

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Peace Corps/Foreign Missions Project

Vietnam-Botswana

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JAMES D. STEELE

Interviewed

by

Joseph Rochette

on

December 11, 1984

DR. JAMES D. STEELE

Dr. James D. Steele was born on October 9, 1925 in Quaker City, Ohio, the son of Chester and Della Steele. After graduating from high school, he entered the U. S. Navy's submarine service during World War II (1943-1946). After the war, Dr. Steele attended Kent State University, majoring in mathematics (B.S. 1949). He then taught grade school in Solon, 5th and 6th grade in 1949 to 1957. He was principal of the elementary school or middle school 1957-1964. During this time he received a Masters of Education from Kent State in 1952.

In 1967 Dr. Steele earned his Ph.D. at Ohio University. Here he became interested in overseas work and eventually served two years in Vietnam with a USAID (Agency for International Development), Ohio University project 1967-1969. Dr. Steele's part of this project gave administrative, facilities, and curriculum support to three pilot secondary schools in central Vietnam. Other aspects of the project involved teacher training.

After returning from Vietnam in 1969, Dr. Steele came to Youngstown State University, retiring December 31, 1984. During this time he took a two year leave to work in Botswana with another Ohio University overseas project. There he worked toward the establishment of a Department of Elementary Teacher Training University in Botswana. In March 1986, Dr. Steele returned to Africa (Swaziland) for a three month consultancy with a similar Ohio University project.

Dr. Steele presently lives in North Ft. Myers, Florida with his wife, Judy. He has two grown children, Jane and Jeff, who live in the Washington D.C. area.

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INTERVIEWEE: DR. JAMES STEELE

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Rochette

SUBJECT: AID, university development projects,  
Vietnam, Botswana, educational systems

DATE: December 11, 1984

R: This is an interview with Dr. James Steele for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the Peace Corps/Foreign Missions, by Joseph Rochette on December 11, 1984, at 1:05 p.m.

Tell me a little about your family, personal background, where you are from.

S: I was born and raised in Ohio. I was born in Appalachia, Ohio, down in the southeastern part of Ohio. I graduated in 1943 from a little high school down there, Quaker City. The population of Quaker City was six hundred and the population of the senior class was sixteen. I went into World War II and was a submarine sailor for two years. I went to Kent State after the war was over and majored in mathematics. I started to teach in Solon, Ohio, which is near Cleveland, in 1949. I taught grade school although I was trained to teach high school also. I was in Solon for fifteen years as a fifth grade, sixth grade teacher. I was also a principal for seven years in the elementary school and the middle school. Then I left in 1964 and got my doctorate at Ohio University in 1967. Ohio University had overseas projects in Africe (Nigeria) and Vietnam. I became interested in such thing, that is overseas education projects. Kind of as a natural consequence, after graduation I went with Ohio University's team to Vietnam. I was supposed to go to Nigeria. I had been working on the edges of their overseas programs during my doctoral program and expected to go to Nigeria, but at the time that I was to go the Biafram war broke out and I couldn't go.

So I took another war; I took the Vietnam War. I was in Vietnam August of 1967 to August of 1969. My family had to be in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia at that time because they were not allowed in Vietnam. My job in that whole situation was to give administrative and curriculum and facilities support to two so-called pilot schools in the central section of Vietnam. One school was in Ban Me Thuot in the highlands, and one school was in Thuy Hoa on the coast. There were sixteen of us in all at the "peak" of our project. Some were involved with other pilot schools in various parts of the country. Others (the main thrust) dealt with teacher training in Saigon, Hue, and Can Tho.

After leaving Vietnam I came to Youngstown State University and have been here since 1969, with the exception of two years with an overseas project in Botswana, Africa. This was with Ohio University again. I took leave here at Youngstown and went again with Ohio U. at their request. Botswana was a new project. We (five of us) were the vanguard group to go over there. It was a teacher training project in collaboration with the University of Botswana. All of my overseas experience in education has been with Ohio University. Ohio University was a contractor with the U. S. Agency for International Development, which is an arm of the State Department in Washington. The United States Government, in its infinite wisdom, is not in the business of doing a lot of educational types of projects in underdeveloped countries, especially training teachers. The USAID mission in a particular country generates a project in cooperation with the local education authorities which supposedly will help that particular country. They invite U. S. universities to bid on this project. In Vietnam the project was to design a secondary education system of comprehensive high schools. In Botswana the project was to develop a department of teacher education at the University of Botswana so that country could have the capabilities of eventually training their own teachers, which at the present time they cannot do. The most recent experience in Botswana in 1981-1983 had to do with setting up a department of elementary education at the University of Botswana in Gaborone, which would develop the capability of that country to train its primary teachers. Primarily we developed a capability of training teacher trainers. In Botswana elementary teachers are the product of a two year teacher training college. The people who teach in these two year training colleges should have college degrees. At the present time they are almost all expatriates, so the people from Botswana want the ability to turn out their own people if at all possible.

Another thing I was doing, and the rest of the team I was

on, was conducting teachers' workshops out in the bush. My particular job was in the area of mathematics and science education. I would go out at regular periods and conduct a teachers' workshop. Usually the people who attended were principals and supervisors, and I would try to teach them how to hold a workshop themselves for their own people. In doing this you not only had to teach them how to do a workshop, but you had to teach them some basic science and mathematics on occasion. The level of mathematical skills in that country is very, very low. The average elementary teacher probably doesn't have anything in excess of an equivalent of a sixth grade education in this country. Sometimes holding the workshop was an adventure. Also you had to have some concern with local culture, particularly in the area of science because there was a great deal of witchcraft. Witchcraft is a term that they wouldn't like, but for our purposes here . . . they call it traditional medicine. There is a certain amount of witchcraft still in existence over there and sometimes you have to be a bit careful when you start holding science workshops that you don't tramp on some corns. Nevertheless it was a very interesting experience as far as teaching in Africa. The African experience was much more productive than the Vietnam experience as one could imagine, because in Vietnam the war kept getting in the way all the time. In Vietnam anytime you started to make some progress, why something would happen, militarily. It was a case of two steps forward to two steps backward. Overseas work and cross-cultural work is very interesting and exciting as far as I'm concerned.

R: In either case what kinds of things did you have to go through in preparation? Were there any kind of training sessions?

S: There was a certain amount of orientation that you had to go through in Washington D.C. You are going over there as an emissary of the United States of America. You are going over there also because it is in the national interest to go over there. You are not going over there with the notion of being highly critical of the United States government policy. As far as I was concerned I let the politics take care of itself as far as things that the United States might be doing as far as propoganda for propoganda purposes. In Southern Africa for example, Botswana is the country immediately north of the Republic of South Africa, therefore apartheid is a very, very big issue. The Africans couldn't understand why the United States Government was in its so-called policy of constructive engagement with South African government. It was hard for them to understand, especially when they would see Americans engaged in developmental work with the Africans. I was very comfortable

with the black Africans in Botswana, very comfortable. It was kind of difficult for them to understand why the U.S. government's official position was constructive engagement and I would be highly supportive of the black Africans beliefs in civil rights at the same time. Nevertheless I didn't have any political problems. You had to be a little bit careful because here we are immediately north of the Republic of South Africa. The South Africans are very, very cautious of foreigners and I didn't want to get my visa to South Africa lifted because occasionally we liked to go to Johannesburg to shop or go to a play or just to travel. If you do too much yacking politically maybe you get your visa lifted. That happened to a lot of Canadians when I was over there. Some things that a group of Canadians said as a result of a South African police raid into Lesotho caused embarrassment to the South African government. It was a bad thing that happened, but there were some Canadians in Lesotho at the time who said some things that probably should not have been said. As a result, all the Canadians in Botswana got their visas lifted, so they couldn't go to South Africa on any kind of pleasure; they could only go for hospitalization or something like that. You had to be a little careful. My job over there was not as a politician anyway; it was as an educator. The best thing I could do to represent the United States of America in a positive way was to do my job, and not be some sort of a faculty lounge politician.

R: What did you notice was different with their education system from what you were used to?

S: Their educational system is adopted from the British. The big thing that they like to do as students is to copy something off the board and memorize it. We don't like to teach that way and so there was a little bit of a problem as far as the way I liked to teach and the way I wanted them to learn. There were a few other things as far as the college students are concerned. In this country we design our examinations so some people will get A's. It seems that the British system is designed so everybody can get an F if possible. At least the tests are seemingly designed to eliminate the possibility of A's. The African student is extremely happy with a D or C. They are ecstatic if they get a B. If you give an A some of the people on the faculty staff will say, "What is the matter with these Americans? They are ruining our standards." I had a little problem there because I would occasionally give A's, simply because a person would never miss a problem. I would have to defend the fact that I had given an A to this individual who never missed a problem on any of my tests, even to the extent of saying, "One hundred percent, isn't that a real number?" The reaction would be, "Yes, but that is ridiculous to

even think that anybody could give an A. A is perfect." I say, "No, A isn't necessarily perfect, not in my estimation. I tell people what they have to do to have an A in my class and if they do it I am going to give them an A." In the United States we like to think maybe we are too easy with grades. Maybe there are too many high grades here on this campus. I tend to think that that might be true, but by the same token I think that the purpose of education is to take an individual and make them go as far as they could go rather than to flunk them out. If they deserve to flunk, fine, but I don't think the purpose ought to be to flunk X number of people in every given class. I just don't believe that, and certain differences in philosophy existed, as far as teaching and learning, between our team of five Americans and the rest of the faculty, particularly the British expatriates that were still on the faculty. Yes, there was a bit of problem as far as that is concerned. As far as going out and teaching workshops, those were fun.

R: What did you feel was the attitude of the British who were there toward Americans?

S: I didn't have any problem. Botswana was once the British protectorate of Bechuanaland. There are still British expatriates all over Botswana. Some of the Brits--the term Brit is not intended to be a derogatory term; they call us Yank and we call them Brits; they are friendly terms--sometimes felt that these upshot Yanks coming over here put them out of jobs. Consequently, occasionally there was some strain, but generally speaking our team got along great with the Brits. Strain was the exception, even when we had grade difficulties. In that university you sat down on a council and discussed everybody's grade. With one or two exceptions we had no problem with the Brits. Generally speaking, I liked them as individuals. I liked the Brits; I liked to work with them. They did a lot of really good things in education through their embassy or British High Commission. There is still a lot of British influence over there. The British empire is just kind of shrinking, that's all. And British influence is shrinking, but nevertheless the British still do have a lot of influence in their old colonies.

R: While you were overseas in Vietnam and Botswana, what were your living conditions like?

S: In Vietnam they were kind of rough. Our families weren't there. We lived in a room something like this one; it was kind of like a cheap motel room. You ate at military bases, sometimes good and sometimes bad. You had weapons. I never fired a weapon in anger, but nevertheless you



carried a weapon. I carried a fold-up 45 caliber "grease gun" in my briefcase. You never knew who your enemies were, so consequently there was a certain amount of stress. I never was too concerned about my personal security. If the Vietcong wanted to kill me they would, simply because that is the way things were there.

In Botswana I lived in a ranch house. It was made out of concrete blocks. It was comfortable. It had two bathrooms and a maid's quarters. My wife thoroughly enjoyed having a maid. We had electricity and hot, running water. The water didn't have to be boiled like it did in Vietnam. The toilets flushed.

There were certain cultural differences. Cultural shock is a disease which affects some people very severely. It never affected me or my wife. Homesickness is a type of cultural shock. The absences of those things which you like, such as hearing the news every night, who won the World Series, what is going on in the state of Ohio, city hall, or what have you, you don't have those things. The mail is slow. Things don't work as efficiently. People steal. You have to have a guard on your house. All these things contribute to that thing called cultural shock. If something goes wrong it is difficult to get it fixed. Generally speaking an awful lot of things, differences in culture, which contribute to cultural shock in some people are simply interesting to me. For example, I've known some Americans who were all uptight because they would see somebody defecating or urinating beside a road. Maybe the native turned his back, maybe he didn't. Some people got all torqued out of shape about something like that. Some poverty bothers people in different ways. Snakes, I've killed a cobra once or twice, mostly in a car. They are poisonous snakes. I never went outside at night without a flashlight, but I never was scared. If you are going to get scared about things like that, then you are not going to be able to do your job. You have to be a little careful about keeping well because things tend to be dirtier.

In Botswana, the living conditions were pretty good I thought. People had a good time. They went out to dinner; there were decent restaurants. Sometimes, every month or so, we would jump into the car and go down to Johannesburg 350 miles to see a play or something like that. We would go to Kruger Park and see animals, or go up to Victoria Falls for Christmas or something like that. We might go somewhere and see elephants, or get in the car and go out in the bush until the road runs out and have a picnic and shove the car out of the sand and come back home. We had a good time, and we worked hard. It was a good project. We were successful in

that project, very successful in setting up that teacher training situation.

R: In both cases what was the physical environment where you worked, like geography and weather?

S: In Vietnam it was hot and sticky. In Botswana it was Arizona. My health in Botswana is a hell of a lot better than it is right now. Botswana in the winter-time, you would freeze. It would get down to thirty degrees and you were cold! Particularly at night. It is that dry air and it goes down below freezing at night. I've had ice on my windshield in August in the winter; the seasons are reversed. The houses are stone and are cold. There is no central heat. You sat around in one of those snug sacks in front of the fireplace and you got cold. In the daytime it would go up to seventy-five degrees, and at seventy-five degrees over there you walk down the street and the sun is shining on you at two o'clock or three o'clock in the afternoon and you are warm on one side and cold on the other. You go in the shade and you are cold. Women wore long dresses to parties, not because they were formal, but because they were cold. In the summertime the hottest I ever saw it was one hundred and twenty-five degrees. Every day was one hundred and ten. It was very intense and it was hot, but one hundred degree temperatures there in January were a lot more comfortable than eighty-five degrees here in July. The summertime was the rainy season and it was the pleasant season. The rain gave you some relief from the heat. In the winter-time you didn't have any rain from May to September, none. It was very unusual to have any rain at all, so you had a lot of dust. It generally was not as pleasant as the summers. You got outside of the eastern fringe of the country and you were in the Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari Desert has the deepest sands in the world. Sand in some cases is one hundred yards deep. The Okovango swamps, it is the only place in the world where a river disappears. The Okovango river delta comes out of Angola and the Kalahari just swallows the river. There is a great deal of game and tremendous bird life and crocodiles. It is a very interesting place to see. Most of Botswana is quite arid. It has a population of about a million people. It is about the size of Texas. There are more cattle in Botswana than there are people. It is overgrazed. Once you get out of the eastern fringe area of Botswana you are in the desert. They are very peaceful people.

They have a black native government, which is reasonably honest. Probably it is the most efficient corruption-free government among the developing nations of Africa. Botswana uses its foreign aid very efficiently. For

example, our project is eleven million dollars. Botswana furnished four million of that. In Egypt or in some places, when we go into a foreign aid project we furnish it all. They, in contrast to Egypt, use it pretty well also. It is a reasonably efficient situation. There is one road which goes from one end of the country to the other. Botswana became a nation in the mid 1960's. They had a president called Sir Seretse Khama. He was president until he died of cancer shortly before I went there in 1981. He was the George Washington, a highly revered individual. The president now is Dr. Quett Masire. Masire was Khama's vice-president. Pete Mmusi is Masire's vice-president. My wife and I have been to Mmusi's house for dinner. His wife was a friend. She was in some of my workshops.

Generally speaking, the government is much more stable than it is in Zimbabwe or Mozambique or Angola or any of those places. It is a very stable government. It is very democratic. They have a highly democratic tradition in that country. They have a town meeting type of government locally. They call it a khotla. The khotla is simply a court which is out in the middle of the town square or under a big tree. Traditionally the village chief or the village elder sits there and hears all kinds of civil cases, and sometimes criminal cases. Anybody who wants to go may go. This is the place where people go to find out what is going on in town. Anybody who has anything to say about a case before the chief can testify. The chief renders his decision and that is it. I witnessed a khotla one time; it was a very interesting situation. Khotlas are like the courts in this country; you have a village khotlas, a higher khotla, and then a national supreme court if something goes that far. It is very efficient and it works.

For example, I was in a village in Botswana. (A village in Botswana has nothing to do with the size; the village has to do with the character of the town. If it is a place where people live and it is their home they call it a village. If it is a place where there are commercial and manufacturing activities, then they call it a town. There is no such thing called a city. A village may be bigger than a town and vice-versa.) The largest place in Botswana is a place called Serowe. Serowe is a village yet there are 40,000 people living there. It is the oldest village and it is the seat of a particular tribe. It is where Sir Seretse was born. I was in Serowe one time doing a workshop and a friend of mine, a local, pointed out that there was a big crowd; there must have been 500 people there. The village chief was under a big tree hearing a khotla case. Usually khotla cases will last fifteen or twenty minutes; this thing had been going all

week. I asked what the situation was because I couldn't understand Setswana (the language). He interpreted quietly and explained the history of the case. A fellow had accused his wife of trying to kill him. He was a merchant in town and he was sick and went to Western doctors and wasn't getting any better. So he went to a witch doctor, the traditional doctor. The witch doctor cast the monkey bones, which is their way of diagnosing things, and he read the monkey bones depending on the way they lay on the ground. He said that something or somebody was trying to do him in. The witch doctor told him to look around and see what he could find. He looked around his house and found some very suspicious herbs. He accused his wife of trying to poison him. It came out at the khotla trial. His wife said that none of the herbs were the so-called "bad" herbs. These were good herbs. One of the herbs was to keep children well. One of the herbs was to keep him home, because he was galavanting around a little bit. One of the herbs was supposed to make her more appealing, alluring and things of this nature. It caused a big flap all over town, what was going on. They listened to all kinds of testimony for a week. He accused her of trying to kill him so she could take over his businesses and all kinds of things like that. They called a recess while I was there and the judge came back after an hour and he gave his decision. The decision was, after hearing testimony, that everybody was supposed to get out of the house. The family situation over there was that you had all kinds of people living with you; this was called the "extended family". The in-laws were supposed to get out of the house and all the kids too. The couple was supposed to live together for three months with no interference because there had been a lot of problems with the in-laws. There would be no divorce. After three months if things worked all right, then fine. If not then they could appeal the case to a higher court. Really, that is not bad, to get the in-laws out of there and let somebody live a normal life. The in-laws were stirring up problems.

Things that came before the khotla might be somebody stealing a goat, all kinds of civil cases or criminal cases. Typical punishment meted out for a minor crime, that is, stealing a goat might well be "goat's teats" or "cow's teats". "Goat's teats" was two lashes with a wicked whip. "Cow's teats" was four lashes. My gardener was convicted of impregnating his two girlfriends. When he beat up one of them when she was drunk, he was arrested and tried at a khotla. His punishment was "goat's teats" or 15 Pula (about \$14). This was a week's pay. He pleaded to me for the money. I loaned it to him. Before he repaid me he was picked up for being in the country illegally (from Zimbabwe). He would rather lose a week's pay than take even one lash.

Things can be appealed. You have neighborhood khotlas, district khotlas. It is just like the courts in this country. It is very efficient. Also the khotlas are where people come to hear the neighborhood news and gossip and things like that. The khotlas are held a couple of times a week. The chief of the tribe holds the biggest khotlas. Democratic procedures are part of their culture. They guard this tradition of the khotla very stringently.

R: Did you ever notice any friction between traditional beliefs, traditional elements, and just the goings on of the modern world?

S: This is one of the problems that you might have with somebody, so-called "ugly" American types. I never saw much of it; I saw very little of it. Americans want things done yesterday; they have very little patience with time. Over there that doesn't work. It was even worse in Vietnam. In Africa the worst thing you could ever do was, "Hey! We didn't do it this way in our country." You just don't say things like that; it is an insult to people to throw your country up to them all the time. I never had any problems.

For example, I don't think it would be wise to stand up in front of a bunch of schoolteachers or principals and say, "This idea that you have about lightning is just a bunch of baloney. That isn't the way it works!" That is not good. Lightning, in particular, is something they have very definite beliefs about. They believe that lightning can be called in to strike somebody, that some certain people have powers that can cause lightning to strike someplace. There is a particular town over there called Molepolole. Molepolole had a lot of kids get struck by lightning at various times. They had a big khotla and people were saying, "Who is it that is calling the lightning to strike our children?" One time during a science workshop I was doing some things with static electricity and how static electricity occasionally manifests itself such as lightning. "Tell us more," they said. I told them what I believed and explained that I was not saying that their traditional beliefs were wrong. I just told them what I believed. I told them I was not telling them to believe what I believed. We did some things with static electricity, created a spark. Then I told the story that my wife's grandmother lost a barn. When she, my wife, was a child, her own house was burned down by lightning. Her grandfather was killed by lightning. This one fellow said, "Dr. Steele, were there any Africans living back there where your wife lived?" There was much laughter at this. They don't dispute this; they just think that these two things can

coexist. The fact that I think that lightning is static electricity is no sign that it can't be called in to strike somebody if you have the proper powers to do so. So certain things coexist very easily in their own minds. I think the trouble comes when somebody says to them, "You are all wet. That is a bunch of superstition and malarkey. I am the font of all knowledge." They think science is wonderful, but it is awfully hard for them to separate science between the wonder and the science. It is very difficult for them to take bits of data and information and come to some sort of conclusion or to make a hypothesis about it. They think that science and mathematics are white men's subjects. They feel to a certain degree that the white man has kept them from learning science and math on purpose.

Mathematical concepts to them are very difficult; it is not in their culture. For example, the kids watch cattle. The kids will go out and keep their eye on a herd of cattle. If you ask a kid how many cattle he has he won't be able to tell you, but he'll be able to tell you if they're all there. He will know that two are missing, but he won't know how many there were to start with. He will know there are three cattle there from somebody else's herd. He'll know there are four brown cows and ten white cows, but he won't know the total cows he has. The idea of mathematical concepts is very difficult to them. Making change is a major operation in a store. They can't make change. You will have a total amount of your purchase and you give the clerk a five pula note. The bill comes to P2.80. They will put down five pula and they'll put down P2.80 and they will subtract and count the money out. It is very difficult for them to see that counting it out from P2.80 to P5.00 is a way of subtracting. Certain kinds of things are very, very difficult.

R: From when you worked in Botswana were there any people, whether they be expatriates or locals themselves, who stick out in your mind that impressed you?

S: I ran into some awfully good Peace Corps people. I ran into some impressive Batswana. (Botswana is a country and Batswana are people of that country. Motswana is one person, and Setswana is the language).

The president of the country I've met a couple, three times. It is common to meet very important people over there. We are not used to meeting important people, you and I. If you meet a governor of a state it is unusual, let alone even seeing a president. Over there it is rather common to see a head of state. I saw five heads of state when I was in Botswana, and was in the president's house more than

once. The first lady was a very nice person. Dr. Masire was a very impressive individual, I thought.

I ran into some excellent educators. We had some dandy Vietnamese educators, but it was very difficult to get anything done in Vietnam.

R: Was that mainly because of the war or just the people?

S: The war got in the way. It was the first time that we ever tried to fight a war and build a country at the same time. The Vietcong, every time you would get something done, they would get it undone. They would blow up your science lab or something like that.

R: The system of the education in Vietnam, was it similar?

S: No, it was French. I don't even want to talk about that. Everything over there, we were really fighting so many different things. Everything in Vietnam was done by examination. The purpose of education over there was to eliminate people rather than to educate them. You had very few people going through with a high school equivalency because the philosophy was not to educate people; it was to train an intellectual elite. Americans don't believe in things like that. It was difficult. I look back on Africa with a lot more pleasure.

R: With the British system in Botswana, did they have any kind of examinations after, for example, primary school?

S: Yes. You had the British system. You had school leaver's examination at the end of sixth grade. If they didn't pass the test they couldn't go to the next step, the junior high school. They had what they called the junior certificate. That was just before high school. Then you had your Cambridge exams, which is really an equivalent of our high school plus perhaps one year. Cambridge exams were pretty difficult. At the university level we didn't worry about that much because we weren't concerned with that. We were concerned with training teachers to teach in the local schools. The schools were very, very crude places sometimes. Sometimes school was out under a tree. At some places the schools were horrible; the roof would leak and there would be no windows and wind would blow in. Sometimes kids wouldn't get enough to eat and attendance would be spotty; it was rough.

R: Wasn't it hard to teach any kind of science without materials?

S: Yes, you had to make your own. You had to show people how to make their own science apparatus. Books were very

scarce. That is why they wanted you to write on the board all of the time, so they could copy it, take it home and memorize it. They expected tests to simply be a regurgitation of those kinds of things. It was very difficult for them to see through a story problem. If you really wanted to have fun with a problem--Mr. So-and-so bought ten liters of gasoline for his car, filling it up. Ten liters of gasoline costs 65¢ a liter. He drove to Francistown and put in eight liters. Francistown is so far, how many kilometers per liter did he get?--If you want to have fun with it just put in some extra numbers like 65¢. The 65¢ has nothing to do with it, but if you tell them how far it is to Francistown and how many liters of gasoline it took to get there, how many kilometers per liter did they get, why it is a straightforward problem. But if you throw in an extra piece of information . . . They know how to do a problem of how many kilometers per liter did you get of driving to Francistown, no problem. But if you put in extra things you are throwing them a curve because you didn't teach them how to do that. They think you have to use all the numbers.

- R: From times when you went out into the bush, what did you notice as far as class size goes, were they large?
- S: Sometimes you would have forty in a class; sometimes you would have fifteen. It depended on whether the parents needed the kid to watch the cows, or depending on whether or not the kid was hungry. Sometimes the only best meal they got was at school.
- R: As far as your daily needs while you were there, what were the markets like over there?
- S: You could buy anything you wanted to if you had the money if you wanted to live like an American lives. A Motswana couldn't live that way, couldn't afford it. We like to eat meat every day, more than once. The Botswana are great meat eaters, but they can't afford to eat their own meat because they sell that meat. They eat mealie meal. Botswana is one of the few countries in Africa that has an excess of protein. The drought that is hitting Ethiopia has hit Botswana and it is very bad; the cattle are dying. The thing that really hurts is the fact that they haven't been able to grow good crops of sorghum and mealies, maize, things of that nature. Mealie meal is a kind of farina type of stuff; they just dip it out with their fingers. It is good. I have eaten it plenty of times. Sorghum meal is delicious; it tastes like Cream of Wheat. They haven't been able to grow good crops. The grass is overgrazed and the cattle are dying. Most of the stuff that we eat comes in from South Africa because South Africa has everything that we would have



in this country, canned goods and so forth, fresh milk, eggs, so we buy it. We eat a better diet than they do. Milk would cost 70¢ a liter. Bread would be about the same price as it is here. A box of Kellogg's corn flakes made in South Africa costs more than it does here, but Americans want corn flakes. If you go out and have a steak dinner at a good restaurant it will cost you about the same as it does here. We could afford to do it; they can't. Some of them do, yes. They don't begrudge the fact that some people have more money than others.

The American government takes very good care of its people. Some of the other expatriates over there kind of give you the needle every once in a while. "You rich Americans, your government does this and that. My government doesn't do it." Canadians, I had some very good Canadian friends and every once in a while they would give me the needle about how they didn't get the same perquisite (fringe benefit) as I got. For example, my house was furnished. Their house they rented on the open market. My night guard was furnished; they didn't have a night guard. A Canadian might give you the needle a little bit about "You Americans have it made." And we did! I didn't feel guilty at all.

R: What were some of the other American projects?

S: South Dakota State University had a project where they were developing the college of agriculture. It was an excellent project, great people. Those guys from South Dakota were really great. The University of Kansas had some people over there. I didn't know them too well. USAID Mission had many people. The United States Embassy had many people. There were some churches that had some things going, Baptists particularly. I don't know of too many USAID projects, contracts with universities, just South Dakota State, University of Kansas, and Ohio University. That is about it that I can think of right there in Botswana.

You have these things all over the world. For example, in Vietnam there were bunches of universities into the business. There were all kinds of private contractors in Vietnam also. You had Peace Corps in Botswana. We used Peace Corps for our medical help. Any time I got anything wrong with me I had the Peace Corps nurse give me pills or whatever.

I played softball in the National Botswana Softball League. We had a team called the American Eagles. I was the oldest guy. I used to be a pretty good ball-player. The American Eagles team wasn't quite as good as it once was because our personnel were always changing.

Peace Corps introduced softball to Botswana and they picked it up, and they are good. They play like madmen. They dive headlong through the gravel and play barefooted. They play too recklessly. We made the playoffs one year when I was there and we beat the best team in the league. We had never beaten them before. It was the first time we had beaten them in three years. This kid that I knew really well, he was a student of mine, had an eighty mile an hour fastball. He was good. We beat him this day and one of our guys broke his arm. I took him to the hospital. He actually broke his upper arm bone by throwing a ball. I never saw anything like that happen. That fellow was in surgery in Johannesburg, was flown down there probably almost as fast as he would be in surgery at St. Elizabeth's. So our government took pretty good care of us.

We played the Botswana army one day. I was playing third base and we got beat five to four. It was really a good game. I did pretty well, got a couple of hits. I can still hit, but I can't run very well. The fellow who played third base for the army was using my glove. Always after the game, regardless of whether you won or lost-- it was an eight team league and we were the only Americans in the league--everybody wanted to ask the Americans what they did wrong. Even though they may have beaten us twenty to four, what did they do wrong? We got beat five to four and we were criticizing the game and so forth. This fellow who played third base said to me, "How many years do you have?" (How old are you?) I said, "I'm fifty-seven." He said, "Too old." I said, "What do you mean I'm too old?" He said, "My father is dead and he is not fifty-seven." I said, "Well, I'm not dead." He said, "Do all Americans play ball before they die?" They have a particular notion of when you get to be fifty you shouldn't be running around playing ball. You should be sitting around drinking Chibuku and playing cards and gambling and doing something constructive. Chibuku is a brand name of native beer or bojawa, that is Chibuku is to bojawa as Coors is to beer. The men over there don't work very hard.

- R: Did they have myths about Americans, about what they thought it was like here?
- S: The size of the country is incomprehensible. Certain things they would ask you, and occasionally they just wanted to talk about America and the world. To them the world stops at the border. The only western world they have seen might be South Africa, and that is too bad because when they go to South Africa they have no rights. I was very uncomfortable one time when I drove

with a fellow teacher, a black man, through South Africa from Lesotho. I had no problem going to Lesotho through South Africa with Mrs. Steele but when I got him and brought him back home I had all kinds of problems getting through border gates. Anyone who consorts with a black person is suspect. They look at South Africa as sort of a white man's world. Although things in this country maybe are not perfect, it is hard for them to believe that they could go to a movie in the United States with a white man, or they could go beside a white man at a soccer game in this country. I did that in their country with no problem. "But in your country is the black man able to do things?" I would say, "Sure, it wasn't always that way, but it is getting better." They say, "Can a black person teach at your university?" I say, "Of course. My boss is black. The head of my department back at Youngstown State University is a black woman." "Woman? That is going too far. That is too much." It is wonderful that it is black, but the fact that it is a woman is too much. They are male chauvinists.

- R: If someone came to you now and told you they were going to work overseas like that in a similar project and they had never done it before, what things would you say to them, advice?
- S: It was the high point of my career, teaching in a cross-cultural situation. I am not going to go for the Peace Corps; that is too rough for me. I like my creature comforts a little bit too much. I think any time that you can work in a cross-cultural situation that is reasonably safe, do it. It is the greatest mind expander that there is. I'm glad to have had the experience. I would go back. There is about a one in one hundred chance that I may end up back in Africa after I retire here. I'm retiring here at the end of this quarter. If somebody comes after me and says, "Do you want to go back over? I've got a project. Do you want to come help us?" I would say yes. It all depends on your family situation. If you have kids you had better be concerned with their schooling. Sometimes you go in a situation like that and the schooling isn't any good. Americans, particularly, don't like to put their kids in boarding schools. The Brits think nothing of that; they send their kids back home to go to school. Americans like to have their kids with them. My kids during the Vietnam time went to a pretty good school in Malaysia. But it was not a good situation; that is, the family was in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and I was able to visit them every month or so. Still, that is not good. Generally speaking, I would say yes, it is great to teach overseas.

R: Thank you very much.