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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Transcript of interview with

RICHARD W. VAN WAGENEN

July 25, 1986

By: Robert W. Oliver
OLIVER: This is Robert Oliver, July 25, 1986, about to begin an oral history conversation with Dr. Richard Van Wagenen, whose illustrious experience in the Bank will be the subject of our conversation. I wonder if we may begin by your telling a bit about your experience before the Bank and how you came to the Bank, and then perhaps begin to talk about your experiences in the Bank.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, I'm a political scientist by trade, in the field of international, so the Bank was a sort of natural place to go. However, I was an academic type ever since the war and came to Washington from the faculty of Princeton. I came as Dean of the Graduate School at The American University and Professor of International Relations.

I did that for five years or so, including teaching a seminar in international administration. It was quite by chance and one of those lucky things, as far as I'm concerned, that I had known very slightly Don [Donald D.] Fowler and Bill [William F.] Howell, one Personnel Manager [Fowler] and the other one Director of Administration. I had earlier invited them each separately to talk to my seminar, which turned out to be so interesting. It was a graduate seminar in international administration. Their sessions were very interesting indeed and a few months apart. Soon after, I had a particularly good student named Steve Gregory who was most presentable in every way and I thought he was the kind of a fellow who ought to go into international administration as a career. So I sent him to see Bill Howell, a very fine person and excellent administrator, and Bill reacted that this was exactly the kind of fellow the Bank needed in the younger age group, and it was a shame there was no system whatever for hiring these people. They didn't have experience, so that was that.
OLIVER: About what year was it that this initial contact was made?

VAN WAGENEN: It was probably 1961. Then some time in 1962 I had a phone call from Bill Howell saying, "I want to have lunch and tell you something and ask you about something." So I came down here and had lunch with him and Ray [Raymond J.] Goodman, his deputy. They said a plan for bringing young people into the Bank had been dreamed up and approved, and would I come in and start it. I said I sure would. So I took a two-year leave of absence and came in November of 1962 to establish the Young Professionals Program, commonly called the YP Program, then known as the Junior Professional Recruitment Program. I returned to the university in 1964. In 1965 I was asked to come back to the Bank to head up a training unit they had created. I stayed here until my retirement in 1977.

OLIVER: What were the specific terms of your coming in 1962? What were you asked to do?

VAN WAGENEN: Well, it was to start and implement this program that had been put in place. I think it had been approved by the Board. All was set to bring in young people under the age of 30 with master's degrees—or non-U.S. equivalents—so as to beef up the lower age groups on the staff. They could see the fall-off a few years hence of older staff and they needed good, fresh, new blood. The terms were all nationalities, and I guess you'd say the policy was to keep the U.S. numbers reasonably down. The very day I came was when Mr. Black left and Mr. Woods took over, but the policy was similar to Mr. McNamara's later policy of keeping U.S. citizens down to under 25 percent anyway and British maybe 10 percent for the whole Bank staff.

OLIVER: I understand at this very moment in history there's an absolute freeze on hiring either Americans or British in the Bank.

VAN WAGENEN: Really? Hmmm.
OLIVER: So the unofficial quota system was developed.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, I'm glad I came in earlier, because it's a great place to work. So what other policy was there? Strangely enough, there was nothing about women at the time. And I think the ratio of selections during my period, shockingly enough to the present generation; was two women and 107 men. The first group was eleven, all men. There was no woman until the eighth group, when Asha L. Datar came in from Oxford. She was Indian, a remarkable lady who was killed in an auto accident shortly after. In the same group was [Chandra] Singh, who is now Mrs. Hardy, from Guyana.

As for some other policy aspects, only education and age. That's the only thing we had.

OLIVER: And the education simply specified that they had to have a master's degree or equivalent. Can you remember that first class of eleven? Were they mainly non-Americans?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. Yes, they were. There was only one American, John Malone. There was Wilfried Thalwitz from Germany, who is now a vice president, and Andre Gue, who has been a department director for a long time now. The first group was selected in April 1963 and came on duty September 23, 1963. The next in January, 1964.

The first group, in addition to Malone, Thalwitz and Gue, consisted of Bilsel Alisbah, Michel Cojot, Antonio Copello, Eugenio Lari, Murugappa Madhavan, Christian Monsod, Gabriel Sciolli and Christopher Willoughby. The second group was a small one, consisting of Jose Andreu, Ping-Cheung Loh, Jochen Kraske, Chavalit Sala, Heinz Vergin and Heinrich Ziegler. The first two groups, totalling 17 persons, included 13 nationalities. Kim [Edward V. K.] Jaycox, was in the third group. He's a vice president now.

OLIVER: A major part of the intention was to recruit by this means young people who showed promise in Bank work.
VAN WAGENEN: Right.

OLIVER: Was there something tantamount to a real offer of a job, or was it the training period and probation and that sort of thing?

VAN WAGENEN: The presumption was a permanent job, lifetime. But there was a probationary period of two years during which they had three assignments: one in the technical side, one in what's now called the country side, and one some place else, maybe IFC [International Finance Corporation] or the Economics Department, which was then separate. But these fellows were so good that this was soon reduced to 18 months. And, in fact, we thought there should be a training element, not just slap them onto the job, and so John Adler cooked up a three months program in the EDI [Economic Development Institute] in development economics. Well, it soon became evident--I mean in the first few days apparently, or certainly weeks--that this was unnecessary. These fellows knew what they were doing. They were beyond this kind of training, and John was the first to admit this, so we never put anybody else through a course.

OLIVER: That's very interesting. I take it that the training that John Adler proposed was similar to, or perhaps even identical with, the training that he was giving the people from other countries that came to the EDI to study the development process.

VAN WAGENEN: It might have been, though it was a separate course for these fellows. They were alone in it.

OLIVER: At any rate, even with master's degrees these people knew enough about the development process that they didn't really need that kind of formal training at least.

VAN WAGENEN: Or enough of them did, so that it wouldn't pay to put the whole group through. They were by no means all versed in economics. I had a strong feeling myself that the undergraduate liberal arts degree--as in the U.S. and in England--was the best possible basis, provided they were topnotch, which they were.
Another of that first group, for instance, was Chris Willoughby, who has been a director now for quite a while. He was a rare first class honors man in PPE, which was the general social science degree, at Oxford, with the Oxford master's, which doesn't mean anything.

Some of the first group have disappeared, but I think there are seven out of eleven still here. If a candidate had not had in his graduate work or undergraduate work any finance or economics at all, we thought in the selection process that they didn't have much of a legitimate interest in the Bank. Why were they here? They probably wouldn't stay. They didn't have an orientation.

Should I talk about the process of selection at all?

OLIVER: Yes, I was going to ask if you personally did the selecting and then what you did to supervise the program once they were here.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, the recruiting was done by me and one secretary, Florence Conlon, who was very good, and a little bit later there was Anwar Ahmad, who was my assistant. He was a Pakistani who had been long in the Bank and knew the Bank's needs, and a good fellow to work with. Later he was succeeded by the able Jose Andreu, a YP himself.

OLIVER: These people were both assigned to you?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. And I was not in the Personnel Division, for some reason, but was called Special Assistant for Training, meaning assistant to the Director of Administration, Bill Howell. And he reported to [Sir] Geoffrey Wilson as vice president, one of only two or three vice presidents of the Bank at that time. He also took a real interest in this program. Sometimes I would go directly to him. Bill would say, "Well, go tell Geoffrey Wilson about this, or ask his advice," or whatever. But there was very little supervision, the way the Bank does it. You know, they turn you loose.
OLIVER: Having mentioned Geoffrey Wilson, can you think offhand of occasions that you did go to see him and the kind of questions that came up?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, one anecdote I recall. He was British-trained himself, and very savvy. He would ask broad questions about this. Are we getting enough balance in this direction or that direction? The broad questions that I, digging down in my little trench, would tend not to see, as my head wasn't high enough up. Once I remember his very quietly asking about the interview process, then sort of mumbling afterwards, "Well, I don't think interviews are useful. All they tell you is whether the man has two heads or one."

OLIVER: I can inject an offhand comment. I have to disagree with him. I served for some years on the freshman admissions committee of my university, and we had a practice of having somebody from the faculty interview every likely candidate who was applying for admission, and we became convinced over many years that the interviewing process is very important.

VAN WAGENEN: Oh, yes. I think so, too. I'm afraid he didn't influence me much on that. But really he was just saying, "Don't overestimate the impression of an interview."

OLIVER: Sure. That's good advice.

VAN WAGENEN: Which brings another anecdote about the interview with Wilfried Thalwitz, one of the big people in the Bank now and a wonderful guy. He was one of the oldest people we brought in at that time, almost 30. But I recall the interview with him in Paris. We had a small panel for the Young Professionals Program in Paris, and candidates came in from Germany, Spain, and all around. Wilfried had ridden on the train from
wherever in Germany overnight in this coldest winter in 50 years. He appeared without a voice—hardly any voice. He just kind of croaked along, and we still thought he was a very good man. So I like to kid him that he's the only person who came into the Bank really without an interview. And he agreed that he had no voice. And I said, at our reunion of YPs 20 years later, that actually I felt that he would have gotten in even with a voice.

OLIVER: At any rate, you thought his not having a voice was a temporary problem.

VAN WAGENEN: Right. And that if he had a voice he would probably be okay, which he was.

Well, the process then was quite formal, and you might say rigid. We recruited these people. I've forgotten really where we found them; a few were already in the personnel files. That gave us a head start. And then I remember I went on recruiting trips to South America and the Middle East and Europe by myself to try to talk with universities about this and hand out a little booklet we had written about how great this program was going to be; but there was no experience.

OLIVER: I'm surprised, offhand. I would have thought that there would have been hundreds of applications every year to the World Bank from people in their twenties who had at least a master's degree.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, I think so. That's what gave us our start. There was a kind of backlog.

OLIVER: But you were saying that the backlog was not sufficient, so that you wanted to supplement it by actual recruiting.

VAN WAGENEN: Right. We couldn't tell whether we were getting the best unless we stimulated these universities to know about the program.
OLIVER: Sure.

VAN WAGENEN: And as you know, the Bank always wants the best, and they recruit even though they don’t have the positions to fill in the Young Professionals Program. Since then it just has snowballed, and there are thousands of applicants for every hundred jobs. We tried to beef it up, spread the sources. It may be we had too many Americans in these files; I don’t remember. But the process was then to form a list myself and later on the two of us—Ahmad and I—interview everybody who was reasonably high on our list.

OLIVER: Would you bring them all to Washington for their interviews?

VAN WAGENEN: Always, except the one time when we went to Paris and had a little panel. I don’t recall any anywhere else. We would bring them halfway around the world sometimes, to interview them.

We began with preliminary lists, then came up with a bunch of people worth interviewing. We would bring those in, maybe 50 for each selection. Then we’d pull this down to 30 perhaps and put them in columns. One column you absolutely cannot ignore or turn down. They’re too good. The next column very, very high. Topnotch. Next column, excellent. The next column, very good indeed. There were usually four columns, and as time went on the candidates got better and better, and you just couldn’t deny their potential value.

To select from among our columns of candidates there was a selection committee made up of the Director of the Administration Department and others like Dick [Richard H.] Demuth, who was Director of the Development Services Department, very high up, and the Assistant Director for Personnel, which most of this time was Reg [Reginald A.] Clarke. He took a strong interest in the program. And a couple of others from outside like Siem [Simon] Aldewereld, Andy [Andrew M.] Kamarck, Ken [Kenneth A.] Bohr
and so forth. They would, for each group selected, sit one day for a couple of hours, go through our written book about this thick, the guy's whole personal history form, testimony about him from his professors or whoever, and written impressions of the interviewers. That committee was supposed to go through the book the night before and then come to conclusions the next day—which we did.

Later on we had so many topnotch candidates that we formed interview panels. The two of us would interview everybody, but we would then put them to panels. And that was very interesting because in an international organization you could never have the same panel for any one group coming up for selection, because Bank personnel is dispersed and nobody's going to be here regularly. You've probably heard Ronnie [Aron] Broches' observation about forming his musical quartet; it consisted of 12 staff members.

So you'd have to have different panels, which created a big variable. We didn't try to make this an even, level contest. You just couldn't do that, and we were under no obligation to do it, either. We were selecting people for our use. We were not doing it as a fair contest like the Olympic Games.

OLIVER: And each panel could find a person or more who could not be turned down because he was so obviously good.

VAN WAGENEN: The interview panel. Yes, that's right. But the selection panels couldn't either. It's surprising how they went down our first column almost always and took all those. Then they'd dip into whatever number they could afford to bring in from the second column. For example, I recall that for the eighth group of 13 we interviewed 108 candidates, after screening out hundreds on paper. Only four were in the first column. All those were selected, and the other nine probably came from the second column.
But the interview panels being variable, you had variable judgements on candidates from all these different cultures. As an example, if you have an American interviewing a Thai, he comes out with the feeling that this fellow just doesn't have enough push. He's not aggressive enough to handle this kind of job. Well, of course, the Thai is trained to be very polite, very quiet.

OLIVER: Deferential.

VAN WAGENEN: Deferential, right. He could be a terrific person, but he doesn't impress the American. Then you have, shall we say a Thai on the staff, interviewing an American. And this guy is brash. He's just too pushy. He's aggressive. So you had those kinds of correction to worry about.

OLIVER: And that was your worry, wasn't it? Your personal worry.

VAN WAGENEN: I had to decide which of those people to put before the selection committee after the interviewers. And you know how much the interviewers could vary in the Bank, not just in culture but in personality. So we probably lost very good people, and we took on a few that we shouldn't have, which brings up another interesting point, at least to me, and that is how successful they proved to be.

One more point on the selection process. They were brought in twice a year, in groups. And that created some headwinds because they were a kind of elite. Who are these guys, anyway? They're just out of school, some of them. Well, the youngest one in all of my time was, I think, 22, and the oldest one was 30 years and 6 months. Some had had quite a bit of experience, such as Adi [J.] Davar, who is now here. He had seven years with Tatas in India, the great business group. Others had had good experience. And some not. So what are they good for? And we had a rather hard time, I think, convincing some of the staff of the fact of their
potential. You know, what good is a babe in arms? Well, this didn't take long because they did such a terrific job, I have to say. Most of them were utterly convincing. Within maybe a year-and-a-half or so, people were calling us and saying, "Have you got one of these fellows for us?" Because we insisted that they not do pratwork, as it was called, carrying somebody's baggage on a mission or clerking it or taking the minutes and nothing else. They had to be given a substantive job, and we tried to monitor that. Some people were so good in working at this that they would sacrifice a little in order to train them. And that was exactly the idea. You invest a little part of your energy and whatever your division is doing to build up this fellow.

OLIVER: So you personally would be in contact with the division chief under whom the Young Professional was working to remind the division chief of the training aspects and the responsibility aspects, as well as getting feedback from him as to how the individual was doing in the program.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. And placement, you see, was the other part of it. After selection, who goes where?

OLIVER: How did you decide that?

VAN WAGENEN: Well, there were some people who were sort of natural gurus. I don't remember quite how we found them. Maybe they came forward. One of them was Bob [Robert] Sadove, for instance. Another was Ken Bohr, and another Jim [George] Baldwin. Hugh Ripman was another one. They were kind of natural teachers. Maybe they were frustrated professors or something.

OLIVER: But I don't quite understand what their role was. You said they were sort of natural gurus. Would that mean that you would assign a Young Professional to work under them specifically?

VAN WAGENEN: Right.
OLIVER: I see.

VAN WAGENEN: And I recall that Bob Sadove once had this big Indus River project going, and he took on two or three as research people. Well, he gave them an excellent experience, but he knew that research people were not going to go anywhere in the Bank—unless they wanted to be strictly in research—unless they got out. So we rotated them.

OLIVER: Did you not rotate them from the beginning?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. Three times. But then after their two years or after eighteen months they would take a so-called permanent assignment. And that's when it could have been troublesome, because they might have frozen in a position that didn't offer them a future. This was long before a career development system was put in at the Bank, of course.

OLIVER: Well, that's the sense in which you particularly were fond of assigning young people to Sadove or Bohr or somebody like that.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes.

OLIVER: Because they had the ability to tell whether the person fit where he was or whether he might be better off somewhere else in the Bank.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. Also, in addition to the weekly meetings, I would welcome any YPs who came in to my office privately to talk about their troubles. Mostly they didn't, I think partly because they thought I would not be effective in helping them, and partly because they did not want to go on record as complaining about anybody. Mostly that. I remember a couple of cases. There is a man who's here now. He came to me and said, "I've had seven offices in seven weeks." They just moved him around all over the place within the division. Another one came in and complained that they were asking him to go get them coffee every morning. Well, this
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was kind of a symbol in those days. You know, a go-fer. And so then I would maybe talk gently to this supervisor, but you couldn't do much because it would get the YP in trouble. So I'm not so sure I was effective on that. That was in the earliest days. When the numbers got greater, I know I was not so effective because I just couldn't get around. One couldn't keep track.

OLIVER: How long would you try and keep track of a person who had come in the Young Professionals Program?

VAN WAGENEN: Really only through his probationary period. We were so busy.

OLIVER: Two years?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, or eighteen months. We were so busy getting new people, so we left it more to the Personnel Division to carry on after that first permanent assignment anyway. But the YPs just proved themselves, to me rather miraculously. Once I remember being in the corridor when Hans Adler, the top transportation man at that time, to whom two YPs had been assigned a few months earlier, stopped me in the corridor and asked, "Hey, who are these guys?" It was Jaycox and Thalwitz, I believe.

I said, "Well, one of them is a specialist in Africa, and he's had American Studies also." And the other one also had had no specific education in that field.

Adler said, "Well, they're the best transportation economists I've seen in a long time." Amazing. They didn't pretend to be transportation economists at all.

OLIVER: Well, a good general economist could do almost anything.
VAN WAGENEN: Of course, Professor. But, Jaycox never was an economist. He had undergraduate degree from Swarthmore in American Studies and went to Columbia, where he got a master's degree in African Studies. But they learned. They adapted. They really covered the ground. They proved themselves.

In a few cases, no. When I said earlier that we made some mistakes, that was quite true. I guess some anecdotes ought to be on record without names. One man from an Asian country was very shy and he had lived in France for the past few years, having learned French before that. He seemed to have a hard time learning fluent English. He didn't have much initiative. So we rode along with this for quite a while, maybe almost all through his probationary period. Then we got worried and we asked Roger Chaufournier to please have an interview with this fellow. By the way, Roger was another of those good gurus. Roger interviewed with him in French, because we thought maybe this was a language problem. Roger did so and concluded that the fellow just simply didn't quite have it in any language, so we just slowly eased him out, telling him there wasn't really much future. He went back home, and I guess he had a good career.

OLIVER: Did he have any family here?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, a wife. A French wife. If I say much more, we would telling who it is.

OLIVER: Oh, well, I wasn't prying. I was just naturally curious as to whether he was in some sense homesick or feeling ill-adjusted in a strange place, as some students that I see in my university from Asia in particular sometimes do.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, that's quite so. It was partly culture and maybe partly what you say. Then another one was a little more spectacular. He was from a small African country, and we were always a little reluctant to
take those people on because they couldn't be spared at home. Very few were real professionals. I remember finding some Africans up at Yale graduate school who were just terribly good, and a couple of them came in. Fletcher School was another very good source.

Anyhow, this fellow wasn't making it. He was again very shy, reclusive, and just not getting all that far. So we suggested that he kind of ease out, and he disappeared back to his country. Much later I asked his best friend in the YP Program, who was from a neighboring African country, whom I knew pretty well, and who was doing well, "How is So-and-So coming along at home? I hope he's got a job in the Ministry or something good."

And this man said, "He's doing all right. He's ambassador to the United States." On the next National Day I had an invitation to shake hands with him. All the other ambassadors wound up shaking hands with this fellow. He was still under thirty. So that's how they need those people.

OLIVER: I think you mentioned at lunch that Mrs. George Woods was very interested in your program.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes.

OLIVER: Is this a good point in our conversation for you to say something about that?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. She was a wonderful lady and very concerned with it. You recall perhaps—you know her better than I do—that she had a very breezy in manner. She was an attractive lady, so this was fine. She would call suddenly and say, "How are you doing?" and so forth, and I'd know who it was. She never interfered. She might interrupt with a suggestion, but she never interfered on behalf of the big boss or anybody. She just said, "I ran across a fellow in France a few weeks ago whose record seems awfully
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good and I just wanted to give you his name and address," and described him. She would not push it. She might say a few months later, "How did So-and-So turn out?"

I'd say, "Very well. He actually won and was selected." Which happened I think in two cases. In another couple of cases the person didn't make it. But she was most helpful and interested in these fellows. Once she asked me to lunch and to bring along one of my YPs so she could just meet him. I took Shawki Farag, an Egyptian.

OLIVER: Did she ever entertain Young Professionals in her home or, in the case of Washington, her apartment in the hotel?

VAN WAGENEN: No, but that's a good point. She might well have done so. I suppose that would have enhanced this image of the elite, though, and she might have been wise not to. I had them to my house, the first group and the second group and maybe the third. Came to know them better.

But that elite thing I should return to, because there was a feeling that they were the anointed boys. And some their own age you might say were in competition. It's interesting that two of those highly successful people of the Bank staff were not YPs. One is [S. Shahid] Husain, now a vice president, who is the same age and not a YP and was so very good that he just moved along anyway. And the other was Bob [Robert] Picciotto, who a lot of people still think was a Young Professional. He never was, but he was very good at that age.

OLIVER: This implies that in addition to the Young Professionals program, there was standard recruitment being done of young people by the Personnel Division.

VAN WAGENEN: That's probably not the case. They were here before I came. I don't know how they were recruited.
OLIVER: Did the young people who came into the Bank increasingly come through the Young Professionals Program?

VAN WAGENEN: Oh, yes. I think entirely, after it started. These two were there earlier.

OLIVER: I see.

VAN WAGENEN: And this group entry thing seemed like an unnecessary burr under the saddle blanket, so Reg Clarke in his wisdom—and I think he was right about this, though we didn’t always agree—said “Let’s disperse and not bring them in in groups, but as they become available individually.”

OLIVER: Sure.

VAN WAGENEN: The groups used to meet with me once a week and catch up with each other—exchange special experiences, triumphs and complaints. They used to, of course, form a tight communication network. It probably was better not to do this. So eventually we didn’t hold those meetings.

But going back, you may recall, Bob, there was a training program before this, about ten years before, that Doug [Douglas J.] Fontein, I think, came in under. It was a different kind of thing, but there was a training program. A few people were here.

OLIVER: A training program for younger staff members?

VAN WAGENEN: For younger people, yes. After that ended, the standard Personnel line to any applicant was "If you’re under thirty, you come under this YP Program."
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That brings up the name of it, which is kind of interesting culturally. It was created as the Junior Professional Program, and you notice the early brochures call it this. And it was maybe during Mr. Woods' time, rather early on---1964 maybe---when somebody from one of the European cultures said, "This is detracting. This is a pejorative thing. If you say 'Junior Professional' in my country, this means you are a stratum that doesn't jump upward."

OLIVER: You're a squire instead of a knight when you're old enough to be a knight.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, exactly. But you can't get there from here, see? You're a Junior Professional or you're a secretary or something or you're a professional.

OLIVER: I see. So you're not on the ladder even.

VAN WAGENEN: Exactly. So at Geoffrey Wilson's behest we changed the name to Young Professionals, which couldn't be mistaken. If you just came in, you know, that's all you were. There was infinite potential.

OLIVER: Were there people in addition to Mrs. Woods who were outside the program who took a particular interest in it?

VAN WAGENEN: I don't recall. You mean staff members?

OLIVER: Yes.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, those ones I mentioned as gurus, and among the higher-ups Burke Knapp and especially Geoffrey Wilson. In Personnel, Jim [James E.] Twining and Konrad Busse took a special interest, I thought, sometimes constructively critical, which helped. Reg Clarke was less open, more devious, so I found his efforts less helpful at significant points in the process.
OLIVER: At any rate, the program was very well thought of I think by everybody in the Bank.

VAN WAGENEN: It turned out to be, yes, because these fellows were so able. I just met one in the hall a few minutes ago and I said, "Congratulations," which is appropriate whenever you meet one of these fellows. They've so often just been promoted. Besides, I keep track of them in "The Bank's World."

This man said, tongue in cheek, "It was due to the early training we got."

I said, "Brains, brains, that's all it is." I mean, that's the way it goes.

OLIVER: Well, you started out with eleven in the first class and over time I suppose it increased in size. And you've already said that the number of applicants increased enormously. What is the status of the program now, or in the recent past? Let's say in the 1980s.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, that I really don't know. You'd have to talk with Don [Donald H.] Allison or Mike [Michael N.] Sarris or Heather Hohbein.

Yes, I did catch up with it when we had this twentieth anniversary festivity over at the Pension Building in November 1983. At that point over eight hundred YPs had been hired from ninety countries. This appears to be roughly twenty percent of the entire professional staff.

But perhaps I could talk about those first three groups, which were the ones that I was most proud of. I was involved in the selection of the first nine, I believe it was. The first three totalled 32, of whom at least 17 are here still. All three groups, 11, 6 and 15. And in that third group were people like Jaycox, Leif Christoffersen, Shinji Asanuma,
who has come back to the Bank. Joe [D. Joseph] Wood came in with the eighth group and became the first person to make vice president among the YPs. We kept track of who was first director, who was first division chief: Jochen Kraske. But the progress was remarkable. They were just on their own. I had nothing to do with this after each one's first year-and-a-half or two years.

Some didn't progress, and we could name some of those. One I recall was told that he didn't have a future. He could either leave or stay. He stayed here, and he's just been at a lower level the whole time. Another one was dropped off because on a mission he was considered not to have enough aggressiveness. Another one was dropped off because of alleged foreign currency dabbling, which you weren't supposed to do. Always you could have made lots of money on the black market on a mission, but almost nobody even tried, ever. Another one was dropped off because he was so irritating to all the secretaries that he worked with that they couldn't stand it, and we figured something was wrong. We tried to find out. Bright as the dickens, very aggressive, just everything fine except he could irritate people to death.

OLIVER: Well, if you can't get along with the secretaries from the Bank, why you don't belong here. My experience with the secretaries is that they're marvelous.

VAN WAGENEN: Really, yes. Well, I had trouble sometimes myself. Maybe I didn't belong here.

I should add that recruiting on the ground was a large part of my job. This meant solo missions to several Middle Eastern and Latin American countries, plus a few in Europe, as well as Canada and the U.S.—to many institutions of higher education in those countries.
OLIVER: You were associated with training programs more generally in time, were you not?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, the staff training. I don't think I did a very good job with that, mainly because I didn't have the imagination to project it into the long-term future, so it amounted to running a few simple programs. The Corporate Finance Program was already in place. Professor Charlie Williams of the Harvard Business School faculty was teaching it, and it was a great success. So the process there was selecting people to take it and who had it and who hadn't and who should.

And then I did establish the language training program, but that was a process of finding the right man at Georgetown and getting him started. That was Mario Parreaguirre who is still here. He came in 1967, and as far as I know, has been vastly successful. They've expanded the lab and added languages, and he's been very good, with good instructors.

I also engaged a rapid reading instructor to teach the VICORE method.

Then the writing course. I did find Jerry [Jerome] Perlmutter by shopping around town to see who was teaching writing at Federal agencies. He was the head man at State Department teaching how to write good English. He had just the right personality, pretty easy-going and tolerant. When we started, he may have had the view that he would be teaching non-English speaking people how to write, but it wasn't that.

By the way, I should go back and say English language fluency was the other YP requirement in addition to age and education. But English only.

OLIVER: But fluency I suppose can be defined in various ways. Did you have tests to establish some minimum level of fluency?

VAN WAGENEN: Not really. That was part of the interview, actually.
OLIVER: How about general employees of the Bank? If somebody's applying to be a secretary in the Bank, what level of English fluency is required?

VAN WAGENEN: I never had anything to do with that, but I think it's got to be pretty high. And then we have what's called bilingual secretaries, you know, who specifically must have two languages perfectly.

OLIVER: But to have established the English language courses as you did implies that there must have been some less-than-perfect English by those who were hired.

VAN WAGENEN: No. If I said English language, I shouldn't have. I thought I said a writing course. But Jerry Perlmutter, you see, was teaching writing to native Americans over there in the State Department. What we were trying to do was get around the bureaucratic language. You remember Sir William Iliff was quite a bear on this—he wrote a little book on bureaucratic language—and so was Geoffrey Wilson. The English are very good at writing, and they laugh at the way we trip over our long words sometimes. So what Jerry was supposed to do was take whoever we sent him and try to wean him away from the standard bureaucratic language—military or civilian. And that he did. When he first came in, he said, "Who are these people?"

I said, "They're mostly Americans and very few British, and some who are neither. But they all know English."

He said, "Well, give me about half a dozen samples of Bank writing," which I did out of Bank reports. And he worked on that. He taught this first class, which I heard was great, and the second and third.

Then I said, "Well, you'll need some more, won't you, Jerry? More cases?"
"No, they're all over the place. All I have to do is pick up a report, and there's bad English in it." So he carried on with that, and still does, as far as I know, about 20 years later.

Then we started the system of leaves of absence, and that's about the time I left the staff training game. And tuition supplements. If somebody wanted to study at night to improve himself, the Bank would subsidize his tuition. Smaller things like that. This was not a full career development program. When the Bank grew bigger, that was needed. But if I could, I'd like to make a statement about bureaucracy.

OLIVER: Please.

VAN WAGENEN: It may be irrelevant. It struck us, as the Bank grew, how different it became. But the term bureaucracy doesn't quite cover it. Of course, in the earlier time we didn't have to keep many records. We had no U.S. Comptroller General looking down on us. We didn't have to prove anything at the end of the year. We did business within the staff horizontally often, not up and down through channels. And it was so much easier, I gather, than the U.S. Government. Well, I have not worked for the Federal Government, except in the military.

Then we gradually tightened up because we began personal ratings. That was another part of the YP job—evaluating this so-called training period, getting reports from the people who took these fellows on missions and worked them in their shop, and trying to figure how they were doing. There wasn't even a job classification system in those days, but it seems to me that what happened was that the element of equity came in.

Now, if you're not worried about equity, the boss decides who's doing the best job, and it works very well. But if you're worried about people getting a sharply square deal, then you have to have a formal evaluation system to tell them how they are doing. So then you start getting
classification. Then you get evaluation. Then you get ratings up and down. And now, I understand, the lower staff are rating their bosses, and you've got morale tests and job satisfaction tests.

OLIVER: It's become very complicated.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes. And there was no Staff Association. I remember some of us felt at the time--maybe this is too conservative--that was going to be nothing but trouble. It was formed. Now, you've got an Appeals Committee. You've got an Ombudsman. All sorts of things, which are great from the standpoint of equity. I don't know how they are for efficiency.

OLIVER: Speaking of equity, did all the Young Professionals come in at the same starting salaries?

VAN WAGENEN: No, we had to negotiate that. Some were as much as six or seven years older than others, for one thing. Some had family; some didn't.

OLIVER: Did it depend in part on the countries from which they came?

VAN WAGENEN: It think it may have, but not much. Thank goodness I was not involved in that. The Personnel Division handled it. Particularly Edgar Haug, who has since died--an able Dutchman.

OLIVER: But the salary was high enough in each case so that the job was regarded by the applicant as a bit of a plum?

VAN WAGENEN: Well, sure, when you combine it with the career potential. Now, the ones who really wanted to make money would go to the commercial banks, and we would tell them so. This is a different thing. It is a United Nations agency. We're out to do some good in the developing countries. We'll pay you plenty, but not like that.
OLIVER: Well, things may have changed a great deal, but I have to say my first job was as a messenger in a bank. And in those days the banks were not thought of as places where you went if you wanted to make a fair amount of money.

VAN WAGENEN: Really? At the start or you mean even ultimately?

OLIVER: Even ultimately. Those are commercial banks, not investment banks. Nowadays people expect to make between a million and two million dollars a year if they're partners in a major firm.

VAN WAGENEN: Hmm.

OLIVER: But what you're saying is that the Young Professionals Program paid adequately, so that it was regarded as a very good job, but also there was a bit of an element of service connected with the job.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, I think so. And interest in the work.

You know, an international organization has a certain attraction. But there were complaints about Topic A from time to time and these were negotiated. I don't recall that anybody left because of it, but I might not necessarily know. During this first 110 people, or however many it was that my administration, so to speak, selected--I didn't select them personally because officially the selection committee always did; but they never selected anybody we didn't put to them, and hardly ever anyone from the third or fourth column--we had six Rhodes Scholars.

Now, I regarded this as pre-screening. I would gladly not even have interviewed these people. There were three Americans, one Canadian, one Jamaican, one Indian, half of whom are still here. Now [Montek] Singh Ahluwalia, from India, was not only a Rhodes Scholar but president of the Oxford Union. Just couldn't be beat, you know, and an economist. And Dave [David A.] Dunn, an American, who's here, is another one. And Joe Wood, also an American, who was the first one to be vice president.
OLIVER: Yes.

VAN WAGENEN: The Rhodes Scholar from Canada, Marcel Masse, went back to Canada, Richard Fletcher from Jamaica went back there. And the other one was Gilbert Lowe, an American. He was here less than a year before he joined Morgan Guaranty in Paris. He had come out of Morgan Guaranty to here and then left. That was very rare; he apparently wanted a different career.

OLIVER: Well, was your career in the Bank always concerned with Young Professionals, or did you do other things too?

VAN WAGENEN: Well, it shifted into two other distinct periods of work. The first was a period of Bank staff training. I think I had one assistant for that, and the job included welcoming all new professional staff members, who were pouring in at that time. It was Mr. McNamara's second and third year. They came at the rate of about one per working day at the professional level. So we would greet them and put them through a one-week to two-week orientation course, which took a lot of time. You got existing staff members to come in and talk about their work, similar to what we did with the Young Professionals, for a week or two when they first came in. Shop around the Bank, look at it, hear from [J.] Burke Knapp a little while and then people lower down, making sure there was a variety. That absorbed any time I could take, so I didn't expand. I didn't see ahead and say we've got to have more funds and we've got to do this, that and the other thing for staff training. That's why I say I don't think it was any great achievement. But Donald Jeffries took my place there. I don't know what happened with him, but then, of course, it went back into Personnel and really blossomed with a fellow named Pierre Casse. Now they have management training and several other kinds, and quite a staff.

We have the language training and the writing courses. I once thought it would be good to get sensitivity training in, so we sent one staff
member to one of those Bethel, Maine laboratory courses. He came back saying yes and no. You either make it or you're broken up psychologically. And Mr. [Bernard] Chadenet, who was then one of my bosses, decided on the whole we'd rather not take the chance.

Another I thought would be useful was a listening course, which you've probably been through. You probably taught it. But, you know, reading, writing, talking, and listening seem to me to be the basic educational elements, and listening is the least developed in our system. So I got a fellow who was a specialist in this to talk with a few people. And they decided, on the whole, no. But an awful lot, I think, is lost in any organization because people don't know how to listen to the essential points made orally and how to remember them.

OLIVER: Communication requires both speaking or writing on the one hand and listening or reading on the other hand.

VAN WAGENEN: Exactly.

OLIVER: You have to receive as well as send.

VAN WAGENEN: Exactly. Through the ear and the eye and the mouth.

OLIVER: Right.

VAN WAGENEN: I think it's still a lack in many people. And the course in rapid reading mentioned earlier. Not Evelyn Wood, which was more famous, but a similar course--VICOR. That went pretty well. I don't think they're still doing it. But it was a little questionable as to whether it was worth the time, whether the result stayed with you. You could pass a great test right afterwards. Did you lose your bad habits? Maybe not. So I don't know what's become of it.
Then you were asking about the rest of my work in the Bank. The other distinct period was quite a different thing, but is still training. The management found—and I think quite rightly—that our loans were not being executed as well as they could be because the staffs of the borrower were not trained properly. So they had John King do a survey with a fellow named Andre Varchevar from UNESCO. He went over and talked with other agencies in Europe and elsewhere about what they thought and what they did. He came back with a report that said, yes, we should provide elements in our loans for staff training. So John King was made head of that unit and I was made his assistant for quite a little while. He got pulled off onto other things all the time. And then they had what was called project-related training. When Moodi [Mahmud] Burney returned from his post abroad, he became head of this office because he knew the Bank's project work well. You perhaps know him.

OLIVER: No, don't know him.

VAN WAGENEN: One of the remarkable people in this Bank, who's done so many things. He was reentering from orbit in another of his overseas assignments, and I became his assistant. He was called Training Adviser.

We were under Vice President Warren Baum then, in Central Projects. We tried to sensitize the Bank's staff a little, like that effort to sensitize staff to the value and the potential of the YPs. We were trying to convince staff of the need for training elements in our loans. Pepe [Giuseppe] Morra, who is still here, was the third man in that group. Then it began to catch on, and we commenced doing mission work.

A fellow named Ted [Edward H.] Chittleburgh came in as Training Adviser, whom I do not want to say a lot of good things about, except that he was intelligent and experienced in his field. So we did mission work. My last few years, from 1971 to 1977, included a good many missions as member of appraisal teams, to assess the needs for training in several
sectors in several countries. It wasn't management training, which I think they should have done more of, and I think they are now doing more of that. It was more the needs at the technical level in a place like India, where the higher education level is perhaps overdone and you had so many highly educated people without jobs that they thought were good enough for them. Yet they didn't, in many countries, have enough people who could run the water filtration plant or such.

OLIVER: They need more students sent to Cal Tech.

VAN WAGENEN: Exactly. Yes, well, below Cal Tech, like the polytechnical institutes.

OLIVER: Sure.

VAN WAGENEN: And Chittleburgh was an expert on that. He'd had vast experience in England and Africa. So most of it was things that I didn't know much about technically. What one had to do was to know about training as a process, what might work and what might not, and then, when attached to the mission, learn from the engineers what water filtration is all about and what you should ask concerning training needs of their staff from top to bottom. It was a little bit ad hoc in that sense. The same thing applied when attached to an agriculture or transportation project. I was on one of those in Brazil, almost like a sector survey, where spot the training that's needed. I went to India five times on agriculture training, which was quite fascinating. They had to put thousands of junior and mid-level people through a new system for appraising farm loans right down at the wellhead, the two-hectare level.

OLIVER: There must be some vignettes that you can recall from these missions, interesting incidents or interesting people.
VAN WAGENEN: Yes. Well, I recall coming back from this Brazilian one with the feeling that they should beef up their civil service, pay them more and offer a career. This was the long term, because in the transportation sector they kept losing their good people to the consultants. Why? Simply because the consultants paid them more. So then, of course, the Transportation Department of the Government of Brazil would have this big project and their staff really wasn't adequate. They would have to hire a consultant. So the money was going out there instead of to their civil service. Well, I don't know that we have achieved that so far.

In India there were horror stories about how some of these student trainees lived. I was under Ray [Raymond] Headworth, who was an excellent mission chief; he has just retired. I would go out with one of the people from the agricultural development bank in Bombay to look at these training centers. Every state had a land bank, and they had sub-banks, and there were cooperatives to worry about, and so on. They had training set up, but they wanted more junior training. So we asked them to draw up a plan. The game is, you ask the borrower to draw up what he wants, and you just advise, then assess what he's drawn up. A program was proposed for the youngsters who didn't have much education and had to go out and assess these farmers for lendability.

The old existing system was that these banks lent out upon proof of sufficient security--collateral. The criterion was, do we get our money back? Well, what the World Bank wanted was, do you get more production out of this loan and do you get your money back? So our IDA funds were contingent on that. It was about $200 million of World Bank money every couple of years drifting down there from Delhi to this Agricultural Refinance Corporation--now called NABARD--in Bombay, then out to the states, and then down locally. By the time it got down there the interest rate was pretty high. But then they had to be trained in a method of appraising that said to the farmer, "If we lend you this, will you increase
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production, will you add this hunk of land over here, or will you intensify this crop, or will you double crop, or something? How much do you think you can produce extra if we approve a loan for how much?" And that was kind of hard to do. It is incremental production instead of simply creditworthiness.

OLIVER: Yes. What year are we talking about now? Year or years.

VAN WAGENEN: The first one of those was in 1974, and we went back in 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1978.

OLIVER: This is after the rural development, rural agricultural schemes had begun in the Bank?

VAN WAGENEN: That's right.

OLIVER: They were just catching on, but eventually became very successful I think, did they not?

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, but I don't think this was classified as a rural development project. It was more of a straight agricultural credit project.

OLIVER: With one string attached.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes.

Well, the vignette part is that when you went around to these training centers out in cities like Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bubneshwar and others, the conditions were simply awful. I mean not just compared with U.S. conditions, but for what you and I would consider a learning environment it was darned near impossible in some cases. Some of them lived off in the city in the most squalid quarters, getting to the training center by
bicycle in the rush hour, morning and night. They were sleeping on the floor, bad light, everything. I just did a little sampling of that. Then they would come to a classroom where teaching was sometimes by rather modern methods, but usually not. They'd be accustomed to these hot classrooms. They were taught in their own non-Hindi language, to be sure. I couldn't tell what was going on; it was in Marathi or Tamil or another language. I could simply get a feeling for whether something was being transmitted from one end of the room to the other. And they would sometimes use a more advanced technique, such as role-playing. But the living conditions were wretched, because the Indian Government didn't want to pay more than I think it was 10 rupees a day. Sometimes we could inch them up to 12 rupees a day. Well, this couldn't buy a meal and a place to sleep. I tried to insist that they might pull it up next time on the third go-around to 15 rupees maybe. Well, you know, compared with what so-and-so is getting over here and over there it would be out of line. It would be too much of a salient into the blue. So not much progress was made. I would love to go back and see how those things actually worked out.

OLIVER: One of the problems both in Brazil and India is that you were recommending a solution to a part of the economy that you saw and were dealing with which, if practiced throughout the whole economy, would simply raise government spending and either tend to be inflationary or would have diverted resources from other sectors.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes.

OLIVER: It must be an enormous or difficult problem in a country with scarce resources.

VAN WAGENEN: The Indian commercial banks began to get into agriculture lending, and they had their own standards. I'd go around and look at them sometimes. They were vastly better on training their staffs, it seemed, than the state-run banks.
Speaking of vignettes about missions, most of the pictures that stick in your mind—the moving ones, or the interesting ones, or the funny ones—cannot be described. They center on the incredible poverty and crowding that most Americans at home have no conception of. Also, the things that stand out in one's mind are the things that one wants to forget—errors made and matters that went wrong on a mission. But there are a few more vignettes that perhaps deserve to be on the record. I can add them later as they come to mind.

On a YP recruiting mission to Turkey I was about to visit the dean at one of the universities when I walked into a crowd of young people inside the administration building. There seemed to be a brewing student riot in there. The broad main staircase was roped off, with a uniformed guard standing there. A small but surging crowd of students was in front of him. It turned out that this happened to be the hour when final grades were about to be posted at the head of the stairs.

Some other scenes misunderstood are too hard to describe. But in general I think the chaotic—not violent—operations inside an office or two in Haiti stand out, in terms of frustration. That observation, and the anecdotes I'll add now, did not occur on YP recruiting missions, but on regular project missions—project-related training work.

In every country cordial treatment of Bank staff by officials is just about universal. So it was not necessarily unusual, but just that I happened to keep track of it, when four tea and coffee sessions were held in various offices in Tehran in a period of 65 minutes one day in 1974.

Another time in Iran I got quite a kick out of eight small boys in a rural village. They were each looking me over with grim expressions. I happened to smile at the nearest one, and all eight lit up immediately with bright grins.
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Once a mission to Ghana came on both sides of UN Day, when most member countries have a celebration. Ted [Edward A.] Minnig and I were invited to attend. It was held that evening in an indoor arena in Accra. When we got there, we learned that I had been put on a small committee that was to judge a beauty and dance contest. We were supposed to decide who would be Miss UN for the country. This job was pleasant, but outside of even the broadest interpretation of my presumed competence as a training specialist. So I was grateful for a committee. At the end, I felt honored to be asked to deliver the prize to the attractive winner. But it was a whole case of beer, among other things. She was more graceful in receiving this bulky prize than I was in delivering it. I sort of glided it along the floor to her feet.

On the more serious side, there was a long taxi ride on one of the missions to India. After a couple of days conferring and looking at training institutions in Chandigarh, in the Punjab, we learned that the scheduled plane to New Delhi had been cancelled shortly before departure time. I was supposed to be in Bombay--over 800 miles away--that same evening. How to get there, leaving around noontime? The escort from the agriculture bank in Bombay decided to try for a connecting plane in Delhi by riding a taxi for 165 miles.

I had become well acquainted with this very serious-minded, highly intellectual gentleman on this mission and previous ones. This was a points trip, so my wife was with us for the ride and the visit. We were gratified that he chose to open up to us about his feelings toward Mrs. Gandhi's current--1976--policies. After making sure that the taxi driver did not understand any English, the Ph.D. in economics gave us an earful of political criticism that showed a clear understanding of democracy. He would probably prefer that I not name him, even though today such criticism is not dangerous. There's no doubt that he felt a hint of peril at that time. When we reached Delhi airport my wife bought a copy of "Time" magazine. He promptly put it into his briefcase, to be read in privacy rather than be embarrassed.
One event in Kenya was so multinational that I found I had made a note of it. This was a visit to an installation out in the countryside accompanied by an Irish ex-colonial serviceman in a Japanese car driven by a Moslem Kenyan on a German-built road to a construction site where a Danish consulting engineer was supervising an Indian contractor who was using Australian machinery and Kenyan labor.

Perhaps the odd thought that sort of summarizes a feeling I had about much of my mission work hit me one day in Turkey. I was leaving this large fertilizer plant at Izmit, after several days there working on its rather complicated training needs, as well as sources of training nearby. A friendly dog gave me a silent send-off. I looked at him and thought, "Do I really know much more about this plant than he does?"

Well, enough of all this.

OLIVER: Well, let me ask a general question now which is, are there things that I should have been asking you about and haven't yet asked that you would like to give answers to?

VAN WAGENEN: Well, you are very good at asking questions and listening. But it does occur to me that I should mention that the executive directors were very good about recruiting YPs. The topside had alerted them that this was none of their business. Recruiting an international civil service was not to be done through the national representatives, I guess partly because the UN has had such trouble at headquarters in New York.

OLIVER: Mr. [Robert L.] Garner insisted upon that from the very beginning.

VAN WAGENEN: Did he?
OLIVER: That there were going to be no quotas in the Bank and that the management of the Bank should have the right to hire and fire whom they wished.

VAN WAGENEN: Very good.

OLIVER: And this was very firmly established at the very beginning.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, I was certainly the beneficiary of that, because we never had any trouble. I can recall only once where the question was even raised why we haven't got any Cypriots. Well, it's a small country. You don't know whether you should get a Greek or a Turk, you know, and names just hadn't appeared in the list of applicants. Now, by the way, we do have a very good one who ran the YP Program for a while. So that's the only case I can recall where the question was even raised. Maybe they did it indirectly through some staff member of their nationality, and it was so subtle that I wasn't aware of it. But we had no trouble from topside, really. No nepotism that I can recall, either.

During that period also tradition was established of having a YP as the President's Personal Assistant, if you recall. The first one may have been Leif Christoffersen, who was in our third group. Wonderful person. Great guy and a fine staff member. I used to get kind of discouraged that Mr. McNamara never spoke to the YPs as groups. He was not much for that, you know. He worked with his topside. He didn't appear in the corridors or dining room or anywhere. But I thought that when the YPs arrived, and indeed when the new staff members came in during that period when I was running orientation, he could have stepped from his office, which was only thirty seconds away, and have spoken to them for five minutes. It would just be a great morale booster. But I conspired with Leif Christoffersen, who was then his personal assistant, but Leif reported that he couldn't do it. That ten minutes just wasn't there.
OLIVER: Did he ever ask McNamara, or did he just infer from McNamara's schedule that there...

VAN WAGENEN: No, I think he tried it on him. Because we were pretty good friends, Leif and I, and we agreed on the point. That reminded me of something else. Oh, and then later another young German, a Young Professional, was McNamara's Personal Assistant.

OLIVER: Rainer Steckhan?

VAN WAGENEN: That's the one. Rainer Steckhan was in my collection of fellows.

OLIVER: He was quite a favorite of Mrs. Woods.

VAN WAGENEN: Was he?

OLIVER: Perhaps not when he was a Young Professional but after he...

VAN WAGENEN: Do you know, he may have been the other one I was trying to think of besides Andre Gue and the man who didn't make it. Yes, I think Rainer was one that she...

OLIVER: Might have recommended?

VAN WAGENEN: ...thought of. Yes.

OLIVER: That's very interesting.

VAN WAGENEN: And we had no trouble because the candidates' records were so topnotch. You can imagine, as a professor yourself, trying to assess these transcripts. Well, I'd had some experience as dean of the graduate school at the university, where we had many foreign students coming in. There we
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had a specialist in the Admissions Office, of course, who knew all about transcripts and who was a member of the association and so on. But here we'd have, for instance, the Italian system of rating their people 110 over 110. Well, that says perfect to us. We got so many of these that I didn't know how to distinguish, so I took them to an Italian staff member, and he said, "That doesn't mean much. That means they are very good. But you look right down the transcript to where it says excellent or cum laude or something else. That's all that counts." So we had little tricks like that. We probably made many mistakes.

What else on the YP? I should mention people who helped with that Program greatly, in addition to Florence Conlon, the original secretary. Later there was Mina Garcia, who is now Mina [G.] Coulter and is a personnel officer over here. She was a topnotch secretary, and more than that, putting together the books and so forth, and Pat Sloman, who has since died, an English secretary. Then on the other job Aija Blitte, who is here now in the orientation office. Oh, we would also have an orientation cocktail party. Then there was the question, who do you invite from the staff, you see. Maybe a dozen from the staff.

OLIVER: The gurus, of course.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, the gurus. And you use up the gurus and you shop around and you say, well, now we can't ask him until three times later. We'd better ask So-and-So and then maybe one real higher up like Burke Knapp. It was kind of fun but a little troublesome. And altogether it was fun because I came to know so many staff members. I still remember the days when they first came in.

OLIVER: Well, you do a marvelous job of remembering names, I must say.

VAN WAGENEN: Well, it could take refreshing. What else? Well, you know that we don't send an Arab to work in Israel and...
OLIVER: He probably wouldn't consent to go.

VAN WAGENEN: ...and vice versa. So we had that problem. But one time I remember we had a very nice Indian secretary in my office who worked for Anwar Ahmad, who was Pakistani, and it was right during the Bangladesh independence campaign and the time when India and Pakistan were briefly at war. No blood on the floor whatever. Just beautiful teamwork.

OLIVER: They were international civil servants.

VAN WAGENEN: Exactly. And that spirit was okay in the Bank. I remember at one time a while back--someone else may have told you this--Bangladesh buttons appeared in the cafeteria. Somebody quietly said, "Look, this is not us. Take them off."

OLIVER: Quite right.

VAN WAGENEN: So that to me was quite a thrill, being interested in the international. I spent quite a couple of years in the occupation of Germany, so I had a special feeling about the Germans. Kind of plus and minus. But YP candidates had such tremendous records, coming from all over. There's another vignette, about Shinji Asanuma, who recently rejoined the Bank about a year ago as a department director. When he was selected for the YP in 1965 he had never been outside Japan. He took an airplane from Tokyo directly to here. His English was so good that I was astonished and asked, "How did you learn this, Shinji?"

He responded, "Oh, I worked on it and practiced and listened to the radio and TV."

But he had this feeling his English wasn't that good. I kept telling him, "Your English is better than so many around here. Don't worry about it." He stayed quite a while, then went back to Japan, made a career in one of the banks there and returned. You may have run into him.
And the Chinese--Ping-Cheung Loh-- was number one in his class over there in his university. Then he came to Yale and took an LL.D.--not the present J.D. but a doctorate in law on top of a regular degree--and he was 'way up in his class there; and a nice guy besides.

And then Guy Pfeffermann, for instance, was number one in the whole of France. And the French are very picky about this, as you may know; they are down to the hundredth decimal point in their national exams and in the grandes écoles and the polytechniques. Now, if he's got a decent personality, you can see some potential.

OLIVER: I should hope so.

VAN WAGENEN: Yes, and if he's motivated and wants to work at this kind of thing. Well, Guy is still here and I guess one of the best economistas.

OLIVER: Very interesting. Well, sir, you've told me many interesting stories about a particularly fascinating group of young people, and I'm very grateful for this opportunity to learn more about the program.

VAN WAGENEN: I'm glad to talk about it. We all like to talk about our experiences.

OLIVER: So I appreciate your time today very much. We'll look forward to seeing the transcript when it is available. And again I hope that you will avail yourself of that occasion to add, subtract, multiply or divide.

VAN WAGENEN: Okay. Great. I'm sure it will read very sketchily, but it's remarkable what you can do in an hour and a quarter, isn't it?

OLIVER: Yes, quite a conversation. We have filled two sides of a good cassette tape.