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ORAL HISTORY

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DATE September 6, 1988

Robert Z. Barbour
(Signature - Interviewee)

6619 Wilson Court
(Address)
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DATE Sept 6, 1988

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(Signature - Witness)

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12-11-87

Robert Barbour (1927 -)

Mr. Barbour is the first Diplomat-in-Residence of the Society of Yeager Scholars and immediate past Ambassador to Suriname. This interview deals with his tour of foreign service, including Italy, France, Spain, and Viet Nam, and the varied duties of those posts. He closes with the selection of Marshall University as his next assignment and what he hopes to bring to the Yeager program.

An oral interview by
Michele Shank

Shank: This is one in a series of taped interviews on the history of the Society of Yeager Scholars. My name is Michele Shank and with me today, December the eleventh, 1987, at the Yeager Scholar offices is Mr. Robert Barbour, diplomat and resident. Okay, we're rolling. Okay. It's not Dr. Barbour, is it? It's Mr. Barbour?

Barbour: No, right.

Shank: How do we address a diplomat properly if we're sending an invitation to you in the mail or for introducing you to the Queen or something like that? How do we address you?

Barbour: It depends on, I suppose, your particular status in the foreign service. An ambassador can always be called ambassador, a kind of courtesy title or just mister. An ambassador is always "the honorable" once he's confirmed by the Senate and technically a foreign service officer on an envelope or something is "esquire." But those forms are usually replaced by mister.

Shank: Okay, I want you to tell me first of all when you were born. 1927?

Barbour: December 23. End of 1927.

Shank: And where?

Barbour: In Cleveland or more specifically in Lakewood, Ohio. And we lived there until my father died when I was just seven. Following that we moved to Memphis, Tennessee which was my mother's home where she had a lot of family. And so it was really in Memphis that I grew up.

Shank: Did your mother remarry?

Barbour: No, no, we lived in Memphis. She worked and uh, she was more comfortable there being with her own family.

Shank: She is essence, raised you along.

Barbour: Oh, yes, yes. I had an older brother. We were two. But he was killed during the war, 1943.

Shank: So you went to high school in...

Barbour: Yeah, I'm very much a product of Memphis, Tennessee and of the state of Tennessee. I went to junior high school, high school, and university all in Tennessee. University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Before that time I was schooled in Memphis, Tennessee.

Shank: Was there a great emphasis put on education at the time you were in high school, uh, higher education.

Barbour: You mean, inside the family my mother? There were two influences that I think were very formative. Both my father and my mother. First of all, we always grew up with the idea, we were always told over and over again "do something you like. Do something you enjoy doing. It doesn't matter how much money you make, make sure you like what you're doing. That was a family principle. As far as the education, I don't remember only particular conversation on the subject of higher education. Uh, neither my father nor my mother went to university. It was always assumed that my brother and I would, it was the atmosphere in which we were growing up. We had the great good fortune of having parents who despite the fact they didn't go to college, were great readers. And we were always surrounded by books and I think that made a great difference.

Shank: So, when you graduated from the university of Knoxville, where did you go from there?

Barbour: I graduated at the age of twenty and one month later began work at the Department of State in Washington and was also enrolled at George Washington University taking a course every night, which wasn't an awful lot of fun.

Shank: So you really wanted to be involved in government from the beginning?

Barbour: Yes. I was very lucky. I happened to come upon a book, a book of memoirs by an American ambassador. And I read that book when I must have been sixteen. And from that point on I never had any other ambition but to be an American diplomat. So that made life much easier obviously during college. I always had feeling that I knew what I wanted to do, and if it wasn't in the foreign service itself, it was something related to it. Foreign correspondent, journalism, or something like that.

Shank: So your degree was a political science type...?

Barbour: I had a dual major in spanish literature simply because I got it out of the way at the end of my second year. And I had another major in political science and spent most of the time taking a lot of courses in business. I have to confess I took a lot of other courses. I had the time simply to show my friends at college that anything they can do I can do too, even though I wanted to be a diplomat.

Shank: So, your night courses you were taking at Georgetown was that to receive a masters or...?

Barbour: It was to fill in some blank to add courses, I hadn't taken. I took courses in business law, American diplomatic history, and international economics.

Shank: Now when did you get married? Did you get married around this time?

Barbour: Oh, no. I was working at the Department of State as a research clerk at the passport division, going to school, aiming to take the foreign service examination that fall. In the meantime I was offered a job as a clerk in the foreign service, and I thought that was more fun than either going to school or working in the passport division, so I took that job. And then before leaving Washington in September, I took the foreign service examination, and failed it miserably. My wife who took it at the same time, but we hadn't met, made a much better score on it than I did on the same examination. And I went off then as a clerk to _____ Iraq; stayed there for one year or so. Went back to Washington in a special program called the internship program which gave us assignments throughout the department of state.

Shank: And what were your duties in Iraq?

Barbour: Well, I studied counselor affairs and I studied administrative affairs, but the one I liked best was working as what we called a staff assistant in the Bureau of Eastern Affairs. That was the time of the Korean War. Dean Rusk was the assistant secretary and I worked for him. That was a stimulating experience. And then, as my internship in that office was about to end, I remember one Saturday morning I was sort of taken by the scruff of the neck by him, walked down the hall, taken in, and presented to John Foster Dulles who at that time was completing his work on the Japanese peace treaty. And I was told, "Foster, here's your new staff assistant." That was my introduction to him, John Foster Dulles. I worked for him for about four months, five months. During the latter phases of the negotiations of the treaty. I went with him to the San Francisco conference. And then, when that assignment was over I went off shortly afterwards to Tokyo, as then what we called an administrative assistant. It was in Tokyo that I met my wife, who was also working in the American Embassy.

Shank: That sounds so exciting, like the work was so exciting.

Barbour: It was more than exciting, more _____ than exciting and it was fun. In Tokyo I was what we then called in a classic sense private secretary to the ambassador, for two ambassadors which was an enriching experience, obviously, working for two professional, experienced, highly competent American diplomats, Robert Murphy and John Allison. I traveled with them all over the islands, saw aspects of Japanese life, both professional and personal I would not otherwise have seen, and found it a very stimulating indeed fascinating experience. And of that time still contained a lot of old Japan. It was still recovering from the effects of the war. These were the early fifties, and it was possible to have from time to time, a sense of experiencing old life in pre-war Japan. That was a very good experience. It was at that time that I took the foreign service examination a second time and passed it.

Shank: Well, good. (laughter)

Barbour: At last.

Shank: And uh, did you start seeing your wife then in Tokyo?

Barbour: She left. She left and decided that she really preferred history to working in the foreign service. So, she went back to Columbia to get a master's in history. And I, at the end of my tour of Japan, went back to Washington where I was put into....into a southeast Asia language and area program and became the Department of State's first Vietnamese language officer.

Shank: Oh, my goodness! So you speak Vietnamese?

Barbour: Did.

Shank: Did? (laughs) Is it a language that is easy to forget?

Barbour: Yes. It's easy to forget because it's entire structure is different from our own. It's a tonal language. The words are made up of, uhmm, all the words are monosyllabic and the meaning is imparted by tone. All the words are monosyllabic and therefore combinations of these monosyllabic elements. And so it's very difficult. In English we express emotion by tone. In a tonal language express meaning by tone. The same word said differently can have totally different meanings. So, it was interesting.

Shank: And probably difficult really in a way.

Barbour: Yes, it was a difficult language.

Shank: How long did it take you to?

Barbour: I had almost a full year. I had seven months in Washington, three months full time study in Siagon after we arrived there. Which I did not live in the embassy. In fact, I went and stayed in a small town outside of Siagon.

Shank: Now refresh me on the time tree. What year was this?

Barbour: This was 1955, when the French were completing their post Dien Ben Phu pullout, and the Americans were replacing them in an economic sense. We were strongly behind this new anti-colonialist democratic regime in South Vietnam that was trying to build a new government.

Shank: Who was the leader of that?

Barbour: _____ was the leader. And of course, in North Vietnam you had the communist regime of Ho Chi Minh. There were certain agreements of the Geneva agreements of 1954 that were supposed to have been complied with but in fact never were. Nonetheless, the county was divided at the 17th parallel, and that demarkation was policed in both North and South Vietnam by an international control commission. But the Americans were trying

to help South Vietnam build an economy based on democracy. And the first couple of years it was a stimulating experience.

Shank: What were the people like in Siagon at that time? Were they friendly towards Americans?

Barbour: Friendly people. Very industrious, very talented. By in large, in the cities, well-educated. French-speaking. And most of them were imbued with the same sense of mission. How long that sense of mission lasted of course, is anybody's guess, because in a couple of years there it became obvious that the political basis for the country, the _____ regime and the _____ family were not going to take it along the path of democracy and corruption-free administration that everybody at first had hoped they would.

Shank: So when did you leave Siagon?

Barbour: We stayed there two years, my wife and I. And then we went up and opened the consulate in Quay Vietnam. Quay is up in central Vietnam, maybe 5 or 6 hundred miles north of Siagon. It was the old capital, usually referred to as the ancient capital. It was built like a miniature Peking and it contained what there was of old traditional imperial Vietnam although it's ancientness isn't all that great since it was being built more or less the same time we were building Washington. But it contained the tombs of the old emperor and the old palace and the vestiges of the other very traditional Mandarin type of society. We lived there one year. A pleasant interesting year, but we were not sorry to leave after one year there because it was getting rather tedious. Three years in Vietnam we thought was really quite enough at that time.

Shank: What was your daily schedule like in Vietnam? What did you do when you got up in the morning and what operations were you on?

Barbour: It was totally different in the embassy in Siagon. I was a junior political officer. I was a reporting officer. I guess I was the only one in the embassy at that time, who could read what there was in the way of a newspaper. But my assignment was two-fold. First was, you might say, the domestic/political situation. I was one of several reporting officers and then later on I became the liaison with the international control commission that policed the armistice, policed the treaty. And it was made up of India, Canada, and Poland. We saw a lot of the Indians and the Canadians, but nothing of the Poles. Poles in the 1950's were somewhat different from what they are today, ours was the entire east-west relationship. But your day was one of gathering information, seeing people, trying to flag what was important in the scene that day, those events. And writing also carrying on writing assignments we were given, to write a telegram about this or write a dispatch about that. At that time we wrote dispatch which were reports sent by mail. We no longer do that except for statistics and things. It was a reporting job and I was a

reporter. In Quay, I was the American consul. I was in charge of the post. We had a small U.S.I.S. reading room cultural center. We had one American nurse advisor provided to the American hospital. We had a MAG (military assistants advisory group), of 16 officers and had one American Administrative Assistant with our own little radio station to communicate with Siagon, and my own pace to set. Daily life was very different. It was kind of slow. We received a pouch from Siagon every week. The charter airplane came up and I was free to set my own schedule, which I did. I remember vividly going to the office from time to time wondering "what shall I do today?" And then deciding I would go out and get in the jeep and visit a village or go up the river or get in a sun pan and go down the river. And it was just to see what was going on in our region. Now that was 1957 and we were already hearing reports from the countryside, although the countryside was still safe, of infiltrations, of people being murdered by northerners come down into the south. We could never confirm that, but there were rumors. I think that probably it was indeed at that time beginning. But the countryside was safe. My wife and I could and did travel anywhere in our district by car, by train, by jeep, and indeed by foot. It was interesting and it was fun.

Shank: So then the year that you left Vietnam was 19 what...1958?

Barbour: 1958.

Shank: Uh-huh. So where did you go from there?

Barbour: Well, we went to Paris.

Shank: Of, what a change! (laughter)

Barbour: What a change. We lived in Paris for...(coughs)...

Shank: Does the government move diplomatic service people like yourself at certain times, every three years, every two years? Do you have to apply to go somewhere else?

Barbour: You can apply.

Shank: You can apply.

Barbour: Now we have a rather formal bidding system that at that time we did not. You applied, you expressed hope and you hoped first of all that you have what the receiving post wants and secondly that you can coincide in time. We were very fortunate because in this embassy in Paris, needless to say a very large embassy with a large political section, they had always had one officer responsible for far eastern affairs. Needless to say, the French interest Southeast Asia, especially in IndoChina, remained very strong despite the military pullout. So they needed someone in Paris who had some experience in that area and we were coming up of reassignment, and it meshed. So off we went to Paris.

Shank: Okay. Is a diplomat like yourself, is that a job like in the teaching profession we say you've not here for the money, you're here because you're a teacher. Is it the same in the diplomatic field?

Barbour: Yes, oh yes. No one ever got rich in the foreign service. It's a government job which means it's not designed to be lucrative or I guess, financially rewarding. But there has to be a sense of vocation. There has to be an interest in the life, in the experiences. A sense of doing something for a purpose that is higher than yourself you might try. It has to be present. IF it's not present, you get unhappy individuals and really they're in the wrong business.

Shank: So how long were you in Paris?

Barbour: Three years.

Shank: And at this time the Vietnam war was...

Barbour: It was developing. The Vietnam war was developing.

[
Shank: I'm surprised they didn't grab you and send you back over there.

Barbour: Well, they did.

Shank: Oh, they did? (laughs)

Barbour: Unfortunately or fortunately, I'm not sure. We stayed three years in Paris. We arrived with the fifth republic which was general DeGaulle. And we were there during the first three years of his return. It was a fascinating period in France. A period of intense political activity, restructuring of national institutions.

Shank: That had to be an interesting time.

Barbour: It was an interesting time.

Shank: What was the the main change that you saw from DeGaulle coming back in, what was the thing that you remember seeing?

Barbour: He brought with it new political structure of France. The fourth republic which was the one after the war, governments came and went. Political majorities in the national assembly shifted. There was also a very strong communist party and it was at times impossible, he felt, to conduct the business of government in the way that a country like France should be able to conduct it's affairs. And so, at the same time, the war for algerian independence was contributing to a destabilizing, undermining effect on French society. He saw that very clearly, realized that the war had to be ended and that France had to have mre stable political institutions which he brought with him when he came back to power. A new constitution, new types of

elections, solid majorities, strong centralized administrative, etc. And he put it all in. Not without a lot of tension, because there was even, there were constant rumors of military action at one time. There was a military revolt in Algeria. I remember the streets of Paris, if you can imagine such a thing, were filled with tanks, buildings were surrounded with tanks. The Prime Minister even went on the radio and the television Sunday evening to say to the people of Paris "If you hear the church bells ringing, go to the airports and block the airborne landing of the soldiers coming from Algeria." So, it was an interesting time.

Shank: And this was around 19...?

Barbour: This was about 1960. I suppose the highpoint of our staying there was the various presidential visits that we had. The 1960 summit, at which I was involved as the liason with the presidential party. Stayed in the ambassador's residence, worked in the ambassador's residence. President Eisenhower and his party. Then the following year the other high point was the visit of President Kennedy. Newly elected, very glamorous president.

Shank: And his wife Jackie?

Barbour: And his wife, Jackie, the Parisians went wild over.

Shank: She spoke french to them.

Barbour: She spoke french to them, and it was a very entertaining visit.

Shank: Did you have much of an opportunity to speak with them personally, other than state dinners?

Barbour: I stayed in the _____ which was the official french guest facility and I guess still is, and worked with the party. My wife saw more of Mrs. Kennedy than I did, she did some things for her and had some personal association with her. I didn't have much personal association with the President, except through other people.

Shank: That had to be just a very ...

Barbour: It was fun.

Shank: You were there when history was happening. That's what's so exciting about your job period is that you're part of history every day, and I don't think the average person feels that they're part of history every day.

Barbour: Well, if you are frequently, you don't feel it yourself. The question is whether what you are doing is worth doing.

Shank: So when did they whisk you back to...

Barbour: Shortly after that visit.

Shank: The President said that man belongs in Vietnam.

Barbour: No. In fact, we were due to go back to Washington to work on French Affairs at the Department of State.

Shank: Do you speak French?

Barbour: Yes.

Shank: How many languages do you speak or have you spoken since you've forgotten Vietnamese?

Barbour: Vietnamese is gone and not regretted. We studied Japanese in Japan and I say we because as I said my wife and I met there; we were in the same class. So we studied Japanese in Japan and learned enough to enjoy traveling around and going to parties with my boss and things like that. So, there was Japanese, a little bit of Japanese and then since then, I majored in Spanish in college. We lived in Italy, we lived in France, we lived in Spain, and we lived in a Dutch speaking country. So, to one degree or another you can say we, and I use the plural because it applies to my wife except Vietnamese, we have been exposed to those environments and used those languages.

Shank: Do you take those little courses, those diplomatic courses when you learn a foreign language?

Barbour: Oh, indeed, indeed.

Shank: Do you really learn how to speak in two weeks?

Barbour: Yes.

Shank: That's wonderful.

Barbour: You don't learn how to speak them.. You learn how to...you have a foundation so that when you do go to that country, you will then be able to begin to use it. No one ever learned to use a language in a classroom, I don't think. You learn, indeed, how to use it when you have not the opportunity but are forced to.

Shank: And when you went back to Vietnam, were you there during the heavy fighting?

Barbour: No. It had not yet begun. We were there, we arrived...the situation had changed dramatically. We had begun the buildup of American forces which started under President Kennedy. It was still the Kennedy era. Uh, the infiltrations from the North had taken on a different character, in both politatively and quanitatively. It was quite clear what was happening. And we tried in increments to assist the Vietnamese to take care of their war themselves. We stayed there a year and a half. Again, I was a political officer doing reporting in a very different type of situation. And then from there, we went back to Washington.

Shank: So you're back in Washington now, and how quickly do they reassign you to another country when you come home? Do they let you stay home?

Barbour: We stayed in Washington that time for four years, (oh...), four and a half years. We're very happy to be home. We had two small children at that time; had acquired a third one then, and after four years of Washington, we went to Rome.

Shank: And how was Rome compared to being in France? I know we can't compare it to Vietnam--it's too different, but as far as cultural-wise and...and uh...

Barbour: It was different. To our great surprise, it was different. It took a period of adjusting, but then those four years we had in Rome, turned out to be marvelous years, for the whole family. Because this....from this point....

Shank: How old were the children at this time?

Barbour: The oldest was, I think, let's see...it was...eight, was eight; the middle one was ten and the little one was a year and a half--no, was that right? Couldn't be. (pause) The oldest was eight, the middle one was six, and the little one was a year and a half.

Shank: Did they go to American schools?

Barbour: They went to American schools, but the nature of my work was such that we were frequently in, and this is true of everybody in that kind of work, we were in Italian very much of the time, so they...they played in both uh, uh, types of setting.

Shank: Did they learn to speak Italian?

Barbour: Yes, they learned uh, they both learned it and they were old enough when we left to keep it, the older ones, not the little one. And uh, have retained their ties with Italy.

Shank: That's great. What are your children doing now?

Barbour: The oldest one is married to a young Spanish lawyer and lives in Spain, and goes to law school herself. (my goodness!) The middle one is uh, has just finished four years of post-graduate school and has, I'm delighted to say, has a job at the national gallery in Washington as a conservator. And the young one goes to ...little one goes to...isn't so little any more, goes to Randolph-Macon College in Virginia.

Shank: My goodness. Well, they've...they have been a nice product of their father's....

Barbour: No, they've been products of their own choice of environment. (mmm-hmm)

Shank: But the opportunities that they were able to have because of having you (yes, I think), as a parent ...

Barbour: Well, having been exposed to certain uh...certain other cultures and lives, whether they profit, whether a particular child profits, is entirely up to that child. (That's true; those opportunities are wonderful).

Shank: So, where did you go after Rome?

Barbour: London (London). Went to London, where I was a student in the Royal College of Defense Studies, for one beautiful year in London. And if our stay in Rome was cake, then London was surely icing on the cake. (oh, my goodness) British institutions, British military traditions and institutions, problems, etc., and then Britain as a part of Europe was a, it was a wonderful year.

Shank: And from there...?

Barbour: Back to Washington. (back to Washington)

Shank: My goodness. Did you ...did...you had to have good luggage, didn't you? (laughter)

Barbour: Back to Washington to stay five years, this time as I worked first for the undersecretary of state for political affairs, which is the number three job in the department. Then I became director for western Europe, whereafter a while we acquired Spain and Portugal, as well as other countries of western Europe. Then deputy assistant secretary for western Europe and southern Europe, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. And from there we went to, after five years in Washington, we went to Madrid, where I was the minister. Minister is the deputy to the ambassador. And stayed there five years, almost six, in fact.

Shank: And this is ...the...I suppose is where your daughter met her Spanish husband-to-be.

Barbour: Yes, she was going to school at that time, decided she wanted to go to law school, I should say she decided she would go to law school, and during...after she graduated, and was waiting to go to law school in the United States, I got her some internships in Madrid, I got her first an internship in a Spanish law office, and then when that was finished, I got her an internship in a multi-national American legal firm, where she was assigned to one of the lawyers in the office, and he was told to keep her busy. (and he did) And he did. (laughter)

Shank: Oh, that's great. Well, then I'm sure she speaks several languages, also.

Barbour: She speaks Spanish and Italian. Well, I guess the two older ones speak Spanish, Italian and I guess, French. (mmmh)

Shank: Well, of course, here at the Yeager Scholar office we are hoping that ...we are encouraging in fact, the scholars to be language proficient. Because it is so important, and it has not been emphasized enough, I believe, at the university, but for this type of student it is a must. Uh, _____ profession to see that your children were exposed to so many nice things, and able to ...

Barbour: They've been lucky; we've all been lucky, in the places we went, and the opportunities those places offered, and that makes a lot of difference.

Shank: Yeah. So, when did you get the _____?

Barbour: After Spain. (after Spain? laughter) From Spain we went to _____ six months in Washington, yes.

Shank: Okay. So tell me about _____. I mean, if someone said...when they first said you were from _____....coming from _____ I said, well, where is that?

Barbour: Exactly. That's a common reaction. (laughter)

Shank: So, tell me where is it?

Barbour: _____ is the smallest independent country in south America. It's up on what is usually called the northeast shoulder between what used to be called British Giana, what is today still called french Giana, and _____ used to be called dutch Giana, until it became independent in 1975.

Shank: So what is the language in _____?

Barbour: The official language is dutch. (dutch) But uh, most people, certainly anybody with any education also speaks English, but Dutch is the official language.

Shank: And what is the political regime like there? What is the government like?

Barbour: The government is a military regime (mmm-hmm) that is pledged officially to returning the country to democracy (mmm-hmm) That's the official program. They're now in the process of...

Shank: You said returning to democracy...

Barbour: Yes, it had been a democracy, (had it been a democracy at one time?), yes, in 1975 until 1980 when it was taken over by the military _____ it was...it was a new voting democracy. And what's going on now in the country is...is...a process that will determine whether after a new constitution has been installed after elections, which have just been held, the power will in fact will be transferred from this military group to elected institutions. And if it is transferred, how much and whether some is transferred, it will be enough to permit the country to be called democratic, which it is now now (mmm-hmm).

Shank: And how long were you there?

Barbour: Three years. To the day.

Shank: And you said the weather was wonderful. Tropical.

Barbour: It's June 365 days out of the year; lovely, lovely.

Shank: Now did any of your children visit you over there?

Barbour: Oh, all the time. All the time and I must say, as frequently as possible. They liked it there. _____ people are extremely pleasant. They're always courteous, very friendly, hospitable and ...

Shank: Economically how...how...how's the country economically?

Barbour: Well, until the military took it over it was not a poor country. Their stashed centralized economic policies have certainly been the principal factor in the country's economic decline. But it's probably not really a classic third-world country. It's sort of between the 2nd and 3rd world; living standards are very high--very little poverty, very good educational standards. Uh, much talent in the country.

Shank: So, when did you first hear that you might be coming to Marshall University?

Barbour: By telephone, earlier this year, in maybe July, I'm not really sure. I had a telephone call from our foreign service institute, which Marshall had been in touch, and I was asked whether when I left _____ I would like to come to Marshall, here in Huntington, West Virginia. And I thought about it and I went back and said, "I don't think so. I think if I'm going to a university, I believe I would rather go to one that has a more traditional interest in foreign affairs, and a larger international relations program." And my friend on the other...and said, "don't be hasty. Let me send you some material about the new program there with which you would be associated." And he described the Yeager Scholars program, a little bit over the telephone, and said, "I think you'll find this interesting." So he did send me all the material, and I read it and I said, "he's right." So it was the Yeager Scholars program in a very true sense that brought me here to Huntington. The uniqueness of the experiment, the fact that it is trying to train an outstanding group of selected young Americans, to take their places in American life, to make contributions to that life in whatever field they choose, the standards of the program, all made it sound attractive and different. And in fact, I heard later on that I wasn't the only one who had been attracted by this program. Various other people said they had heard of the program and they too, were interested in coming here. I think I happened to come here because I was available at the right time, because it fit into the department's own planning, because I perhaps show the right degree of enthusiasm (mmm-hmm) and I think uh, the fact of

being an ambassador between assignments made it desirable for the departments. So here I am.

Shank: So here you are. Oh, we're lucky to have you.

Barbour: So, it was really the Yeager Scholar's program that brought me here.

Shank: So, what were your first impressions of Marshall when you came?

Barbour: They were very favorable, because we were first of all, well prepared because everyone we had met in Washington and in New York, who was familiar with Marshall and with Huntington, said very good things about it. So, when we arrived, our first afternoon here was getting dark, we found that it was a real university looking place, because what we had been told ...but we had looked around Marshall, it gave us the impression there was not even a campus here, in college information handbooks and things like that. There's a nice campus. So, that was a very good, a very good beginning and then our first introduction to Marshall was extremely warm and then to Huntington itself has been always, always very, very positive.

Shank: That's great. Well, tell me about some of your work here. What are your plans? What is the work that you're going to be doing with our Yeager scholars and some of your things that you'll be doing outside of the university?

Barbour: With the scholars themselves, I hope to be able to give to them an interest in and and understanding of international life. I know that they are not interested in international relations as a career, (mmm-hmm), but you cannot be in the real sense, an educated person today in the United States with any ambition to achieve higher objectives, unless you have some realization of the importance of international affairs on the United States and on American life. I'm not certain that that realization is general, or the understanding of the impact of international events on day-to-day American life is exists throughout the country. But it should exist at the university, and it should certainly exist with a group of selected students like those in the Yeager Scholars program. I also hope to give them some sense of understanding of how American foreign affairs are managed, so if I succeed in doing that, I'll be quite happy. Outside the program, I have been invited to meet with the Rotary Club, Kiawanis groups, to talk to them about the American foreign service, American diplomacy. They've been very hospitable. And then we are beginning to receive requests or invitations from other institutions here in the area, to meet with their students and talk with them as I did here in the University as I shall do outside about particular foreign problems. So, like everything else that we have done in this business, being here at Marshall and in the Yeager Scholar's program is also fun.

Shank: Well, it sounds like that there's a lot of work, a lot of detail uh, organization, a lot of reading, uh, a lot of uh, what do I want to say, common sense uh, kind of an intuition about your job that must be maintain all the time; am I reading that right, or...wrong or...? (laughter)

Barbour: If you're right, I doubt that it's any different from any other business or profession, for after a while one's own experiences, preparation (mmm-hmm) and preparation as you said is constant. (it'd have to be) Give the individual what he needs to do his job, whatever it is.

Shank: You have met with the scholars then, already (yes), uh, what are you general impressions?

Barbour: Well, they are the group of, of outstanding individuals that they are said to be. That's my impression. (mmm-hmm)

Shank: Uh, after this appointment, where do you think you will go?

Barbour: I'll go back to Washington. And either go to another embassy or work awhile in the department, or do both. We're always....we are always subject to another call, so to speak. Sounds like a missionary or a ...or a preacher, but we are ...we might say we are available for reassignment and we are reassigned as the needs, what we call the needs of the foreign service dictate.

Shank: How many people are in the foreign service?

Barbour: Not as many as you think. We are altogether, I think, between 10 and 11,000. Of that group, there are about 4,000 foreign service officers, (mmm-hmm), and this 4,000 hasn't changed much over the past 25 years. (clears throat) We're almost the same number as we were in 1961, 62.

Shank: Do you have a lot of new, young blood coming in to this profession?

Barbour: Well, because of the budget situation, the cuts that we're taking in our budget, we are being forced to reduce the numbers that we're taking in. We us....we have been trying to take in 200 a year. Next year I'm afraid we're only taking maybe 150, 160, so that's bad. We should take in around 200, so we hurt.

Shank: In their training, do theydo they all start in Washington and then are assigned there?

Barbour: They all start with a period of training in Washington, I think it's only six weeks. They come in through a series of examinations (mmm-hmm). They like the Yeager Scholars, are very carefully selected; a very small percentage of those who take the examination, if you figure that maybe...maybe 16,000 people will

take the examination in any one year, uh, even 200's a very small figure. They also come in nowadays uh, at...somewhat older than they use to. I entered the foreign service when I was 21. The young officers coming in today come in around 30, I think, 30 or 31 is the average age, which is really higher than it should be. But they come in work experience in advanced degrees.

Shank: So you would say that the...we're probably gonna be less on target about getting young people involved because of budget problems?

Barbour: We're going to be restricting the what is a vital part of any organization (mmm-hmm) and that is it's annual intake of new material. We are, not because we want to but because we don't get the money from Congress.

Shank: What would you say was your most challenging assignment in your career, up to this point?

Barbour: I suppose the challenge is determined by responsibility rather than individual sense of satisfaction or enjoyment. Sort of greater the responsibility, the more the challenge. So, I suppose there've been two; the first as minister in Madrid, I was _____ affairs, much of the time, which means to say "in charge of the embassy in the absence of the ambassador." And during those periods the responsibility for the show is yours. It's not like being the ambassador, but it certainly is a sense of responsibility. And in that same context, as the deputy to the ambassador, I spent a lot of time--hours and hours, days, weeks, months--negotiating part of a very comprehensive treaty we have with Spain. But even so, that doesn't compare, and I don't think can compare with being Chief _____ at one's own post, because their responsibility all comes to rest, and an ambassador has to take, during the course of a day, many, many decisions for which he's held responsible; not only responsibility but accountable. He's accountable to his government in Washington, he's accountable to the government in which he's accredited, for policy matters and he's accountable in a very real sense for the proper use of all the resources that are given him. He's accountable for the security and the safety of the people under him. He's accountable for the well-being of the American community, both public and private. He's accountable and responsible for helping American businesses, so when he goes on record either in his daily activities in his capital, or in his advice to his government, he is assuming a lot of responsibility and that's true, surprisingly, when today, we talk about constant communications, high-level travel, uh, ambassadors being messengers, things like that. I found, to my great surprise, even in a little place like _____, that that's not true. And the level of responsibility is very high. And it's much higher, of course, where you're...in countries where you have very serious security problems. We had security problems, but they were not nearly as serious as they were in other places, where the ambassadors were literally on the spot, and his family day after day (mmm-hmm).

Michele: So you would say your most challenging _____ was when you were in _____.

Barbour: Yes. Despite having been in all those great cities of Europe, and of the far east, the real challenge comes from being your own boss.

Shank: Well, is there anything in this interview that I haven't ask you, that you would like to relate?

Barbour: No, I think it's probably gone on far too long already (laughter) (no) you've got far more on that box than you want...

Shank: It hasn't...it hasn't clipped yet, so, that's great. Well, I appreciate your time, Mr. Barbour, and it's been very interesting, and we want you to know that uh, you really are going to be part of the history of the Yeager Scholar program, because you will be one of the first, our first diplomat in residence. And we hope to have many, and we know that you have a lot to offer Marshall University and we appreciate your coming.

Barbour: Thank you, Michele. I hope that...I hope it works, I hope you're right. I hope there is a contribution (laughs), but being in it will help.

Shank: It will, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW