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**Stan Garnett**

Stan Garnett

Institute of Child Nutrition

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Stan Garnett Oral History  
Interviewer: Meredith Johnston  
Interview Date: July 21, 2005

Stan Garnett grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. He served in the Peace Corps and worked for the Catholic Relief Service early in his career. He joined the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service in 1971 and worked in child nutrition programs there for thirty-six years. He retired as the Director of Child Nutrition Programs in December 2007. Stan is currently the Executive Director of the Global Nutrition Foundation.

MJ: We are here at USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and we are with Stan Garnett. It is July 21, 2005. Thank you for spending time with us today.

SG: Well, you are entirely welcome.

MJ: Would you tell us a little about yourself and where you grew up?

SG: Okay. Well, I was born and raised in the Midwest in Kansas City, Missouri, and finished college there at the local Jesuit college and taught school for several years until I actually answered President Kennedy's call for public service. So I joined the Peace Corps and I was assigned to the Philippines and I spent two years in the Philippines doing community development work and teaching English as a second language in several elementary schools. And when I completed my tour of duty with the Peace Corps, I had not had my fill of roaming and international type of work, so I joined the Catholic Relief Service and went to Vietnam and I spent two years in Vietnam basically doing refuge feeding during the war. And then I left Vietnam right before the Tet Offensive, went back to the Midwest and got married to a young lady that had been a blind date when she was a senior in high school. We kept in touch all those years. We got married and actually left the day we got married for my next posting in East Africa. So we honeymooned a week or so in Europe and then went down and we were in Nairobi for a couple of years and we were, it was a regional office there and we were covering Sub-Saharan Africa and we were basically working with PL Public Law 480 food commodities, and distributing those food commodities to schools in some cases, institutions, leprosariums, and that sort of thing. We had a program similar to the

WIC Program in this country where we were providing milk and nutrition education and that kind of thing to pregnant and postpartum women. And then we did some school feeding as I mentioned. And then we were during my tenure in East Africa, we were asked to go over to West Africa during the Biafran Conflict in Nigeria and again do refugee feeding. And I was, as the English would say, seconded to the International Red Cross to do that work. So we spent some time in Lagos, Nigeria. It was wartime so our travel was restricted but we enjoyed our tour there. And my wife was pregnant so we returned to East Africa for the delivery of our first child. Then we were posted to Ghana and spent the next couple of years again on the west coast of Africa in Ghana doing similar work that I had been doing in Kenya with some school feeding and then after having spent about eight years outside of the country and beginning a family, decided it was time to look at going back to the States to raise a family. So I basically went through the catalog of federal programs and when I saw the Food and Nutrition Service and it was, they were administering nutrition programs, I decided to apply, and applied and I was offered a job in Washington and a job in Chicago and a job in Atlanta. And I had never lived in any of those cities, but they offered more money in Washington, so I came to Washington. And that was early '71, and I joined the Food and Nutrition Service in 1971 and I actually was assigned to the Child Nutrition Programs and I have spent my whole career in the programs.

MJ: What is your earliest recollection of the program?

SG: Well, my earliest recollection, if I really go back to when I was in elementary school, I recall that we had subsidized milk in those days, which obviously was the Special Milk Program. But of course I didn't realize, being young and in elementary school, didn't realize it was a federal program and all that sort of thing, so. And then my earliest recollection of the Child Nutrition Program when I joined in early '71, it was right after the passage of Public Law 91248 and the free and reduced price meal eligibility was being made uniform across the country and my first assignment was really working in implementing that legislation and standardized eligibility requirements and providing the guidance for our state cooperators for the program then. And then shortly or almost at the same time, the Breakfast Program was really in its, pretty much its infancy so we were working on the Breakfast Program. And shortly thereafter the Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program were split from what was called, I think we called it the Special Feeding, Special Food Service Programs

prior to them being separated and made separate programs, so working on implementation of those programs.

MJ: Well, uh, would you like to elaborate any more on how you became more involved or maybe how you got to this position?

SG: Okay, I can tell you a little bit more. I was assigned to the policy work in the programs and I thoroughly enjoyed the policy work and basically began writing regulations and policy and instructions for the programs. And then with the Summer Food Service Program we really were beginning a new program. So we not only wrote the implementing regulations, and in those days regulations were the preamble might be a couple of paragraphs and the regulations might be two or three pages and the clearance was very simple, whereas today the preamble might be six pages and the regulations might be three paragraphs and the clearance process has gotten extremely complex and lengthy and difficult. So we not only did that, but we actually from the federal office were assigned cities to go out and work with, with our regional counterparts. And the first summer that we started that program and I was out there for I guess three summers, I was assigned to St. Louis, Missouri, and we were working with a CAP agency in the city and starting in April-May went out to work with them to get sponsors for the programs, to get sites for the programs, to help them in getting food vendors, and really getting the program off the ground. We actually did that in seven cities across the country. And that was really the beginning of the Summer Food Service Program. We also were very busy at one point in time; the department was sued on the School Breakfast Program so we got into a breakfast outreach initiatives in the mid to late, late '70s. And through that time I was promoted up the ranks and became a section head and then a branch chief in the programs. And then in 1985 I joined the deputy administrator for the Special Nutrition Programs so I moved into that office. And we covered all the Child Nutrition Programs including WIC, all the commodity programs. And then when there was a vacancy in the director of the Child Nutrition Programs, I was assigned as Director of the Child Nutrition Programs somewhere in the late '80s. I was in the position for several years until early in the Clinton administration, the Deputy, Assistant Undersecretary, I guess at that time, asked that I go over to the WIC Program. So I did spend about three years in the WIC Program as a Director of that program and then Undersecretary Shirley Watkins wanted me back in the Child Nutrition Programs, so she in about, let's see, what year are we in now? So

it was close to, soon will be ten years ago. So it was around '96 I guess, '97, she put me back in Child Nutrition as the Director of the program. I have been in that position now for almost ten years.

MJ: Was there someone, maybe a mentor who was influential in directing you in this field?

SG: I would say there was no one individual, probably. I think what impressed me when I began my service in the, federal service in the Food and Nutrition Service was how many people were dedicated to the programs and interested in the programs and had been in the programs for some years. The agency itself was only established as a separate agency in 1969, but there had been people that have been around until, from the mid-60s and even before that. Very dedicated and hard-working and I found many, most of my peers in that same category and enjoyed the work, enjoyed working with the state cooperators who also were extremely dedicated to the program, working with the local cooperators to the extent that we work at the local level and also with the advocacy community and the associations like the School Nutrition Association which of course was the American School Food Services Association in those days. So we worked very closely with all of those groups to make the programs work and I just, many, many dedicated people. And there are many of us here in the agency that have been here 35 up to 40 years. So it inspired me to stay.

MJ: Would you tell us a little more about your educational background, and maybe how that prepared you for your present job?

SG: Well, basically a liberal arts graduate, so I am not a nutritionist or anything like that. But I've found that the work that I do in as Director of the program and coming up through the ranks always in the policy arena, although as Director we do other things, but the ability to write was something that was very, very important so I think that my liberal arts education and writing skills have served me extremely well. And I can still remember diagramming sentences in elementary school and you know we hated it in those days but I think it was well worth while.

MJ: What changes have you seen in the Child Nutrition Programs over the years?

SG: Well, I think, in one word, they have become very complex over the years, and for many reasons. But I have also seen that if you look at the School Nutrition Programs, when I joined 30, almost 35 years ago, schools cooked on-site. They baked bread. They did all those things. Whereas today you see much more convenience foods, prepared foods being served. You also see much more competition with the school meals that you did not see in the earlier years. Kids had more time to eat say back 35 years ago. We've seen scheduling changes in the schools where lunch periods now are much shorter; they begin earlier in the day. It is just a whole different attitude I think with the nutrition programs in the schools. There was much more local support for the programs, for example, picking up the costs of electricity, of water, of janitorial services and that sort of thing that today in many, many school districts they are charged for everything so it has put a lot of pressure on the school food service to be much more profit oriented, for want of a better word, than it was in the earlier days.

MJ: Well, this sort of goes along, is sort of a follow up to the changes question. But what do you think are the biggest challenges today, facing the programs?

SG: Well, I think probably the biggest challenge today is to, given the interest in and the concern about obesity, the biggest challenge today is to provide nutritious meals that children will consume and time to consume them in an atmosphere that is conducive to good eating. It is almost a need to go back to slow food versus the pre-prepared foods and things that so many schools now are compelled to providing kids. I think it is a huge challenge for the schools. There is a lot of competition. The economic pressures that schools are facing has caused them to, you know, fund-raise for everything it seems like today. Principals having school stores to support student activities that compete with the school nutrition programs. It really is a challenge for our schools to meet the needs of the kids to provide nutritious meals in a setting that is conducive to good eating.

MJ: What do you think has been your most significant contribution to Child Nutrition Programs?

SG: Well, I think probably the most significant contribution in a broad sense has been that since I have been around for a long time and been through many reauthorizations, have been able to work with the hill staff as we have gone through the various reauthorizations and being able to influence the legislative

changes that the programs have seen over the years, some, many of that in the area of expanding access to the programs, improving the programs. Also I feel that having the long tenure here I have built up working relationships with cooperators, our state cooperators. I attend almost all of the regional state meetings, meetings of state directors. Working with the advocacy community such as the Food Research Action Center, the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, of course the School Nutrition Association, Second Harvest. Folks like that who all have been instrumental in maintaining the programs and growing the programs, and I think that broadly has been the ability to influence some of the things, some of the good things that we have seen in the programs.

MJ: Do any memorable stories or events come to mind when you think about your years involvement?

SG: Oh, yes, I can think of a lot of good stories. My first years in the program we did, we did probably more traveling in the early days than we do now. And I can remember traveling to schools and we would start early, early in the morning, 7, 7:30, as school breakfast, those schools that had school breakfast in those days, and there as I said earlier all the schools cooked on-site and they always wanted to feed you. And they would make cinnamon rolls that were absolutely delicious. You could smell them as you walked into the building. But after you have gone to about three schools I would finally have to say, "no, no, no, I can't eat any more." And then of course then they, you had to eat something, and then I would be very full by the end of the day. Or if I tried the foods, I can remember in the South particularly cornbread and I'd have, I just couldn't eat any more cornbread and then they would accuse me of being a Yankee and not liking cornbread. And "No, that's not right." So that was, that was an interesting story. Starting the Summer Food Service Program as I mentioned earlier was very interesting work. And in some ways we were too successful. The Summer Program became a runaway program. And I can remember going to New York, I worked in New York City in probably '77-'78 in the Summer Food Service Program. And seeing meals being given away to anybody and everybody, it was just very rampant abuse of the program. And the program had to be scaled back in the late '70s early '80s, and still had some restrictions on it from, from those early days, but I think just being able to, of being on the ground floor of a program such as the Summer Food Service Program was very, very memorable and fun. The Child and Adult Care Food Program, we worked very closely when family day care homes became

eligible for the program. We knew that states couldn't deal with a hundred thousand homes. I think we are up to about 170,000 homes now. We had to build an infrastructure for the program, so we, I can remember meeting with it was Bob Greenstein in those days when he was, we were all very young of course, and working in really creating a structure for sponsoring organizations for the, for the Child and Adult Care Food Program. So that was very memorable. I remember the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the School Lunch Program where we had a party at the patio of the Department's administration building and a lot of the senators who were involved in passage of the School Lunch Act in 1946 were there. So I remember that very fondly. And then of course the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we had another celebration of the program. Next year we will have the 60<sup>th</sup>. So those are all memorable experiences of getting some of these programs off the ground.

MJ: Preston, could you pause for just a second. Could you tell us a little bit about what's it like going through budget cuts and the decisions you have to make in those areas?

SG: Well, I remember, I guess it was probably, it was late in the Carter administration, the Office of Inspector General had done some reviews of school districts, mostly, my recollection is up and down the Eastern Seaboard, and found some abuses in the free and reduced price area of the program, and then there was at that time some thought that some modest changes needed to be made in the program so there were some cuts there about 1980. I can also tell you that in 1980 at the federal level administering the Child Nutrition Programs we had 119 people. Today we have 55 and the programs are more complex and more difficult. And then of course when the Reagan administration came in then there was, you know, some further cuts in the programs and determining from the legislative standpoint what cuts had to be made, and of course we all know that there were attempts to block grant the program and the School Nutrition Association among others was instrumental in getting a huge letter writing campaign to Capitol Hill in the sense that "school lunch" became a verb. You could be "school lunched" and I think the Hill will never forget that effort so we had that. In both of the last two reauthorizations, we had a directive from the administration at that time that they had to be budget neutral proposals so while there were a lot of things that we wanted to do with the programs to expand them, to improve them that cost money we had to find savings within the



programs, and that's a very difficult thing is "where do you take cuts?" So we had to in those two instances look at areas of the program where we felt you could take cuts without doing serious damage to the program. In the reauthorization in '96-'97 we knew that states were not able to expend all their 2 percent audit money, so we proposed to take, to lower that to one-and-a-half percent. That gave us a savings that we were able to put into some expansion of the program and we got the After School Snack Program, which actually I think cost a little bit more than the savings that we had but we got into the process and that got the ball rolling. In the reauthorization that was completed in 2004, we were addressing the, what we called the over-certification issue, the fact that all the indicators that we had available pointed to the fact that more kids were being certified for free, particularly free meals, than were actually eligible based on the population survey data. Now that was certified, that didn't say that they participated, but that they were certified. And I think that the general Child Nutrition community all felt we had a problem, but there was no agreement on the extent of the problem. But that any increase, say, or changes in the certification, verification process generated some savings. So there were modest changes made in 2004, increase in the verification requirements which resulted as I said in savings that were put back into the programs so that we were able to do several things. Increased access to the programs, eliminated some of the complexity in the programs and I think were, were very helpful. We saw for example an expansion of the fresh fruit and vegetable pilot became a program. And that's been a very fun program to see get off its feet. We ran it through the pilot stage in four states: Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Michigan, and the Zuni Pueblo. And then we saw it expanded to now that we have 11 states participating in that program, 225 schools. So by getting that ball rolling, by getting some savings in the bill, Congress did find a little money to put into it this last time, so we got more than our savings would have allowed. So that's kind of the process we go through.

MJ: Well, think of one more question I might like to ask you. What would be like a typical day for you?

SG: A typical day. Oh, I would say, today, a typical day has changed through the years that I have been here. When I think back to when I joined back in '71 the, everything of course was typed. We had a secretary, secretarial staff, that probably one secretary for every four or five people, and the best thing we had

was correction ribbons on a typewriter. That has gone from you know successfully changed so today, and in those days you wrote out drafts in long hand, gave it to a secretary who typed it in draft, sent it back to you, and then typed it in final. They made mistakes they had to correct them manually and do all those sorts of things. Today, on a typical day would be first of all catching up on your e-mails, so first thing in the morning is getting as best you can caught up on your e-mails which come in from many, many sources. Then the next thing is most likely meeting with your immediate managers to see what is due that day. Lots of meetings, meetings on program issues. You know, take for example, my children today who feel like you need to change jobs every few years think that, can't understand how I could stay in the same job for all of these years. But I must say there has never been a dull moment in the job, so we do, we answer congressional inquiries. Hardly a day goes by that we don't get some requests on the congressional front either for information or some request that we need to deal with. Right now, we are doing a lot of review of written documents such as regulations. We have a lot of regulations in process so that we, I have to read all those, so there is a lot of reading in the job. And do that. Through the reauthorization process, lots of meeting with Hill staff. Answering a lot of phone calls as well as e-mails. In fact, when my children were younger and they had you know "bring your child to work day," and of course they had to go back and report to their teachers, they said their father talked on the phone and met all day, that's all he did.

MJ: Well, anything else that you would like to add?

SG: Well, let's see. What else would I like to add? Well, I guess the only thing that I would say is that I thoroughly enjoyed my work in these programs. I know that one of these days I will be retiring but I, as I say it has never been dull. I have enjoyed it. I've enjoyed working with all of the partners that make these programs successful, that cause them to enjoy bi-partisan support on the Hill. My co-workers here, I have a wonderful staff that means a lot to me, that is able to put out the work that, and just the fact that our work get out and see the kids, you know, consuming their meals, enjoying their food, makes it all worthwhile.

MJ: Wonderful. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to do this.

SG: Alright.

MJ: Okay. That was interesting.

Update:

Interviewees: Stan Garnett and Gene White

Interviewer: Jeffrey Boyce

Date: May 15, 2013

Location: National Food Service Management Institute

Jeffrey Boyce: I'm Jeffrey Boyce and it is May 15, 2013. I'm here at the National Food Service Management Institute with Gene White and Stan Garnett. They have kindly agreed to update their oral histories that we did a few years ago. Thank you both for coming in today.

Stan Garnett: We're glad to be here.

JB: Since we've already done your oral histories, why don't you catch us up with what you've done since you retired, Stan, from USDA? Tell us what you're up to now.

SG: OK. I retired from the USDA in January of 2008 and I pretty much began volunteering in the international scene. My career has sort of been bookended with international work. I had spent about eight years overseas in the '60s before I joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working in food assistance programs in the developing world in Southeast Asia and Africa. And when I retired, my first overseas assignment so to speak was an invitation from the former Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Service Eric Bost, who was appointed by President Bush as the Ambassador to South Africa. So, Eric was in Pretoria and he had asked myself and Alberta Frost, who had retired from USDA a couple of years prior to me, and had been involved in the school feeding programs, if we would come down and help the Bafokeng Nation in South Africa implement a school lunch program. Now I had to go online and look up the Bafokeng Nation, because I had never heard of it before, which most people haven't. I think it can

best be described as something comparable to an Indian reservation in this country. It's very interesting. They have a king. And actually the territory was originally owned by the Lutheran Church. And they had built a church in this area, among these people, and they eventually gave the land and everything on it to the Bafokeng people, and that's been recognized by the South African government. So it's semi-independent. There's a lot of support provided by the South African government. But, they discovered platinum on the land, so they have money, and they wanted to initiate school feeding in their schools. So Alberta and I went down and spent a week with them working on establishing a school feeding program. And the following school year after we were there they implemented a school feeding program in their nation. So that was my first. And then Gene had contacted me and invited me to join the board of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, and they were planning their forum. And their first forum in Africa was in Stellenbosch, and asked me if I would work on that forum and go down, and I was happy to do that. So I did that, and then the following year we were in West Africa, in Accra, Ghana, and I participated in that. And then the executive director over the Global Child Nutrition Program, Barbara Belmont, retired in 2011, and I was asked if I would – I actually guess the safe thing to say – Marshall Matz bent my arm and said I had to do it, I had to go over and work in the Global Child Nutrition Foundation. And I said, "Well, you know, I'm retired. I can't do anything. I'm not going back to work full-time." But anyway, we worked out a deal, so two days a week I go over to the headquarters of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation, and I've been working there almost two years. And we've had a forum every year. Subsequent to Ghana we went to Nairobi, Kenya, in East Africa and had a forum there. And in 2012 we were in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and had a forum there. And these forums bring together representatives from developing countries with the whole purpose of helping them initiate and expand school feeding programs. And while we realize that the school feeding program in the U.S. has been around for over sixty years and is very sophisticated, there are certain principles that we feel we have learned over the years in the domestic programs here that are essential to a successful and sustainable program – establishing policies, establishing oversight, establishing systems of management, establishing some sort of evaluation of your program, establishing nutritional standards, even if it is a goal you are working towards – all of these sort of things we feel are necessary to sustain a program; and to connect to the local agricultural production. Many programs were initiated using donated foods, often from the United States and other donor countries, and that, long-term, is not

sustainable. And then of course the McGovern-Dole program was initiated about the time the Global Nutrition Foundation was established and the McGovern Dole program was an initiative that was started by Senator Dole and Ambassador McGovern based on their experiences in the school feeding program in the United States, and they had been long supporters of the school feeding program, and just felt that the experience in this country and the success of the program, that that could be replicated in the developing world over a period of time. So we have been doing that for the last two years. We are just getting ready to go to Brazil and have a forum in Brazil. We have a workshop the first day. We have a toolkit that was developed by the Global Child Nutrition Foundation. We work with the delegates in identifying their needs, identifying their plans and what they will do in the following year to enhance and improve their programs. We had 23 nations, all from sub-Saharan Africa in 2012 in Ethiopia, and we're anticipating over 40 nations, again from sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Central America, and a few from Asia, in Salvador, Brazil next week.

JB: Gene, jump in here and tell us exactly what the Global Child Nutrition Foundation is and how it was founded.

Gene White: The Global Child Nutrition Foundation was created by the School Nutrition Association. There was a time about eight years ago when there was so much increased interest in school feeding, or we would call it child nutrition in this country, that we were getting calls, requests for help from really all over the world. Countries would say, "How do you do it in the United States? Show us how you do it so we can try to do something similar." At that point the board of the School Nutrition Association decided it would be wise and more helpful to those countries if we had a separate group, a separate unit within SNA, who could answer those international requests for help. And that was really the start of a Global Child Nutrition Foundation. And so today we work all over the world. We carry the message of good nutrition, the importance of school feeding, the relationship of nutrition to learning as well as health, to the other countries. And when we go into a country we go only by invitation of that country, and we work with them in helping them understand and articulate what they really want to achieve. We try to help them do what they want to have done, based upon the experience we've had with policy and the building of programs in this country. So it's been a wonderful experience. We've worked in many countries, Africa extensively. Originally we brought the delegates from these countries to the

United States, and those were very important forums, as we call them, in this country. And then we thought, you know, we really need to get out of the United States and go to the countries that we're trying to help. And so we did that on an experimental basis about four years ago, as Stan said. We went first to South Africa, to Stellenbosch, then we went to Ghana, and then Kenya, and the last year, in fact a year ago almost to the day, we were in Ethiopia doing the same thing there, working with the countries, giving them guidance, technical help, on how to build programs to feed children in their countries. And so it's been a wonderful experience, I hope a rewarding experience for the countries. And I believe it's been a very important experience for those of us who are so-called school feeding specialists in this country. We've learned so much from these people. In fact I sometimes think maybe they're better teachers than we are because we've learned so much from them. The important thing here is to realize that these children that we're trying to help are the world's children. They belong to us all. And in that context then we're so glad that we can share some of these experiences to help them do that. And I guess my own interest in this started many years ago. But more recently we, at one time, had the U.S. Agency for International Development calling the School Nutrition Association for help. And I was one who volunteered and I was sent to North Africa. I was sent to Tunisia. And it was in that experience there for about six or eight weeks that I really saw a whole different side of school feeding that I had never seen before. I saw what really happens when children are starving, and I saw many starving children there. And I saw the opportunity to reach out to these children and get them to school. When children have food at school the enrollment often doubles. More girls often come than boys. And it's so important to give children this heads up start so they can learn, stay in school, and become productive citizens. So that's what really motivates us. And after that I got a call from the UN World Food Programme in Rome, and they needed help to start a school feeding program in Paraguay, in South America, and Paraguay was a whole different experience with a brand new democracy. They didn't even know what school feeding was except they wanted to do it. So that was another wonderful experience. And then I think a third thing that really got us on track as the foundation that we now have, was a call SNA got about ten years ago from the World Food Programme in Rome, and the person who was the director of school feeding in Rome, Gilboy, called to say, "Can we ever meet with you and talk about starting a Latin America school feeding network, something like what we have in the United States?" And so several of us did get very involved in that. We formed the Latin America School Feeding

Network modeled after what we do here in this country with the School Nutrition Association, and instead of having states involved we had countries involved. And that turned out to be a very meaningful experience and one that in part is still going. In our forum we think we have the opportunity to do something that hasn't been done before, and that's to give hands-on experience as practitioners – and that's really what we are, we're practitioners in this country – to show these countries just how to do it. That became a very important experience for me a year ago in Ethiopia. The Minister of Education looked at me and she said, "You know, we know there is a lot of education going on, but all we want to know is just how you do it, the practitioner's approach", and that's the thing I believe we do in the foundation, is that unique approach that people have been there and done that. And I think that's what gives us the chance to offer some really important real help. So that's my story. The foundation was actually started in 2006. It was functioning in 2007. It took us a year to get up and running. So we've been in business now quite a while – seven years. We do this Global Child Nutrition Forum to train the countries. We did that even before we had the foundation. This year we do our fifteenth annual Global Child Nutrition Forum. We leave for Brazil this week to do this in Brazil. Again, in Brazil it's going to be the largest forum we've ever had. Much to our amazement there are 44 countries coming, delegates from each country, so it's almost like a mini United Nations, all wanting to get involved more so in school feeding. So that's what we're doing. We see school feeding as growing in terms of its global awareness and global need. The interesting thing to us is that when we started this seven years ago we talked about school feeding, the term I'm using today. Lately we're talking about school nutrition, and that is such an important difference. We're looking at nutrition as being an important part of school feeding. It must be there, and so we now are focusing on not only school feeding, but school nutrition, because we have the food that we can use for that fund. I think the other big thing that we're doing is modeling what's been done in the United States, and that is link our school nutrition programs to agriculture. The early days in the United States, in the law itself signed by Harry Truman, links agriculture and school nutrition programs. They're in lockstep. They're interdependent. And so we're trying to help countries do that. Some call it homegrown school feeding. Others call it other forms of terms. But the bottom line is we're trying to help countries link their agriculture development to school feeding, and when that happens then subsistence farmers – and eighty percent of the small, subsistence farms are run by women – it gives those women perhaps a little cash if they can sell some of their food to the

schools. It gives the schools, hopefully, a supply of fresh and nutritious food. They help each other, and almost in the process start a micro industry, where the schools and the local farmers can work together for the common good of educating children and improving the local economy, and hopefully alleviating hunger and poverty at least a little. So that's who we are, that's what we're doing. We see no end in sight in terms of the opportunities. There's a tremendous amount of hunger today, a tremendous amount of child hunger. We feel this is an important contribution we can make as professionals in this country – to help other children have a similar opportunity. So that's my story.

JB: Do you see lots of similar problems among the countries, or are they vastly different?

GW: Well, I always find, and Stan can give his view, I find every country to be very different, but they all have the same basic needs. The countries need guidance. They need help on how to do a program. They particularly need help with policy development. How do you write a law or a policy that would serve a nation, or even a province? In this country we have a National School Lunch Act signed in 1946 by Harry Truman. Other countries want to know how they could do something like that. Funding is a problem in almost every country. We find many countries have money, but we need to help them, show how they can use it and direct those resources into feeding children. So, every country is different, but there's a common need, a common urgency to feed children, get them educated, get them in school, and get them healthy.

SG: I think everything being said is very true, and in many ways every country is different. When we were in Addis last year one of the things we did during our workshop was have them to prioritize among – these are 23 nations, now – prioritize the issues that they face, that they could present to the whole group. We talked about all the countries that come to the forum. In addition to the delegates from these countries we have a lot of other groups that come, UN agencies – Gene mentioned the World Food Programme – USDA, USAID, a lot of private voluntary organizations, non-government organizations, OXFAM, Save the Children, Catholic Relief, CARE, all of these representatives are there, plus observers who come just to see what is happening, including now over the last few years marketplaces, where industries will come and present their products. Maybe it's a clay stove that can be used. Maybe it's a meal, not a full meal, but a



corn blend or a soy blend, this kind of thing. So that has happened too. But in prioritizing all the needs, as Gene pointed out funding was the first thing. And even though in some of the countries we are working in are- give one example – we've got a project in Angola. Angola is rich in oil. Many dollars are flowing into the country at the national level, but it's not filtering down. So, to do that you have to have mechanisms to establish a policy, establish a funding flow, and get that going. So funding was the first one. Training of personnel was a big issue – all the way down the list, even to such things as things that we talk about in this country – time for the children to eat the food, and what time to serve the meal, and that sort of thing. So there are certain commonalities among all the countries. Another big benefit of the forum is the networking that goes on. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa the Anglophone countries established their own groupings where they could share information among themselves on what their needs were, what issues they were facing, what were the best practices that might be shared, and that sort of thing. Last year when we were in Addis the French-speaking, the Francophone countries came to us and said, "We want to establish a Francophone group so we can do what the Anglophone folks are doing." So we put them in contact with a gentleman that had been instrumental in founding the Anglophone grouping. And so it will be interesting to see when we get to Brazil next week how far along the Francophone countries have become. And now we're dealing with the Lusophone countries, places like Mozambique and Angola, the Portuguese-speaking countries of Africa, so they can begin sharing. So the networking that goes on at the forum is in many ways probably as important as everything else that we do, because they spend a lot of time talking among themselves and working together, and we would really like to see as we progress, the ability for one country to go to the neighboring country to share their best experience, to work together and that sort of thing. I think that will happen over time.

JB: Sounds like a really interesting project. I assume you have general sessions?

SG: We do.

JB: How do you handle the language barriers there?

SG: We have translators. We have a translating service throughout the whole program. In Brazil we will have Portuguese, French, Spanish, and English, of course, so it's all translated. They have headphones.

JB: Just like the United Nations.

SG: Just like the United Nations.

JB: Wow. It's a bigger project than I realized.

SG: And we had, in Addis, we had about 220 people all total, so we had a large group. And we're talking about in Brazil around 250, 275, go it's a large group.

JB: Gene, I was re-reading your oral history from 2005 yesterday, and one of the comments you had made talking about this was the goal wasn't to make others like America. That struck me as interesting. Do you want to elaborate on that?

GW: Would you read that again? I want to hear what I said. [Laughter]

JB: I think you were talking about being culturally sensitive.

GW: Yes.

JB: That's why I was wanting you to share what you feel about that.

GW: Being culturally sensitive, well, we are in this country too. We're very aware of the cultural needs of this country, which are diverse, and becoming more and more diverse, so I don't want to minimize that at all. But as Stan said, we're working in countries where we don't speak the language. And also, we don't understand in total all the innuendo, all the little pieces of the culture that shapes the lifestyle and the food habits of people. You take Kenya for example. I think there is something like sixty different tribal languages. It's an incredible opportunity to learn the differences in these many, many diversities. So it's a challenge. We go in to learn, and to help with what we've learned. And so the cultural diversity is with us, it's increasing. I was in Washington yesterday and my cab driver was from Ethiopia. So we're becoming a world with many, many mixtures of cultures and I think it's very exciting, but it's a challenge for us. And

Stan mentioned the headsets that we wear so we can dial in the language we want to hear. In the training materials we also have them in multiple languages. Stan mentioned the toolkit that we use. It's a large, 100 page document of process to develop a national school feeding program. We now have that in several other languages. We have it in English of course, but we have it in French, in Spanish, in Portuguese, and in Mandarin Chinese, and we've used it in all of those countries where those languages are the first language. Stan also mentioned Angola, where we're in our fourth year of the project there. And there we had two opportunities to help that country. Again, McGovern/Dole money was the basis for the funding to another organization that helped us get there and do what we did, working at policy development. And Stan and his team have been very effective working with policy in Angola. Then quite the reverse in that country, in a province called Benguela, one of the poorest provinces in all of Africa, we're doing training on how to operate their little school feeding program, often not even in the school building, just out in the bush, in this sort of very rough, rural environment. Now there we have written a curriculum for the training of people who speak no English. Penny McConnell, from the Fairfax County Schools, so many people know is an outstanding leader, and she's the one who gave the leadership to develop that curriculum. And so we don't speak Portuguese, so we were able to employ a man from Spain who was multi-lingual, had been with the United Nations. He now has been in Angola doing the training for us. We have trained him in English how to use our materials; then he helps people in Portuguese understand how to actually explain the curriculum and how to train them. It's very simple – sanitation and food handling, this kind of thing – the basics on safe food handling to feed children in a very, very rural and very impoverished environment. So culturally, yes it's a tremendous, ongoing challenge, and a wonderful opportunity I think, because only when you're sensitive to that do you even begin to understand the people and their needs.

JB: Exactly. I remember how hard it was in Ukraine to learn the different cultural nuances. It was an interesting experience.

SG: We were in Angola February a year ago, and we hope to go back in August, but we're talking about in Benguela Province, as Gene said, where in many instances they are cooking on firewood in the school yard, boiling a pot of water, making a gruel, so the training materials had to be very simplified. You know, measuring the amount of corn/soy blend, which is what's being used, getting the

water to a boiling point, how to mix it properly. And as Gene said, the food safety aspects, because in many instances this food is being cooked by ladies from the community, many times with an infant strapped on their back. So safety – you've got a good fire going here, you've got boiling water here – so it's very interesting and very satisfying work.

JB: I expect there are even issues of potable water in some communities too.

SG: Oh, I mean it's just gathering water from the stream, so it has to be boiled.

GW: Safe water is almost as important as food. We just got back from China, where in rural China where we've started almost like a snack program with some fortified materials – food based, they're having for the first time ever running, clean water in that school. And they're celebrating that almost as much as the food. They have clean, running water. For the first time children can wash their hands. It's an incredible gift to that school to give them water as well as the food itself.

JB: How were you able to do that?

SG: This has been a very interesting initiative. We all know that China is a booming economy and a booming nation right now with huge, sophisticated cities, but yet we were approached by a biotechnology firm located in Guangzhou, who to the best we can figure had heard Gene speak at a conference in 2009 in Beijing, talking about school feeding, the importance of school feeding, the benefits it brings and all those things. She did a wonderful job. And we were approached and asked if we would assist this company. They wanted to help feed children in what they called rural, impoverished schools of China. And they wanted to do it just on a philanthropic basis. They wanted to give back. And this is a vibrant biotechnology firm that is marketing throughout China. We visited their plant when we were there about six weeks ago – a state of the art plant. But anyway, working with them and then with the China Nutrition Society, who we are partnered with to help establish some nutritional standards for this supplement the children are getting. So they started the project in rural Guangdong Province as Gene mentioned, in four schools, and the schools had no running water, so the company paid for bringing running water in. It's basically a very simplified system. The water is brought in and stored on the roof and gravity

flow brings it down to the faucets on each level of the school building – there are about three levels. And that water is heated and the supplement that the children receive is put into hot water. And the children have a little mug and they shake it – they're as cute as they can be – and that's their snack for the day. They also get snacks to take home on the weekend. And it's very interesting of course in China. They have the one child policy and for the most part in these rural areas the parents have gone to the urban areas to find work. So the child is being cared for by grandparents. And we've seen some very, very poor conditions in these rural schools in China. And the project will move to another province next year, again about four or five schools, and then in 2015 into another province. It's been very interesting, but interesting working with the China Nutrition Society also.

JB: Is that a government organization or – ?

SG: I would say quasi, quasi.

JB: So it does more work than just with schools?

SG: Yes.

JB: Let's talk a little about the issues in this country then, since you all should be quite aware of them. Where are we with scratch cooking? Where does that stand? Will we ever go back to that?

GW: In this country?

JB: Yes.

SG: Well, I'll answer first. I don't think we'll ever go back to scratch cooking as it was even thirty years ago. Gene may have a different view, but I think there has definitely been increased interest in using fresh foods, the Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Farm to School Initiative, exposing kids to those kinds of foods, improving the nutritional value of the foods that are being used. That I think will continue to grow, but you'll never go back to the scratch cooking of the early years of the program.

JB: So it'll be a hybrid of fresh fruits and vegetables and convenience foods?

SG: It'll be a hybrid – I think that's a good summary. Gene would you like to comment?

GW: I totally agree with Stan. I think scratch cooking as we have known it for years is over. I think the challenge today is to select from the hundreds of products available, those that best meet the needs of the school, through the nutritional content, and affordability. And schools are challenged to find the products that are meeting their nutrition model the most successfully, and the cost containment that they have to have. But we have today a huge array of new products of all kinds that we didn't have thirty years ago. So I think this is an indicator of how these programs are growing in their sophistication, in their quality, and in their availability of products to meet the needs of children. So I see scratch cooking as being history. I think today it's technology, it's the new, advanced food, and the challenge to make wise food selections in terms of nutrition and cost. I might go back to one awful thing Stan mentioned about making these selections in other countries like China for example. The poverty there is so great that as he mentioned we send food home with children over the weekend. We don't do that in this country, but there, and in Afghanistan for example, and other countries, food is sent home with the school child so that child will have food, and even for the little brothers and sisters during the weekend, so they can come back to school and pick up on the nutritional quality of the food being served at school. So the fact that grandparents come and live with the children and go home often with a little food to feed them, means that school feeding there, in these poor countries is a seven day a week process, and in some cases providing much more than just one meal a day.

JB: Another topic – childhood obesity – where are we there?

SG: Oh my. Well, if you want to start from a global standpoint, I think that the bad habits that we experience in the States among many of the population, which I think is beginning to change somewhat, in some of these more advanced countries that are developing, you're beginning to see the same thing. We learned from the China Nutrition Society for example, in the major metropolitan areas of China you're beginning to see that. Fast foods are available, and kids are not as physically active as they were, because they have iPads, and iPhones, and computers, and so it's growing a bit. But I think the emphasis in this country on

physical exercise, and you have to give credit to the First Lady, Michelle Obama, who started this movement program, but I think it's beginning to take. I think people are becoming aware that exercise is necessary and good for your health. I think you're beginning to see more of a slow movement of children walking to school, biking to school. So I think we've turned the corner.

GW: Well, I see obesity in all the countries that we visit, particularly in the urban areas, where there isn't as much physical exercise. But to me this whole issue of obesity is one that we need to really deal with with an educational program. You have to have exercise, there's no doubt about that. In this country we're restricting money for physical activity at school to get the test scores up, we know all that's going on, and I'm not saying that that's even bad, but here I think we have to face obesity as a nutrition education issue as well. And I think that's one of the great needs that we've had globally. I think it's one of the unmet needs, is to give nutrition education as well as the food. And I see that as being a shortfall that we have that we hopefully will be correcting in the future. Nutrition education needs to be part of the food delivery system in my view.

JB: Another issue talked about in '04 was the AIDS epidemic as you started to get into Africa. Have you seen any improvement in that with the children?

SG: I don't think I have enough background to really answer that question, Jeffrey. I don't know.

GW: I think we have seen very little because we don't focus on that particular health problem. You can look at the broader data that shows there is an increase in much of Africa, for example, and in other countries. But how it really affects children, I'm not totally sure about that. I do know that there are many homeless orphans, where the parents are both gone. I know in Tanzania there is a project; it's called the Women's Project, in which volunteer women will find a home where the father is already gone with AIDS, and where the mother is dying with AIDS. And these women go into that home, get the children together with their mother, who will not be there long, and they work together a plan on doing two things, first of all the family history, in other words 'Who is this family?' The children don't really know sometimes, so they're writing down the family history so the children will have that. And then the mother, with this volunteer, and her own children, will work out a plan, so that little family can stay together, when

the mother is gone. So those things are going on. They're hopeful, they're tragic, they're very sad, but it remains as far as I know, it's still a very big problem.

SG: Oh, I think that's very true.

GW: A very big problem.

JB: What about universal feeding? Will we ever have that in the United States?

SG: If you're talking about universal free school lunch – I think is what you're asking – I think the cost of that universal free school lunch – I don't think we'll ever see that. I think it's too costly, particularly in the economic climate that we're in now; just fighting to keep what we have is going to be the effort. So I don't see in my lifetime universal free school meals.

GW: Well, it's an interesting question, and one we debate every year at the Legislative Action Conference in Washington, where the school nutrition community comes together, and there are various points of view. I think when we say universal we need to say what are we really talking about. Are we talking about giving a child three meals a day? Are we talking about giving a meal at school at no cost to the child or the family? I don't know that we've ever really defined that. We use the word universal, but what does that really mean in terms of production and parsing out the meals? I would agree with Stan that as we see the economy today it's not affordable. We're going to be challenged to keep our present programs at the nutrition standards they have now, in my view. I think though there are ways you can help fill the gap if some children aren't getting maybe all they need at school. I still have to go back to nutrition education. I think there's an opportunity there in education. WIC does a wonderful job with family nutrition education. I think that's been a shortfall in our school nutrition programs, is not having an adequate nutrition education system that's universally available for children.

SG: I would totally agree with nutrition education. Of course we had a small program that was eventually not funded, and pretty much eliminated, so – it's very important, and we need it.

JB: Anything else either of you would like to add today?



GW: I just want to thank you for giving us this chance to set the record straight in the last few years. It's a wonderful privilege to work with this program. I'm eternally grateful for it. It's fun. It's very hard work. At times it's discouraging, but in the end what could be more important than feeding a child? And that's what I'm coming from.

SG: Well I think I would say it's been wonderful to have jobs and positions where I love my work.

GW: Yes. It's fun.

SG: I have found in my lifetime, among my college friends, etc., that there's not a lot of people that love their job, but I loved my work with USDA, I love my international work, so it's been great.

GW: And I think too, so often people think that international work is so exciting, and a lot of fun, and it's not – hardest work I've ever done, frankly, in these countries. I think we need to be sure that people understand that it's very difficult work – but it is so rewarding, and it's fun, and it's challenging. And it demands all the skills and knowledge that we have to apply it in these conditions where there's so little. So it's a privilege to do it and a wonderful experience.

JB: Well thank you both for all you've already done and all you continue to do for the children.

GW : In nine years we'll be back for another update!