

**The Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project**

An Oral History with Mike Molloy

Archives and Research Collections  
Carleton University Library

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Narrator: Mike Molloy  
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**Abstract:**

Mike Molloy was one of the Canadian immigration officials who assisted in the 1972 Asian expulsion from Uganda. Working under the direction of Roger St. Vincent, Molloy was second in command at the Kampala office during the time of the expulsion. Molloy has also served as the President of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society, which was responsible for gathering the materials found in the Ugandan Asian Collection.

This oral history covers Molloy's background working for Manpower and Immigration Foreign Service and the lead up to the 1972 Asian expulsion. It also includes a detailed account of the major issues faced at the Kampala immigration office during the three month period before the expulsion deadline, from September 6 to November 8, 1972.

The interview concludes with a brief overview of how the Ugandan Asian Collection was assembled before arriving at Carleton University in 2012.

This oral history was conducted at Maxwell MacOdrum Library, the home of Archives and Research Collections at Carleton University. Present for this interview was also Shezan Muhammedi, PhD Candidate in History, Migration and Ethnic Relations at the University of Western Ontario.

**Heather LeRoux: Okay so today is the 13th of August 2014, this is Heather LeRoux, an oral history with Mike Molloy for the Ugandan Asian Archive Oral History Project. So Mike I'll get you to start by telling me a little bit about yourself and where you're from.**

**Mike Molloy:** I'm from British Columbia, I grew up for the most part in the Kootenay area, in and around Nelson, British Columbia. I got my education there including a university degree from a university that lived and died in Nelson in the fifties and sixties, Notre Dame. Nelson's the prettiest town in Western Canada – just put that plug in. I did graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan in European Diplomatic History, although I didn't finish it. I had a pretty normal growing up, I guess.

In 1968 I guess it was, I put in an application to join what was then called the Manpower and Immigration Foreign Service, and to my amazement I was accepted and reported for duty in Ottawa having driven across Canada in a Volkswagen, with baby in the back and all of our possessions stuffed into the back seat, which was taken out and shipped to Ottawa by greyhound bus.

I had a year's training – really good training – basically in and around the Burke building on Rideau Street, which is where Manpower and Immigration's headquarters was. We got, of course, intensive work on the Immigration Act and Regulations but also a lot of skills acquisition including interview techniques. We were interviewed on television which was a quite a big shock to all of us back at that stage. We did a tour across Canada and I was really lucky, we were supposed to go as a part of the training to two posts abroad for two weeks each and I was to go first of all to Vienna and then switch with my friend - a guy from Kitchener - and go to Belfast while he came to Vienna. But I arrived in Vienna three days after the Russians marched in to Czechoslovakia and so I was there when the government made the decision that we were going to take Czech refugees.

I was very proud because I started out interviewing refugees and then a very senior officer came to watch my technique, and I was immediately promoted to carrying files [Laughter] after which I was promoted to signing visas and my friend Doug Dunnington and I literally worked out of a broom closet for four weeks. We'd get in there in the morning, push our chairs backwards into the broom closet, they'd bring a table and all day long it would be piled with applications from Czechs who had been approved by the interviewing team – lucky guys – and were getting ready to be transported to Canada. So my first real interchange with any immigrants was with refugees, the Czech refugees.

That was followed up by a fantastic two and a half year posting to Tokyo, where I did mainly normal immigration from Japan, from Okinawa – which was still occupied territory – and from Korea where at

that stage we had no embassy in Korea so we would fly once or twice, three times a year to Korea and interview immigrants there. It was really the start of immigration from Korea to Canada. Korea was a very odd place at that stage, it was still crawling out from the horrors of the Korean War. But you could see very powerful people, very determined people, people with a strong sense of who they were and where they were going. So that was really good training and experience.

And then I got my next assignment after two and a half years there in the summer of '71, it was a cross posting to Beirut, and Beirut at that stage was what was called an area office and it was responsible for thirty-eight countries, so those countries began with Iran farthest east, Iraq, the Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Although we had lots of business from some of them, not so much in others. Turkey, and then west and south of there, we didn't cover Egypt or Sudan but we covered the eastern half of Africa, down to the South African border and all the islands in the Indian Ocean – I said we had thirty-eight countries, several of which we never even found.

I'd wanted to go to Beirut for the travel, I was appalled at how much there was, I had been there barely a month when my boss said "Okay everybody here has been travelling like crazy." I'd arrived late because we'd had some medical problem, we had just rented an apartment with no furniture, and he said "Two weeks from now I want you in East Africa interviewing" so... and he said "The other guys will teach what you need to do." And the first thing we had to do was learn the name of the airports, the countries and the currency, and the capitals. If you didn't know those things you could go off and never come back.

So what I had to learn was how to get from Beirut to Athens, because you couldn't get to Africa from Beirut, then we would fly to Kenya and interview for anything from a week to two weeks. Then to Zambia for maybe three or four days of interviews, then out to the islands – the beautiful island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean you always tried to make sure you had a weekend there – and maybe interview from anything from a week to ten days. Then back through Dar-es-Salaam, where the Ismailis in particular were being squeezed out and we were interviewing there people whose businesses had been nationalized – they hadn't been told they had to go they simply had their businesses nationalized – and we... one of my colleagues was dealing with them full time. So I spent a week in Dar, then back to Nairobi where there were more files waiting and so another almost week. And then the idea was that I was to go to Ethiopia, Rabat - each for a couple of days work - and then home through Cairo.

So I got this all planned out and the boss said to me “You haven’t got Uganda on your list.” I said “We don’t have any files, we don’t have any applications there.” And he said “That’s not the idea,” he said “You know, you’ve read this mad man Idi Amin has taken over, I want you to go and spend two or three days there and you are to meet with the British and the Americans, but most of all you are to meet with the leaders of every one of the communities you can track down.” He said “Start with the Ismailis, they’re the best organized.” So that’s what I did, and in those days we didn’t have diplomatic status so you travelled with an ordinary government passport, which meant that for the most part you ended up at the back of every line. Which is really not very pleasant, with tonnes of files and suitcases full of files and stuff.

Anyway, so when I swung back through Kenya I did my work there, I then went to Kampala for three days. And I met the head of the [Ismaili] council, who said basically you know, who we are, we’re watching, we’re worried about what’s going to happen here. You guys might want to start thinking about sending a few families to Canada. There was a little movement out of Uganda – not much – but there was a little movement, certainly there was none on that trip. And I met a number of people who then became very, very important six or eight months later.

So home we go back to Beirut, and spend a week working through all the files you hadn’t quite finished because we were doing twelve families a day, so it was pretty intense. Plus, often in those places there were visitors that had to be dealt with as well. It sounds like it was a lot of fun, it was a lot of work. Anyways I came back, spent a month or so mainly dealing with Lebanese visitors which was a bit like cleaning a sawmill – it was really hard work. A trip to Turkey and then it was time to go back in June/July, it was time for another trip to East Africa.

So I again, I did that whole circuit again and went to Kenya, or rather Uganda, met with the same people again and a few others and basically said you know, things are not looking well and over the course of that summer or that spring between my first visit and the second one less than six months later, the pressure on the community as Amin began to focus on that community, was growing. But people thought they could, for the most part people told me even on the second, “Oh well, you know, this will pass, he can’t afford not to have us here – we are the economy.” So I got home, and was home and the plan was that my wife and I were going to – I hadn’t had any time off since I got there – so the plan was we were going to take a month off and throw everybody in the back of the car and go off to Turkey for a bit of camping which was what people did in those days.

And then one week, probably the middle of... I must have got back the last part of July... of course on the fourth of August we hear that the expulsion has been ordered and then my boss Roger St. Vincent begins to get bombarded from Ottawa as I'm the last guy to have been in Uganda. I'm in there with him all the time thinking okay, what can we do... trying to figure out the answers to the questions that Ottawa's answering – because they didn't know what to do either. At first they thought that we could somehow do everything from Beirut, and we quickly disabused them from that – you can't do it from here, the mail takes forever, there's no good communication. You can't even get a flight from here to anywhere there.

Then in one week - kind of the week from hell - my wife who was pregnant was told by the doctor in the embassy "You're not having the baby here, I want you out of here back to Canada as fast as you can. This week." And then I got a message from Ottawa saying "Oh by the way we're going to be shifting you from Beirut to the United States to open a new visa office, before December" and then as I, I was sort of reeling from all of this – this happened the same day – and then within an hour Roger's secretary comes in [to get me] and [Roger] tells me he's heading as fast as he can within a day or two for Kampala and I'm going to be his right hand man. I said "Yeah well I've got to get my family out of here first," you know so, busy day.

Buys days, we had to break the lease, pack up what we had, get the shipping companies in, get a ticket for my wife and two kids via London, notify her friends in London she was coming through. Got them on the plane on Friday, finished up the packing on Saturday, checked into the Phoenicia hotel, because the flat was empty by that time. Drove in, checked in, got up in the morning, got on the limo to the airport, up to Athens, have a day in – well twelve hours to the flight, I'll be able to explore Athens. It was – pardon me – pissing down rain in no uncertain terms, so I thought well... and you know I'm in a hotel room, no T.V., no radio, no nothing. So I thought well, I'll just have a nap. Just as I drifted off to sleep a little voice in my head said "Where did you leave your car?" [Laughter] It was quite a mystery, I had driven to the hotel.

Anyways, the next morning, or that night I flew down and when I got to Nairobi, there was a message waiting for me from Roger saying he'd got some forms and stuff printed up and I was to pick them up and he said "Come as soon as you're done, bring as many big Canadian flags as the embassy would let you have." So I guess the next day, the forms were done and I got them all bundled up, and I went and saw the ambassador and he gave me about six very large flags, and I flew into Kampala on the sixth. Now, Roger had been there for two or three days and the core crew had arrived on the Monday. I

arrived with two or three others on the Tuesday and to my surprise there was a mini bus waiting for me at the airport with... a little white mini bus with little cardboard Canadian flags painted, stuck to the front, the back, the walls, the doors. And a man, the African driver said "I'll take you to the hotel," I said "No, no, I understand there's an office, take me to the office."

Roger had managed to get a really good office with the help of the British and the Ismailis who held the space for us, the British they put in the basement, we had this mezzanine floor. So I arrived there with the boxes and stuff and went up the stairs and I'm looking around because there's people running hither and thither, and furniture is arriving that had been made for us and I hear from the back of the room St. Vincent's voice "Well Molloy, did you come here to look around or did you come here to work?"

So I just threw everything down in the corner and said "What do you want me to do?" he said, "I've got a meeting, here's..." he has a piece of paper... "This is how I want the furniture set up." So we all get in there, we get it all done and he tells me "We're opening tomorrow morning." I met the three secretaries who'd come in, the clerk, two or three visa officers who had come in from London and Athens, and I think Rome, a doctor... a couple of doctors. And so we had a meeting that night, Roger had a little suite for meetings at the Apollo International Hotel, where we were all staying. Which was a, maybe six blocks from where the building was.

So we had a meeting there that night, and we were trying to figure... the big problem was how the heck are we going to communicate with these people? We've got sixty days to move them out, the deadline is in November, this is September, the beginning of September. How will we communicate? And this clerk by the name of Jim McMaster who'd arrived with the three secretaries opens up this box and he brings out a stamping machine, a little silver gizmo like this, and could stamp the same number over as many as nine times, and then go onto the next number. I think it did six digits, and he said "Well why don't we stamp this on the application and stamp these on a piece of paper - a different piece of paper - and then we could just put the numbers in the newspaper." Well of course that was... that was the device around which the whole system worked because it allowed for us to put... to summon people to interviews or for other things without ever putting their names down anywhere and using the paper, which everybody read. So I mean McMaster should have gotten the Order of Canada for just... he just... just on spec he was packing up supplies and he just saw this thing sitting on the shelf in the store room and without even thinking just grabbed it and threw it in just in case. That, boy that was our pivot.

The next morning, sixth of September we're open for business. The rules that we had from cabinet at that stage were up to three thousand people who meet normal criteria - the points system. But keep in mind the humanitarian circumstances, you know the typical perfectly square circle of instructions, up to three thousand and... but standby. So that was our initial thing. The next morning everybody except the boys - the three young visa officers – got in the mini buses, and I walked down the hill with Jacques Drapeau and one other fellow... to walk to the office. When we get down to Kampala Road, which is the main drag, there's all these Asians standing around on the street. It didn't matter which way you looked, they were this way they were that way, all along the sidewalk, all standing there. We you know, duh, being a little dumb we didn't necessarily figure out what it was. We're walking along, heading towards the IPS building... all these Asians on the sidewalk. Well, we come around the corner to the building and guess what? The line begins there. And there were, well there were close to a thousand people in line at that moment. We got fifteen hundred people who came that day.

So we went in and Roger had had the foresight to have a large counter being made, and that was across the front of the doorway. The visa typing ladies, the eldest of whom I think was twenty three at the time and the youngest had just turned nineteen, had no visas to type. Roger's brilliant insight was, we'll put them on the counter, they'll be the ones... so when the Asians started coming, I guess we opened the door about eight thirty, the first people they met were these three young women from Ottawa who were thrilled out of their skulls to be there. This was the great adventure of their lives and as a result were friendly, smiling, helpful and just the antithesis of what these people had ever seen of bureaucracy.

While they're doing this... they're handing out applications to people saying, "Come and bring these back as soon as you're done, bring these back this afternoon, bring these back tomorrow morning, bring these back tomorrow afternoon" as they go through. Fifteen hundred and seventy-seven applications handed out for over seven thousand people. So by about eleven o'clock people who'd been in line first thing in the morning were coming back with their completed applications, including photos and the applications were amazing, they were all either typed or neatly hand written. So we had to open up a second line for people coming for their applications, for people dropping off applications and it's at that stage that the stamping machine comes out. The British had given us a little grey form with her majesty's government stuff on it, but it was what you had to do to get permission to leave from the Ugandan tax department, so we'd stamp the number on that, we'd stamp the number on the

application and say, “That’s your number, watch for it in the paper or watch for it in the window over there.”

So in the course of the day I think I interviewed about sixty or seventy people who had somehow or another previously got applications or had letters or telegrams from their families, so we already by the end of the day put about seventy cases through in to be processed. The thing was of course we had to kind of invent the system as we went along. But Roger said, “We’re not going to use file jackets, we’re going...” the application was a double sheet you know, folded with information on it... “Put everything in there, put a number on it and we’re not even going to have index cards. The people know their numbers, they’ll come to us with their numbers. When we have the number we can find their application’s which we’ll file according to the number.” Really dead simple so it saved a huge amount of work in terms of because... the people were our indexing system. So the next day we had as many people, the day after that we had... I think by the third day it began to go down and I think eventually then we started – I think it was by day three – we would have three lines. Applications going out, applications coming in and people coming for interviews. Eventually there were five lines because people were coming for their medicals, people were coming for their tests, picking up their visas. So managing that front counter was the key to the whole thing.

There was an incident the first day, some people tried to push to the front of the line and that resulted in a fist fight and there was a big fellow we called Goliath who... six foot five tall who helped. The minister had sent his political assistant, a guy by the name of Zavier Levine from Winnipeg out to sort of provide us with political direction and Zavier went out to – I thought rather foolishly – went out to try and sort out this scuffle that was going on. Well he restored order at the cost of his shirt and then this Goliath guy just was deputized to keep order and we realized we need some security guards. That was easy and we hired some from a security company and after that we never had any problem. But word of that got back to Ottawa and they thought oh, we’re dealing with these chaotic Asians... of course we weren’t at all, we were dealing with very orderly people with a few people who had come in and thought that they were so important that they should go to go to the front of the line. Well that doesn’t work anywhere in the British Commonwealth that I’m aware of.

So, anyways when we got home back to the hotel that night we heard... that was the day of the Munich massacre, the Munich Olympics massacre... and Zavier who was Jewish got really quite alarmed because he knew Amin was a Muslim and there was a strong... a strong worry. So he left I think the next morning got him out of there. He was really quite upset, as was everybody who heard about it.

One of the earlier problems that we had... okay so, six days in on the thirteenth [of September] Cabinet met again. Now, what do we know? We're on the... we're interviewing people you know seeing maybe... well, our interviewing team the goal was everybody had to see twenty-five families a day. Which was all odd, you know we did more in Indo-China but in this case, we had to get a lot more information that was required just because of the way the system was. I seldom made my twenty-five because whenever Roger was out I was the boss and if there was snarls, it was my job to sort them out, so I'd do maybe twenty and everybody else would do twenty-five and we'd work until there was nobody else left in the line.

We started I think asking seventy families a day to come in and as time went on and people began to leave we got a lot of no shows, we'd go up to a hundred, a hundred and twenty, a hundred and thirty to get sixty or seventy in. Anyways on the thirteenth - we started on the sixth - so on the thirteenth of September Cabinet met again and every night the boss had been phoning back to Ottawa, how many we'd seen, what we were seeing... and you had to phone from a bank of phones in the lobby of the hotel, and you had to book the call and Roger quickly discovered that every night there were two fellows beside him, one on either side who were pretending to be talking, but who were listening to what he was saying. So Roger and Maurice Mitchell who was our Director of Operations quickly decided that they would speak joul, a French-Canadian slang and as soon as they start doing that – it was cut off. [Laughter]

But anyways he was... we were phoning back our... Roger was really insistent on good solid statistics, nothing ever gets put down except where it's supposed to be. Any disorder will sink us, and so every night he would phone Ottawa or they would phone him and he would give them the numbers, and what we were seeing. What kind of occupations we were seeing, what kind of... what our impressions were of the people, what our impressions were of the political situation. So on the thirteenth Cabinet met again and there'd been a big shift in perception and the shift in perception is this... one – this is a humanitarian movement, this is not primarily an attempt to get people to meet the selection criteria, it's a humanitarian movement. You're officers have the discretion to approve people whether they meet the points system or not. Remind them that they are to use it as this is a humanitarian movement, over and over again. And the three thousand limit is off, you are to process as many people as you possibly can – no upper limit. Go, go, go, go.

And Cabinet even agreed that the minister's... nobody would mention any numbers in terms of total. That was absolutely verboten. There would be no mention of a target and when asked they would say,

“We don’t know, we will see, circumstances... we can’t foresee what will happen.” But our... at that stage we were told “shift gears” and its humanitarian. And so what we were doing is as the applications came in, some of us would be interviewing and some of them would be going quickly through looking at who they were, you’d have to formally paper screen them and with a form, a section had to be torn off and sent to Ottawa. You had to do that part of it, so that took a bit of time... so whenever we weren’t interviewing that’s what we were doing and as soon as we got seventy people – bang – that’s the list. One of the secretaries would type it up and off it would go to the *Uganda Argus* and we’d stick it up in the window of the office. So you know, and if you were working there at night – you could be working there say eleven or twelve at night - there was always people coming onto the veranda of the building where we were. And you’d see them, they’d have a little list of numbers and they were checking to see whether they or their friends or relatives had been called.

So anyway that’s when we shift gears into a different mode and it’s pretty clear at that stage that Ottawa thinks we’re going to have people to put on airplanes after two weeks, but people still haven’t... even though by that stage its six weeks since the order to leave was given, people haven’t absorbed it. And we didn’t have anybody that we could have put in the first flight. In fact the first flight got postponed until about the twenty-fifth I guess of September, and even then it was not filled and the second was not... it had even less people. But around the end of September, a whole series of things happen.

Amin announces that not only are Asians with British passports to go, but with Kenyan passports, with Zambian passports, Tanzanian passports... they’re to go as well. So that sent some more rumbles though the community. And then there was an invasion of the former president’s people and a bloody little war that lasted about a week. It started on a Sunday because I was actually having lunch with one of the wives of people I’d met on my first trip down, her husband and family were out but she’d stayed behind and I remember saying to her, “You have to get an application, you have to get out of here.” “Well I don’t think it would...” And as we’re sitting there we all of a sudden see all of these army vehicles roaring down the road, there was a traffic circle and you could see all of these army vehicles going around the circle and heading towards the border... and the only other person in the dining room was a British journalist. Halfway through our meal three or four policemen come in, hit him so hard he can’t stand up and drag him out. So I said to my friend, my wife’s friend, “Monday morning come to the line, waive the application and I will interview you,” “What about my family in London?” “That’s my problem, not yours, your problem is we need to get you on an airplane.”

Now the war lasted about five or six days and pretty well all of the invaders were killed in that or taken prisoner and killed, but the army went crazy after that. They went right out of control, and it became very dangerous for people to travel in for their interviews and then go home to Mbale and other places. So there was a real... we quickly learned that if there was someone coming in from outside they weren't going home... so there was the impetus that we had to move quickly. While that's happening, other Asians are being told they have to leave and we had a big problem initially because although we got all our doctors at once, the Cabinet wouldn't relent on the medical criteria even though we told them we're not seeing any real problems. In the ordinary immigration of Asians we're not seeing with the medicals that are coming through we're not seeing... this is a healthy population. "Oh, tropical diseases..." we're not seeing tropical diseases. Anyways we had to do the whole thing so that in addition to a physical, x-ray, radiology report, blood test, urinalysis, and stool examination.

So anyways a week after we get there an army medical team arrives of technicians and boy they brought in... they brought in two generators just in case, big enough... bigger than a Volkswagen. And they set up a tent to do the blood screening and stuff, the quickest way they learned... the tent went up and as soon as they got it up the temperature went up to about a hundred degrees in the first fifteen minutes. This was... and we had to go out and buy air conditioners to air condition the tent. But they were behind and the head of the medical team who had been with Roger in the DP camps in Europe in the late forties, early fifties, he and Roger never got along from day one... and oh my. He refused to let his doctors medically examine anybody until all the test results were there.

So while this... we're waiting for the medical team to come, and they're very good, really fast, and they were you know, what you'd expect from the Canadian military. Give them their orders, they'll do it, and they worked like dogs but they were lagging behind us by about two weeks. So finding people who were ready to move who could get through all the medical stuff... when the medical guys were up and running and then get the doctors to give them the clearance, put us behind. And so we're in this situation by the end of September where the security situation has gone to hell. We actually had to close down one day when the military came by the street... scared the living daylights out of everybody, including me. And we're all now really nervous because you never know what's going to happen.

The Asian community is now really frightened, they want to go. But the thing is, they're also being seen by the British, and so many of the people applied to us... whoever gives them their thing first, they'll go. And with the British, there was no medical... it was a question of whether or not the people were British,

confirming that people were British citizens. There was no medical, nothing like that it was just a ten minute interview and they get a sticker.

Now, the British thought they were going to get sixty thousand people but at the end of the day they got less than thirty. And it's at that stage we'd begin to... then in the middle of all this Asians are told you all cheated on your citizenship thing, so you all have to come to the ministry of something or other and get your papers done. Well, it was completely capricious as to whose was accepted... there was no process. It depended on what the clerk felt at that moment and could choose if you'd lose it or not. And the army one day came along one afternoon and just went down the line and took everybody's documents away and that was that. So when we reported that, we went back to Ottawa and said look, clearly, clearly, clearly, Ugandan citizenship offers no protection. We should be targeting those people who want to come.

So just as the way things kind of shook out, the British took the ones who because of their status, they qualified. And even the British criteria became much looser as time went by. And we started to focus on people who had nowhere to go. That resulted in what I've come to understand similarly, for many in the Hindu community there, the ultimate aim had always been to get to Britain. There were two other communities for whom Britain was a desirable option but who were prevented in many cases from going to Britain because they were Ugandan citizens, those were the Ismailis and the Goans. The Ismailis had been encouraged by the Aga Khan when independence came to take out Ugandan citizenship – they didn't all – but many, many did. Majority of them, I'd say probably. And the Goans for the most part were overwhelmingly people who worked in the government so they had to take out Ugandan citizenship as well.

So when we got to the point where the, where we'd gone through and got everybody who'd met the points system and then started working through the rest of the files there was kind of a rule of thumb. Regardless of what citizenship you had, if you had met the point system of course you went, you qualified as an immigrant. But if you didn't, if you had somewhere else to go – go there. If you don't have somewhere else to go, come see us. And so that's... it was kind of a rough and ragged distinction we made and there were many exceptions in both directions. But for the most part we discovered we weren't there to help the British, we were there to help people that the British couldn't help. So, as luck would have it we got the two most adaptable communities as a result because they had thrown in their lot, with Uganda. The Goans were Christians, and were able to adapt to Canada very well. The Ismailis were highly organized and they were able to adapt very well. So by... one of the few times in my career

by making virtuous decisions we actually got the better results than if we did something else, which was kind of nice to see.

So we get through this war and the first week in October was the Ugandan national day and everybody... all the other embassies were shutting down and we decided, with Ottawa's permission that the secretaries and the younger officers would all get the weekend off because reinforcements were arriving. We were getting more doctors, more visa officers, and three or four more of these crack visa typists from the same section that the three original women were from. So they all arrived hot to trot on the long weekend and we shipped the young... the youngsters - I was all of twenty seven at the time – so the 'youngsters' we sent off and we used those three days for a real drive.

The medical technicians worked twelve hour days, they got caught up. The visa typists came in and they got it all caught up and we went through all the applications. Because we said okay, we will go through and screen now in and make a list of everybody we're going to see until the end of October. So we can get those lists into the paper right away so people know we're going to see them because we were beginning to see, as I say, a lot of people not showing up because with things getting bad if you had a British thingy, you didn't know when the Canadians were going to see you, you didn't stick around – you went.

That was a long, brutal weekend but at the end of it we were confident that we could fill the flights and we could get, probably something like six thousand people. It was that weekend that the boss created a new unit of... that would be in charge of the documentation stream, getting everything onto the files and then, sign to make the visa, make this visa, call the person... put their number up to call them in. And decide, are you going to come on one of our charters? Are you going to go some other way? Sort it all out. And then the same unit was responsible for getting people... doing the Uganda end of the charters.

We now had the charter schedule, I think there were twenty to thirty flights coming for us... to us. And so... the boss, interestingly enough went into this pool of five or six visa officers and I, and picked the youngest one, Gerry Campbell. Gerry had worked for a month in London interviewing as a trainee, and he worked for me for two weeks, and on the basis of that six weeks he was put in charge of the... coordinating all of the paper flow and meshing that with getting people on airplanes. He had managed to get someone from one of the American airlines to help him, and they set up a whole system. The first thing he decided – and it was really brilliant – was we were not going to have our people go that thirty

miles out to the airport unescorted. Because we were beginning to hear how the people, British and others were being ripped off at every stop along the way.

So what we did was we... everybody had to come to the parking lot of the hotel, the baggage was weighed there, extra baggage was take your pick, take your pick. You can take this one, you can take that one – you can't take them both. And onto the buses, and then there was always a very dignified looking car in the front always with a Canadian flag even though there was no ambassador, we got in some trouble over that – which we ignored. And then the busses were draped with big Canadian flags and it got so, when they came to the roadblocks they just opened up and we'd pass through. The other thing was that our guys would stay there until the plane was gone, and they would follow the people through the processing. Now, you couldn't protect them from whatever the customs officers were going to do but the fact that we'd send out soldiers, we'd send out – if they wanted a bit of a break – we'd send all these young muscular fellows out there and the fact that we'd stand there and watch offered a degree of protection to them. And then we'd... that little team went out would never come back until the flight was in the air.

About that time with that set of reinforcements we also got a legendary visa officer by the name of Mo Benoit, and Mo came from just across the river here in Hull [Quebec]. A typical Irish French Canadian and was the toughest man I'd ever met. He'd been torpedoed twice within twenty four hours in the north Atlantic. His ship went down, he was rescued and kept alive in the water in the winter in the water by a broken collar bone, otherwise he'd have died from exposure. Then rescued by another ship and it went down, back in the water - this was one tough cookie. [Laughter] And so he was put in charge of the front counter because he really knew his stuff and once we explained the system he very efficiently moved people along.

At that stage... so you get in to sort of the middle of October... the system is really working. We'd all learned what needed to be done. The systems had been worked out, the kinks had been taken out and we were really pushing them through. But you know we could be asking for a hundred and... sending out the call for a hundred and forty families and maybe getting sixty, seventy, fifty, forty as people left. As we moved along the... of course we got better, more efficient, we got tired. [Laughter]

So we... I'd be the first to say that as things went on we were not quite as smiling and accommodating as we'd been along the way because we knew that there's no time for chit-chat – we had to get these people through. We had to get them through, we had to get them on a plane because what was coming

out of the Ugandan government at that... anybody who's not authorized to stay will be sent to the villages and will have to marry into the villages and da da da... and we were beginning to see people getting hurt. Or people coming in for their interviews and even though we didn't... you know we didn't ask any refugee questions, people would tell us about horrible things that they had seen where they lived. A lot of violence directed at Africans, local African headmen, leaders – with the Asians being hauled out to watch by the soldiers as people were being murdered and tortured and that sort of thing.

We had at least one case where a young man had been brought to us and his brother had been murdered the day before. We got him on the flight the next day. We began to see that. We had the richest man in the country, an order went out to arrest him and he managed to get to us by... in part because at the first road block they hit the officer in charge of it had actually gotten a scholarship from that guy and so he just turned to his men and says, "It's not him," and sent him on his way.

And those are the ones I think in that video where the woman at the conference several years ago talked about how we got them. I remember being pulled... Roger coming along and grabbing me by the shoulder and said up to the hotel... because we didn't want this guy to be seen – he was very well known – so I interviewed him in Roger's room I guess. Roger rather famously had booked him into the hotel under a Canadian name and put them in the room, and we had these little white cardboard Canadian flags that the embassies had to give out, they were like a little postcard. And so we had them on all our doors because we felt if we had to run in the middle of the night, we wanted to be able to go down the hall and bang, bang, on the... you know - to find our people fast. So Roger put this flag on this family's door and it made quite an impression on them, that our flag was protecting them as we whipped them out of the country.

What else can I say? As we got towards the end... you know we had a steady stream of visitors coming heading in on the flights and then going back as escort officers and we had to sort of show a lot of them around which took up a bit of time. Then as we got to the middle of October we then now have to begin to plan how are we going to get out of here? So we had to sort of okay, last medical would be this day, the last medical test would be this day, the last medical examination would be this day, the last interview would be this day, and then at this point the secretaries are gone, the technicians are gone, the medical techs are gone, the doctors are gone, and then Roger was gone and then Mo Benoit was gone the next day.

That was really good experience for me to learn not only how to set it up, but how to break, set it down and get out of there with, what do we do with our records? What do we do with our furniture? As we're coming to the end, the UN more or less arrive, not officially UN but... because the UN High Commission for Refugees couldn't touch these people because they were not refugees yet, they were still in their own country. But it was agreed that IGCEM, the International Governmental Committee for European Migration which is now today IOM, the International Organization of Migration, they showed up at the behest of the UN to set up an evacuation centre for anybody who was left over who had to go. And we got them the space right across from us in the same building and we gave them, as we stopped needing furniture and equipment we shifted over to them. We showed them how we dealt with people with no passports, and you know kept an eye out on what was going on.

One of the things that really struck us was that you'd look at the line ups in their office and a lot of them were black Africans trying to get the hell out of there, not Ugandan Asians. But they, at the end they evacuated about two thousand people. So the question is, why didn't we get them? They tended to be people from the far villages and corners who were so far out that they didn't comprehend what was going on, or thought at the last minute that the... there would be a change of heart. So a lot of them were in that kind of a category and ended up being evacuated to Malta, Naples and Austria. And we took two thousand of them in the following year, I don't recall there being a formal program, there may well have been... I had moved on by then. But so when you say we brought six thousand, we actually brought eight thousand in the next years.

So that's kind of the main line. I remember the last day, it was just myself and Mo Benoit and we had a really great clerk, a fellow who had been lent to us from Nairobi, a guy by the name of John McNeish. And John was going to take all the files back by train to Nairobi, because we... I mean the applications would take up half the room at that stage. And Mo and I went out to the airport the next morning and we learned that there were going to be no more flights into Kampala again for maybe a month. So we just got out by the skin of our teeth, and I was really looking forward to getting home because... back to Beirut and then getting back to Vancouver because that's where Jo [my wife] was, and on to my new assignment... whatever that was going to be. But instead Roger said to me, "Look, there's going to be a lot of people in Nairobi, the Ugandans who happen to be in Kenya who'll need help, so can you stay another week to ten days?" Well there was nobody waiting for me in Beirut, the baby wasn't due until December so of course I said yes.

That last day we just said goodbye to everybody, to the staff, took one last walk around the office which was just an empty space now because all of the furniture had gone to the UN. And you know, got in our little white mini bus and went out to the airport. And then, that was kind of an interesting time. I got there and I thought, I'm going to take the weekend off – I think I must have got there on a Tuesday or so. So I worked for three days and it was really one of the big moments of my life. The High Commissioner invited me for lunch the first day, now I had never been invited to lunch by anybody so amazingly senior as a high commissioner. He'd been – his name was Mr. Oliver – he'd been really helpful, pulled out all the stops, couldn't have been... we couldn't have asked for more. So he takes me out to his residence for lunch and I'm feeling really quite good at that.

We come back to the office and of course as always the case, the visa office is on this floor and everything else of course is above it. Those of us who deal with the people are always on the lowest possible floor. Anyways I'm talking to Mr. Oliver as we're going up and we get to the consular floor, and the door opens up and it's so crowded that somebody literally falls into the elevator and there's... it's just packed. And Mr. Oliver kind of blanches a little bit and I said, "Excuse me, sir, I'll take care of this," and I step out, I was feeling pretty good. So I worked for three days and I went down to the coast for a couple of days and I came back for another two or three days. By that time it was over, anybody who was a Ugandan was there.

Now, that afternoon when I came back the first thing I did was I got up in the chair and I said "Everybody who's a Kenyan citizen put your hand up," all these hands go up, "Everybody who's Tanzanian put your hands up," I said, "Okay all of you here, go on! We're opening a visa office here in a month, we'll see you then, we're only seeing Ugandans today." So that kind of cut the business down quite a bit. But I must have seen maybe another hundred... a hundred and fifty people in that time. And quite often they were spouses, of Kenyan, or Kenyan spouses of people with Ugandan nationality who went when Amin said the Kenyans had to leave, the people with Tanzanian passports had to leave... they had gone to Kenya. So my job was then to pick them all up and make sure that they got off to Canada too. So that's the main lines of the story. Any questions?

**Heather: "Yeah, well just to go back a little bit for people listening to the recording who don't know, what were the criteria that you were using at that time, in the beginning?"**

Mike: "Okay, in the beginning when we opened the doors and say from the sixth to the thirteenth – before that second cabinet meeting – it was people who met the points system. So that meant you had

to get I think at that stage, the pass mark without interviewing the person had to be about thirty nine. Typically it was forty one, but we were allowed to go down a couple points below that – and you had to get a total of fifty points. And we were, as officers, we had ten points to give them on the basis of what was called “personal suitability” and that meant evidence of adaptability, flexibility, you know is the family hanging together? You know, that sort of thing. It was kind of quite subjective. And then if that wasn’t enough then you had to decide – and it was right at the bottom of the form – discretionary authority, and so you could say this person gets forty-seven points, but given the circumstances I think we better let them go, so you could just write that in there. And then you had to have another officer counter sign it, and I was the counter signer for the whole thing. I imagine I probably counter signed fifty in the first day, because we were using discretionary authority all the time.

So that was the first set of instructions was people who meet the criteria. Then the second element came in, people who have relatives in Canada and people who have offers of assistance from Canada. It was really amazing, by week two we were getting telegrams from people’s aunties and uncles in Canada, or even friends saying you know, “My friend Mr. Ahmad, you’re number 443...” you know, that quickly the numbers went back... went across to Canada and came back to us. And we got so many of those that we actually had to have a special system to keep track of them. Because it made a big difference when you opened that application and you look at their name and you open it up and right there is a telegram from somebody’s auntie in Coquitlam, British Columbia saying this is my niece, nephew, my niece, my friend and if you let them in, we’ll look after them. We just said, that’s as good as gold. That’s one we don’t have to worry about. So in those cases you would always use your discretionary authority even if they didn’t meet the points system, you’d always use the discretionary.

And then as I said, later we also began to look at, as we got through... it was fairly easy for us to go through those six, seven thousand applications and very quickly spot... we worked out of the Occupational Demand Guide that decided how the points were allocated... we had it posted in our head at that stage. So we could very quickly pull them out. Then if you got an offer from someone, you’d go back in say oh, we didn’t pull that one out, this one out. The other criteria was, we quickly learned that if the leadership of any of the communities came to us and said, “Could you take so-and-so they’re in trouble” ...we made the decision, we take that on face value. And so the answer is, yes. If someone is in trouble, the military’s after them, the police are after them, an African enemy is after them... yes. We will take them. And we would scribble down the reasons for it on the form and away they’d go.

So that's kind of how it worked, it was... and the other thing was we were always on the lookout for people who were stateless. Because there were lots of people in East Africa who could have been born in a territory other than the one they were in and the system was so chaotic that a lot of people weren't British protected or anything, they were simply stateless. They weren't Indians anymore, they weren't Pakistanis... they were stateless. Now a lot of those who were... them we always looked for. It wasn't always easy to tell, quite often on the application we couldn't always decipher what they meant on the citizenship column. And I remember we had to go back time - and if you read Roger St. Vincent's book - you'll find we keep going back time and time again looking for stateless people.

The funny story of course is that many of the stateless people who thought they were stateless actually went to the British and got permission to live in Britain. So they may have thought they were stateless at the beginning of the process, by the time they got to us they were telling us they were stateless but I remember at one stage quite late in the process one of my colleagues was interviewing somebody and I was sitting next to him in the next table over – and the guy, “Yes, sir I'm stateless, I'm certainly stateless.” So they get talking, and then he's being counselled about the next steps of the process and we're going and without even thinking my colleague says, “Can I see your passport?” So the guy reaches into his pocket and brings out two brand new British passports. So what do you do in a case like that? Well you know, you make allowances in circumstances like that. But that was the other thing, if you had no place to go, which meant stateless or Ugandan citizen, we will use our discretionary powers to ensure that you come. Is that clear?

**Heather: Yes.**

Mike: Okay.

**Heather: So you mentioned a couple of stories but are there any other cases that particularly stood out to you at the time?**

Mike: Other?

**Heather: Cases of people that you were interviewing that were particularly memorable.**

Mike: Well the famous one is the morning in... I guess we were about three or four weeks in because Mr. Benoit had arrived. He and I had had a disagreement a day or two before because he was pretty gruff. He wasn't a mean man but he was rough and tough and gruff. And he said some things and I said... so we had a little bit of an argument and I was feeling pretty annoyed with him. And anyways it's the

middle of the morning and I'm interviewing away and he all of a sudden shows up and he said, "Mike there's something I need you to see right away," and I was going to tell him to go peddle his papers and I looked up and Mo had a face as red as mine usually - only it was white. And I said "Okay, yes right away" and I turned to the person I was interviewing and I said "Your application is approved, take your application to Mr. Colfer there and he'll finish it off." And Mo shows up seconds later with this big African policeman and a scruffy little Asian fellow about maybe five foot three or four, very dirty, dishevelled, unshaven – you never saw people like that you know, they always came to interviews looking their best. And he's in chains, he's got handcuffs and a chain... the sergeant's holding the chain and a machine gun – a sten gun. Mo says, "Here's his file, please interview him."

So I ask the policeman "Can we take off the handcuffs?" and "No sir, we can't." So I said... then I put the chairs... I moved the chairs, put the guy's chair in front of me and the policeman sitting behind him so I could lean over my little table and we could have a private conversation. I said you know, "What's going on?" He was married to a... he was Asian and his wife was Asian but she had a Kenyan passport. So when the knife came down on Kenyans – on Kenyan citizens – they decided that he would take her to the border and she would go to Kenya and stay with her family until he heard whether he was going to be going to Canada or not. When they got to the border, she being a good Asian woman had of course taken all of her jewellery and of course the customs agents found it and said, "Ah! You're smuggling gold!"

So they do three things, they push her across the border to Kenya and they take the gold and they charge him with smuggling, and the police take him to the Kampala jail - which was one of the worst places on the planet at that time. I guess what happened was when she got to Nairobi she let the family in Uganda know what had happened to him – took them a while to figure out where he was – but they realized he was in jail and it didn't matter what they did they couldn't get him out.

So anyways that particular morning the guy's number came up on the front page of the *Uganda Argus*, so the family goes to the jail with the newspaper and demands to see the warden. And says to the warden, "Please bring this guy up, we want to show you something." So they show the... you know what does the warden care what's going on... and they show him this little block of numbers. Anyways they go into the bowels of the jail and they bring this guy – he's in a cell with about sixty other people, it was horrible – they bring him out and they say, "Do you have your little grey document with the number on it?" Somehow or other he had managed to hold onto it despite of everything and they open it up and they show the number on the pad and they show the number on this form – and it's the same number.

And so the warden, deeply impressed says, “Okay well you can take him for an interview but he’s got to go with sergeant so-and-so here.”

That’s the story I get from about three exchanges of sentences. And so you know there’s no question in my mind that he’s going to come to Canada. But I have to go through the forms and it turns out he’s an auto mechanic, well auto mechanics were the highest in demand you could get and he spoke enough English that we got along, so he got full points for that. And he had an auntie in Port-Coquitlam British Columbia, so he gets extra points for that and you know he had some years of school. Anyways, I don’t even have to use my discretion he has fifty two or fifty three points and because... I gave him a really good personal assessment for looking after his wife so well. So I said okay, well you meet our criteria but you have to have a medical. And I’m thinking well how the hell is this all going to happen?

While I’m interviewing I’m aware of everything going around you because this guy’s got this gun and you could have heard a pin drop in that place. There was thirty of us working there and god knows how many other people had arrived by this time coming for their medicals, getting their documents and all these things. Not a sound. Except when the... the sergeant... this machine gun shaped like the very – they’re very crude – a little stock here and then the magazine goes out the side and the, you know I knew enough from when my dad was in the war, these things are terribly unreliable. They go off, and he kept... they’re awkward to hold so the sergeant kept putting it on the floor and then realizing he shouldn’t be doing that and lifts it up, and every time that gun came up everybody in the room freaked out.

Anyways I say to the sergeant “We’ve got to go see the doctor.” And I head over to the medical section which was just across the room really and there... Dr. Piche is just so formal, so bureaucratic standing by his little curtained in cubicle, I introduce the sergeant to him and I introduce the client to him and I say “It’d be nice if he could be seen” and Dr. Piche says, “Well I just happen to be free Michael I’ll do it right now, sergeant take off the cuffs.” And “No sir, I can’t do that.” So happily, the chain was quite long so in they go behind the curtain and we don’t hear very much and I’m... I talked to the sergeant and he’s got ribbons on his chest... including two that my father had from the Second World War so we talked about it, he was in Burma, my dad was in the north Atlantic. Not a lot of... commonality but at least it gave us something to chat about while we were waiting. And a very short time later, Dr. Piche comes out and says “He’s met our medical criteria.” No x-ray, no stool test, no urinalysis and I’m about to say, “What about...?” And he says “Michael – he has met or medical criteria.” If you say so... [Laughter]

So then the boss, St. Vincent who'd been watching this... you know, aware of his presence... watching the whole thing from the side of the room starts strutting over in his... Roger was about this wide and this tall, no fat on him, big man – but not tall – big like a brick, and he always wore these military cut safari suits. Comes over like the air force officer that he was, plants himself right in front of the sergeant and says "Sergeant, this man is to be delivered to Kampala airport for the Canadian flight that will be there tomorrow at seven o'clock precisely, do you understand?" And the sergeant says "Yes, sir." And Roger says "Well make it so," and turns and kind of marches away, and the sergeant salutes him as he goes. So I thought you know, this is really interesting.

So then there's a little awkward silence and Dr. Piche then says, "And oh, by the way sergeant if this goes well tomorrow we'll give your family free medicals the day after." Big smiles. And I had said to the sergeant, "It'd be really nice if this man could have a shower before he leaves tomorrow so that... you know it's a long journey and it won't reflect very well on Uganda if he doesn't get a chance to clean up." Whether he did or not I don't know, I didn't read the... they would see what they could do.

So the next morning seven o'clock exactly this convoy of police cars comes out to the foot of the airplane going up... there was no way... you know you had to go onto the tarmac and go up a couple of stairs and so this fellow, the police car arrives and the sergeant gets out and the man is still in his handcuffs and chain, no machine gun this time thank god. And Roger is waiting at the top of the stairs checking off the list of people going in and up the stairs they come and Roger says "Take off the chains now" so they, click, click, click, shoves him into the airplane as fast as he can. And the policeman had never seen an airplane before and said "Can I have a look inside?" and Roger's like it'll scare all those poor people to death if this guy comes in so he says "No, sergeant this is Canadian territory" which of course it really wasn't, of course it was Canadian property, but he said "I hope we'll see you tomorrow with your family" and they walked down. Roger shakes his hand and you know, leaves him laughing as it were. And the next morning the family showed up and they got the most extensive medical that anybody in Uganda ever got – and a big certificate of good health signed by Dr. Piche. So that one is the one that sticks out in my mind more than any else.

Towards the end... what we saw with the leadership of all the communities they kept changing as people got their visas and left and there were a couple of instances where people were brought in from faraway places by leaders of one community or another as we were reaching the end and in Roger's book he says that we turned them away. My recollection is that I wanted to turn them away, and Roger always said to me "Come on Mike, make room." And so... and for the most part we did.

The other thing that really sticks in my mind is was that we... there was a number of Canadian professors at Makerere University in Kampala... a very good school at that time and there was a guy from McGill who sort of acted as our liaison and he came to me one day and said “There’s maybe twenty or so... maybe a bit more of medical students, Asian medical students at Makerere who are going to have to leave” and “What could we do with them?” And I said well, “What can you do?” I said “Can you get in touch with somebody in Canada and see whether these kids can be admitted to medical school in Canada?” and I reminded him that you know we had done the same with the Hungarians many years before. They had done it – I wasn’t doing any immigration in those days I was five years old. I was too young to do it, they wouldn’t take me.

About three days later he comes in with a telegram from the president of the Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges and it basically said, “Tell the visa office that we will place every single medical student at the expense of the universities that you care to send to us.” So I showed that to Roger and at that stage we were just going like crazy and he said, “Well you can’t have any resources to see these people but if you want to interview them you’ve got to do it on Sunday on your own time.”

So I got in touch with the professor and I said, “Why don’t we bring them all here say nine o’clock Sunday morning and we’ll see if we can’t get through them all.” But they were all individual cases and so – I think I was within my authority – but what I did was I deputized the professor to be my assistant and I said, “We’re going to interview these guys... [in groups] if we interviewed them one at a time we’d be here until midnight so we’re going to do them in groups of five, they’re all young men, we’re not going to ask them anything too embarrassing” and so that’s what we did.

I showed him what needed to be done with the paper so he would be filling in the parts on the back that I would have to sign for the medical and I would just go, your name is so-and-so? Your name is so-and-so? Your name is so-and-so? And asked them all the hard questions at the end. “Are you a member of the Communist Party? Do you work for the KGB? Are you an ax murderer?” That sort of thing, all that sort of stuff. And the basis of that offer, we put a copy on each file and we approved them all. One went somewhere else but I’m told that they all got their medical degrees in Canada and around the time we did the thirtieth anniversary reception here in Ottawa for them I got an invitation to come to their thirtieth anniversary in Canada. Unfortunately the day... I was leaving the following day for something I was doing with a refugee file, but they were all back in Canada and all did very well.

That had some interesting repercussions down the road because a few years later I'm back in Canada as Director of Refugee Policy and we've just put through the refugee sponsorship stuff... we'd just got it designed. Just got the minister to sign off. We were in the business of that stage of going off to the churches and groups and telling them about it, warning them that Indo-China was coming, asking them to think about sponsorship.

One morning I get this guy walk into my office, a fellow by the name of Chris Smart from WUSC, World Universities Services Canada, and he says to me, "Why aren't you doing anything for refugee students?" and I said, "Well..." kind of really chippy, his attitude, and I said, "Well, nobody's ever asked me to." And I said, "What do you have in mind?" and he said, "Well, what do you have in mind?" And I said, "Well look, when we were in Uganda we brought in medical students on the strength of an offer from a university to look after their expenses and admit them." I said, "Well do you think WUSC could organize something like that?" He said, "Yeah we probably could." I said, "Okay, well I suggest we meet in three weeks and draw up a contract" and that was how three weeks later we were at the WUSC offices at that time – not where it is today – and we signed an agreement with them to sponsor refugee students. And more than a thousand student have been brought to Canada under that program since then.

So that was a direct, in my mind I could just... when he said that I could just see those groups of five shining faces in front of me. So that kind of had an interesting spill off effect – made it a lot easier. And even when we were doing it, the day we started to design the process for the bigger sponsorship program... that was what, in 1978... so six years later I remember my deputy Carla Thorlakson said well she would like to have the job of designing it, I wanted to do it myself and she said, "But you're the manager, let me have some fun" so I said, "Okay, well let's just talk about it" and I said to her, "What you need to understand is how important it was for us in Kampala when we opened up those applications and found that somebody somewhere had cared enough to send us a letter saying they'll look after them." I said, "So you've got to make it replicate that so when a visa office abroad sees that thing they'll know somebody cares and that will have a huge impact on any decision that they make."

So it all, you know it's funny these are things that later on were used in Indo-China and just to push it one step further... the fellow who ran that unit that brought the transportation documentation together, Gerry Campbell in the spring of '79 was sent for temporary duty out to Singapore... because we were really ramping up, hadn't made the big decisions yet but made five thousand... told in '78 bring in five thousand boat people. So Gerry was sent out as a reinforcement and the manager in Singapore was ill so he and two other guys put two thousand cases in to process in about two months. When he

came back to Canada he met with our management team and basically said, based on what we learned in Uganda, if we use the standard Canadian documentation techniques for this bigger movement of Indochinese in much more difficult circumstances... not in a building in one city but rather scattered from Macau to Thailand, the paper burden will kill us. We've got to shift as much as we can to after they arrive in Canada.

And it was on the strength of his hands-on experience in Kampala that the deputy minister said, he just literally picked up and called, phoned one of the really good administrators in the department and said, within a week I want to see the plan to shift the paperwork from the post to the two staging areas [in Montreal and Edmonton] that we set up at that stage. So again, that's another lesson learned that you know, what had almost killed us in Uganda in terms of a paper burden we were able to extract from the process or shift it. So this thing had a lot of implications.

The other thing I would say to is, just in terms of its longer implications... you know we were still, at that stage we were ten years into the no racial barriers thing, which had started in '62. Five years from the bringing in of the points system, two years from applying the convention and the fact that still this country was a very white country and there was a lot of misgivings... "What are we doing bringing brown people here as refugees? Refugees are from the communist countries. They look like us." And the fact that this community did so damn well so fast... and a huge psychological impact on them. You know, you pluck people out of their ordinary lives and in a short time bring them here and they're on their feet... it really expanded our understanding of what the country could do with willing refugees. It had a huge impact I think you know... we had brought in some Tibetans and we brought in a few people from Hong Kong, but this was a really highly visible movement and yet I think at the end of the first year there was still twelve people receiving government assistance out of the sort of seven or eight thousand, so that was really noted, it had quite a good impact.

**Heather: We're getting close to the end here, but could you tell me a little bit about your involvement with the Ugandan Asian community since that time and with the Canadian Immigration Historical Society?**

Mike: Well, it was really funny. People that I met on my first visit to Kampala ended up in Vancouver where my wife was. Of course my wife after she had the baby couldn't fly for six weeks or so, and I in the meantime had to go open a visa office in Minneapolis, Minnesota of all things. Anyways, when we get to Minnesota my wife finally arrives sort of in... I don't know February or March of 1973, she's

unpacking and she says “Oh! Here’s some hand me downs from Sadru and Nelly, their kids have outgrown these clothes.” When these two couples arrived in Vancouver they knew my wife was there, they knew she was pregnant and they went out of their way to look her up and my kids ended up wearing their kid’s hand me downs. You know, just a one-off.

So we stayed in touch, and I’m originally from B.C. so that’s where we would spend our vacations, my in-laws were there, my cousins were there. When we would be home you’d go see the Irish cousins and then you’d go see the Ismaili cousins, and there was kind of a real sense of family developed over the years. It came very close to being real at one stage but nevertheless... and they’ve been part of our inner circle of friends and family since then.

Through that of course you meet everybody else. So we’ve been to weddings there and funerals and the same applied to the – Oh, when we were starting in Uganda we needed more clerical staff and we’d been going through the applications and we’d discovered two Sikh girls who had just come back from a travel agent’s course in London. Aha! This is what we want, so we called them in with their dad who’s a big game hunter – a big tough fellow – and said if they worked for us we’d certainly be sympathetic if you chose to apply to Canada. Well at that stage he was going to India, he didn’t want anything to do with Canada but the girls quickly integrated to the secretarial crowd. They all liked each other and persuaded daddy that they were going to go to Canada. And they stayed in touch by correspondence and then we fell out of touch but they all worked either for the immigration department – one of them still is a deportations officer – and the others worked for the airlines or in the travel business.

Years later my wife and I had gone down to Toronto to support one of the ministers when he was on Canada AM or something, we’re standing at the airport and this old Mercedes comes wobbling down the street and all these women are looking out at us as they go by. My wife says, “Who the hell do you think that was?” and I said, “It can’t be the Chima girls... oh well.” A few minutes later it comes around, this car pulls up... “Mr. Molloy?” And it’s the girls, there were five sisters, two of whom worked for us and they – we’re seeing them next week they’re in Toronto – and they had become... and in fact, because the family’s so small, at the various funerals I am one of the Sikh men who goes to funerals to stand in.

So the links are quite deep and then we got much more organized as time went by and now that the twentieth anniversary... about the twenty second we decided that it would be - in the Historical Society – that we needed to do something to recognize it. We met with people from all of the communities and

we had a huge... a one day conference and then a big gala called Journey into Hope, it took place at the University of Ottawa and the Museum of Civilization [now the Canadian Museum of History]. Seven hundred people showed up... it was just really... and you can still find the transcript from the meeting. The morning was about the Canadians going to Kampala and the afternoon was about the Asians coming to Canada, and it was really quite impressive – and it's all on tape, it's on the tape that's in the archives here – so that was the first thing we did.

And then the thirtieth anniversary just before... a year before the thirtieth anniversary I ran into Salim Fakirani – met him for the first time – at the Iftar on the hill one year and as we're standing there, Salim and I are just you know, just became instant friends. And before the night was out we were already planning a thirtieth anniversary which we did on the thirtieth anniversary and that – again six or seven hundred people came to that and we brought in the politicians and all that stuff. So and then that lead... I got increasingly interested in who were these people and where did they come from? I know a lot about what happened when they got here so I got interested in their historical antecedents.

Then we get this... I spend an afternoon in Vancouver about seven or eight years ago probably with a lady by the name of Umeeda Switlo who was doing oral history, gathering oral history within the Ismaili community there and we had a really good chat, I really liked her... I really encouraged her to keep doing what she was doing. So three years ago this gentleman who had – Mr. Bennett – who had collected all those newspaper clippings in Uganda, somehow or other was trying to figure out what to do with them, and the trail lead to Umeeda Switlo who said, "Well, you ought to talk to Mike Molloy." And so he came to see me and it turned out he had this amazing collection of clippings that he had collected in Kampala between '70 and '72, including the famous sample of the "Here's your number, come in on Thursday" ad in the paper.

So he wanted to get rid of them, he was downsizing, I was downsizing – didn't necessarily want to take them but I thought these are not going to slip out of my sight. So I thought okay well I'll just take them and we'll figure out what to do with them later and I thought I've got to talk to Salim about this and see whether he's got some ideas. And something happened... I know what it was, I had given a series of talks on the Ugandan Asians for the fortieth anniversary and I was giving the talks again at the annual meeting of the [Canadian Immigration] Historical Society and we invited all the veterans of Uganda to that meeting, including the three secretaries and when I was talking to them after dinner I told them about this amazing collection and Mary Ellen Hempel said, "Well my husband did the same thing from the Canadian side."

And so I thought, what are the chances? This... within a matter of weeks I get a Ugandan collection and a Canadian collection all dealing with the same thing. So that then I thought, okay we've got to get these somewhere and since Carleton is – even though I'm associated with the University of Ottawa – there are many more people working on immigration here than do at Ottawa. I thought, so this is the place where they're more likely to be used, so that led then to the setting up of this archive, this project. The Historical Society is a very small group so we work with levers, you know [Laughter], we always work in association with someone else whether we're working – whatever it is – on Uganda or Indochina or Kosovo... our method is to always find a university or the community and work with them, because you get a better result.

And because you know, at any one time in the society there may be ten really active people and everybody else is reading what we're doing. So that's kind of the legacy of this. And to me a never ending source of amazement to me that now forty-two years after the event, this thing is still swirling around in and out of my life. There are two PhD's being done on this as we stand, people are collecting oral history from Ugandans right across the country right now, and I think what's happened is there's a generational dialogue that seems to be going on – not in a very organized way – but I see it in the Goan community, and I see it various places where I meet Ismailis... the people of Shezan [Muhammedi]'s generation want to know the experience of the parent's generation or their grandparent's generation, and the parents and grandparents have been pretty busy [Laughter] getting established in Canada, but they are now in a situation where they now have the leisure and time to think about it, talk about it.

So we're... and given what a great experience this was for everybody, the positive impact it had on the immigration department, the positive impact it had on Canada, the positive impact it had on the people who came here, at a time when people are getting... the whole business of good refugees and bad refugees and all the rest of that stuff that's going around out there right now, this is a great story to keep telling because it shows how everybody wins when we do this.

For me, I'm always surprised that... there is not a month goes by in my life right now where somebody doesn't contact me through the Historical Society to ask me a question about Uganda. There is not a month. [Laughter] I mean, there is some people I'm working with quite a bit, but we get these questions coming in from England, from Europe, from all across Canada. What about this, what about that? It's nice now to be able to say, "Oh, have you heard about the Carleton website? Go take a look at that, it's got everything you ever need to know and then a bit more."

**Heather: Great. That's all I have, but do you have anything else that you want to add?**

Mike: No, I think I'm almost talked out.

**Heather: Thank you so much.**

Mike: Thank you.

[End of transcript]