

Chron Ref: CF/RAI/USAA/DB01/HS/2001-00033
File Sub: CF/HST/INT/KEE-011/M

Interview with Spurgeon Milton Keeny

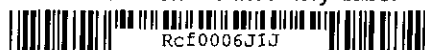
Conducted by
Peter Jessup
November 24, 1980

From Reminiscences of
Spurgeon M. Keeny Sr.

Oral History Research Office
Columbia University
1982



UNICEF Alternate Inventory Label



Item # **CF/RAD/USAA/DB01/2001-00121**

ExR/Code: **CF/HST/INT/KEE-011/M**

Interview Spurgeon Milton Keeny, Sr. by Peter Jessup for
Date Label Printed 4/23/2001

Cover + 33pp + 1b

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Interviewee: Mr. Spurgeon Milton Keeny, Sr.
Interviewer: Peter Jessup
Place: Washington, D.C.

Interview no. 11 - November 24th 1980

Q! Good afternoon, Dr. Keeny, this is Peter Jessup. Here we are on a very wet November afternoon, for what I believe is Session no. 10.

If we haven't noted it already, I should like to say you have to treat it as a supplement to the memoir -- your book -- written in 1957 called Half the World's Children--The Diary of UNICEF at Work in Asia, published by the Association Press in New York. I have just completed this book, and I think it meshes ~~meshes~~ very well with *much* of your own particular coverage, with more detail of course, of your work with UNICEF in Asia for 13 years.

I did have one question on something that we were talking about before we went on tape, and that was simply about the man who wrote the introduction or the foreword to this book, the entertainer Danny Kaye. I was just wondering if he was another person in show business who lent some time to this, or whether he did an extraordinary amount for UNICEF both in the field and in the United States.

Mr. Keeny: The latter. He did an extraordinary amount of work in the field, and he and I took a lot of time to take film with ~~him and the children of Asia~~ him and the children of Asia which would benefit UNICEF back in the States.

I traveled with him all over Thailand and in several other countries, and even went to Japan on one occasion, when they wanted him for some kind of festival there; and they learned that he was a friend of mine, and asked me to get him, and he said that he would go if I did, so I went along, and we had quite a time together.

We had suites reserved for us at the Imperial Hotel, but I refused to stay in such luxurious surroundings, and stayed in a small Japanese inn which was my regular haunt there.

He was entirely surrounded by admirers, but was curious to know why I didn't stay with him, and I told him that he'd never learn about Japan unless he lived more in the Japanese way when he went there.

He came down to visit me one day, and I told the servants in this little place that Danny Kaye was coming to visit, but they didn't believe me, and when he came we had quite a hilarious party, and they all had their autograph cards ready for him to sign. They had a special form of card which they used for that purpose. But he falls into the spirit of every such situation. He was out in Asia a number of times, and he made excellent use of the material. You may remember his repeated appearances in the United States on behalf of ~~an~~ UNICEF. He was I think the very first of the Hollywood people who adopted a cause of this kind and stayed with it.

Q: He is still with it, isn't he?

Keeny: He is still with it to this day.

Q: Of course he could communicate with all sorts of audiences, but did he have a special touch with children or not?

Keeny: Yes, with children in the mass he could. . . he was a kidd of Pied Piper who could lead a crowd of kids anywhere, regardless of their language, and we had some marvelous scenes which were duly filmed.

I remember one occasion on which he tried to make friends with a little naked boy who was just too shy. Danny is tall,

and he tends to be quick and rather nervous in his movements, and that's one of the things you must^{learn}/about Asiatic children -- that you must drop yourself down to their level, and you must never make a quick move nor quickly change the tone of your voice. So after Danny had failed I tried, and soon had a small one in my arms, and took him over to Danny and said, "Take a few lessons, and you'll learn eventually." And he was jealous of me -- definitely -- at that moment. (laughter)

Q: That's interesting. Well, now, when we ended the last tape you had arrived back in Asia ~~xxx~~ after your shortened, truncated briefings according to your desire, and you had more or less carte blanche.

Keeny: Yes. Oh yes. I had come back to Taiwan, which was my only choice really, because it was the only country which had extended me an invitation. Besides, it was rather central in the whole group of countries that we were going to try to get started on family planning, and it was an extra place to settle in.

I decided to go not to Taipei, the capital, but to Taichung, which was the provincial capital of the island. This included the entire island except the capital of Taipei, which was ~~called~~ a so-called special city, and a couple of outlying islands.

I set aside a week to find myself a place for an office and hire myself a secretary to get started. When I got there I was told that they would give me free office space in their own

provincial building, which they did. They took me down to where it would be, and there it was, with my name on the door, and a table and chairs and typewriter inside. Everything was ready for me to go to work.

I [REDACTED] made a visit to the police station because that was important -- we were under military rule of course -- and I went to the bank to establish an account, and my week's work was done, and the first day wasn't half over. This was an excellent beginning, and a very warm greeting.

I found myself accommodations in a hotel which was picturesque even by Taiwanese standards, back in a little narrow alley. The hotel was called the E-Moon Hotel. I don't know why I rejoiced in this name, but that's what it was, and I settled down there and was quite comfortable, and I was ready to go to work, but the Commissioner dropped in a couple of days later and he said this would never do. He said, "I have a big house supplied by the Government. You must come over and live with me."

And I went over, and he showed me the space I could have, and it was more than adequate, so I accepted that, and lived with him for seven years, rent free.

Q: And this was the Commissioner of. . .

Keeny: Of Public Health.

Q: I see -- for the Taiwanese Government?

Keeny: Yes. My next step was to find a secretary, and that wasn't easy, for the number of people speaking Chinese and who could take secretarial work in English was relatively scarce. But they had a list of candidates lined up for me -- a couple of dozen -- and so we had a competitive examination, and one girl named Bernice was outstandingly better than the rest.

Q: Was she Chinese?

Keeny: Yes, she was Chinese, and came from a little town up in the mountains not far from Taichung. Her father ran a small business up there -- he had a small store, a general store we would call it. She said, "I've graduated from the training school here, but it's Catholic, and I am Catholic, and I am not sure that they will let me take it."

I said, "Who is your spiritual adviser at school?"

She said, "Sister Mary," and I said, "Let's go see Sister Mary."

So we went off to the school to see Sister Mary, and here were all these nuns, and here was ~~xi~~ Sister Mary.

Q: Which order was it?

Keeny: I don't remember which order they were, but it turned out that Sister Mary was from the United States, and by an odd

chance she was from York County, Pennsylvania, my own county!

Q: Amazing!

Keeny: So I said, "Sister Mary, I want Bernice to be my secretary, and she says she won't do it unless you consent. So will you please give us your blessing?"

And she said, "If it has anything to do with birth control absolutely No."

And I said, "Sister Mary, I am astonished to see you flying in the face of the Vatican like this. His Holiness approves of certain methods of birth control. It's only the mechanical and chemical means that he opposes."

And there was an elderly sister, Sister Theresa, sitting across, and she said, "Yes, Sister Mary, you mustn't be too impulsive."

Well, I knew I had Sister Mary on the ropes for the moment, and I pursued the matter. I said, "Now, Sister Mary, you and I are from York county, and we can think straight, so you think hard about the consequences of my program. Will your good Catholics pay any attention to what I say about this matter?"

She said, "Of course not."

I said, "Will the Buddhists?"

She said, "Well, many of them may."

ten million soldiers ~~and~~, and refugees coming home from Manchuria and from the other battlefields of Asia, and had nowhere to export, they had no money to pay for the raw materials for imports, and they were in a desperate situation.

As a result, there was a tiny postwar boom and then a rapidly diminishing birth rate. This was caused partly by the provision of free abortions, which ran to about a million and a half a year registered abortions. They were well done, with small mortality rate - and by late marriage and by regular use of condoms. Strangely enough, Japan has never to this day approved the use of the pill, but there was a large import of ~~the~~ pills, but never to the extent that the majority of women use in this country. But the results were fantastic, and ~~within~~ within six or seven years the ~~birthrate~~ increase in population growth rate dropped from 3 percent to roughly about 1 percent, which is just about the rate necessary for the maintenance of the same population. In other words, Japan had found by itself, without an official policy, a means of controlling its own population, and we never had a program in Japan, but we used the Japanese as consultants because they had learned a great deal through their own experience.

Now as for Communist China, they had their ups and downs. For a time, they were fanatically against family planning. Then they turned for it, and we heard that they were using family planning, and they were supplying ~~contraceptives~~ contraceptives.

The results were of course ["]perfect," but we never had any figures. But as time went on ^{and} figures ~~became~~ became known we began to see what we have learned in recent years -- that theirs is one of the most successful of all the programs.

Their method is very simple: they assign a certain number of permitted births to an area -- a group of communes let's say -- of a million people. This is broken down into smaller groups of communes, and so on down, until it gets to the village, which is allowed five or six or seven or ten babies. The village is then allowed by what they call a democratic process to select which women ~~are~~ may have babies this year, and the result is that if more women have babies than the allowance the rest of the pregnancies are aborted. It's as simple as that.

This is simple social pressure. It's caused by social pressure.

Q: But it was entirely conceived by the Japanese themselves without western improvisation?

Keeny: Uh. The Japanese had nothing to do with the Chinese method. The Japanese was voluntary, there was no particular pressure from the Government that I know, except that they offered free abortions and all the other facilities that they could offer ~~with~~ with their many hospital and clinic facilities -- and they were well supplied with them.

The Chinese on the other hand are not so well supplied, but they built up their paramedical staff, and that means they are able to get to their population the necessary information and contraceptives.

So both of those have been successful as exceptions, and our program with the Population Council had nothing to do really with either of those countries except for consultation with Japan as to methods, and we got some aid -- some gifts of contraceptives of condoms -- from Japan, for various countries, until we could get aid from other sources.

To go back now to Taiwan, the official line when the Army defeated by the communists came to Taiwan was that they must return to the mainland, and there were huge signs along the railways and everywhere you went, PREPARE TO RETURN TO THE MAINLAND, REMAIN HEALTHY, KEEP HEALTHY, GET HEALTHY SO THAT YOU CAN RETURN TO THE MAINLAND, and so on.

Well, this had gone on for 15 years, and was becoming more and more unrealistic, but it was the official policy of the Government.

To talk about family planning at the beginning was considered communistic, but there was opposition to this among citizens -- some outstanding ones -- and in the Government itself.

There was one man, S.C. Hsu, who was quite influential in Government and in devising healthy programs, and he had introduced -- had smuggled ^{you} ~~you~~ might say -- birth control

into the emergency training against enemy attack under the heading emergency help, and nobody objected.

Then after a time the Government began to develop a plan for the economic betterment particularly of the welfare of the people living in the country, who had lived rather miserable lives from time immemorial. These plans included all sorts of things from better water and improved privies, better roads into the village, getting rid of fly pests, which were bad in the summertime -- all sorts of things -- and in general improving the health services, getting more clinics and nurses and midwives out to rural areas, and all that sort of thing.

Under this general heading of Family Health, Dr. Hsu and a number of us worked out a plan which involved helping a million of the very poorest people. These included miners, salt workers, fishermen, and the people who lived in the worst slums -- about a million altogether. Nobody could object to getting help to people in that state.

Q: Are you separating the ethnic Chinese from the native Formosans, or bunching them together?

Keeny: They were all together. The Formosans were mostly Chinese with the exception of about a quarter of a million aborigines. They were getting special attention, because most of the missionary work was centered there. Most of the aborigines are

Christians; those who don't drink mostly are Protestants, and those who have to have their liquor are Catholics. The Catholics are more tolerant in that respect.

The mainlanders held the main jobs, but the bulk of the people -- probably a million mainlanders or so -- came over, including the Army, I think, and all their followers and family; all together a million to a million and a half came over. The other population was about ten times that.

The question was how to finance this business. We didn't quite have the nerve to ask for new money for this program lest it become too conspicuous. But the U.S. had been helping Taiwan for a number of years with supplies which had been sold, and the money had been put into a reserve fund drawing interest. This money in Chinese also called N.T. Dollars -- about 40 to the ^{U.S.} dollar then.

This was a very large sum; something like 400 million dollars had been accumulated, and the ^{yearly} interest on it was about 40 million dollars. Out of this we asked for a million dollars and a half for a five-year program to get this program going. This money didn't belong to the United States, but was subject to assignment with the approval of the U.S. Ambassador, who was our friend, and the Minister of Finance, who was also our friend.

So we got the million and a half set aside, to be drawn on as we needed it, and started business.

The program proved very popular, but by the end of one year only a fraction of the counties ~~of~~ had been touched, and every county was demanding that it get similar services, so that the pressure from the people for an islandwide program became very great, and the way eventually opened for a program.

Now the program consists of very little more than getting an adequate number of field workers out to visit every family that has two or more children, and explaining to them very simply what methods of contraception are available, and what failure rates they have, and what they recommend to start off with, and what problems there might be from side effects, how to cope with those side effects, and if they are too great what to use as an alternate method.

We began by combining with the nurse-midwife and home visiting services, where they did M.C.H. work, and also with followed-up TB cases.

Q: What is M.C.H. ?

Keeny: Mother-Child Help. We eventually wound up with three people -- three young women -- in every community, one of them who was responsible for following up mothers either pregnant or neonatal, and the other cases with TB that required continued treatment -- it was chemotherapy, just taking drugs every day -- and family planning.

These three would go out together in the morning, and each one would follow her specialty through working in the town or village, where the houses were close together. But if the houses were widely separated they would check their cards, and one girl would take an isolated house and do everything that had to be done there, because each of them was competent to do the work of the others in a pinch.

At first it took quite a lot of courage for these girls to go out alone, especially into the mountain districts, but they did, and they became much admired by the health staff and they were much liked by the communities, which is more than you can say of the usual official, and the program got its start there in this way.

It was quite a difficult program to get going because after the war there was a big baby boom there, and the annual population growth rate was somewhere up around 4 percent. It was way high, and the problem was to get it started downward and accelerate the drop. That has been charted very carefully ever since.

The work has been greatly helped by the excellent statistics that are kept in Taiwan. The Japanese had set up the plan originally. They kept their statistics in the police station, and people didn't disobey the order to bring their reports of births and deaths and other vital statistics in there, ~~_____~~

~~_____~~

The modern statistical system was established, and eventually the time came when a computer was needed. When the statistics grew too elaborate, and they asked us to give them one. We didn't have much money, and I tried to turn it down by saying that we wouldn't consider it unless the Government would agree to pay at least half the cost. They immediately replied that they'd be glad to do that if we'd use part of the computer time to figure other statistics that were needed for other governmental purposes, and since the capacity of the computer was more than we needed, that was a very reasonable consideration.

I therefore turned it back to New York, and they negotiated with A.I.D., and A.I.D. agreed to pay half of the other half, so we got out of it by paying a quarter, which amounted to only about 60,000 dollars or so. The whole thing cost about a quarter of a million.

The result has been that Taiwan has by far the best statistics on its program of any program in Asia or indeed I think any in the world. Their errors are far less than those of the U.S. Census for example, ⁱⁿ their intercensal calculations here.

Well, that program has gone along steadily from success to success, and they are now trying to get their annual ~~growth~~ growth rate down to one-and-a-half percent by 1985. The line

has been almost straight except for one year -- one year in the Buddhist cycle which comes every 12 years, which is an especially propitious year to be born in, when men are successful, women are beautiful and so on, who are born in that year, and this year ... turned up I think in 1975 or 1976, when an unexpected 55,000 babies were born in Taiwan and made ^{abrupt bump} ~~an abrupt bump~~ in the curve. But with that exception the program has gone on as it had been originally planned, and the Government has steadily supported it, and eventually we were able to build the requirements into the regular Government budget.

K.T. Li, who was Minister of Economics or Finance during all this time, would say, "You give me a year notice, and tell me what you need -- what you really need -- and I'll see that you get it," so that working with him, with S.C. Hsu and the rest we had a fairly calm sailing in Taiwan.

Q: In other words, public health concerns plus common sense, plus a reasonable long-range perspective in the population control thinking, superseded political considerations of invading the Mainland and other dreams like that.

Keeny: Yes. That officially still remained, but the two learned to live together. The secret of all these programs is to establish a target -- a long-term target, for a decade or for five years -- and to estimate what it will cost year by year,

and then to fight for it, and to get everybody in all departments -- not only in the ~~Health~~ health department -- to cooperate in doing so, and to get all the foreign aid you can, ~~and~~ as long as you can, and then do the rest yourself. In the meantime the advance in the general living conditions makes it increasingly less difficult, because the countries were recovering. They had a lot to recover from, because when I went there Taiwan was in a bad state. The average income per person was much less than 100 dollars a year -- per person per year.

Q: Now you are talking about 1957 or 1958?

Keeny: About 1950, when I first went there. The figure is now about ten times that. They are now approaching -- or may have surpassed -- 1000 dollars a year, and are second I think to Japan.

The second country that was ready in 1950 for some action as we thought was Korea. There the Government's attitude was not hostile at all. They recognized that with their small food resources they had too many people, and they hadn't found foreign markets yet, they hadn't developed their industrial side, and they decided in the simplest terms that it would pay to have smaller families, better educated families.

This had come out sharply in Taiwan, where at first the call was for more and more babies so that there would be more and more soldiers, but then it began to be pointed out by the thoughtful that babies can't carry guns until 16 or 18 years later, and in the meantime they have to be fed and clothed and educated, and that costs money. And I heard even a general make this statement in a discussion at a symposium we had. He said, "What we need is not so much a lot more raw manpower, country boys who don't know enough to go to the toilet unaided, but young people who can know something about electricity and gasoline engines and Diesel engines, and how to use modern weapons and handle all the problems involving the support of a modern army, and this requires a limited number of much better educated people."

This was quite a shock, but it began to be the talk of people in country after country -- that instead of putting all your money into primary schools you could put some of it into high schools and universities and technical schools, and turn out the kind of people you needed for the kind of work that you were going to have in the decade that was ahead.

Well, in Korea we found the general situation was friendly. Nothing had been done, but the Government was willing to get started, and fortunately on the volunteer side they had just organized a private organization ~~for~~ for family planning, called the Planned Parenthood of Korea, which had the support

of Dr. Jae Mo Yong, who was the leader in ~~and~~ one of the foremost medical schools of Korea. A lot of people had graduated to his classes, and he had large classes, and he was an enthusiast for the new program, so he rallied all this graduates and his students around this new cause, and got them pumped up with determination, ^(with the idea that) and wherever they were serving or would serve they would use their energy to get this program going.

This proved to be one of the vital supports of the program.

The general division between the Government was that the Government was to carry the routine of the program, and the Family Planning was to do the research, the experiments on new methods and all that kind of thing. There was room for both of them, and they were the vehicles through which I.P.P.F. -- that's the International Planned Parenthood -- gave its money to Korea.

We got their aid in quite early, and that program began, but unlike Taiwan they had very poor rural services. The need was there to get more paramedical people out into the rural areas, which was quite difficult because the Korean terrain is particularly difficult -- it's mountainous and full of hills and valleys. And they didn't have the money to do this immediately, but were quite ready to do so as soon as possible.

I was able to get money -- I think it was a quarter of a million dollars -- through the Council. I think they got some of it or most of it from U.S.A.I.D. to pay the costs of the

staff for the first year and part of it for the second year, on the understanding that the Government was to take over as soon as they could get it into their new budget, and they took it over eventually and it got going much more rapidly that way.

Their problem was essentially the same as that of Taiwan -- to reduce the rate of population growth . They didn't have to start from as high as 4 percent, but they had to come down from something over 3 percent to 1 percent in the long run, and they are still working at it, and quite successfully. In fact Korea has now I think about the best balanced program of all the countries in Asia, that is among the various methods. Among other things it has a high percentage of sterilization, which is the most effective way, and among these the highest percentage of vasectomies, that is the sterilization for men, because in most of Asia sterilization means sterilization of women. Now this is partly because men somehow or other assume that looking after the consequences of intercourse are a woman's business, and, whatever the reasons, men have been very reluctant to be sterilized generally. But they made an exception of this in Korea, largely by cooperation of the Army, which brings its military reserve in for training for several weeks every summer. These people are brought back until they are 40, I think, and they usually have completed the families that they want, but haven't done anything about ~~ix~~ contraception, and by getting time in their curriculum to talk about this, getting the support

of the Army itself, and giving time off for the sterilization process, excusing the men from any heavy duty during the four or five days after the operation, they can do the whole business and have it all over with by the time the person goes back home.

I visited many of these assemblies, and listened to the discussions. These were in charge of the voluntary part with special people trained, and they did very good work.

I remember one occasion when one of them didn't turn up, and the man I had assigned in charge of the work in Korea -- George Worth -- was in charge, and he was asked whether he would speak to the men. He spoke to them for about ten minutes, and came back and rejoined me, and we went on.

I said, "How did you manage that so quickly?"

He said -- he was a very good interpreter, so good that he was often called on to do official interpreting instead of their usual interpreters --

Q: Was he an American?

Keeny: He was an American from North Carolina, but he had learned Korean so perfectly [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Well, he said, "I went through the usual ritual of congratulating them on their patriotism and following through on their civic duties and so on, and then I said to them,

'Now the man who has introduced me has been vasectomized, I have been vasectomized, what are you guys waiting for? Get in today. If you have three children, that's plenty. If you have two children, a girl and a boy, that's enough. Go on and get it over with, and then get back and get on with your work in the fields.'"

And that program has been one of the most successful.

Q: Vasectomies do not preclude sexual intercourse?

Keeny: Oh no, no.

Q: But was that a point that was raised in their minds?

Keeny: Oh yes, that question was always very much raised. The figures show that between 90 and 95 percent of the people who have had vasectomies are quite pleased with the results, and have seen no difference in their libido. From 5 to 10 percent have some questions, but where there is a coital relationship one never knows. People sometimes attribute causation where it can't rightly be placed. For example, a man who complained about his wife having an intrauterine device said, "It's a terrible thing that you put in my wife. Before she had it my hearing was clear as a bell, and now I am deaf as a post." Now if you call that causation your logic is not the same as mine

(laughter)

So the problem differs in one country after another, but the problem in Korea was a fairly standard one, but you know, even as late as five-six years after I went there I wouldn't have dreamt that Korea would have the renaissance that it has had. Even in the late 1960's it was hardly to be foreseen, and then suddenly they got going, first in textiles -- light industry like that -- then in light electronics, and then more and more industry, into heavier industry, and now they are leaders in shipbuilding even, and are taking away business from Japan hand over fist.

Q: And they also export many workers to Saudi Arabia and the Trucial States.

Keeny: Yes.

Q: Engineers. . .

Keeny: That's a big source of income. They have built up trained bands of workers, and they are excellent workers -- industrious and cooperative and hardy -- so that they have many contracts all through the Middle East in connection with the oil business, and elsewhere, and all the way down into Vietnam.

The third country that we had to deal with^{that} was an exception in another way was the Philippines. It's the only Christian country there is in the whole group, and it's over 90 percent Catholic. Now the position of the Church was of course against any program of this kind, but many of the priests, especially from the rural areas and many of those from the slums, even in Manila, didn't go along with the official program, because they saw the miserable conditions in which their people lived.

Q: Were these missionary **Foreign** or Filipino priests?

Keeny: They were nearly all Filipino priests. They had some missionaries there, but the bulk of them were Filipinos, and they took the position of the parents' responsibility for their children, that they ought to have only as many children as they can afford to feed and clothe and house and educate, and with the tiny incomes that they had this meant a small family.

They were much concerned about the fact that people were withdrawing from the Church, because when they did accept family planning they didn't come to confession, and this troubled many of them.

I remember a conference we had which I was chairing for some reason or other, and I was asked by a priest what I would do if I were in his position, and I said, "I would say to a couple, ~~to~~ Be responsible parents in the sense that you do care

for your children properly, and if in order to do this you feel that you must use a method that is not approved by the Church, don't stay away from confession because of that -- you will find a sympathetic ear."

And there was general applause. I suppose the conservatives stayed away from such symposia, but I thought it was very interesting to have that kind of response, even as I, a black Protestant, made a statement like that which I thought was very ~~provocative~~ provocative. They seemed to take it right in their stride.

The problem in the Philippines was again that they didn't have any or much good service to the rural areas. We found clinics which had been set up in the poblacion, which had been a small town when it was set up, but had grown sometimes to be a city of 50,000 or so, and the person who was supposed to work on family planning was attached to the clinic there, and her boss was the doctor. He used ~~the~~ ^{her as} general clinic help to do all the dirty work around the place, but released her usually in ~~the~~ ^{the} afternoons, and she was supposed to do her home visiting then, but she couldn't get out of town, let alone get out of the country, because she had no travel money or almost none, and sometimes had ridiculously small sums, and she'd have maybe only three hours or so to work, and it would take an hour or more to go each way, so at the most she could visit one family.

The A.I.D. was there at this time, and by this time the U.S. had a policy of helping on this kind of program, ~~xxxxxx~~ providing contraceptives.

They asked me to have a look at the situation because of my knowledge of the islands from my work with UNICEF, and I recommended that they put up the money to hire at least 2000, preferably 3000, full-time workers who would be independent of the doctors, who would be decently paid, have adequate travel money, and whose job was to visit people in their homes.

~~xxxxxx~~
They accepted the general idea, and ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ they took the larger amount of 3000 as their figure, and provided the money for it.

The work started after about a year or a year and a half. In the meantime another movement had started up, which was helpful in one way, but sort of spread the effort in another.

That was the program of aid to every barrio. The barrio is the smallest Government division. It is the tiniest, the smallest village and its surrounding houses. It's usually 100 to 500 houses perhaps, something like that, and the idea was to appoint one person there -- usually a woman -- as a barrio supplies depot. She was to keep the supplies on hand and issue them as needed, month by month or in emergencies in between, and to make out simple reports to follow up those who didn't come for their supplies, that sort of thing.

The 3000 workers were largely put to work training these workers -- these barrio workers -- and that was good, but they began to rely on them to do the home visiting, for which they really weren't competent, they didn't know enough and they were too tied down to do the job.

I have just received in the last month the final report on the most recent survey of this situation, and it showed that the actual number of families visited by these 3000 workers was not much more than one a day, which is a disgrace -- it ought to be brought up to four or five.

There were some reasons for this: in some cases it was that the travel money didn't come through, the money didn't come through on time, they were caught up with the new waves of paperwork, and so on and so on, ~~██~~

But the total picture was anything but satisfactory. Half of the people in the barrics didn't know that a barrio depot existed. They also found that ~~42~~ half of the people who were supposed to do the visiting had no written materials giving the necessary information to leave with the person who was visited in the home. They found that perhaps 15 or 20 percent had materials, but in a language they couldn't understand, because there are many dialects in the Philippines. That hadn't been thought out, and they merely distributed the stuff pretty much regardless of what the dialect was in that particular place. So there were all kinds of bureaucratic difficulties of that kind in the way.

But the plan it~~self~~ is a good one, and I think that in another couple of years the program, if it continues to be supported, will show greater success than it has. But even so, the program has brought the annual ^{growth} ~~birth~~ rate down to something like a 1.7 percent per year, which is not at all bad for those parts. It came down from upwards of 3 percent -- they were nearly all around 3 percent to start with -- so it has been nearly halved, and ~~that's~~ reasonably successful among the Catholics.

There have been many interruptions, ~~in~~ in Mindanao particularly. It is largely Muslim, and it has been the scene of fighting for the past decade -- Mindanao and surrounding towns having been the center of ~~the~~ fighting, which has kept a good section of the Philippine Army on guard down there, and has taken some thousands of lives in the past ten years.

There have also been local outbreaks, and all of this has been an excuse for keeping the military rule on in the Philippines all these years.

It must be said though that (President) Marcos has kept his word. In his first term as President he said that if he was reelected he would come out openly in support of the program, and when he was reelected he did -- he and his wife Imelda -- and they have supported it quite faithfully.

Q: What is the Muslim attitude toward family planning?

Keeny: It depends on the country and on the way in which the

problem is handled. I'll go into that when I talk about Indonesia. The Koran does not take any specific position on it, in fact it even ~~xxx~~ condones abortion up to the 12th week.

Well, to go on with the countries to Thailand.

There we found a system whereby unlike most of the places where we had had to put additional help specifically for family planning into the corps of workers, we found that the people that UNICEF had helped to get trained as assistant midwives and nurses had been spread out pretty well over Thailand, and were at work. We also found, as I may have mentioned, that they were somewhat surprisingly ready to ride motorcycles. We tested this out, and when we found that it worked we offered a motorcycle to everyone who could pass an examination for handling it competently and had a certificate that he had passed the local examination required for getting a permit and could maintain the vehicle. We got a few hundred of them, and this increased their ability to make numbers of home visits very much out in the countryside, because the roads were not well developed there. But there were paths everywhere, and these little motorcycles could go everywhere, and they were light enough so that the rider could lift them over streams and that sort of thing, and they did.

We got in 2000 or 3000 of them, and there were plenty of bicycles. We made them as mobile as possible so that they could multiply the number of home visits, and that 's what counts/

The idea is to get a visitor into the home of a woman as soon as possible after she's had a baby, especially after the second or third one, and get her practicing family planning in order to stop having babies or to start spacing them, if they happen to have two girls and they want a boy -- if they feel they must have a boy and so on, because there is in a sense a boy preference throughout nearly all of Asia.

But the program there was developed with the aid of a person assigned by the Council, Dr. Allan Rosenfield, who was sent there to build up the statistical mechanism that was necessary to follow up the program. He was an obstetrician himself, and did far more, and he worked out all sorts of schemes to combine mother-child health and family planning.

Q: Did you find any conflict with former UNICEF cohorts now that you had moved to a higher plateau? Any resentment that you had taken a new tack?

Keeny: No, no, they were generally helpful. We were all old friends, and they were helpful whenever they could be, but they were shackled by the policies of the U.N., and they couldn't get into this field until very recently, and then the Committee or the Division of the U.N. family planning activities started business, but it has not been very effective, and has worked

essentially on long-term plans such as taking censuses in Africa and that kind of thing which doesn't help Asia in the slightest.

But I had constantly before me the hard fact that the world population was increasing by about the amount of the population of New York every month, and that three-quarters of these babies were being born in Asia, and that at the rate we had been going this population would double in anywhere from 25 to 35 years, and every minute counted to me, and I used to get frantic with frustration at the organization that said let's take the long look, let's see what the trends are, let's graph it, let's project.

But we had plenty of opportunity to let off steam by showing what could be done, and we did it.

There wasn't much new in Thailand. The Thais were of course Buddhists, and there was no opposition there, but there was a tradition of large families. But Thailand was not making the kind of economic progress that Taiwan and Korea were, and they began to wonder whether this business of small families might have something to do with it.

The Thai Government essentially lived on the export of rice. It exported about half the rice that gets exported in the world. There isn't a big world export business in rice.

With a growing population they were eating into that, [REDACTED] and the fact that /the amount of rice that they had for export was declining that set them thinking, and kept them friendly toward the program.

Then it also happened that one of the youngsters that I'd had working with me for yaws, Dr. Sombun, was coming up rapidly through the health echelons, and he was most helpful. He is now director of public health in Thailand, and he's done everything he could to make the program grow. He now occupies quite a dignified position. It occupies a building that was given to it by one of the European countries that specializes in individual gifts like that -- I think it was Denmark or Holland, ~~the building was given to it by one of the European countries that specializes in individual gifts like that --~~ -- and they built a six story building, which is the highest building in the entire health compound, and this made all the other departments jealous.

But it's well equipped, and gave them room to expand, and they've had good people in there doing the work.

One of the persons who provides me with the most information is married to a Thai woman who is a statistician, and I get good information from that source.

Well, going on southward --

To the West there isn't much to report, really. It was Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Laos can be forgotten because it was in chaos during all of this period, and it's underpopulated by its own standards, so its Government is pronatalist.

Cambodia has been in a little trouble, as you may have heard. (laughs)

Q: Little with a capital L.

Keeny: And we never got in there. But I did spend quite a lot of time in Vietnam, because they wanted to get started even though they had a war on. When the U.S. Army was in there I was invited to come in and help them set up a plan, and I visited all of the provinces that were held under the sway of the U.S.A Army, and it was there that I got my widest experience riding in odd aircraft. We weren't allowed to go by road in most places -- it wasn't safe -- so we were taken in little puddle jumpers, cargo planes and all kinds of things -- anything that flew.

Q: Including helicopters?

Keeny: Anything that you can imagine. I enjoyed the trip, because ~~there~~ there was a ^{who} Vietnamese doctor/was a very charming lady, young and pretty and witty, a good interpreter.

(end of tape)

Ebd of Interview 10 w/ Spurgeon Milton Keeny by Peter Jessup,
November 24th 1980.

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