



U.N. Security Officers form a guard of honour.

[Photo: United Nations]

Interview with Officer John Lamberti

Question: Is there anyone that you have admired most since you have been here?

Security Officer: U Thant.

Question: Did you work with him? Did you go to his house?

Security Officer: I've been there a few times. I was still working nights when he was the S.G. He had a house up in Riverdale. So we used to drive up there with a security car; we'd usually drive with a Lieutenant or a Sergeant and check it. He would be outside sometimes. He liked to swim. He was always nice. He had a very special way about him. You didn't have fear of him. You were able to converse with him on the same level, and he seemed to enjoy that. I mean, he was who he was, but it didn't go to his head. He wasn't pompous. I liked him. He was a really nice individual. I don't think he was capable of being mean or nasty. It wasn't part of his personality. He's the best, I think, of anybody at the U.N.

Question: Do you feel the U.N. is doing anything for humanity or the world?

Security Officer: Oh, I feel they are, mostly in

the social and economic fields. Politically I think their hands are tied. They only achieve what the super-powers let them. I think as far as programmes go, curing disease, fighting starvation, education—they are doing as much as they can for the welfare of the world. They don't always succeed, but a lot of times they do succeed. But I think the people were a little naive when they started the Organization, thinking that it was going to cure all the ills of the world. That's impossible. You have to give it time to mature. I think just being here, giving these people an opportunity to meet each other and talk, and even for the average person like myself, to be able to meet people from different parts of the world, with different philosophies and religions, helps overcome ignorance and a lot of things. Even if they just sit here and talk to you, my way of thinking is that even that is an accomplishment in itself. It is not perfect, but what's perfect?

* * *

Interview with Officer Joseph Agazzi

Question: Can you think of any interesting or unusual incidents that have happened while you have been here?

Security Officer: Well, I was assigned to Secretary-General U Thant's home from 1969 to 1972. We weren't assigned to anything else. We worked at his home, and we got an inside look at him. To me, he was one of the most marvellous human beings that ever lived. He was like another father to us. And he made us understand the *work* of the U.N. a little better. We were very close to his family and his friends. This was one of the greatest thrills that I ever had since I've been working here. I would say the second greatest thrill was seeing the Pope. He came in 1965.

Question: Would U Thant talk to you?

Security Officer: Oh, yes—every day. The first thing when he came out in the morning, no matter who was on duty, he would say, "Good morning." When he came home at night, he could have the President of the United States waiting on the porch, but the first thing he would do would be to salute the guard who opened the door. Then, he

would ask how you were, no matter who was on the porch—whether it was his wife, daughter, grandchildren or anyone else. We were very closely tied with him—most of the men were. And in fact, I just saw his daughter and son-in-law the other day. We still keep in touch; we still see Mrs. U Thant and his daughter.

I think I would like to write a book someday. I really would. I thought he was one of the most marvellous human beings I ever met in my life. He was a great man, and I was very upset about his death.

If you were sick, he would call you at home to see how you were. This is the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I had an automobile accident. He had to call every hospital he could find in order to find out if I was all right. Finally he called my house. My mother answered the phone and she didn't know who it was. He introduced himself as the Secretary-General. I got on the phone and told him what happened. He said, "You stay home and take care." That was very thoughtful.

I asked him one day, "How do you feel about certain things that go on at the U.N.?" He said, "You must understand something. We all make mistakes."

When you spend a minimum of eight hours a day with these people, they become like part of your family. You get to respect them. You really get to love the kids. You meet all their people that come in. You see a lot of nice things that way.

We found out what his likes were and what his dislikes were. He was a man who had very simple

pleasures. I think that surprised me most of all. His greatest relaxation, besides meditation, was swimming. He loved to swim. Every morning he would come out about 6:30 or quarter to 7 and would walk to the pool. He would swim no matter what the temperature was. It could be ten degrees outside and he'd be in the pool—of course the pool was heated.

I hope someday that the work of this man comes out in writing so that people can really read and see U Thant as he really was. I am sorry that he did not finish his book. It's so easy to take these people for granted. I told him one day, "I think the job is a thankless job, because the press is always criticising you." He said if they didn't criticise you, you wouldn't be doing your job. He always had an answer, and his answers were always good. The man was brilliant. And as far as a human being goes, there was none greater. I really cared for him. I'm sorry I couldn't do more for the man. We had lots of good times.

Question: Did he like to laugh?

Security Officer: Oh, yes. He loved to laugh. He would tease you. I was the only one at the time who wasn't married, so he would tease me about that and tell me to make sure to get married and have a family. I had horses at the time and he knew it. He asked me how my horses were. And I was a little crazy at that time—I used to always run around with his dog.

He was really great. He was really nice. His wife was also a very nice person. I was really sorry to see him die so young. I was up to his house for dinner about a year before he died. He looked terrific. He was swimming a lot; he was sun-tanned. He kept in touch with us because there was a sergeant who worked there. He kept us informed. I thought he was very great. He would tell you certain things and you would say to yourself, "You know, he's right." He never got excited. I never saw him raise his voice, except maybe once. He was so level-headed. I don't know if it was his religion or what that made him that way.

If you knocked the U.N. itself, he didn't like that at all. He said, "What you must understand is that it is like a wheel that doesn't have all the hub together yet. This is what has to be done. Once you have that hub, the wheel will turn freely." He always defended the U.N. He said, "Things will get better. The world is progressing."

At home, at night, he would eat, and then he would go into his library and he would write. He would spend a few hours there, and then he would return and go to bed. I didn't think it was such a good life, because he was working all the time. He never took very many vacations. But he always made sure his children had the best of everything. And if he could ever help a friend, he did. He helped a lot of people. I can't tell you how many.

I could never work for another man like I did for him. He was super. We had a lot of fun with him. We really did. Once in a while, on a day off, he would come out, and he would walk around and he would talk to us. He would come inside and ask us how everything was. And, as I said, we had a lot of laughs.

Question: What kinds of things did he find funny?

Security Officer: He had a very good sense of humour. I used to tease him a lot. If it was cold and he didn't have a jacket on, I would say, "You should put your jacket on!" You know, you would worry about him. He had a good sense of humour, because he loved people. There was nothing phony about him. The man was just fantastic.

I guess something that really impressed me was how much he thought of us, especially because we were nobodies; we were just people. One time there was a rumor that they were going to take us off the post. He told us, "No. As long as you want to, you can stay." He gave us a sense of pride.

One thing I will never forget that he told me. He said, "Joe, you have to remember, I am only a husband. All women in the home are bosses. So to keep Mrs. U Thant happy is to keep me happy. If she asks you to do something, you do it." I said, "Yes sir, Mr. Secretary-General, whatever she wants she gets." He said, "When I come home at night, I don't want to have any problems because she is mad that something wasn't done. When she is home, she is the boss." But when he was home, he was the boss—you could see that. Not that he was a domineering figure—everybody loved him. When he came home, it was like God coming home.

We used to have a bell. If he rang the bell, we knew it was an emergency and we should respond to the house. But if there was a party, he would tell

a maid, "Ring the bell." We would go up to the back door—we couldn't go through the front door because all the guests went there—and he would say, "When everybody is in, you come inside and eat." So that is exactly what we would do. And we couldn't refuse, because he would feel insulted.

He would tease me once in a while. He thought I was going to marry one of the Burmese girls. His wife was more worried than anything that I wasn't going to get married. They believed in marriage.

I used to go sledding there. I would hose down the hill at night and I would go sliding down—I was a little wacky then. One of the maids told me that one of the Ambassadors once said to U Thant, "You know that Officer, Joe, he's very boyish, he acts very young." U Thant told him, "The fox that bit that man died. He acts young—that's just his nature—but he doesn't forget anything." We were very close to the family. I used to get a little wacky, sliding down the hill with the kid, and the dog would come chasing down after us. The boy had nobody to play with, so we used to make him laugh and enjoy himself. And we used to make the Secretary-General laugh. He liked to laugh.

He would say to us at night, "If you are too tired, don't go home." There was a place in the basement. It wasn't much, but we could sleep down there.

He would say, "If you need anything, just ask me." My mother fell down one time and hurt her shoulder and her right arm, and he said to me, "If you need any financial assistance, or any good doctors, don't be afraid to ask." That really surprised

me. It shouldn't have, because that was the way he was.

He used to smoke cigars. He liked to smoke. And we always got free cigars. He used to call us in and say, "Here." They were cigars that you couldn't buy in this country. I smoke cigars—he gave me a very expensive habit. I used to tell him, "What am I going to do when you are not Secretary-General? How am I going to buy these dollar cigars? We can't afford them on our salary." He was great, he really was.

It wasn't fair that he died so young. It just wasn't right. When he died I felt like I lost a piece of myself. Here was a man who was so great, and yet he was so humble. The world could take a lesson from him. Toward the end he bought his own Cadillac. I used to wash and polish it. He would get a big kick out of that. I used to tease him and say, "Make sure not to go through any mud puddles!" It didn't take much to make him laugh, and yet he enjoyed himself so little.

Question: You were still out there when he wasn't Secretary-General?

Security Officer: What happened was that we stayed a month, so he could move. But afterwards we kept in contact. He sent us post cards. Every man that worked there has a letter from him. When his wife went into the hospital, we sent her roses.

One of the most touching moments was the first time we got him a birthday gift. It was an attache

case from Mark Cross. He almost had tears in his eyes, because we had paid around \$95 or \$100 for it and we had his name put on in gold. U Thant was so thrilled with that. All the Ambassadors were sending him bottles of liquor and he was so surprised that on our salary we would do a thing like that. We hadn't known him that long. That is how attached we had grown to him. We always bought him nice gifts. It was part of our respect for him, for what he'd done for us. To work for that man was the best experience I ever had.

He would walk around the house, and when he saw you, he would always acknowledge you. He would never shun you. Mrs. U Thant was always very nice to us, too.

Question: Did she cook and things like that?

Security Officer: Sure, she cooked. She was in the kitchen every morning at seven o'clock. When we first went there, she would come out at four o'clock in the morning to see if we were awake. We had to gain her trust. At first we had very little contact; everything was very business-like. We would see her looking out the window at four o'clock in the morning to see if we were up. She was a better Security Officer than we were. After that she gained confidence, and we became friends. She was really great. She did not speak much English. She was a very simple woman.

His grandchildren were always at his house. Always. They were small at the time. They would tell us different things about the Burmese. His

grandson used to tell me how his grandmother would say, "No yellow hair." In other words, if you were Burmese, you were supposed to marry a girl with black hair; you weren't allowed to marry a blond-headed American. They didn't believe in it. He was good to them, real good. I can't say enough about them. I'm sorry I didn't know more about them. I get the chills when I talk about them.

When we first went up there, they had a guard dog named Bala, and he only understood Burmese, naturally, because he was with Burmese all day long. The funny thing is that when they wanted to let the dog out, they used to tell *us* to come in. One time, as I was walking out the solarium door, here comes Bala around the corner with the teeth out—grrr—hellbent to get me. Mrs. U Thant was banging on the windowsill yelling, in Burmese, "Bala! Stop!" He stopped short and put his tail between his legs. I'm telling you, I thought I was a dead man, because he was all hellbent to get me. And there was nothing I could have said to him because he only understood Burmese! He died, unfortunately. He was one of the strongest shepherds I ever saw in my life.

Then we got another Bala. Somewhere we must have a picture of the S.G. with the puppy, Bala, on his desk. Then he grew up to be a big dog. We had a lot of fun. That dog hated flowers. He used to drive Dr. Myint-U crazy, because he used to run through Dr. Myint's flower beds. But the dog loved the kids.

Even though Colonel Trimble was the top man in Security, U Thant was the man we were respon-

sible to. He would come home at night and ask us, "Is everything all right?" And if it wasn't, we had to tell him, so that he knew what was going on. In a way, we were really on our own. And he wanted it that way. Many times things happened which were never reported.

We were all trained to be armed, but they wouldn't arm us in the beginning. I don't know what the real reason for that was. I guess it was because we were all so junior then. Most of us had only been here four or five years. There were two incidents at the house with fire crackers going off. He came home the night after the second incident, and I was very upset. I said to him, "Mr. Secretary-General, I have to speak to you privately." He said, "What's the matter?" I made him go inside with me to the living room. He sat on one couch and I sat on the other. I said, "Today, a truck drove by and threw firecrackers at the place. How can I protect you, if I cannot protect myself?" That night we were robbed, and he himself called up the investigation unit and told them that we all had to have pistols brought up for us. He was not a man of violence, but he said, "This is my home and I want it protected." So we wore pistols on the outside after that, but we never had to use them.

People actually feared us. They thought we were James Bonds, sitting in that booth. They thought we had all kinds of rockets or missile wires up there. But really we had nothing. All we had was a thermos, a telephone and a light.

This had to be the greatest thing for me. Plus, naturally, seeing all the Heads of States and all the

dignitaries, kings and queens. You know, the job is so interesting. It is hard to pinpoint these things, because you see so many different people in so many different aspects, working with all the different police agencies, meeting all the foreign diplomats. When you first meet someone he may be Second Secretary. Then two or three years later he may be an Ambassador, and five years later he's the Prime Minister. Then, if you last that long, he becomes President of the country. And the people are really beautiful. Really, I can't say I can honestly criticise one of them, because they've just been great.

Question: Have you traveled away from Headquarters at all?

Security Officer: The only place I ever traveled away from Headquarters was to the Habitat Conference in Vancouver last year.

Question: How was that different from being here?

Security Officer: Basically it was the same thing. The only difference is that you have to put all of your knowledge to use while you are left on your own. We worked with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who had never set up a U.N. Conference before. Chief DiCicco, Officer Edwards, Officer McNeil, Sgt. Smith and myself all went to Vancouver. I arrived a week after Alan Smith had arrived, and he had everything all set up for us.

We had private security, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Vancouver Police helping us. Our primary function was to use our knowledge of the delegates and procedures for running the meetings. We set up a mini-U.N. there. For example, we set up two guards at each door, similar to what we have at the U.N. Many times we would act as a liaison, because even before a delegate would get his pass, we would know him. If the other men didn't know him, they would stop him, which was only natural. So our job was to act as a liaison and to make sure that he was recognised and allowed to enter the meeting.

Question: Where were you born?

Security Officer: I was born in the United States, in New York State. But now I live in Jersey. Outside the job, my primary interest is my horses and my dogs.

Question: Do you feel that the U.N. is doing something for the world?

Security Officer: I feel the U.N. can help a lot of people. We all need to help one another, because without each other, we're nothing. We all have to teach each other.

* * *



"When he saw you, he would always acknowledge you. He would never shun you. . ."

[Photo: United Nations]

*Interview with Two Officers
of "A" Squad of the Tour Platoon*

Question: What would you say is the most interesting thing that has happened to you? Can you think of a particular incident?

Security Officer: I believe one of the most exciting things was the Pope's visit in 1965.

Question: What did you have to do at that time?

Security Officer: Oh, the security was very tight, very tight. We prepared for a couple of weeks in advance before he came. Just having him here was a big thing for me. That was one of the most exciting things for me.

Question: What do you think is the most important quality that somebody in Security needs to have? Or what combination?

Security Officer: It's got to be a combination, sure. You have to be very understanding. You've got to bend a lot, be flexible. You have to have, I believe, a pretty good sense of humor, and very good judgement because you are dealing with very temperamental people: diplomats, you know. And

then the staff, too. You're dealing with people from other countries with different ideas and lifestyles. You have to think about where a person is from, his background, his philosophy, and even his sense of humor. I mean, what Americans think is funny, other people might not think is funny. I could say something to somebody from a foreign country and there will be a blank expression on his face; yet I could say the same thing to my colleague and he'd be laughing hysterically. Everything is different.

Question: Do you get to talk to the delegates?

Security Officer: Oh, sure. I would say definitely that they are very friendly, and we get along very well. They really help us out.

Question: The Chief talked the other day about pride. What do you think would be the time that you felt the most proud to be part of the Service?

Security Officer: I feel good coming in on the job all the time. I feel proud of the job when I'm working here. I love the job.

Question: Is there any particular tour of duty that is fulfilling to do?

Security Officer: The majority rotate, so you can't pinpoint any particular section that's any more fulfilling—Tours, Conference, Safety—they are all important. Whatever you do, I think is important. It's all one team; it's a team together. It's a family. That's exactly the way it is: four to

twelve, twelve to eight, eight to four, around the clock, the Conference squad—they're all together. That's the way it should be and that's the way it is.

Question: What other kinds of striking experiences have you had here at the UN?

Second Security Officer: I liked when Arafat was here. To me, that was a challenge. That was a real tight security situation. For my colleague it was when the Pope came. I was not here then. For me the big thing was when Arafat came. We had helicopters landing in the north garden. To me that was the best security we have ever had. And nobody knew when he was coming in. He really kept people guessing. It was well done. I thought it was well done.

Security Officer: Khrushchev was here, before our time, in 1960. When he came in, he'd go into the General Assembly, and he'd start pounding his shoe on the table. We had some rough times here—one fanatic group coming over the walls. A few of the Security got hurt in the line of duty, trying to protect the delegates and the staff. We have had our good times and our bad times.

* * *

*Interview with an Officer
I of "B" Squad of the Tour Platoon*

Question: What's the easiest tour, for you personally?

Security Officer: The easiest one for me is from midnight to eight. That's my preference. Most of the guys don't like it. The night goes faster, because we have a lot of things to do. We make a large check of the place. We have to check all the DPL cars out and type a list of them. By that time it's five o'clock in the morning and then the cars start coming in for the day shift. So the night runs by quickly. Rather than just sitting here doing nothing, you're always a bit occupied. That's why I like it. Then I sleep during the day. Most others don't sleep during the day.

Question: Since you've been here, has anything amusing happened to you?

Security Officer: I was out at the front gate of the Secretariat here and I had a big dog come through the gate and jump into the fountain and start swimming around. I got a little concerned. It caught me off guard. Another officer and I were finally able to coax him out.

Question: What do you think is the most difficult part of the job?

Security Officer: I would say dealing with the unexpected. You're not sure what's going to happen from one second to the next. If you are approached at the gate, for example, you don't know whether that particular person is going to try and force his way through your post or just ask you where 42nd Street is.

Question: What do you think is the main quality that someone in the Security Service needs to have?

Security Officer: Perseverance. It's definitely not a job to take casually. I feel that we have a service to render here, and to do our job we just have to be alert at all times. We have to be prepared for anything.

Question: Do you think that the U.N. is really accomplishing anything?

Security Officer: I believe so, because, let's face it, you have to have a place in the world for countries to meet and discuss their various disagreements. As far as being in the United States, they couldn't have picked a better place to have it.

* * *



A Security Guard locks the doors of the delegates entrance to the General Assembly building after the close of another day's proceedings.

[Photo: United Nations]

*Interview with an Officer
of "C" Squad of the Tour Platoon*

Question: Is there a basic attitude that someone in Security should have?

Security Officer: Normally, basically, we're neutral. We don't get involved when they have demonstrations for a cause against the U.N. We usually don't exchange words or give any opinion to people who ask questions of what's going on in the General Assembly or who's speaking. And then they may want to get involved with the country or talk about what's taking place in that country. They ask you for your opinion or they want you to talk. But we're neutral to them. We don't discuss what's going on in the United Nations. I believe you can get along with people. If they ask you politely, be courteous. But you get a lot of visitors who come here from all over the world and they want to come in at 5:20 p.m., when we have to close. It's really rough to turn them away. They say: "I came here from across the world, Australia." I say, "Sorry, come back tomorrow." They say, "But we're leaving tonight, we're not going to be here tomorrow. We just stopped by." And you have to say no. Who knows when they were planning to come again to the United States, or just come to New York and see the U.N.? There are a lot of visitors.

Question: Do you think the U.N. is doing anything for the world?

Security Officer: Oh, yes. I think so. It's the only place I know that's making an attempt. No one else is.

Question: If you had to pick something you like the most about the job or the least about the job, what do you think it would be? What is the hardest part and what is the most enjoyable?

Security Officer: The most enjoyable time is in the summer when you're in the garden. I think that's the most beautiful place in New York City. It's nice in the summer. Even in the winter it's nice with all the snow. I enjoy the outside. That's what I like most about this job.

The part I like the least is the standing part. It gets rough after a while, but you get used to it. As long as you always manage to get your breaks, get your rests. At one time they used to be more strictly military, but they've slacked off. They realize we're staff just like yourself or anyone else.

Question: Actually, you're firemen, too. You've found a few fires here and there, too, so I've heard.

Security Officer: In fact, tonight we were making a patrol on the 20th floor. There was an electric typewriter that apparently was plugged in

and as I was going by there was smoke coming from it. It could have started a fire. On that particular typewriter I think they just left it on and the wires got burned: it was smoking. Normally most of them are turned off.

Question: Can you think of any amusing incidents that have happened while you've been in the Service?

Security Officer: Once two visitors came in and walked into the Meditation Room. They said to the Security Officer, "Up, please." He said to them, "This is a Meditation Room—this is not the elevator!" They were shocked. They didn't know what to say.

I had a comical incident happen to me many years ago, an embarrassing one. You know the Scots, with the kilts? Once I was on the third floor, in front of the Security Council Chamber, and I saw a little Scottish hat. I had seen the Scottish Orchestra walking by with the kilts on—the plaid dress. When I found this hat, the first thing I said to myself was, "Well, this must belong to the Scottish Orchestra." So I took this hat and I ran up to this guy and I said, "Sir, you dropped your hat." He took the hat and he turned it over. And on the side of it—I didn't look at that side. I should have, but I didn't—it said, "Junior Airline Hostess." It must have belonged to a kid from one of the schools down here in New York.

Question: I bet he just laughed.

Security Officer: He laughed it off, but I felt just terrible at the time. Afterwards I laughed about it.

* * *

*Interview with an Officer
of "D" Squad of the Tour Platoon*

Question: Can you think of any interesting or humorous incidents that have happened to you since you have been at the U.N.?

Security Officer: Not really. After a while everything becomes just part of my day's work. I make my day interesting just by doing my normal thing. And there's nothing I could really pinpoint and say, "This was out of the ordinary." Every day is interesting; every day there's an incident.

Question: How long have you served?

Security Officer: Sixteen years. You know when it was very exciting was when Kennedy came. It was two weeks before he died. He had an honour guard, and everybody was standing up by the elevator. He shook all the guys' hands. Two weeks later, I was here on the midnight shift when I heard that he was assassinated.

During the G.A., if they need it, sometimes I work plain clothes or do bodyguard work for visits. The Premier of Cambodia was here once—a heck of a nice guy. I was his bodyguard while he was here. Two years later, they overthrew the Government. I talked to a friend of his who said that he was leaving the country on a helicopter and

some member of his family jumped down off the helicopter. He jumped off to try to get them. I guess he must be dead by now. Nobody knows what really happened.

Question: I know many of the Security Officers travel to other parts of the world, but this is Headquarters, isn't it?

Security Officer: Exactly. They send in men to different meetings in different parts of the world. I think the last few posts were in Canada. A few people went to Kenya and to Venezuela. And some go to Geneva occasionally.

Question: So they are assigned from Headquarters?

Security Officer: Right.

Question: Do they have regular people on at all these places where there are U.N. stations?

Security Officer: Well, yes, they have regulars—like in Geneva: they have their own Security Section.

Question: So would that Section be under Col. Trimble too?

Security Officer: I think now they've co-ordinated it so that it would be. He would be the Direc-

tor of Security of the U.N. all over the world. They are trying to have the same uniforms, to make it more organized, so they could run it better.

Question: So people going anywhere would see the U.N. Security?

Security Officer: It would be more organized, more efficient. That is what they are trying to do. Occasionally they send people there on a permanent post. You could be transferred to Geneva, for example.

* * *