

## Michael J. Molloy

### Uganda Collection Oral History Project: Immigration

**Michael Molloy:** “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, 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 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, being a little dumb, we didn’t necessarily figure out what it was. We’re walking along, heading towards the IPS [Industrial Promotion Services] 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, 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 and saying, “Come 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 handwritten. 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. 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 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,” 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

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cards. The people know their numbers, they'll come to us with their numbers. When we have the number we can find their applications which we'll file according to the number." Really dead simple so it saved a huge amount of work because the people were our indexing system. 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."