

AMBASSADOR KEITH LAPHAM BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: November 15, 2000

Copyright 2003 ADST

Q: Do you go by Keith?

BROWN: I do.

Q: Well, let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born, and a little about your family?

BROWN: I was born June 18, 1925, in Sterling, Illinois. It's located in the northwestern corner of Illinois, 30 miles from the Mississippi River, and about 100 miles west of Chicago.

Q: Is it a town, a city?

BROWN: It is an agriculture and hardware manufacturing city. It has a twin city on the other side of the Rock River, called Rock Falls. When I grew up, there was about 20,000 people. There are probably about 40,000 today.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your parents. First, how about your father?

BROWN: My father was born and raised in nearby Sterling, in Morrison, Illinois. He was educated at the University of Chicago. He was on the Chicago track team, under Coach Amos Alonzo Stagg. He then went to Cornell University, graduated from the law school, and thereafter practiced law in Chicago for a while. His family had farms around Morrison and he managed the farms for several years. Then, he moved to Sterling and went into the practice of law. He practiced law for 45, 50 years, until he died.

Q: The family came from where?

BROWN: On my grandfather's side, they were originally from New York, upstate. On my grandmother's side, they were from Vermont. That is the Lapham name. The Browns and the Laphams both pioneered out in Morrison, Illinois, and met up there and married.

Q: Your mother?

BROWN: My mother was born and raised in Sterling, IL. She was a school teacher. They came to Sterling from, I think, Winona, MN. I don't know where they were before that.

Q: What was their name?

BROWN: Briggs.

Q: They weren't sort of a Norwegian family?

BROWN: No, in fact, one of my cousins has done a background of the Briggs genealogy. They are from Scotland and England. The Browns and the Laphams are the same.

Q: Did you grow up in Sterling?

BROWN: Yes, I grew up in Sterling, until I graduated from high school, and went off to the Navy. I went into the service - U.S. Navy - at age 17.

Q: For a kid, during the late 1920s, 1930s, what was Sterling like?

BROWN: Sterling was a small, I thought, beautiful midwestern town. I think we were fairly isolated. The big thing in our lives was to go into Chicago, on the train. Of course, there were many, many trains in those days. We were, I suppose, considered hicks. We were small town. We didn't get very far from our birthplace.

Q: What was school like?

BROWN: Well, I went through the public schools in Sterling. graduated from Sterling Township High School in 1943.

Q: While you were in school, what things interested you the most?

BROWN: I had an older brother, almost three years older, who was quite a star athlete. I tried my darndest, all my life, to keep up with him. So, I was on the football team, the basketball team. I ran the mile in track. He was an eagle scout, so I became an eagle scout. He was a role model for me. If I hadn't had him to live up to, I don't know what would have happened.

Q: How about studies? Any particular things grab you while you were in school, reading, or...?

BROWN: I've always been interested in history and English, I guess. I've done poorly in foreign language, I must admit. In high school, without meaning to brag, I did quite well. I was near the top of the class, and so was my brother. I also had an older sister who was also at the top of her class. She's five years older, but I was closer to my brother.

Q: How about at home? Did you all sit around the dining room table and talk about events?

BROWN: We had a pretty old fashioned family life, I guess. We ate all meals together. We had a maid that helped out very well. My father came home from the office for lunch every day, and we came home from school every day. We had breakfast, lunch and dinner together, all my life, at home.

Q: This is, of course, particularly when you were becoming aware of things, a time of great political ferment, the New Deal, etc. People usually fell into one camp or the other.

BROWN: My family, as was almost everybody I knew, in Sterling, were very arch conservative, hardworking, anti-New Deal family.

Q: Did this play a role in your life?

BROWN: Sterling was a divided community, I suppose. You had a big steel mill. So, you had all the steelworkers, and several hardware plants. Those people were the blue collar group, and they tended to be Democrats. Of course, Roosevelt was their great hero. Sterling was 12 miles from Dixon, Illinois, where Ronald Reagan grew up. I was aware of that. He came to Dixon for a celebration. It was actually a celebration of Louella Parsons, who was from Dixon.

Q: She was the famous gossip columnist from Hollywood.

BROWN: Yes, gossip columnist. Louella Parsons brought Ronald Reagan back with her, along with a lot of other stars such as Bob Hope. Of course, he was kind of a young star then, and had only been gone from Dixon for about 15 years. Instead of everybody cheering for Louella, they were all yelling, "Hi Dutch," and clapping him on the back. I went up there. I had a date with a girl who he crowned Miss Rock River Queen. I met him at that time, and I so recorded in my diary. In the last few years, when I've met people who have been big Reagan fans, they always want to tell you how well they knew Ronald Reagan, and how early in his career, they had met him. So, they would say, "I met Ronny in 1962," or something. I would say, "Well, I met him in 1942." It always put them down. Many of them thought I was lying.

Q: When you were getting out of high school, what were you pointetoward?

BROWN: I took examinations, and applied for the Navy B-12 program. If I remember how it worked, I was sworn into the Navy on May 5, 1943, when I was seventeen. I got out of high school at the end of May, in 1943, and I was sent to the University of Illinois. I wore a Navy uniform and it paid \$50.00 a month, I believe.

Q: The B-12 program was a twelve-week program, or a twelve-montprogram?

BROWN: Actually, you were to finish about a two and a half year college program. When I got in, I didn't realize it was going to be that long. Actually, after the first year at the University of Illinois, I was moved to the Naval ROTC, where we wore midshipman uniforms. I was sent to Austin, TX, the University of Texas.

Q: Was it a pretty straight forward Naval course, engineering?

BROWN: It was about half and half. You took Navy courses, navigation, communication, and that sort of thing. Then, you also took engineering courses. I kept trying to get into more History or English courses, but they steered me, as much as they could, into engineering, which I had no interest in. I arrived at the University of Texas on March 4, 1944.

Q: So, when did you get out of the program?

BROWN: I stayed at the University of Texas. You went straight through, of course. I got commissioned as an Ensign on October 31, 1945. The war had just ended. I was sent, of all things, to Harvard, to take training in the Supply Corps, which I was very upset about. Everyone else was going off to Navy bases, and doing duty on ships, and I was sent to Harvard. There were about 20 of us, and we complained bitterly. They said, "This is an honor. We picked you, and your group is being honored by this." We were all as mad as could be. So, we got to Harvard. I got half way through the supply course, and they picked a group of us and sent us to New York, to take commissary training, so that we would improve the cooking conditions wherever we were going to be sent. I said, "Am I ever going to get out of the training program?" I was so upset with them. I was in New York for a month, observing cooking conditions at selected restaurants. It was kind of foolish. I finally got assigned to go over overseas. I went to the Pacific, and finally ended up on Palawan Island in the Philippines, which was a Naval Air Base that was being closed. I was there at the tail end of it.

Q: What was it like there?

BROWN: Everybody was shipping out, so to speak. There was a full navy captain, and there was a doctor who was a lieutenant commander, and maybe one first lieutenant, and then me. I was just a green ensign. So, we were doing everything. They were trying to close the base as fast as they could. I was only there for six months.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Filipinos, at that point?

BROWN: Yes, there were quite a few working there. Like in the Foreign Service, we have FSNs, well we had quite a few Filipinos, mostly men, working for us.

Q: I am curious about this, as we disengage from the war effort. Were we taking a lot of stuff home, or were we sort of just "selling off" the stuff?

BROWN: That's an interesting question, because there was just an awful lot of equipment, and supplies, and such, which was eventually turned over to the Philippine government, rather than our bringing it back. It would not make any sense to send it to the U.S.

Q: It didn't make any sense at all.

BROWN: As a matter of fact, we had frozen lockers, full of wonderful meats and staples. But, under your Navy regulations, you had to serve meals that cost a certain amount, \$1.22 for lunch, maybe \$1.87 for dinner. But I got the Navy doctor to survey the steaks and declare them unfit. Then, we would serve steaks every night. Everybody there thought this was the greatest place to have dinner, and the captain was just wild about me, because we were eating the best food you could imagine, all against regulations.

Q: Of course, but if you are really out somewhere... When you left, was the base turned over to the Filipinos?

BROWN: Not when I left, but it was pretty much closed.

Q: What kind of a base was it?

BROWN: It was a large naval air base, on Palawan Island. There was an Army Air Base about 10 miles away. They all used the same air strip. Both of them were closing very rapidly when I left.

Q: Well, where did you go then?

BROWN: I came back. I think I got out of the Navy on August 12, 1946, and my father knew some people in Northwestern Law School, and pulled some strings, and I got into Northwestern Law School, as did my brother. We both started out in our first year of law school together.

Q: Well, what did your brother do during the war?

BROWN: He was in the Pacific the whole time. He got his commission right when he graduated from Carleton College. He was called, I think, into the V-6 program. But, that was only about eight weeks. Then they immediately sent him overseas. He was captain of an LST the whole time. He ran supplies and people around the islands in the Pacific. He saw a little action, actually.

Q: So, then, you started at Northwestern Law School. I take it that you had set your mind on being a lawyer.

BROWN: Yes, both my brother and I wanted to go into the law. I guess in the back of my mind, I assumed I would graduate and go out to Sterling, and go in with my father's firm. He always encouraged it. But after my first year in Northwestern, I missed being in Texas, actually. I thought that I would like to go back to Texas. I had made so many friends there. It just so happened that the dean of Northwestern Law School, who was named Dean Leon Green, had started his career in Texas. He was a Texan. He decided he wanted to go back to Austin, TX to the law school. They made him a Distinguished Professor. When I talked with him about it, he said, "Well, you come with me, and I'll make you my quiz master. You can work for me." It was too good a deal. I decided to do it. I told my father, and he was very upbeat about it. He said, "I think you are doing a great thing. Go for it." He met with Dean Green, and was quite pleased. My mother was just devastated. She thought I was throwing my life away.

Q: What type of job was this?

BROWN: Well, a quiz master was sort of an assistant to the professor. I graded papers for him. I did an awful lot of research for him. You got paid a very paltry sum.

Q: A graduate assistant.

BROWN: Yes, exactly.

Q: Were you also taking law?

BROWN: Yes, I transferred to the University of Texas Law School.

Q: Did Northwestern have any specialty? Did Texas have speciality, or not?

BROWN: Yes, they had a course on Oil and Gas law which I took. But when you start out, you take criminal law, tort law, civil procedure. You take the basics. I guess today they teach a lot of different things. I call them, sort of, way out courses. But, when I went to law school in the late 1940s, we all took pretty much the standard curriculum in law school.

Q: Were you planning to work in Texas then?

BROWN: I had made up my mind that I was going to become a Texan, and I did.

Q: So, you graduated from law school when?

BROWN: On May 30, 1949. I had become engaged to a girl from San Antonio, named Carol Liebmann. I also, through Leon Green, got a job with a fine law firm in San Antonio. In those days, the firms weren't very big. I went with the largest law firm in San Antonio, seven lawyers. Today, they have law firms there that are 160, or 180 lawyers. But, in those days, most of them were three or four lawyers. This was the firm of Lang, Byrd, Cross, Laden, and later, Oppenheimer. It was across-the-board, politically and ethnically. Three of the partners were Jewish; two were, I don't know what, one was a moss back conservative, Episcopalian. So, we had some pretty lively political arguments with coffee in the morning.

Q: What was San Antonio like in those days?

BROWN: Not very good as a business city. When I got there, it was sort of what I would call sleepy and quiet. It had certain social strata like Boston, I guess. Of course, there was a large Hispanic population. When I first went there, it was about 40% Hispanic. Today, it's about 60%. It was not a Houston or a Dallas. If you wanted to make the big money and lead the real exotic, great professional life, you went with law firms in Houston and Dallas. San Antonio was just a little more pleasant and gracious, and maybe a little quieter.

Q: It was also a military base town, wasn't it?

BROWN: There were about five military bases there; Fort Sam Houston, which is still there and very big, Randolph Field, Lackland Field, Kelly Field and Brook. When I started in law in San Antonio, I was paid \$250 a month. Lawyers that went with the large firms like Vincent, Elkins, Baker, and Botts were probably up in the exotic figures like \$350 a month. None of us were rolling in dough. I got married that fall, in 1949.

Q: What was your wife's background?

BROWN: She had gone to the University of Texas. I had met her at the University of Texas, and we dated. I spent lots of weekends in San Antonio, and would stay with different friends. So, I was delighted when I had this opportunity to go with a the law firm in San Antonio.

Q: I remember San Antonio in August through December of 1950, because of the minor little problem in Korea. I was an enlisted man, in Lackland, taking basic training there. I was in the security service. Did you find yourself specializing in any particular type of law?

BROWN: Yes, totally. I was hired to be the trial lawyer's assistant. I immediately was put into trial practice with him. His name was Bernard Laden. He was a great inspiration. He was a wonderful man, and great fun. He was a little bit of an extrovert - sort of actor type.

Q: You have to be kind of a showman, don't you?

BROWN: You do, and he was a great showman. I learned an awful lot sitting behind him. In those days, we didn't have air conditioning. The offices I went to when I first started practicing were non-air conditioned. It was on the 27th floor of a large tower building. You had windows open blowing hot air at you, and the papers were flying all around. We worked Saturdays until noon. We wore coat and tie everyday. After about a year or so, we moved over to an air conditioned building, but we still kept the same hours. The pay was still the same.

Q: Looking, at that time, how did the Anglo and Hispanic communities work together?

BROWN: I would say they were fairly separated. There were no Hispanics in the legislature in Austin, and yet you had this tremendous population. I don't think they were organized. They didn't vote as well. The same was true with the black population. Eventually, that was changing. At about the time I left San Antonio, after seven years, they were electing Hispanics. Of course, over the years, it's now a big voting block. They have many legislators, congressmen, and mayors from the Hispanic community.

Q: Did you have much Hispanic work on a trial basis?

BROWN: We didn't really. Well, we did in terms of law suits since we represented the insurance company that defended the San Antonio Transit Company. So, many of the plaintiffs were Hispanics. A good many of the jurors would be Hispanic. A lot of them worked in Kelly Field, or Lackland. They got pay, and then they got \$3.00 a day to be jurors. In those days, it was all male jurors. There were no women on the jury. We would have maybe five cases set for trial. But the court system administrator would permit us to try only one case. We didn't have to be in court in two different court rooms. We would try one at a time, so it would cause the plaintiffs to have to wait a while, which was probably unfair, but it was the way it worked. We would go to the "call of the docket" on Monday. If the plaintiff wasn't ready in the first case, which we were very ready for, and had our witnesses lined up and such, I would set that file aside and then go to the second one, which I would brief myself on, and was fairly ready for that one. Then, if they would pass that case, and you got down to the third, or heaven forbid, the fourth case that was on the docket, it was panic time. I would jump out of there and race for the claims department at the transit company, and let them know we were going to trial this afternoon in this case. They would run out all over the city, trying to find witnesses. It was exciting and interesting. We would deliberately take longer in picking the jury, if we knew we were still trying to find witnesses. We had twice as many questions of the jurors.

Q: What were the politics of San Antonio while you were there?

BROWN: Well, San Antonio was an old guard sort of town. It had a very set, strict social life, that became more and more Republican in the presidential vote. But, otherwise, below that, it was all democrat. Everything was a solid Democrat system. There was a Republican party that almost existed in name only. I happened to join that, and worked on the Eisenhower campaign in San Antonio.

Q: Eisenhower must have taken Texas, didn't he?

BROWN: I think he did. Governor Allan Shivers, who was a democrat, jumped and supported Eisenhower. I believe I'm right about that, Texas did go for Eisenhower.

Q: Did you get involved in politics?

BROWN: Very much. I've been involved in politics since I was a little boy. When I was 11, I had a weekly neighborhood newspaper. It was called The Northend News. My father put a Kansas sunflower on the front page of the paper for one edition. We painted it in and put in "Vote for Governor Landon." My father managed to send that to Governor Landon, and he wrote me a letter back, and enclosed a little sunflower pin. I can remember the letter saying, "My dear Keith, I'm so pleased that you are active in politics, and hope you will always be interested in government and public affairs." I suppose that inspired me.

Q: Oh, that's great.

BROWN: I was always interested in politics, and have been to thiday.

Q: This day makes it very interesting. We are now talking a week and a day past the election of 2000, and we don't know who the president is. We're talking about 300 votes. It's a crazy time.

BROWN: Absolutely crazy.

Q: Well, I suppose, as a Republican, you couldn't really hope fooffice.

BROWN: When Eisenhower was elected, the Republican party, which was just a handful of ineffective people, had control of the patronage. As a matter of fact, the man who sort of controlled the Republican party in "Bear" County - I don't know whether you remember "Bear," spelled "B - e - x - a - r," was named Sheldon. He came to me and said, "Keith, you were very helpful in the campaign, would you like to be an assistant federal district attorney?" It paid a little better, not much. But, I told him that I didn't want to leave my law firm. I passed it up. In order to supplement income, I was also teaching at St. Mary's Law School at night. I taught about three nights a week. I think I got paid \$600.00 for the semester, but every dollar helped.

Q: Oh, absolutely. While you were doing that, I was earning \$60.0a month, but I had a nice barracks and all the food I could eat.

BROWN: Well, in the Navy I was getting \$50.00 a month.

Q: Well, you say you were in San Antonio for about seven years.

BROWN: Let's see, that was 1949, and I left in 1955, so that would be six years. Through some friends in San Antonio, I met a Yale graduate who was from Grosse Pointe, Michigan, and he had gone into the oil business in Oklahoma City. He was by himself, and he came down to San Antonio on two or three occasions and attended some social functions. I got to know him, and he asked me to come up to Oklahoma City and handle the land and legal work of his oil operation. It was one of the biggest decisions I ever made. I talked it over with my wife, of course, and I talked with my friend, Beb Laden. He said, "You're going to be a great lawyer here, if you stay here. You know you can always make it, and you'll be a partner one of these days, and you'll make just the money a lawyer makes," which wasn't much in those days. I think Laden told me he was making about \$20,000 a year, and he had been practicing for 30 years. I thought that I would see if I could do better than that. I accepted that proposition of my now partner, George Caulkins, Jr., and I'm still with him. Another man, Hanley Higbie, Jr., joined us at the same time, also from Grosse Pointe. The three of us stayed in Oklahoma City for five years, and then we moved to Denver.

Q: Well, let's talk about Oklahoma City. What were you bringing tthe oil business?

BROWN: Well, I did all the legal work and I assisted with a lot of leasing. I was out in the field leasing from farmers. I did all the contract work, the drilling contracts, all the legal work. But, more and more, I got away from the practice of law. You get more into the business, and less into the law.

Q: How did you figure out where to drill?

BROWN: Well, we had a geologist who developed prospects for us. I would also meet with land men of major companies. They had prospects which they wanted someone else to drill. They were called "farm outs." They would talk to you and say, "Look, you people can drill this, and we will take a back-in interest, maybe 25% interest, and we'll give you 50% interest in all the acreage around the drill site." There were different kinds of contracts, different kinds of deals. They would give you what they call "bottom role" money, or "drill stem" money, to try to get you to drill. They had more prospects than they could drill themselves. For the most part, independent oil men did all the wild catting and the drilling, and then the majors would do the established locations after that.

Q: I take it that since you are still in the business, that it was successful venture?

BROWN: It wasn't highly successful. I really can't claim that it was. We found some production, not a lot. We certainly weren't rolling in dough. I think when I went to work with Caulkins, I was drawing \$450 a month. Later on we moved to Denver and took over another oil company that had the same investors or backers, and we merged with them. We took over a small field that they had established in New Mexico, which was a water flood oil project. Eventually, they wanted out, and we personally formed a partnership and bought them out. Then, the oil, water flood project dried up, so then we started drilling gas wells, which were from a different strata. That's where we made money. That field became a very sizable gas field. We have that field today. Our partnership owns 25% of it. We have about 260 gas wells. Some of them are producing from two and three locations. We were successful by buying up an established oil field that was dying out. We were pretty lucky with that.

Q: This was in Colorado?

BROWN: We officed in Colorado but the gas production was in NeMexico.

Q: How was Colorado? Did you get involved in politics there?

BROWN: I did, very much.

Q: What were the politics of Colorado then?

BROWN: I would say the Republicans had a little bit of an edge most of the time. At one time, when I was very active, we had Governor John Love. We had two Republican senators, Dominic and Allot. We had about three out of five congressmen who were Republicans. Then, as far as the legislature, the senate and the house were both Republican. It's been pretty Republican for most of the time I've been there. We had a period when the governor was a Democrat, for about 12 years. It's back now in the Republican column. It voted very Republican in the last couple elections. Usually, at the presidential election, it goes Republican.

Q: What sort of things are you doing with politics?

BROWN: A friend of mine became the Republican State Chairman. He asked me to be Republican State Finance Chairman, so I was raising the money for the state Republican party. Then, a man named Jeremiah Millbank, who was the National Finance Chairman for the Republican party asked me to go on the National Finance Committee. I did that, and I worked five states, out of Denver. These were small western states. We are talking about Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah and Montana. You aren't paid for any of this. You're totally on your own nickel. But, I did that for four years or so. In 1975, there was a vacancy for the national committee man in Colorado. I ran for that state-wide and won it. Then, I was reelected twice more. So, I was on the Republican National Committee for about seven years.

Q: What were the issues in Colorado that were particularly strong?

BROWN: Well, Colorado is a divided state. You have the eastern region, Denver, Colorado Springs corridor, up to Fort Collins. Then, you have the western slope, which is over in Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, Aspen and Vail. The interests of the two are sometimes at odds. Water is the big battle. Colorado has changed. It used to be a big mining business, and it still is, but not like the old days. It is big agricultural, but mostly out in the plains, where there is dry farming. Then, you have the cattle ranches, which are gradually being bought out and made into resorts. Skiing and tourism have become big in all of western Colorado. But, with everything you do, water is the key.

Q: One hears about in the west, that with regards to water, there is a love/hate relationship with the federal government. In other words, "Stay off my back, don't bother me, but make sure I get my water," and that sort of thing.

BROWN: That's exactly right. It's a battle with the government. Of course, also the ranchers want to keep their federal lease and want to keep the rent low. Ranching, as you probably know, is a very tough business. It's a way of life, with wonderful people. It's awfully hard to make a lot of money ranching in today's market. That's very true in Texas, too.

Q: Did you ever get into ranching, or anything like that?

BROWN: I bought, at one point... I forget exactly when, a small ranch over in western Colorado, near Rifle. But, it was mainly just a family place. I tried to run it as a ranch so that the Internal Revenue didn't call it a hobby, and I did. If you could show a profit every five years it took you off the hobby law. It was mainly for the kids and the grandkids to enjoy. We sold it about five years ago. They weren't using it enough, and I didn't feel that I needed it.

Q: Here, you have definitely been in the Midwest and Texas, outside of heading off to the Phillipines, at one point. While you were doing this did the role of both national politics and international affairs intrude at all?

BROWN: I wouldn't say that I became an expert on anything, but I certainly knew more than when I was back in Sterling, IL. I'd say I was more aware of what was going on in the world. Of course, I started coming to Washington quite a bit. Then, in our oil operation, I did a lot of traveling. I guess I became a little more aware of national and international issues, and became more interested in the world.

Q: Have you ever been involved in any other business?

BROWN: Yes I have. When we moved to Denver in 1959 we took up skiing with all the family - mostly in Aspen. About 1960 my partners and I heard about a project to build a new ski area to be called Vail. The result was that we invested - individually - in the project and ended up going all over the country raising the million dollars of equity needed to get it started. We spent all of 1961 raising the money along with the money for the first lodge - \$750,000. All three of us went on the Board of Vail Associates Inc. and I acted as Secretary and initially handled the real estate. From 1963 to 1965 I built the first one-hundred condominiums in Vail - now there are thousands in the Vail valley. Vail, as you probably know, has become the largest and best ski resort in North America and is now a year-round resort. Nobody could have predicted such a huge success. There is a very excellent book out on Vail called The Inventors of Vail by Dick Hauserman which tells the early history.

After Vail I continued an interest in real estate and built a twenty-seven story office building - which was the tallest building in a Denver at the time - 1971. My partners and I had also purchased a large block of stock in The Colorado State Bank which was the incentive to me to build the building.

Finally, we got into a citrus operation in Florida, so I ended up going to Florida quite a bit. We formed syndicates of investors, and we bought big acreage. We bought about 12,000 acres in Florida, and put it all into citrus operations. It was one of the largest citrus operations in the country. We thought it would pay out in about five or six years. It paid out, finally, in about 25 years. All the investors made a lot of money out of it.

Q: Why would it take so long to develop it?

BROWN: Well, the market was flooded with citrus. A lot of people were doing the same thing. Then, you had foreign imports from Brazil, and still do. It just took longer to make the thing profitable. When it got profitable, it started throwing out big income. Well, that's when our investors wanted to sell, so they could take capital gains. They didn't want the big income. They already had big income. So, we started selling them off. We had four ventures, and we sold three. We still have one which we are struggling with, but we will sell it one of these days. Our investors definitely want us to sell it.

Q: When did you start getting involved in Washington politics?

BROWN: Well, I know in 1972, with reelection of President Nixon, I had five states, and was on the reelect finance committee. I came back to Washington quite a bit. As you remember, that got pretty sticky after a while, because the FBI was all over everybody. I didn't do very well because Wyoming and Idaho were practically closed in the late fall when I was trying to raise money. So, I didn't raise a lot of money in the states that I was assigned. I was very happy the FBI never came to investigate me.

Q: This is after the Vietnam war?

BROWN: Actually during and after the war.

Q: I had the dubious honor of delivering a subpoena on Mr. ToPappas.

BROWN: Oh, sure, I knew Tom.

Q: In Athens. He was a big man. I was consul general in Athens, and I had to call up and say, "I've got to come over there, and I have a little piece of paper for you."

BROWN: He was one of the large contributors to the Republican party.

Q: He was very much involved in this.

BROWN: You know, the reelect committee got into terrible trouble.

Q: I can't remember what the issue was.

BROWN: It was over whether there were illegal contributions. Maurice Stans finally accepted a misdemeanor plea. He was the chairman of the reelect committee. A lot of the people who were raising money got into a lot of trouble because they cut corners. I had trouble getting large contributions. I think Stans wanted to fire me, because I couldn't make my quota. He wanted me to get \$50,000 from people who gave me \$500 or \$1,000. So, I was kind of a disappointment to him.

Q: I'm always curious about this, and I'm trying to grab some social history. How the hell do you go out and say, "Give me money," for a presidential campaign? I can see somebody contributing a modest sum, but big money?

BROWN: Well, I think it's like all other money raising efforts. It's who does the asking. If you know the man sitting across the desk, and he is a friend, and you know he has been successful in business, you ask him if he wants to support the party, and tell him that we desperately need his help. We had a program in the finance committee called "The Eagles," and that was a \$10,000 annual contribution. That is nothing today, because they now have \$100,000 clubs. I am way ahead, because after I had been an ambassador, I later came back to Washington, and was the Republican National Finance Chairman for four years. That is when I went around the country, all the time.

Q: You were going to Wyoming, when there is too much snow?

BROWN: It was not just Wyoming anymore. It was all over the country - 50 states. You just ask people you think of as patriots. Some people are willing to support political causes, some people don't feel they should give a dime to politics.

Q: When did you get attracted to foreign affairs?

BROWN: Well, let's see. I went on the board of the graduate school of international studies at Denver University. I enjoyed that. I thought it was a very high-powered board, and members were from all over the country. You probably know Ambassador Stephen Low.

Q: Oh, I know him very well. This is at Denver University?

BROWN: It's actually called the Social Science Foundation, but it is the board that deals with the graduate school of international studies.

Q: At Denver University.

BROWN: Yes, I was on it for seven years. I know Steve Low came on after me, and he is still on it. But, as I say, these were people from all parts of the country.

Q: How did your ambassadorial plans come about?

BROWN: I worked very hard for the Reagan-Bush campaign in 1980.

Q: What exactly did you do?

BROWN: I was on the Republican National Committee at that time. I had been the Colorado National Committee man for six or seven years. I was very active during the 1976 convention in Kansas City. I became the program vice-chairman because the original one resigned. Then, the program chairman sort of abdicated. It was a lady from Minnesota, and she was more interested in the Minnesota delegation, so they just moved me up. I had only been on the committee for about a year, a year and a half, and I was the de facto program chairman.

Q: What does that mean?

BROWN: The White House would tell you who they wanted to speak and when. You have some discretion in who is going to give the pledge of allegiance, and who is going to make the speech in the mornings. You have to fill out a full program. I had Senator George Murphy working for me, out of California.

Q: I remember the California Senator and former movie actor.

BROWN: He would come in and we were trying to be serious, and he would be tap dancing, and talking to us about the old days. But, he was great fun and a wonderful guy. It was a night and day thing. I moved to Kansas City for about one month. I was at the office from six in the morning until eight at night. It was a wonderful experience. I was ushering all the people to the podium and was on the podium a lot. It was pretty big in my mind, at the time. I had my daughters come and be the unofficial photographers. So, I got them passes that took them anywhere, including on the podium. They did a big album for me, and took pictures of me talking with Nelson Rockefeller, Bob Dole, Cary Grant, Alf Landon, and others. I had great conversations with them. Everybody who was on the program I held in the waiting room. It was a very thrilling experience.

Q: Oh, yes. Well, did that lead you to the ambassadorial thing?

BROWN: After the convention, I continued. I was the Ford campaign manager in Colorado in 1976. We won Colorado, but we didn't win the election.

Q: What was next?

BROWN: I stayed very active, all through the Carter years, on the national committee. Then, I worked on the 1980 campaign. I was really a Bush supporter but under the bylaws of the Republican party in Colorado, you are not permitted to be on anybody's team or pick sides. You are supposed to stay neutral. They interpreted that to permit you to contribute. I was hoping they would say that you couldn't give any money. I gave to Bush and Connally and Reagan, I believe. I actually tried to stay neutral, but I was really in the Bush camp, and I was known to be in the Bush camp. Other Republicans in Colorado, Joe Coors, and his wife, then Holly, were ardent Reagan supporters but we got along just fine. We were good friends, and we worked hard together, but they knew that I was leaning towards Bush.

Q: He was producer of the very famous beer.

BROWN: That's him.

Q: Also, very strongly for Reagan.

BROWN: Very.

Q: Did you find the Republican Party, as compared to when you were working on the Ford convention, much more ideological?

BROWN: I would say that Reagan supporters were more ideological, and more fire in the belly, than the more moderate Republicans such as Ford, Bush, and myself.

Q: How did that work at the convention?

BROWN: At the convention, which was in Detroit, I was in charge of badges and credentials. It wasn't a very exciting thing. I greeted the delegates going to the headquarters, and I handed out all the credentials and badges, tickets, and such.

Q: There were no fights?

BROWN: There was a very big fight, and I can't think of what state that was. It may have been Arkansas. I can't remember, but it was a big fight. They couldn't agree. So, we told them until they came here with total agreement, you don't get your credentials, your tickets, or badges. We let them know they weren't going to be able to go to the convention. That sort of forced them into a compromise. (They need that down in Palm Beach right now.) It was routine, and you had two or three staff people who did most of the credential work involved. So, I had time to be involved with the activities at the convention. I was out politicking a lot. It was known that Reagan was getting the nomination, long before the convention, so we all supported Reagan. You may remember there was some movement to put President Ford on the ballot of vice president. That was sort of a short, streaking falling star, because some people got upset about it, and then decided that it wasn't going to work. So, we pulled back, and of course Reagan chose Vice President-elect Bush.

Q: Had you run across much before, because you were sort of in the same trade, and the same area?

BROWN: I knew George and Barbara quite well before that 1980 election. I met him when I was still in San Antonio. I went out to Midland on some kind of business, and I went to dinner at the Petroleum Club with some friends. George and Barbara Bush were there. That would have been in about 1951, something like that. He became a national chairman of the party, and I was on the National Finance Committee. We worked together a lot, and he would come to Denver for political events and I would meet his plane. One time, my wife and I drove him down to Colorado Springs for an appearance there. He had a habit of writing little personal notes. I have a stack of them in my file. Every time he'd get on the plane, he must start rattling those off. As I say, I have a stack of them. I'm very proud that he would take the time to do that.

Q: The Reagans are elected.

BROWN: When Reagan got elected, I had two or three people in the national committee, or in the campaign, talk to me about doing something. They wanted to know if I wanted to come to Washington and do something. I wasn't at all interested in coming to Washington to do anything. Washington certainly didn't excite me. I told them I might be interested in an ambassadorial position. We had taken a trip in 1979 to South Africa. We had gone with friends, Anne Armstrong and her husband, Tobin. She was the former ambassador to the United Kingdom.

Q: She had also been to Belgium, too, I think.

BROWN: No, that was somebody else.

Q: Ann Chambers.

BROWN: We've known Anne and Tobin for many, many years. When I lived in San Antonio, we were all good friends. Anne became vice chairman of the Republican Party when I was very active. She had been a great friend and remains so today. She asked us if we wanted to visit South Africa with them, and we did. We became quite excited about what a challenging position Ambassador to South Africa would be. They said I better do something, if I wanted the position. I talked with Senator Bill Armstrong, and he said, "Go for it."

Q: He was senator from...

BROWN: Colorado. I had been very active in his campaign, and had been his finance chairman once, I believe. He gave me some advice early on. He wrote a letter immediately to President-elect Reagan. And he said, "Look, if you are interested in this, you can't just put your name in the hat and sit back. You really have to go after it."

Q: Absolutely.

BROWN: I was pretty naive, and I said, "Go after it, like what?" He said, "Like get hold of everybody you know that has any influence, and have them write letters, and voice their support. Be active yourself, and go call on these people. It's just not going to happen, unless you campaign for it." So, I wrote people I knew and got their support. I can remember Anne Armstrong was very active. President Ford had made her ambassador to the UK. She was probably my closest friend, and strongest supporter. I just bit the bullet and went to Joe Coors, and said, "Joe, you know my politics. You've been a good friend for years." He said, "I'll support you," so he did. From then on, I got everybody that I knew in politics to write letters.

Q: This was aimed at one post.

BROWN: It was aimed at an ambassadorial post. My preference or desire was to go to South Africa. Of course, most helpful was President Ford in Vail, where we both had homes. I went over and met with him and he wrote a letter and talked with some people. I got William French Smith, whom I had known for several years to also help.

Q: Later, he became attorney general.

BROWN: He became attorney general in the Reagan administration. I would have to go look in my files to see who else, but I went after 10, 12 people, at least, who wrote letters and supported me. Oh, I had a friend of Al Haig work on my behalf. He had been a roommate of his at West Point, I think. I guess you would call it a campaign. It was just an effort. On March 30th, I think it was, I was flying back to Washington to go to a CSIS dinner. Anne Armstrong had gotten me appointed to the advisory board at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS. They had a dinner scheduled for March 30th in 1981, in which Ronald Reagan was to be the speaker. I was flying back on the plane and the captain came on the loud speaker of the airplane, and said, "We have just received word that President Reagan has been shot." It was deafening silence on the plane. There wasn't any noise, nobody was talking, it was absolute silence. They stopped all service, and everybody was sitting around in gloom and shock. I guess it was that way for 20, 30 minutes. The captain came back on and said, "I have good news, President Reagan has just walked into the hospital, turned and waved, and smiled at everybody, but he has gone into the hospital, under his own strength and ability." Well, the whole plane exploded. They broke out free drinks for everybody, and champagne, everything. It was a party the rest of the way into Washington.

The story goes on from there. It gets worse for me. I found out immediately that the dinner had been canceled. David Abshire was the president and later Ambassador to NATO. I had a note from him. I was staying with a friend, and his office notified me that it was canceled. So, I called some people from Colorado, such as Bob Burford, who was the Bureau of Land Management head, and several other people from Colorado that I knew in Washington. We went to the Jockey Club which was at the Fairfax Hotel to have dinner. While I was having dinner, they came to me and said, "You have a phone call." I thought, "Who in the world?" The friend I was staying with, Ray Benton, probably knew I was there, so I thought it was him. It was Ray Benton, and he said, "Keith, I have terrible news for you. I don't know how else to do this, but I have to tell you, your son Briggs, while working on your ranch, fell over dead."

Q: Oh, God.

BROWN: It was the worst thing. I just slumped into a chair there at the Jockey Club.

Q: How old was he?

BROWN: He was 29 years old. He had an enlarged heart muscle, which we knew nothing about. He was six feet, four inches, solid as an ox, good looking, a wonderful man. The muscle had folded over and closed off his aorta. He was putting bales of hay on a truck with the ranch hand. The ranch hand said, "Briggs, (his name was Briggs Brown) you don't look good. Is there something wrong?" He said, "Yes, I don't feel good." With that, he just fell over. Well, I don't know if CPR was given. You think of one thousand things... But he died right there. My friend Ray Benton said, "I've got your bag, and I'm picking you up. I've made reservations for you out of National Airport." He said, "You will get into Denver by morning." So, I went home. I just forgot everything and tried to get on with my life. Then, out of the blue, in about July... This happened on March 30th... They called me from the personnel office of the White House and said, "You were on the final short list for South Africa, but you didn't make it. The president is appointing someone else, but he is offering you the ambassadorship to Lesotho." I said, "Good heavens, I know nothing about Lesotho." I had heard of it; they call it "The Kingdom of Lesotho." I knew it was a small, all black country. It is surrounded by South Africa, I knew that.

Q: Next?

BROWN: We had been going to La Jolla, California every August for vacation. We went to San Diego. I still hadn't told them I would accept the appointment. We went to La Jolla, rather. I talked to a very good friend from San Antonio who knew South Africa, very, very well. He had been there many times. His name was Frates Seeligson. Frates is a rancher, and he had been to law school with me in Texas. I knew him even before, when I was there in the Navy. He is probably one of my very closest friends. So, I said, "Frates, what about Lesotho?" We walked the beach, I remember, and I said, "I have to talk to you. What about Lesotho?" He said, "My God, it's a backward impoverished country. I can't imagine it's a very pleasant place to go to." I said, "No, I don't think it is. I looked it up and read about it. It is just what you said. It is fairly new and independent." It gained its independence in 1966, and this was 1981. He said, "Why don't we call our friends in Durban?" He actually knew the man who owns the Mala Mala game farm in South Africa. We had met him and spent a lot of time with him when we were on that trip. So, I called. His name is Michael Ratray. He is quite a well known man in South Africa, and very successful. So, I called Michael and said, "Michael, tell me what you think." He is very big in polo. He said, "Well, I have a friend in Lesotho, from Maseru, the capital, who we play polo with. He is quite a wild character, but he is a great guy." He also said, "We've been to the Lesotho many times when I was a kid. It used to be a great place to fish and hunt, but that is gone." He talked to me quite a bit about it, and finally said, "Look here, lad (he talked British), come on down here, we'll make sure you aren't bored to death. Come on, give it a go." So, I talked with my wife. I don't know if we would have made the same decision or not, but we thought that since our son had died maybe it would be the thing that would change our lives, so we did.

Q: It's terrible.

BROWN: But, anyway, we decided to do it. It was a two-year post. It's called a hardship post. We thought it might change our whole lives. We thought we could have our other kids over to visit, and so forth.

Q: This was from when to when?

BROWN: I got there in March, I believe, of 1982, and I left in December 1983. It was less than two years, but they count the time that you are in Washington. I could have stayed, but I thought it was a good time to go home. I'll get to that. We also decided that the thing to do was instead of having our family Christmas in our home in Vail, we would go down to the Balboa Club in Mazatlan, Mexico. We would take our kids, and we had one grandson at the time. We had a family Christmas down there.

I'm ahead of myself. When I came home from La Jolla in early September, 1981, I called Washington and told them we would take that position. They said, "Well, you'll be hearing from the president. He's made a practice of calling personally all ambassadors, career or non-career." So, in early September, we were at home. I got this call, and a couple of my grown children were there with my wife. They said, "It's the White House calling." We lived in a big apartment at the time. I could hear phones being picked up all over the apartment. So, everyone was on. President Reagan said, "Where did these telephone girls get you? They are geniuses, they can find people anywhere in the world, at a moment's notice." I said, "Well, they got me in Denver, Colorado, at home." He said, "Well, weren't you just in La Jolla?" I said, "I was, I was out there on a family vacation." He said, "I envy you. I love La Jolla. I've been there many, many times." He then said, "I'll tell you why I'm calling." I said, "I think I know." He said, "Well, I'm going to ask you the question. Would you be my ambassador to Lesotho?" He pronounced it "La Soto." I made an instant decision that you don't correct the president. I didn't tell him that he had it wrong, it's Lesotho. I said, "Yes sir, I would be very happy to. I'm looking forward to it." He said, "Well, I want to see you when you get back to Washington. We'll have you to the White House, and we can chat then. I'm pleased and delighted you are going to do this." So, that is what happened. From then on, I went back to Washington several times before my confirmation hearing.

Q: How did you find the briefings that you were getting from the State Department?

BROWN: Very good, really. I was really at a loss. I hadn't been into this kind of thing before. They had what we ended up calling a "charm school," where you come for two days... and Shirley Temple Black, an old friend, and a man named Ambassador Dean Brown, I think. Now, it's Tony...

Q: Motley.

BROWN: Motley, now. I think he was in my class. Q: I think he went off to Brazil.

BROWN: It was very good. It was an awful lot of information in a very condensed time. I studied as hard as I could and I worked as hard as I could to bone up on everything. That is what you should do. I can tell you something that is amusing. I don't know whether you will want it in my oral history. As I went around on briefings with my desk officer, every now and then, someone I would be talking to would say, "Now, in La Soto..." I would say, "It's Lesotho, isn't it?" They said that it wasn't. I finally said to my desk officer, "I'm getting a little nervous about this. I'm getting ready to go to the confirmation hearing, and half the people I talk to, mispronounce it. They keep saying La Soto." He said, "Ambassador, just say to yourself, 'I laid Sue, you lay Sue, too'"? "Lay-Sue-Too" is the right pronunciation.

I have to backtrack. Before I went to the confirmation, my wife and I were in Washington, and we went over and made a social call to George Bush. He was one of the people I wrote when I was seeking the job. He wasn't even sworn in yet. He was vice-president elect. Just a few days before he was to be sworn in, I got one of these handwritten notes from him that said, "I know I can help, and I would be very glad to. Things are crazy around here. Love to Carol." I saved that. It was pretty wonderful to get that five days before he was sworn in. He did help. I know he helped. I called him, and he said, "Please come by. I want to see you both." We came by his office, which it seems to me was in the executive office building. We sat and chatted and had a quick visit. While we were visiting, the phone rang, and he said, "Just a minute, let me get this." So, he went on to get the phone. He said, "Kurt, as you know, the purpose of my call is we want you to dinner. Bar and I want to have you for a farewell dinner. Is that date satisfactory? That's great, that's wonderful. We look forward to seeing you then," and hung up. He came back and said, "What are you two doing in early March (some date)?" I said, "I don't know what we are doing." He said, "Well, I want you to come to dinner at my vice-president residence on this date, because we are having a black tie dinner for Kurt Waldheim." He was then the retiring Secretary-General of the UN. I said, "We would love to come." We had to fly back for it, but it actually turned out well, and I'll tell you why.

We went home and packed and got everything ready to leave. Then we came back to Washington for Vice President Bush's dinner. I was at the table with Senator Charles Percy, who I had known from Vail. So I was visiting with him. He was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at the time. So, I said, "Chuck, I'm waiting for the full Senate to vote on my confirmation since your committee has already voted me out unanimously. I just need to get the Senate to vote." He said, "Well, that's no problem. I'll see if I can do that tomorrow." And he did. Two days later, we were on our way to Johannesburg, since we were already packed and ready to go.

Q: Any problems with your confirmation?

BROWN: No. I met with Nancy Kassebaum ahead of time, and I knew her quite well. As I have already related, I knew her father, Governor Alf Landon. She said, "I understand you had a little problem over at the Federal Building Office - FBO. That you got mixed up over there and had the wrong file." I laughed and said, "How did you hear that?" She said, "Oh, we hear these things." We then went out of her office, and went into the confirmation room. Bill Armstrong, Senator Armstrong introduced me, and spoke very kindly for me. Then, it turned out that Nancy was the only senator in the room on the stage. She said, "I want to tell something for the record. When my friends Keith and Carol Brown went over to the FBO to look at the file of their residence in Lesotho, they were given the file, and put in a room to look it over. When they opened the file, here was this big three-story mansion, with a dining room that seated 40 people, with chandeliers. They were absolutely perplexed and astounded." The end of the story is the lady who was handling it, came rushing in and was embarrassed as could be, and snatched that file - it was Geneva - out of our hands, and threw down this other file. When we opened it, it was a one-story ranch house. It was more what I expected. Nancy told that story at the confirmation hearing. At the hearing, we just chatted for a few minutes, and she said, "I know you and have known you for so long. I know you will do a wonderful job in representing your country. If I can, I'll come over and visit you." I told her that would be wonderful. And she was the only CODEL (Congressional Delegation) that we had come to Lesotho. She and her two children came. They were on a South African trip and just came down to Lesotho for the day.

Q: What was Lesotho like?

BROWN: It was more or less what I had learned about it, and what I expected. There was a very small... they call it the European colony. That was the old terminology. What it means is, there were about 600 white people in the country. Some were real colonials, but very few. Most of them had left, when Lesotho got its independence, and the black party took over. I think most of the colonial ministers and staff went home, or went somewhere. I was met at the plane by Alan Lukens, who lives here in Washington. He was consul general in Capetown. Since there had been a vacancy in Lesotho, which was a tiny little embassy, they sent him up three or four days a week as chargé d'affaires. So, he was sort of holding the fort down until I got there. We had sent cables back and forth, and he had been extremely helpful in all of my arrangements to get there. He had the country team at the airport, and we went to the residence, and I met them all, their wives and spouses. We visited about, and they gave me a tour of the embassy, and then they gave me the tour of the residence, and then a tour of Lesotho. Then, we went home and freshened up. Alan Lukens had made all the arrangements for the reception at our residence, for about 150 people. It couldn't be official, because I had not presented my credentials. There were no ministers of the government there. But, all the AID people, the officials of the Peace Corps, and some UNDP people were present. It was mostly non-diplomatic, or non-government, people because as I said I hadn't presented my credentials. Then, Alan Lukens came by the next morning when I had my first country team meeting, and said goodbye to everybody, and he left. He went back to Capetown, where he was on duty. From then on, it was the usual procedure. I presented by credentials to the king, reviewed the honor guard, listened to the royal band play an almost unrecognizable version of the Star Spangled Banner. My wife was not permitted to participate in any of this. She was waiting at the residence. When we finished, I had the country team, more or less, come to the residence, and we had a glass of champagne. From then on, it was night and day meetings of diplomats. This was both the ministers in the government and the diplomats. It was a very small diplomatic corps. There was a British high commissioner, a German ambassador, Irish consul, a Taiwanese ambassador, UNDP, European community and the World Health Organization represented. That was the whole diplomatic corps, about 14, 15 at the most.

Q: Now, did South Africa have anybody there?

BROWN: Did they have anybody there? No. I don't think they had diplomatic relations, but they had unofficial relations all the time, people they could talk to.

Q: What sort of American staff did you have?

BROWN: I had a political officer who acted as DCM. I had an admin officer who had been in the Foreign Service for about 10 years. He had been married to a Foreign Service officer, and they divorced. So, he was there as a bachelor. I had a public affairs officer, PAO. We had a cultural center. I had the head of AID and we had about 75 people from AID. We had a Peace Corps director, and deputy director. We had about 80 or 90 Peace Corps people, young people mostly. Aside from that, everybody I dealt with came out of Pretoria. The military attaches would come down from Pretoria on a regular basis. A man from the agency would come down. I would go up there to Pretoria fairly often, too, because they had the regional people there. We had to meet with them and get our acceptance on a lot of paperwork. That was our group in our embassy. Most of that embassy was involved in our donor program, our AID contributions to the country.

Q: What were we doing there?

BROWN: Well, it occurred to me, and it occurred to everybody else, when I would talk with them about where I was, or where I had been. They would say, "Why in the world were you there?" I think one of the reasons we were there was because we didn't want the Russians to be there. At one time, the Russians had requested to put an embassy there. This was before my time. Our country had fought it very forcefully, with the Prime Minister of Lesotho. They didn't want to lose all the western country aid, because the British were giving aid, the Germans were giving aid, even the Irish, of all people, were given aid. The Danes had a representative there, but he was not called a consular officer. He was just an aid representative. We had a donor meeting every week, with all the representatives of all those countries, and the UNDP, and the European Community. We would meet once a week, and go over our different projects. As I say, that was the main business on a regular basis that I was involved in. I went to all the different provinces, and met with all the chiefs in the villages.

Night and day, it seemed like, we were going to different types of village functions. They called them PITSOs, which was sort of like a county fair. They would dance and wear their native costumes. They wore the blankets and the Lesotho hat, which was a great tradition. It had a little top-knot to it. It was actually on their flag at the time. I hardly had any business or commercial business of any kind. Eventually, they got into a highland water project, which was a big major thing, but it was being financed by the South Africans and the British. American involvement was practically nil. We had a few engineers who tried to get into the project, but they didn't.

Oh, one of our big projects of AID was a road project, perimeter road, so they could go on a highway in their country, as opposed to leaving their country and going on a South African highway. That was a special project. It was about a \$30 million project. That was over and above the AID projects, which we funded at about \$20 to \$23 million a year.

Q: Were these projects coordinated? You say they were coordinated with the other donors?

BROWN: Yes. We specialized in water projects and in agricultural projects. We had a renewable energy project that was pretty much a failure. This was all handled through AID.

Q: How about Peace Corps? How did that seem to be working out?

BROWN: The Peace Corps was one of the best things going for us, in my book. You got more bang for your buck out of the Peace Corps. I have been to many other embassies. I did make a lot of visits. All of my colleagues felt the same way. The Peace Corps was really worthwhile. I say that, really, in contrast to my feeling about the AID projects, in some cases, or about the AID people, in some cases. They were a specialized group. They considered themselves professionals. A lot of them had doctoral degrees. They were paid considerably more than anybody in the State Department. They were a little bit aloof. They tended to travel among themselves. For social events, they didn't enter in with enthusiasm. As I say, I think some of them had a little loftier opinion of what they were doing, and maybe of themselves, than the people in the embassies. We did everything we could to bring them into everything we were doing. Of course, it was required that they attend the country team meetings. They would be social with me, but they wouldn't be very warm and helpful with others in the embassy. I know people in my embassy did not really appreciate the AID people. It's an interesting observation, I guess.

Q: It is. What was your impression of the Lesotho government? How did you work with it?

BROWN: Well, when they got their independence in 1966, I was told there was the foreign minister, economic minister, finance minister, and they were all driving around in beat up Volkswagens or beat up pick up trucks. When I got there, they were all in a Mercedes Benz. They were all in pretty nice cars. There is no question, it was corrupt. You just couldn't put your finger right on it. They had an overall audit while I was there, an independent audit. It was the most savaging report I've ever read. It said that the accounts hadn't been balanced in two or three years, that everything was out of balance. Money was missing from every account. All of the diplomatic community had copies of this thing. There is where your money is going. So, it was discouraging. You knew that things weren't being handled correctly. As I say, it's very hard to go out and point your finger at someone and say, "You've absconded with some of our money." We would send grain, for instance. It would be in sacks and written on the sacks, in some language, was "Donation of USA."

We would go the village, and they were handing out the grain to people. They would take the grain out of the sacks and just put it in a truck. They would not label the grain out of the trucks and nobody could see where the grain was coming from. As far as the villagers who were coming up and getting the grain, to them, it was all a gift of the chief of the village. He would be up there with a big smile on his face. The USA got no credit whatsoever. That was not uncommon. You would do everything you could to stop people and you would complain, and they would say, "Oh, my, that shouldn't happen. We will look into it."

Q: Well, were there AID people telling you that maybe they should shut down operations, that they weren't that useful, or was there sort of a machine there that wound up and just kept going?

BROWN: A few of the AID people were very devoted and, I would say, thought what they were doing was of tremendous importance, and perhaps very worthwhile. I would say the majority of them I talked with were quite cynical. They made snide remarks about it being a big waste of money. They were all there under contracts, if you know how AID works. So, I would say the majority of them realized that it wasn't overall a tremendous success. The heads of AID really did good jobs, and worked very hard. The first one was Frank Correll and the second a woman named Edna Borrady. She was a wonderful lady, and she worked hard, and was great fun. I think she was over retirement time, so this was her last post.

Q: What about the government? How did it work? Was there a king, and a prime minister?

BROWN: At one point, they had banished the king from the country because he had gotten political. They didn't like his political ideas. I think he lived in London. They finally worked it out so that he could come back. They built a huge palace for him. It was really ridiculous. This was a huge palace in a town of real squalor. So, he lived in that palace. He had a few official functions. He did the credentials, as I mentioned, but otherwise he was not allowed to talk about policies. He was never out of sight of a protocol officer. The prime minister ran the country. He was the dictator. He rigged the last election. I've forgotten which year. He wasn't winning, and he extended the election. He stayed and called the election off. So, he was known to be a dictator. With the first election in 1966, he started out as South Africa's token. They put him up for prime minister, and he was elected. South Africa thought they could deal with him, and that it would be cozy. More and more, he got very alienated. Before I left, he was an active communist. During the time I was there, which was less than two years, he went from a western oriented prime minister to a totally eastern block communist, North Korea type of person. Then, after I left, the military banished him to his farm, I believe, and assassinated two or three of his ministers. This all took place after I left. So, back to your question. The prime minister had a permanent secretary, named Joe Kotsoquani. Joe was sort of the liaison between the diplomatic corps and the government. Everything you did, you would always call Joe. He came to all our parties, drank and ate all our food. He was quite a socialite type. He was very outspoken and outgoing. He did all the prime minister's pronunciations. Occasionally, we would meet with the prime minister, particularly if it was ribbon cutting, or something of that sort. But, we didn't often. When you requested an audience or social event with the king and queen, and had them to dinner and lunches, it was always with protocol. The king was actually a farmer in private life. He was a delightful man and I liked him. His wife was very quiet, and overweight, like most of the Lesotho women. Some see that as a sign of wealth. Every time my wife was there, they were all complaining about their weight. So, I don't know if it had too much to do with wealth. The old tradition was that if you were fat, heavy, that was good, because that meant you had wealth. They all complained. Joe Kotsoquani's wife was constantly moaning that she was overweight.

The first night we arrived, I guess I had gotten up in the middle of the night and gone into the library, and was reading. My wife was in bed. All of a sudden, I heard wild gunfire, and I looked out, and there were tracer bullets going off in the sky. I jumped up and started running down the hall, because I thought my wife would be concerned. She was concerned. She realized I wasn't in bed, so she thought I had been kidnaped. She had gotten up, and she was running down the hall, and we bumped into each other in the hall. She was screaming that she didn't know where I was. So, we calmed down, and I called Frank Correll, the AID man who had been there the longest. We didn't have a DCM. So, I called Frank, and he said, "Oh, ambassador this goes on every night. He said, it's the BC... I've forgotten what the initials were... It's the opposition party. They cause mischief down on the river, on the border, almost every night. They try to shell the military installation, which is down there, and the military people fire back at them. It goes on every night. Don't worry." I said, "Well, you know, this residence backs up to the prime minister's house, which is a big substantial house. It worries me that if they are trying to overthrow the prime minister, they are going to come running through our lawn and through our house." He said, "Well, that's why we have a perimeter fence, and a guard. You have to wake the guard, because he is asleep all the time." He said, "So far, that hasn't happened. It is a legitimate concern, but just relax, that isn't going to happen. You are going to hear this every other night, or so." It got to where we would sit out on our patio, on our back lawn, six or seven in the evening, and have a cocktail, and watch the tracer bullets. It was like fireworks. It was sort of an entertainment. That was some excitement. You had that kind of thing a lot in the mountains. You had an opposition party that was constantly causing mischief. The first chief, Jonathan, who was the prime minister, was always screaming about them, and how awful the people were. They never got to vote because he wouldn't hold an election.

The big excitement while I was there, of course, is what's known as the "Maseru raid," or the "Maseru massacre." It was the first December I was there, December 9th, I believe, of 1982.

Q: So, you were there from March 1982?

BROWN: I didn't get there until March 1982, and I left December 1st in 1983. So, this was December 1982. It was December 8th or 9th, 1982. In the middle of the night, it was a real racket. It was real artillery. It wasn't just the border type of thing we had gotten used to. This was major warfare. Of course, I got up, and I could observe what it was. I could see South African Defense Department artillery, and trucks. I don't think I saw any tanks. It was definitely South African forces. We had a radio system, which was the way we communicated. Once a week, we would check our radios with a test call around. So, I put it to real use, and got on it and called everybody on to the radio. At that time, I established what it was. I told everybody to stay in their homes, stay low, and take every precaution, keep doors locked. I've forgotten now who I talked to; it may have been the foreign minister. At any rate, I told everybody that I was advised that this was a South Africa raid, and they are here to eliminate the ANC terrorists that existed in the Lesotho. We had been aware for a long time that there were things going on over in South Africa where the ANC people would sneak over from the Lesotho, an independent country, and bomb a railroad station, or something. South Africa was aware of it, and they had gotten very tired of it. As I later established, South Africa officials talked to the foreign minister, who was one of the "Molapos" (there are two "Molapos" in the government), and he advised that the Lesotho government would make no effort to expel ANC people. Further, he said if South Africa wanted the ANC out of Lesotho they would have to handle it - and they did. They killed 32 people that night; almost all of them in their beds. They didn't know, but found out later that only about 25 of them were ANC. So, at about 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning, I had a call from the foreign minister. He told me they had soldiers around my residence and embassy to make sure nobody fires at us, and not to be alarmed. He said they were after his people, not me. They had men standing with guns to make sure nobody would come running into our place. The last thing they wanted was to disturb a United States embassy, or officials. He asked me to come to the foreign ministry, as soon as possible.

So, about 6:00, I guess it was, I reported to the foreign ministry as requested, and the British High Commissioner was there, and the German ambassador. It was the three of us. They put us into cars and took us from place to place. Most of the bodies had been removed, but some bodies were still there. Blood everywhere; dead bodies; blood all over the walls. They had pictures on the walls. A lot of them had posters on the walls of ANC leaders, Nelson Mandela posters, Oliver Tambo (who was the head of the ANC). They had all that propaganda, so you knew that some of them were definitely ANC (we called them terrorists); they called themselves freedom fighters, I guess. The purpose of this trip was for us to learn how awful the raid was. They said, "We want you to be sure and cable your government." I said, "We've already gotten that up and going, don't worry." They said, "We want a meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations. We want action taken against South Africa. This is barbaric and can't be tolerated." I actually prepared the cable myself. It was to go out "flash," right away. My political officer, I'm sorry to say, kept editing my cable, and he didn't send it flash. He sent it the next category down. I had done this, and I was called off somewhere. I came back and I think he had just gotten the cable off. By that time, it was noon. I said, "We should have had that cable off at the crack of dawn this morning." He said, "Well, it's gone now but not flash." Before they got the cable in Washington, I got a call from my desk officer in Washington saying, "What's going on. We haven't heard from you." I said, "Well, we have sent the cable. I apologize, it was supposed to have gone earlier." I told him then what was going on on the phone, and then they did get the cable. But, I was criticized for that. In my report, my desk officer said "In two instances, Ambassador Brown was a little slow to get off the dime," or something like that, or "to get moving." I took it as legitimate criticism.

After that, the Lesotho complaint became sort of a joke. The complaint became a wish list of all sorts of aid programs that they wanted. So, this was supposed to be how we were all to react. We were to finance a water project here, a bridge there, and all this. That, as I say, became sort of a joke at our AID agency, because they were asking for millions of dollars because South Africa had done such a terrible thing. It really had no relationship, none whatsoever. I cabled my recommendation to state that we not increase or in any way change our attitude about aid, but that I would openly support the Security Council resolution which condemned South Africa, and we did. President Reagan did support that resolution. It was probably controversial, because a lot of people didn't think we should even do that. I think Chet Crocker, who was assistant secretary for Africa, favored that resolution. His program was called "constructive engagement," as you may remember.

Q: Well, whatever it took, it seems, things worked out there.

BROWN: I think on a pure constructive engagement, it might have taken years and years. What finally happened is they put into effect some sanctions, which I didn't think were going to be worthwhile, but I think, in the long run, I have to look back and say that maybe the sanctions did bring them around. Frederic De Klerk, who was the Prime Minister of South Africa, when I was ambassador in Copenhagen, Denmark, finally released Mandela and changed the country. It is now totally independent, and a total black government now.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

BROWN: Let me just say a couple things. Following this raid, I guess about eight, nine days after, they had a huge funeral, they billed it as a burial ceremony, in response to the massacre by South African defense forces. It was a big, long title. That was an amusing title because it was really a big, huge political rally. They had people from all over Africa there. Oliver Tambo was flown in secretly. All the diplomatic corps were required to be there. We sat in sort of stands at a big parade ground where they had all their athletic events. I don't know how many thousands of people were there. All the soldiers had automatic weapons and they were everywhere. If you turned and talked to each other, the weapons would turn on you.

Q: Those are scary.

BROWN: The British High Commissioner and I were sitting together, and he was a rather amusing, typical British colonial type. We were sitting next to each other, immediately back of Oliver Tambo, the ANC head. If there ever was anybody the western world was out to assassinate, I think it was Oliver Tambo. At one point, I turned to the British High Commissioner, and said, "Are you enjoying this? How do you feel about this?" He said, "Bloody hell, I don't fancy this a bit." Typical British reaction. It lasted seven hours. It was fiery with antagonistic speeches against us and against the British.

Q: Why at us?

BROWN: Oh, because we had not come down hard enough on apartheid, and they had been urging us for years to force South Africans to do away with apartheid system. Generally, they just opposed our position, constructive engagement. As time wore on while I sat there, they got worse and worse. There was a lot of condemnation and screams by Chief Jonathan several times. He said ugly things about Reagan. He mentioned that we didn't want the Russian embassy to be in the Lesotho, and that we came down hard on them. They also asked, "Do you do anything against the South Africans? No. Did you tell the world, deny to the world, that there aren't any ANC training camps in the Lesotho? No." Of course, I never saw an ANC training camp, but we certainly knew there were ANC houses there all the time. That's why they had this raid. At the very end of this speech, he tried to maybe backtrack a little to save face. He said, "We do thank President Reagan for voting for the Security Council resolution. Maybe he is beginning to understand us, and if so, maybe we can try to understand him." I remember that language because I put it in the cable.

At the end of the ceremony, they had everybody of the diplomatic corps, all the dignitaries, from other countries, and such, go in a procession, led by the king. We filed by the open caskets which had been half opened. You could see the bodies from the waist up. There were about 25 caskets there. They had been open for the seven hours, in the sun. This was in December. It was really a ghastly affair. They had us file past. I saw the Brit take out his handkerchief like he was weeping or something, but I knew he was trying to stop the stench. It was awful. You just sort of held your breath. That procession probably took 15 minutes, something like that. When it was over, we walked on out and got into our cars and went home. When I got home, I raced to the bathroom. As you can imagine, seven hours just sitting there. Then, I ripped my tie and coat and had a scotch drink and dictated the whole thing into a tape recorder. The tape I recorded on, which I was so proud of, never made it home. We had several boxes of our goods flooded, and destroyed. I've lost the tape. I did take down a few words and such out of the classified cable, so I did have some of the language. In my summary, I remember I said, "The procession and the grisly affair were probably designed to humiliate us, or make us ill, and possibly hope that we would encourage more aid. On the first account, they certainly succeeded with me, because it was totally sickening." Thus it was probably the biggest thing that happened overall while we were in the Lesotho.

To finish up or summarize, I would say that when 1983 wore on, it was more or less routine, we had our Fourth of July parties etc. We did everything that you were expected to do. About the fall of 1983, my wife said she would certainly like to go home for Christmas. I said, "Well, let me talk to the department." I knew she was missing her grandchildren and so was I. I talked with my desk officer and a couple other people. They said, "Well, you're going to come home in February, and if you really feel like you want to come home then, why don't you just come home for Christmas and terminate then. We'll get to work on another ambassadorship with somebody." So, that is what we did. We left there, and had the usual round of goodbye events and everything. It's amazing to me that in the short period of time we were there, we packed in a world of experience.

Q: Oh, I'm sure you did.

BROWN: It was a whole other life. My wife had grown up in the south, and here she was in almost a totally black country, dancing with the black ministers, and such. It was a great cultural change. I don't think either one of us had ever had any racial prejudices, even though she grew up in the south, and I certainly didn't, in my background. Still, it was a great cultural awakening, to live in that environment. I think I learned an awful lot. I certainly did an awful lot. There were official and social events all the time. We went to different embassies. In the bureau, they asked me to go to Swaziland and meet with the ambassador there. They wanted me to go to Pretoria because they said I needed to get to know those people fairly well. So, I did a lot of traveling, right away. I went to Swaziland, Capetown, Pretoria, and Johannesburg. I went to Durban, and met with the consul general there. He became a great friend. In general, we worked together as sort of a Southern Africa group of diplomats.

Q: Okay, I'll put it at the end of the tape, so we'll know where to pick it up the next time. We'll pick this up when we get together again, with when you left Lesotho, in December of 1983.

\*\*\*

Today is November 6, 2001. Keith, we're leaving Lesotho in 1983. Where did you go?

BROWN: I went back to the State Department and checked out. I went through all that, and then went back to Denver, and got settled into civilian life. My wife and I took a couple trips that we had put off. During the fall of 1984, the Republican Party asked me to be the National Finance Chairman. So, I spent the next, a little over three years, being the National Finance Chairman living part-time in an apartment here in Washington, at the Watergate. I spent 50% of my time here.

Q: So, really from 1984 to 1988, you were working as financchairman. What does this mean? What were you doing?

BROWN: Well, you coordinate all the activities of fund-raising for the Republican Party, on the national level. A good part of the time, the chairman works with the large contributors. We had a program called "The Eagle Program," which was \$10,000 a year for individuals. The direct mail solicitation pretty much took care of itself. We had a director of that who I worked with, but they were professionals. They sent out all the mass mailings to thousands and thousands of people. It was interesting that our average contribution of a Republican contributor, while I was chairman, ranged somewhere around \$35.00 per person. That included those who gave \$10,000. So, you see, you have a lot of people who gave \$5.00 or less.

Q: I would think the \$10,000 and up people are people you really would have to keep contacting.

BROWN: Those are the ones I worked with mostly. I held hands with them, and we had three or four meetings around the country during the year, and always had one or two in Washington. We had a Republican administration, so we had their help. It was exciting, and a great deal of fun really, but it took an awful lot of time and work.

Q: I imagine that someone who is going to invest significant money is usually quite interested in something. I'm not saying this is all self-serving. There is a cause. It may be self-serving, it may not be self-serving. But, the point being that they are doing this more than from just love, I would think, of Republicanism, or something like that.

BROWN: I would put most of them in the category of concerned citizens in working toward the ideals and goals of the party. Now, there are always a few that had in mind maybe access to some senator, or this or that, to enhance their business contacts, or that sort of thing. But I would say that 90% were men, women, husbands, wives, for the most part, who were just devoted Republicans. Of course, they loved to come to these "Eagle" parties, where we had a lot of important people, in many cases the President, the Vice President. So, that was the frosting on the cake for them.

Q: This money was being raised. It always seems to me that what you look at is what you look at when acting like a police person when there is a murder, who benefits? It would seem that the media, and all the media hangers-on and the consultants and all. Where does the money go?

BROWN: Well, you touched on one point. Campaigns more and more today are run by professional consultants, and media people. That is true, but basically the money goes toward the election of Republicans to office from sheriff on up to president. A good deal of the money goes to the state candidates, to congressional races, senatorial races. Then they use it in their budgets. Whether it goes to media or not or what percentage, I couldn't tell you. But, it's get out the vote, door-to-door solicitation. It's the whole political process. Of course, it has gotten more expensive year after year. I would say that was over 10 years ago, and I'll bet it has at least doubled or tripled in cost today. It's incredible.

Q: While we are talking, by the way, today is election day. We are here in Virginia, and it's a rather important election for the governor and the legislature.

BROWN: I might point out that I was the pre-soft money era. The year I went out in 1988 was the year in which the soft money program started. Let's see; 1988 was an election year. Soft money was just the beginning.

Q: You better explain what soft money meant.

BROWN: Well, we took money under the old 1974 campaign act, which was limited to \$1,000 a person and was limited to \$5,000 from a political action committee. You had an overall cap of \$25,000 that you could give for all federal races. So, those are pretty simple guidelines, and you just stuck by those guidelines. In about the middle of 1988, I would say, there was a big push, actually started by the Democratic Party. It took the position that you could take unlimited amounts of money as long as it didn't go to the candidate. As long as it was for "get out the vote" and "registration" and that sort of activity. That has been fuzzed up to where an awful lot of money probably ends up going to candidates. It has been quite a controversial problem, as you know. But I was out of the circuit then, out of the loop. I resigned in early 1988, when I had the appointment to ambassador to Denmark. Bobby Mosbacher took over the Republican Party and had to get into the same thing. Both parties were working for that big, big money - \$100,000 contributions. The Republicans started a Club 100, which was at the \$100,000 over four years. I just point out that my experience was all before that era. We had no soft money recruiting. We were strictly going by the original 1974 act.

Q: Well, did you have any problems with contributors? Sometimethere are contributors who come to represent unpopular causes.

BROWN: Oh, yes. We turned down money from several sources.

Q: What sort of things were you looking for?

BROWN: Well, we were looking for clean money. You don't want to get into any scandal or controversy. If we thought there was some problem with the money or the people from whom we were getting the money or those who were offering the money, we wouldn't take it. I don't mean to sound like we were super clean people, but we tried to be. I'm sure the Democrats do, too. It's not worth getting into a scandal.

Q: Well, I'm sure, at a certain level, people say, "Gee whiz, here's money, let's take it," not really knowing much of the background. Did you have a screening committee, or something? I mean, people who had run these names through whatever you could run them through?

BROWN: We didn't have a formalized plan or procedure, but normally you were introduced to somebody by somebody else who was giving money, and you recruited new Eagle people and you knew their background, which was usually business background, and that they had made money in whatever endeavor. It's only when somebody came up out of the blue, and wanted to give you some money. Of course, we wouldn't take cash money, whatsoever. That was a sure sign that there was a problem. Occasionally, we felt that the money was not very desirable, so we would politely turn it down. Occasionally you had non-citizens and you couldn't take their money, and you had to explain that.

Q: There have been several groups, really basically ethnic groups, but American citizens. One thinks of the Jewish group for Israel, the Irish for the Irish cause, and the Greeks for the Greek cause. All of these we in the Foreign Service have been up against because of the power. But were you noticing a change, sort of an emergence, at this time, of other ethnic groups, maybe Indians, or Pakistanis? I'm talking about Americans.

BROWN: I can't really say yes to that. We had outstanding Jewish leaders who would help us raise money from Jewish groups. I don't recall any particular Irish group, as such. We had a leader of Hispanic Republicans. We had Jewish Republicans. In fund-raising, we simply relied on some of our outstanding supporters.

Q: How about on the Greek side?

BROWN: I would have to go back to Nixon and Agnew. I raised money for many, many years for the Nixon team, both elections with the Agnew name. I remember, we went to the Greek community in Denver, and got a lot of support when Agnew was coming for a fund-raising dinner. Yes, I do remember that there were Greek citizens, probably some who had never contributed before. But the fact that Agnew was Greek brought their enthusiasm out.

Q: I was in Greece at the time, and I remember when Agnew came out, it was a big reception there. It was interesting because he was actually Episcopalian, but he was told, in no uncertain terms, he better be Orthodox, by the time he was... Anyway, after all this was over, you came to a time when you were out to be a... It was Bush that was elected in 1988. BROWN: No. I was appointed by President Reagan. It's Denmark, we're speaking of. When I took the job as finance chairman, I made it clear to several people in the administration that I would do the best job I could but I really would like to be ambassador again. That I had enjoyed it thoroughly and I hoped that they might find a spot where I could take another post. As a matter of fact, I think, in the middle of summer, say, of 1987, I was called by the White House personnel office, I can't remember who. They asked me if I would be interested in going to Cyprus. They said, "Your residence is upstairs from the embassy, and it's a very dangerous post. We suggest that your wife, if you want her to be with you, stay in Athens, and you can commute." We talked that over and decided we didn't want to do it. I was too old to be separated from my family.

Q: It doesn't sound like a good appointment.

BROWN: Well, somebody would do it.

Q: Somebody has to do it, but usually you get somebody young, and familiar with the Greek-Turkey thing, or someone who has dealt with that for a long time.

BROWN: So, while I was finance chairman, I would meet with the White House personnel. The head of it was Bob Tuttle from Los Angeles. He would ask me about certain people who were contributors, and Eagles, about their qualifications, because he was trying to vet them as to whether or not they would be a worthwhile appointee for some particular job. So, I got to work with Tuttle, on a fairly regular basis. I would go to the White House and meet with him. I remember on November 4, 1987, I was going to a fund-raising event, Republican Eagles, at Decatur House, in downtown Washington, DC, right near the White House.

Q: Lafayette Square.

BROWN: Yes. I got a call before our Eagle event started, at the Decatur House, from Bob Tuttle. He indicated the president had agreed to send me as ambassador to Denmark. That was November 4, 1987. When the program started, John Whitehead, who was Deputy Secretary of State, was sitting at my table. He came rushing in to me, and said, "Keith, you haven't heard the good news, the president is going to send you to Denmark." I said, "I just heard, and I'm delighted, and appreciate your help." Next came Howard Baker, who was Chief of Staff at that time. He said, "Keith, I just got good news for you." I said, "I just heard." So that was quite a nice evening.

Q: Oh, wonderful.

BROWN: The president was there, and I took the president around and acted as sort of his host. We went from table to table, introducing him to different people. One thing I recall is the president had a glass of wine. I had never seen him have a drink, or take a drink. But he more or less held this glass of wine all the way around the room, meeting people and such. He stayed for about an hour. He left and we had our program. From then on, I was hellbent on becoming ambassador to Denmark. I didn't realize what an awful difficult time it was going to be.

Q: Well, I always like to get this at the beginning. You were ambassador to Denmark from when to when?

BROWN: I actually went over in January of 1989, until January of 1992, three years.

Q: Why did it take so long?

BROWN: First of all, you go through a lot of paperwork, which I did. For some reason, it took longer. I was in Washington a lot, trying to get the thing moving. So, they put my name up in June to the Foreign Relations Committee. At any rate, by that time, it was getting closer to the election. No matter how many people I had called, Senator Claiborne Pell, who was the chairman of the committee, would not actually hold a hearing for me or several other nominees. Senator Bill Armstrong from Colorado did everything in the world he could do. We could not get a hearing. I take that back, we got several hearings. I would come from Colorado to Washington, and find that they had canceled the hearing. I bet I made four different trips for four different committee hearings, and Claiborne Pell, I have to say, was the one who always canceled. Senator Dodd of Connecticut, a Democrat, made an agreement with Bill Armstrong that they would schedule me for a hearing, and they did, twice. I would come back to Washington, and each time, the night before, I was notified that the committee had canceled the hearing. So, it was a very unpleasant time. I struggled with everybody in the world.

Q: Was there anybody who could convince Senator Pell?

BROWN: No, I had Ambassador Tom Watson, who was a great friend of mine, try to help. He had been ambassador to the Soviet Union. He called his friend, Claiborne Pell, and talked with him. Claiborne Pell said, "I'm sure Keith Brown is a fine man, but I'm not going to have any hearings and send anybody over to assignment this late in the game." It got down to August. It was all over. I knew I couldn't get a hearing after that. The Senate adjourned in August. I unpacked my bags, and my wife put everything back on the shelves. We figured that was that. Then, after the election, John Whitehead called me, and Bob Tuttle also called, and said, "The president is going to give you a recess appointment." He gave four ambassadors recess appointments. I was the only non-career. The other three were career. There were 25 others nominated to different departments of the government, but they had not been able to get confirmed. So he put them on the list and gave them all recess appointments. On a recess appointment, as you might know, you go over to your post without a confirmation. You can stay until the end of the next session of Congress, unless you are confirmed in the meantime. That's what happened to me. I went over to post and presented my credentials, and was ambassador. In July 1989, I came back to the United States and had a hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was sort of amusing. They had about 10 or 12 senators on the committee, but I was supposed to be about number three of about 10, or 12 people. These were all new Bush appointments.

Maybe I should back up. When they told me I was going to get the recess appointment, I didn't want to go over there and then be called right back home. It would be embarrassing, and expensive for the government, and so forth. I called Jimmy Baker, who was a friend. I said, "Jimmy, I've taken this recess appointment."

Q: He was Secretary of State.

BROWN: He was the Secretary of State to be. This was in November, after the election, but before the new administration was sworn in. He didn't give me an absolute commitment. He said, "I wouldn't worry about it pal." I decided to go ahead on that. So, the Bush administration had never given me an absolute commitment, that I was going to stay. Well, now I'll go back to the hearing I was telling you about. Shirley Temple Black was on the list. She asked to be moved up on the schedule because she had some other appointments or something. So they moved her up and then they moved a couple others up. Out of 11 people, I ended up the last person. I thought, "Oh, my God, they are going to adjourn, and I'm going to go back to Denmark and still not have my confirmation." It finally got down to Senator Joe Biden and me. It was about 1:30 in the afternoon. He kept looking at his watch. He asked me one or two questions. He said, "I understand you are doing a good job, keep it up. But we don't like recess appointments." I said, "I understand Senator, I didn't like it either. I didn't get any other choice." So, that was it, it took five minutes. I was confirmed.

Q: When you went out to Denmark, you actually went out in 1989?

BROWN: I went out in January of 1989.

Q: When you were getting briefed and all that...

BROWN: I spent all of 1988 in and out of Washington.

Q: What was the state of our relations with Denmark, and when you went out there, what did you see at that time, before you went out, as being the principal things you were going to have to deal with?

BROWN: We had almost no bilateral issues with Denmark. They were very, very supportive. We were very supportive with them. We had no real controversy. The only thing that was bothersome was that they didn't always agree with the NATO decisions. They would footnote them. The decision would be made, but Denmark would make a footnote to the decision, at NATO meetings, that they had some misgivings or reservations, or something. So those were known as sort of the footnote days. Otherwise there was nothing you could call controversial. They were a socialistic democracy. They had pluralistic elections. Many, many parties would participate. So the government was always a coalition government of leaders from several parties. This is getting into the whole theory of government, but the countries that have that kind of system have trouble getting a lot of things done, because they have to make compromises. That was the situation in Denmark and still is, I'm sure.

Q: When you talk about the NATO footnotes, what was sort of thrust of the footnotes? Where did they have misgivings?

BROWN: I can't think of the specific issues. Sometimes it had to do with defense appropriations. Many countries had some misgivings about nuclear navy ships. We had a policy of "neither confirm nor deny." I can't tell you what specifically, but there were many occasions when Denmark would footnote rather than disturb the whole NATO process. They would just footnote it.

Q: When you went there, how did you find the embassy?

BROWN: I had met with my DCM to be. He was on home leave in 1988. So I met him and his wife. My wife was with me. We had become good friends, and I had good briefings from him. He was an outstanding DCM, I thought.

Q: Who was it?

BROWN: His name was Ron Flack. He had gotten a little crosswise with my predecessor, Ambassador Todman. I don't think Todman gave him too great an evaluation report at one point. So Ron Flack never became ambassador, but he held outstanding positions. The embassy I took over, I thought, was very good. It was a well-run embassy. It was larger than I had realized. It had several detachments that were ancillary to the main embassy. We had a veterinary detachment that handled all meat in Europe. We had an F-16 Air Force detachment that trained Danish pilots. They had to be part of the embassy because Denmark had a rule that you could not have foreign troops on their soil, so they had to be attached to the embassy. So we had several of those, which made the embassy a little larger. That added to our administrative work. We eventually got into a lot of problems of having to downsize the embassy, which happened all over Europe.

Q: That was after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

BROWN: Yes, all embassies, particularly European embassies, where your pay scales were so large you had to downsize to free up resources to open new Embassies in eastern Europe. You could have had 50, 100 people on the payroll in Lesotho for the cost of what it took to put 20 Foreign Service nationals in Denmark. In some cases I think I heard or read where a couple of FSNs were getting paid more than the ambassador.

Q: How did you find that taking over from Terry Todman... I know Terry. He has the reputation of being sort of one of the imperial ambassadors. The whole embassy is in support of him. It was a very ambassadorcentric time. How did you deal with that? It's your embassy now?

BROWN: Everybody operates differently. I am more hands-on and I liked to have lunch at the diplomat restaurant in our embassy. I made a practice of sitting at different tables and talking with the different people, FSNs, our embassy people, the agriculture attaches, the military attaches, etc. I just thought it was a good way to get acquainted and learn some of the problems. I understand Ambassador Todman had a different approach. He sat at his own table, and no one approached that table unless they were invited. We had a different manner. He was an outstanding ambassador and an experienced diplomat. I see him from time to time now.

Q: He's on our board.

BROWN: Yes. We're good friends. When we had our Council of American Ambassadors trip to South America, I ran into Todman in Buenos Aires and I asked him to join us for dinner, which he couldn't do. It's just a different way of operating. We had an inspection in 1991. Our inspectors commented that I had a different approach. My way of dealing with people was more one-on-one, and hands-on, I guess.

Q: What issues did you find yourself enmeshed in in Denmark, when you got there?

BROWN: Well, the first two years were different than the third year. 1981 was an unbelievably full year.

Q: 1991.

BROWN: Yes, in 1991 we had, of course, the breakdown of the eastern bloc. In 1990 we had the Berlin wall. Then we had a queen's visit to Washington in 1991. We had the downsizing of the embassy, which was a very difficult, trying time. Finally, we had to "RIF," reduction in force. We had to RIF FSNs. Well, you can imagine what that did to our morale. We tried very hard to get all 12 of those employed with other embassies in Copenhagen, but not successfully. It was just a very busy year. Of course, it was my last year. I found out in about the fall of 1991, that I would be coming home in January 1992, which terminated my three years. Being a recess appointment, I was ahead in post, of all the Bush appointments, because they didn't get there until about June or July of 1989, and I got there in January. I had a little seniority among all the European ambassadors. As far as other problems or issues that I dealt with, we had attached to our embassy a very large military attachment. It was just astounding. Every ambassador had tried before me, it seemed like, to downsize that, to merge some of the people. We had a full Navy captain, who was the head of the military attachment. We had a full Army colonel. We had a full Air Force colonel. We had a Marine major. Then they each had staff. Then we had a European ODC, Office of Defense Cooperation. They handled military sales and other military aspects. When you got down to it, it was just huge. Every inspection before me had all recommended that that be downsized. So I got busy and worked on that as one of my biggest goals. Before I left I did get that underway. I filed an NSDD-38 report, which required sharings, and required Washington to pass on it. After I left, I found out that they did make some downsizing. They didn't do the whole job I wanted them to do.

But it was very controversial. The military and I had a little disagreement. The General in Ramstein wasn't very happy with me. At one point he said, "Why don't you come down here and we will sit down and talk it all over?" I said, "General, we can't afford to travel down there. That is how desperate we are." He said, "We'll send the plane down for you, and you'll be our guest for four days. It won't cost a cent." I said, "That's the problem. Your military doesn't realize we are trying to cut back." He was going to send a jet to take me down to Ramstein. At any rate, I would say, the first year at post you're doing all sorts of meetings with ambassadors and meetings with the government people. You are making all your courtesy calls. You're getting acquainted with the foreign ministry. You are getting acquainted with your own staff. So I did all that. But, in the middle of the first year, we started having guests like I couldn't believe. Everybody I had known, or might have known, kept descending on us.

Q: A little bit different than Lesotho.

BROWN: Yes. In Lesotho, I maybe had 18 guests total. I had talked with my friend Ambassador Anne Armstrong. She had been in England, at St. James. She told me that she finally had a system which she called receptions. Her husband called them whiskey parties. When people called and said that they were in town, and "we would love to see you," that usually meant, "Can't you have us out to dinner? Can we meet you for lunch at the embassy?" She said she grouped them into Wednesdays and Fridays, or Mondays and Wednesdays. That became a very good practice. You would love to see a lot of your friends and everything, but you just couldn't give your day away to these guests. My wife spent a lot of time taking them around the country and showing them sights and things. I couldn't do it. We would have those receptions, two or three times a week, at 5:00, 5:30, until 7:30. Then they would all go on their way or, in some cases, we would have a few to dinner.

During my first year, the Pope made a visit to Denmark. He's not very popular in Denmark. It's a very big Lutheran country. They had some controversy over that. But, we all met with the Pope. I had a very fine session with him. He talked about meeting President Bush and that he enjoyed his conversations with him. Those were the exciting sort of things that happened.

Q: As the Soviet Union came to an end and the Berlin wall fell, what were you getting about the impression of the Danes, the next door neighbor? Their very big next door neighbor was unified.

BROWN; I'm not sure I follow you. You mean the Russians?

Q: No, I mean the Danes found themselves next to a completely unified Germany. I would think that it's all well and good, but to a certain extent Denmark is very small, and now we have a much bigger Germany.

BROWN: On that particular issue, Denmark is not very friendly to Germany. They do trade with them. They do a lot of agriculture trade. Of course, West Germany was part of NATO, so they had NATO exercises in Denmark. The head of the largest shipping company in Denmark, the Maersk Lines, was Maersk McKinney Mueller. He's still with us, he's almost 90. He was an outstanding man. I became a very good friend, and he became a very good supporter. It was a privilege to know him and I still correspond with him. He told me that he still had the prejudice of World War II and he just couldn't seem to get it out of his system. He said, "When NATO comes here for their exercises, and they pull their ships alongside the canal here, by my office, I'd rather look out at some other ship than a German ship. Could you change that for me?" I didn't do a thing about it. It gave you some of the feeling they had; probably some of the older ones who had served. Maersk Mueller happened to be running their New York office, I think, when World War II hit, so he spent the whole war in the United States. I don't know that the unification bothered them any more than their general feeling about them.

In early November 1990, I was going to Wiesbaden for my physical, which you are required to do once a year. It was right after the wall had come down. It was just a few days. I said, "Let's go to Berlin on the way to Wiesbaden." So we did. It was an outstanding experience. I'll never forget it. The checkpoint Charlie was still there, and we had to go through that. The procedure was you didn't roll your window down, and talk to the East Germans. You just showed your passport through the window, and then they waved you through. That was the compromise they made after the airlift battle. At any rate, the East Germans were free to come into West Germany. It was an outpouring. The people were just flooding across the border. The East German soldiers had flowers in the barrels of their rifles.

We were having dinner one night in a West German hotel. We were seated right along the window of the dining room. The East Germans came by in droves. They would look in and it wasn't with any bad feeling. They just were astonished. It was disbelief. It wasn't envy or anger. You could just see them in absolute astonishment that we were sitting there eating a beautiful plate of food. They had never seen that. In the two days we were there we saw them all over downtown West Berlin. You could tell by their hats and their clothes that they were East Germans. Countries get tired of refugees after a time. We predicted that this outpouring of West Germans handing out money and food to their East German friends wouldn't go on forever. It did stop after a few months. They became a little irritated with all the East Germans, and you know the history from them on. In 1991 they actually had the reunification. We happened to be in Hamburg meeting with our consul general, Jim Whitlock. That night they had the big celebration. The reunification was a big wild, drunken celebration all over Hamburg. I felt pretty fortunate, not only seeing the Berlin wall come down but being there at the reunification. Two different events.

Q: How about events in Yugoslavia? Were we consulting with the Danish government on this at all?

BROWN: Well, let me back up. During the Persian Gulf War, I was probably over at the foreign ministry, almost once a day. We had the demarches coming in from Washington. I'm sure every embassy in Europe was getting the same. So I spent an awful lot of time with their foreign minister. His name was Uffe-Ellerman Jensen. He was an outstanding man who became a very good friend. Denmark wanted to do everything in the world they could. But they were a little country and they didn't have a lot of military resources. They sent a corvette into the Persian Gulf that sort of stood by to take on anybody that was in trouble or injured. They were going to provide an ancillary service. One of the greatest things they did that I remember is, there's a little town up in Jutland, called Hostelbro. They had a hospital that had been put into storage. When the Persian War broke out, they reactivated that. We had to agree to what is called an "MOU," Memorandum of Understanding. The military in Stuttgart was not very anxious to get it done, but I was. So I pushed ahead and we finally agreed to it. The Danish government was certainly delighted. People in Hostelbro reopened the hospital. At the same time some citizens there, a little town of 1,200 people, went from door to door and got people to agree to take relatives of wounded soldiers into their homes as guests when they might come to visit their wounded relatives. So they arranged for 1,200 beds out of that little community to accommodate American mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, or whatever. So, I went to Hostelbro, where we had the signing. It was very, very emotional to me to see those people. They were so wonderful to do that. When I went back to Washington on a visit with the queen, when she had a session with the U.S. Senate, they asked for any other remarks, and I told that story. I remember Senator Lugar came over and said, "That's the most fabulous thing in the world, a little town, in a little country, to show us that much support." I don't know if I explained that right or not.

Q: You did. When the circumstances came, we were expecting verlarge casualties, which didn't happen.

BROWN: None of this was ever used, of course. But, it was there and in place. I was very proud of what they had done. I was very proud that I got the Memorandum of Understanding signed in order to make it possible.

Q: Well, how about Denmark in the United Nations? How did we finDenmark?

BROWN: Denmark was usually very supportive of almost every issue we had in the United Nations, as opposed to my experience in Lesotho, which always voted with the African block. In Lesotho, they would say, "You know, Ambassador, we are with you, but we have to vote against it." You remember Jeanne Kirkpatrick, when she became UN ambassador, said "Well, you aren't going to have that anymore. You are either going to step up and say we're with you, and you tell me that in the hallway, I expect you to vote that way in the assembly. If you don't, we're going to remember it." I didn't have that problem at all in Denmark. Whenever there was an issue in the UN there was usually a call for me to make a demarche. I would go over, and it was a very friendly session, and the foreign minister or the deputy foreign minister would say, "Well, you know, ambassador, we're with you, so you don't have to worry about it." I can't recall that we ever had any differences. I don't think we did.

Q: How did you find, just in your observations, the relationship between Denmark and Norway, and Denmark and Sweden?

BROWN: Well, they had a Scandinavian Council, and they worked together. We had a Scandinavian group of ambassadors that had a meeting in Stockholm at one time. I would say that most of their issues were the same. They had some differences. Denmark built the great Belt bridge. The bridge was thought to be too low to get some drilling rigs under it on their way up to Finland. That was a big controversy. It was for me also, because initially our government seemed to be perfectly happy about the bridge being built. There was one bridge company out of New York, and they were the only people from the United States who were involved. So I worked with them a great deal. We were successful. At about the time Denmark was awarding the contract, the United States government said, "We don't think this is a very good deal. We think the bridge is too controversial; we might have to oppose it." I went back to them and said, "How can you do this? The time to do that was a long time ago. Here we have our neck way out and we've been working with the U.S. company. It's a multimillion dollar contract." It was a done deal, as far as I could see. So, we had a lot of controversy over that. Again, that was in 1991, which I said was the busiest year I ever had. Our government finally approved it. The international court ruled for Denmark against Finland. Our government did not take the position against the bridge. That would have been a mess. One of the fallouts of that was that the head of the bridge company wrote a very glowing report to Larry Eagleburger about all the work I had done and how pleased and delighted they were. It was a real accolade for me. So Larry sent it on to me with a little note, "Keep up the good work." I got this in December 1991, and I was leaving in January. Larry certainly knew I was leaving. But, he did write, "Keep up the good work," and I thought, "Well, for 30 days, I'll try to keep up the good work."

Q: Is the bridge in place now?

BROWN: Oh, yes. Not only that bridge is in place, but in the 10 years I have been gone, they have built a bridge going from the airport, south of Copenhagen, to Malmö<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>, Sweden. It's a tunnel and a bridge. So the ships can go over the tunnel, you see. Both bridges are railroad and automobile bridges. You can drive from the tip of Finland, Russia actually, to the boot of Italy and never get out of your car.

Q: How did you find relations with other embassies there?

BROWN: Excellent, including the Russian embassy. In 1990, early on really, they hadn't broken up the Soviet Union and the Berlin wall hadn't fallen. It was in February. The Russian ambassador asked my wife and me to come to lunch. We had a wonderful time. He wanted to toast every word that was said with vodka. You just had to watch yourself. He, through an interpreter, was very, very open. He practically told me that the Soviet Union was going to be changed in very, very violent ways. This was in February. I wrote a very extensive cable back to the States about that meeting, because he said that things were changing, and that they weren't going to be the same country or government. He, in effect, was telling me what was coming up, which did happen later in the year. Then, I guess, to reward him, they sent him to Afghanistan as the ambassador. I saw him before he left. I congratulated him and he looked at me with a sick smile and said, "Ambassador, don't congratulate me on being sent to Afghanistan." So he knew, I guess, it wasn't a great promotion. It was a very controversial post at the time, as you know, because Russia was at war with them.

Q: What were some of the other issues?

BROWN: Well, we talked about the Persian Gulf War.

Q: Was that at all controversial, as far as Danish support?

BROWN: Not at all. I think there were a couple members of the Folketing, which is the Parliament, who were a little passive and not happy about bombing. Basically, the whole government and all the military, and everybody I came in contact with... I don't think I met anybody who wasn't very favorable.

I'll skip right ahead and go into this in a more detailed way. They have a celebration every year on the Fourth of July in Denmark. It's the only country in the world that celebrates our Fourth of July. It started about 85, 90 years ago, by some Danes who came to this country and made a great success. They came back and bought some country in the hills of Jutland, called Rebild. Every year, 15 or 20 thousand Danes in this country fly to Denmark and participate in the Rebild ceremony. Every year we participate and the Ambassador reads a message from the president. The first year, they had Wally Schirra as the U.S. guest and he was a tremendous hit. Everybody loved him. He gave a very humorous but wonderful speech. The next year, they had Richard Chamberlain. He was outstanding and everybody loved him. The third year, they had Garrison Keillor. I looked forward to it. I knew of Garrison Keillor, and I had read some of his stuff. When he arrived at our residence for a party before the Fourth of July, he barely spoke to me. I couldn't figure out what the problem was. I had a house guest, George Pillsbury, and his wife, from Minneapolis, who knew Garrison Keillor. He was very cold to them. Pillsbury said, "What's wrong with him? I know Garrison." I said, "I don't know. He just didn't seem to be very happy." But then we went over to Alborg where they were celebrating before going to the Rebild ceremonies. One of our Navy ships is always there for this occasion and we have a reception on the ship. He sent word that he did not care to come aboard a United States Navy ship. That was pretty strange. When we got to the Rebild festival, he made some very funny remarks. Then, he made- I brought it with me, so you would know it - he made some very damaging remarks that were very insensitive and out of order.

In his speech, he said, "If America had had any kind of contact with the Arab world, and lived with Muslims, any common culture, any understanding of their language or religion, which we do not, would we have done what we did? Would we have poured such destruction on them in the Gulf War? Would we have then celebrated it like a football victory? Would we have killed 100,000 with so little feeling? We did not care about them, because we did not see them as human. But God does, and may God have mercy on us." It was shocking. The Danish military and all the Danish ministers were up in arms. The Danish speaker was the minister of agriculture, and he was livid. He was sitting next to me, and I was sitting next to Prince Joakim, the Danish Prince. I felt it was incumbent upon me to write a letter to the leading Copenhagen newspaper - the Politiben - in which I strongly protested, by saying Garrison Keillor's remarks were totally inappropriate, in poor taste, and simply absurdly timed, but I didn't say that he didn't have the right to say them, but that became the phony argument that Keillor tried to make.

Q: You might explain who Garrison Keillor is.

BROWN: He is a kind of home-spun humorist out of Minneapolis. He has written books on Lake Wobegon, a mythical place in Minnesota. He is very humorous.

Q: Oh, he is.

BROWN: In my letter I made two points. I said his remarks were inaccurate. We did have an understanding. We had Fulbright scholars and Fulbright programs with the Arab countries. Then I said, "He showed poor taste to use this event to air his personal prejudices." After all, he was a guest. I wrote my letter, of course, in English and sent it to the paper. They translated it and put it in the paper in Danish. He wrote a letter back, that showed he was out of control, he was so mad. He said, "The Ambassador's Danish is disgusting and embarrassing." I replied, "I didn't write my letter in Danish, I wrote it in English, and the paper translated it." I was able to kid with the paper editors and said, "Is your Danish really that bad that Garrison Keillor, who claims he knows how to speak Danish, can criticize it?" There were some people who did write, saying, "Don't you believe in free speech?" But of course, I never said he didn't have a right to free speech. I never formally replied again. But my PAO answered several letters saying, "The ambassador certainly believes that Garrison Keillor has the right of free speech, and so does the Ambassador, and he replied in free speech. If you say things like Keillor did, then you can expect answers like the Ambassador's, which we thought were appropriate." So, from my standpoint, I had nothing but support from Danes over this event. From the foreign minister on down all were very supportive. They were all disgusted with Garrison Keillor, who came across as a bad-mannered boor. Next, he was to speak at the American Club, which is 95% Danes, and they canceled him out. I had nothing to do with it and, in fact, didn't know he was scheduled to speak. They canceled him as the speaker, so he wrote another nasty letter saying that he was happy he wasn't sitting around with a bunch of fat, old American expatriates, and he'd rather be home with his Danish wife. Well, in the first place, the American Club, as I said, was 95% Danes. They had jobs with American companies. So he wouldn't have been with fat old Americans. Then he said he would rather be with his Danish wife, but he left her less than a year later and married some young girl. Things that go around come around. When I left my post, the foreign minister had a lunch for me. He had about 30 people there, businessmen, and others. In his remarks, he said, "Now, it's my understanding that Ambassador Brown is not going back to Lake Wobegon!" Very funny!

Q: You said you had a couple things to mention about Garrison Keillor. The reason we are talking about this is that he is a radio personality of considerable repute, at the time we are talking, so this is not a minor figure.

BROWN: Well, one of the things I recall, which seems to me was indicative of the whole controversy, was that when we had the celebration at Rebild I read President Bush's speech, which was in praise of Denmark's participation in the coalition, the victory, in the Gulf War. I then made my personal remarks - in Danish - which I had done twice before at Rebild celebrations. The Danish Prince made his remarks, which were along the same line. The Danish speaker was a man named Bertel Haarder, the minister of agriculture, I think. He was very, very outspoken as to how proud and happy they were. (Several days later, Secretary Haarder wrote me: "My remarks on the Gulf would have been stronger had I known Mr. Keillor's intentions.") Finally, came Garrison Keillor, who made these stupid remarks, I thought. They were very inappropriate and out of place, and not in very good taste. When he replied after my letter, he said, "Three of the four speakers celebrated the Gulf War, and the victory, and I decided while I was talking, that somebody should point out that there was a terrible disaster, and it shouldn't have happened." That was in his reply. It was such a lie. The fact is his speech was printed, and we had copies of it prior to the time he delivered it. He delivered it pretty much word for word. So all those awful remarks he had written long before he got up to talk. I had not seen the speech before, but my PAO officer had. He came running up to me later and said, "Look, we had this speech." I said, "I wish you had let me know." At any rate, I thought that he arrived in Denmark with this chip on his shoulder. As I mentioned, he was hardly civil when he came to my residence for a reception. He refused to come aboard the Navy ship, which every speaker had always done. It was part of the ceremony of the Rebild celebration. So I won't dwell on it anymore, but I just felt that it was a very ugly event. I have been asked whether I was glad I wrote the letter. I said, "If I hadn't written that letter, if I hadn't protested, I wouldn't have been able to live with myself the rest of my life."

What happened was the Danish television had pictures of the American flag, and our Navy men standing at attention, saluting as the flag was being raised. Then they cut right into Garrison Keillor's remarks. Then they cut right back, showing everybody standing, singing "The Star Spangled Banner." It was a very negative show. If they hadn't made such an issue of it, I probably would have let it pass, but I couldn't. Then there were headlines in the papers.

Q: Well, now, you've talked about some of the other things. For example, I think it is interesting to look at what happened when you had to "downsize" the embassy. In other words, get rid of people. In the first place, there is a background of why we were doing this.

BROWN: I went to the states for Christmas with my family in 1990. I returned near the end of January of 1991. When I returned, the first thing we did was meet in the embassy. I found out that Denmark had assigned body guards, and a back-up car. The whole world had changed, because of the Gulf War. From then on, I was like a prisoner. I have always felt pity since then for people who have to live with body guards, and under that kind of surveillance. You can't go to the bathroom, hardly. In any event, we then had the queen's visit in February 1981, which I mentioned already. We came back from that and there was a great celebration. The war was ending. In fact, it ended about two days after the queen's visit. Immediately, the State Department went on a campaign, or program, that said, "We must cut back. Our budgets are being cut back." Congress did cut our budgets back, and they continue to this day. So we started receiving this advice from State, but it wasn't very specific. We kept saying, "Well now, give us the parameters. What do we have to live with?" Initially, after several months, we thought it looked like we might be able to RIF five Foreign Service nationals. So, we prepared for that, and we worked with them. I met with the Foreign Service nationals, and I talked with them on several occasions. We had discussions. We tried to get them ready, although they were very unhappy. Then it really got difficult and they sent budget people over. It wasn't just our embassy, it was the same everywhere. The ambassador in Rome threatened to quit twice. He had to close down two consulates. He said when the president visited, he had to walk him in the rain because he couldn't get a car. He was angry about it. He wrote a devastating cable. But all of us were up in arms. Our Greek ambassador was terribly upset. I'm trying to point out how awful this was, because it came so suddenly. We got criticized in the inspection report because they said we didn't plan ahead. We tried to point out to them that we were getting contrary messages. I would have to say that it was very poorly handled by the State Department, in my book. That was true because every embassy in Europe felt the same way.

Q: Secretary Baker had made the decision not to ask for extra money when the Soviet Union collapsed, and you ended up with something like 12 new embassies, or something like that.

BROWN: I don't know whether Secretary Baker asked for more money or not, but we didn't get extra money.

Q: That was taken out of the European budget.

BROWN: We just divided the pie up with more participants. It meant that everybody had to give in. In hindsight, I can't argue with it a bit. But I think the way they handled it was unfortunate. They should have sent somebody to every embassy and said, "Look, here's what is happening with your budget." Instead, they kept saying, "Well, we're going to try to keep you at a very good level." It backfired terribly. We ended up having to RIF 12 Foreign Service nationals. It was a real blow. We could do it, but you can't do all the services any longer. We had too many detachments. We had a Greenland detachment that did nothing but buy supplies for Greenland. That was four people. Administratively, you have to serve all those people. It is a real bind. We were working until 10:00 at night, our administrative office was, trying to get every little detail done. That was an unfortunate thing, near the end of my tour. Well, it started in about the summer of my last year and it went on almost to the end. I already mentioned that we did reduce the military eventually. It happened after I left, but I started it all. The General in charge was very upset about that. He sent me a cable saying, "Why couldn't you have waited. Now, this is going to have to be fought in Washington." It was friendly. He said, "Keith, why didn't you wait?" I wrote back and said, "Jim, I've been waiting for months for you to respond to this, and you kept saying no we can't do it, so I had to move. I'm leaving here, and I had to move on it."

During the Gulf War, when they were bombing, it looked like we were winning. The troops from Iraq were moving back toward Baghdad.

Q: What was the feeling in Denmark?

BROWN: We saw on TV a lot of our planes, with the Iraq troops being strafed on the ground. At that time the head of the Diplomatic Corps, the Dean, was a Moroccan named Ambassador Omar Belcora. He asked me to come to his residence and meet with him. He was a very good friend. When I got there, he was very uptight. I could tell he was mad. He started in a tirade. We had cookies to eat and he was spitting the cookies on me, literally. He was so upset. He said, "You are killing innocent Islam people." It sounds a little familiar today, does it not? He said, "This is genocide." He just threw everything at me. He was the Dean of the Corps from Morocco. This was in early February. He said, "You have to stop, stop." He screamed the "stop" at me. I made notes of that. He said, "The casualties are so unfair, unreal, and shouldn't happen." Well, I sent a cable back on that, but it sort of fell into place with what George Bush, Colin Powell, and all of them finally decided, which was, we couldn't pursue it all the way to Baghdad. We weren't going to be an occupying force; we were trying to restore Kuwait to its government. We had accomplished that. But, as you know, for the last several years there has been lots of criticism about stopping the war so suddenly. I just wanted to add that I saw it first-hand with the Moroccan ambassador, the Dean. He was very upset.

Another big event. We had two different sessions with Secretary Baker. The first one was very early in 1989. I mention this because it was important for my career, I guess. He visited all NATO countries. It was a very whirlwind trip. He came in in the morning, and left late afternoon. The protocol called for me to meet the plane and to escort him to the foreign ministry. The foreign minister, who I was just getting to know, said, "It is our country. I will meet the Secretary of State, and he will ride with me." I wanted to ride with Jim Baker, because I wanted to find out what was going to happen about my confirmation. We finally made a compromise. The foreign minister took him, rode with him in the car to the foreign ministry, and I rode with him when we went back to the plane. I remember saying, "Jimmy, what's going to happen? I need to know. I hope I'm going to stay." He said, "The President and I have been talking about you. You're going to stay pal, don't worry about it." That was a very happy moment for me. Even though I felt I was going to stay, the pressure was there.

Q: Also, it's interesting that the Bush taking over from the Reagan administration, although Bush had been Vice President under Reagan for eight years, it was closer to an almost hostile thing.

BROWN: I can comment on it. At the time I had that very discussion I was just relating to you, with Baker, he said, "There is only one or two of you who are going to stay." I said, "Really?" He said, "All the rest are Reagan appointments, they aren't ours. Everybody is going to go, but you are going to stay." I don't know who else might have stayed. I was relieved.

Q: I can imagine. It was not that friendly a takeover, in a way, the way it developed.

BROWN: The second trip where Baker visited us, was the North Atlantic Council, NATO. He was here for about three days. I tried to get him and his wife, Susan, to come stay with us. My wife had written him. He said that it gets so hectic with people dropping in and out who want to visit with you, the hotel is the best place. But we did have a very outstanding meeting. I particularly enjoyed it, because I was in on every session. An ambassador doesn't get too many times, in today's diplomatic world, to get in on what is going on. You get cables and you can watch it on CNN, which is better than the cables you get. On the queen's visit, the foreign minister was taken to the White House, and we met with Brent Scowcroft and with Jim Baker and Bob Zoellick and three or four others. I was present and the Danish ambassador was present. I took notes from that and I found it very exciting because I was in a strategy or very high-level meeting. We don't get that very often anymore in our diplomatic service. I can remember some things they said at that meeting that were really exciting and stunning to me. I shouldn't go into them, but I was excited.

The queen was taken into the White House after the ceremonies in the Rose Garden, where the president and the queen made their remarks. Then pretty much the same group was taken into the green room at the White House. The president and the queen sat and visited. As you know, under the constitutional monarchy, the queen doesn't comment on foreign policy or foreign questions. It is always the foreign minister. At the National Press Club half the questions were on policy. Of course she would turn and smile and the foreign minister would get up and answer them. I should probably mention that as I prepared for this oral history, I went through my diaries, my office diary, and my personal diary, that I kept also. It was amazing to me the appointments, every hour of the day, the meetings and such. I just can't believe I was physically able to do it. I'm sure that's the case with every ambassador. You have all these courtesy calls. You have different people who are in town, from the State Department, or Washington. It is never ending. At the same time, from my personal diary, I was able to notice that we had some wonderful social events. We did a lot of bird shooting with Danish friends. I was invited to shoot with some American groups that came over. Carol and I played bridge with some of the diplomatic corps and Danish friends. So, what I'm saying is it is an extremely busy, hardworking job, but I enjoyed it thoroughly. I think almost everybody I know enjoyed their service. You also have some wonderful rewarding times that are social. Some of the ceremonies you attend are outstanding. You look back and think, "Did I really get to participate in those events? Was I really sitting in the White House, chatting with the president, and with the queen?"

I guess to sum it up, I would say the three years were probably the most exciting three years that I have ever had. I do have one other incident I wanted to comment on. We had notice that Colonel Lyday of the ODC, the Office of Defense Cooperation, was being offered a command. I think it was at a post in Arizona, or somewhere, in the Air Corps. He was a lieutenant colonel. He was very excited about it. We had a little reception for him and his wife. Then, out of the blue, his office command came back and said, "No, we aren't going to release him from his duties in Denmark," which as I already mentioned, I didn't think were too strenuous anyway because they were too overstuffed. They were devastated. It just so happened that at that very moment, practically, I got a call from General Jim McCarthy, in Ramstein, I guess it was.

Q: Air Force base.

BROWN: Yes, Air Force. It was about the matter of combining, or merging the different military things. But, at that moment, I thought it was my chance to speak up. So, I said, "Jim, I have to tell you something," and I related what had happened. I said, "I'm going to send a cable. I'm very upset. I think somebody in your chain of command is taking it out on Lyday, probably because of what I'm doing, in trying to merge the military up here. I just feel that it is so unfair to this man and his family, because he has earned this. McCarthy said, "Let me understand this. He is now going to have his first command? He was put up for this command, his first one?" I said, "Yes." He said, "We are standing in his way?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You don't have to send a cable, I've handled it right this minute. Colonel Lyday is going on that assignment, and I'll take care of it." I said, "I appreciate it. You are doing a great thing for him." Of course, the Lydays came by, and she was sobbing she was so happy. I remember I put in my diary that this was probably one of the most fulfilling, although not a big tremendous thing, it was probably one of the most fulfilling, happiest things I did as ambassador while I was there for three years. I saved a man's career, I think.

Q: This is terribly important. The fact that you were able, and had the thought to do that. You left when?

BROWN: In January of 1992. I left after this unbelievable 1991, with the queen's visit, the Garrison Keillor episode, the "RIFing." As I say, it seemed like all the monumental things happened. Then, the inspection team. I'll comment on the inspection team. I wouldn't say I got high marks; we got good marks. They pointed out two or three things I was doing; particularly the merger of the military was "visionary" on the Ambassador's part. I think it was a long time overdue. But, they commented on areas where we probably should have been more on the ball, in mostly budget matters. One of them was, in order to save money, we were told we should have "RIFed" or fired the gardener at the residence. I got to thinking about it. The residence is about three and a half acres. It has a swimming pool, and a tennis court, and formal gardens. We had one gardener. I was trying to think what that place would look like if I had important VIP guests, as we did, and receptions out by the pool, and Fourth of July, over the whole estate, if we hadn't had a gardener. These are little things you pick on, I guess. There is no way you could run that residence without a gardener. We had some of the household staff out there helping out occasionally. All and all, inspection was a big experience for me. My wife was back in the states at the time. They were there for about 12 days. I suppose I was with them about 50% of the time while they were there. It was a very enlightening experience, to go deep into some of these things. This was near the end of my term, but one of the things they were talking about had been going on for 10 years. You point that out, and they would tell you that you've been in charge for three years and you should have changed that. The inspection was a great experience. All in all, nobody was hurt. I think it was worthwhile for me to go through it. I asked if we could have the summing up at a breakfast meeting, because I was due to leave at noon to join my wife in the states. They did that and I got to go back and join my family on a family vacation.

The end of the show, I guess, is we made a round of Denmark. We went to two or three different islands off Jutland, which is the big peninsula, and called on a lot of our Danish friends and Danish officials that we had met through the three years. I thought it was worthwhile and enjoyable to more or less say farewell to them all. There was a usual round of parties and dinners. I already mentioned the foreign minister had a wonderful stag luncheon for me. Then it all came to an end. We left there on the 16th of January, and the embassy people all saw me off at the airport. My wife and I got on the plane and took off and I started sobbing. It was the most moving thing in the world to me. I couldn't believe it was over. It had been so fulfilling and so busy and, all of a sudden, it seemed to end. I came back to Washington and did my signing out. It's interesting, I talked with a lot of my Republican friends, and I said, "I'm back, I'm free, and I'll be happy to help." They said, "Oh, Bush is so popular, and he is so far ahead, there is no need for you to worry about that." I went back to Denver, shaking my head, saying, "These guys don't understand what is going on." By that time, Bush's popularity had fallen. We were in a recession and they wouldn't really acknowledge it. It was a revelation to me.

I should say, before I left, I asked Lord Chamberlain for a farewell visit to the queen, which was arranged. Of course she awarded me, as she does almost every ambassador who doesn't embarrass the country, the Grand Cross of the Danneberg which is the equivalent to a knighthood in the British Empire. So, I have that to wear with my white tie. I also had a big ceremony and farewell at the American Club, where they presented me with a plaque of appreciation. I had the usual things, I guess, every ambassador who leaves a post goes through.

Q: To wind this up, to let people know, what did you do when you left? You returned to Colorado.

BROWN: Well, I remember thinking initially that when I left I didn't have any obligations, I didn't have to meet appointments, or cut a ribbon, or anything of the sort, I was absolutely free. I thought this was marvelous. After a while, I wondered what I was supposed to be doing. I had a business, but my son took it over and ran it. I didn't feel that I needed to interfere. He was doing just fine. So, I would go to the office once or twice a week and not interfere. So I finally got into a, more or less, retirement mode. Then, I was elected president of the Council of American Ambassadors, which I had been active in just as a director. For the past three years, I've been doing that. It takes 50% of my time, and I thoroughly enjoy it. I feel like I'm back in the swing of things. We have conferences twice a year and we take a "mission" each year to foreign countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile in 2000 and China in 2001. Next week we are meeting at the State Department where we will have many outstanding speakers. We'll have a lunch at the Ben Franklin room, at which we hope Secretary Powell will drop by. I'm 76. I guess I'm very active for that age. I've enjoyed the 10 years since I left, but it has gone by awfully fast.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much. I have really enjoyed this conversation.

BROWN: I've enjoyed it, too. I caught up on Denmark in the last few days, getting ready for this.

End of interview