The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

STEPHEN EISENBRAUN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: December 14, 2004

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Q: Today is the 14th of December, 2004. This is an interview with Stephen Eisenbraun, S-T-E-P-H-E-N E-I-S-E-N-B-R-A-U-N. This will be done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Steve or?

EISENBRAUN: Steve. And you go by?

Q: Stu.

EISENBRAUN: Okay.

Q: To start today, when and where were you born?

EISENBRAUN: Well Stu, thanks very much for giving me the opportunity to talk about my earlier life and my career in the Foreign Service. To answer your question, I was born July 23, 1947 in the central lowa town of Marshalltown. My mother recalled to me many times that she gave birth during a scorching heat wave that made the ordeal of childbirth that much more difficult in the days before air-conditioning. I bring this up only because the writer Jack Kerouac, in his famous semiautobiographical novel, On the Road, mentions being in that heat wave when he passed through central lowa in the summer of 1947.

Q: Let's talk about, first on your father's side, and then on your mother's side. Where do the Eisenbrauns come from?

EISENBRAUN: The Eisenbrauns come from the central part of South Dakota. The nearest large towns were Wall, Colome, and Winner. If you mean by that question where do they come from originally, it was the Stuttgart area in Germany, specifically Geradstetten, about 12 miles east of Stuttgart. In 1762 and again in 1763, Catherine the Great of Russia offered land in the Crimea to German farmers to colonize, and many Germans took the offer, including many Eisenbrauns. So my part of the family came to America from Germany via the Crimea.

Q: The Volga-Deutsch.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. I've read that virtually whole villages took off for the Crimea in the 1700s because they got the opportunity to acquire land at no cost. According to Catherine's manifesto, the prospective immigrants were told that they could practice their religion (they were Lutherans), they would not have to serve in the czar's army, would not have to learn Russian, and would not have to pay taxes for at least 30 years. The Eisenbrauns, and a lot of other Germans, ended up going to the Crimea. Many Germans were willing to leave Germany, because so much of the area was devastated by the just-concluded Seven Years' War.

That arrangement worked for about 125 years, as the German villages retained their language and customs and didn't interact very much with the local people. However, the German villages prospered a bit too much, and in the 1870s, the Russian authorities thought it was about time for these Germans to begin to be Russians, to serve in the military, and to pay their fair share of taxes and so forth. A lot of these Germans, including most of the Eisenbraun clan, decided that this wasn't what they wanted to do. At that same time, the American West was opening up, and there were great opportunities to acquire land, so they immigrated to America. The Eisenbrauns came to South Dakota, which in the middle of the 1880s was just being opened to pioneers. If you go back, which I have, and look at these little towns that dot northern Nebraska and southern South Dakota, you'll find that they were all established about the 1880 to 1890 period. Q: Bismarck and all that?

EISENBRAUN: Well, I don't know about Bismarck, which is in North Dakota, but some of the smaller towns in South Dakota and northern Nebraska were established in that period. In fact, I went out to see my family roots in 1991 with my uncle, E.J. "Pete" Eisenbraun, who had moved away from South Dakota when he joined the Army at the beginning of World War II. We found that several towns were celebrating centennials. These were towns of probably less than 1,000 people.

I do have quite a bit of family history, gathered from Pete, that 1991 trip to South Dakota, and from a publication entitled Eisenbrauns in America, published privately in 1978 by Ronald Siebert, who married into the family and did a lot of family research. He was able to trace the family genealogy directly back to 1647, and found the first reference to Eisenbrauns in a land transaction dated 1350.

Once in South Dakota, the settlers were able to acquire what were called patents for their land from the U.S. Government. A patent was a land title signed by the president. I have a photocopy of one that Pete and I found in the county courthouse in Winner. It was signed in 1912 by President William Howard Taft and was issued to a great aunt of mine, Mary Eisenbraun. They weren't homesteaders, they did have to pay for the land, but it wasn't much.
Q: Did they get into sod houses or were the Eisenbrauns after that?

EISENBRAUN: During our trip together in 1991 to that area of South Dakota, Pete and I found that the region is much more depopulated now than it was at any time in the history of its settlement, and I was told by some of the Eisenbrauns who still live there that some families did begin with sod houses, but not all. The Eisenbrauns were prosperous almost from the beginning because the land was fertile, virgin land, and they raised crops and some cattle. But more crops than cattle; cattle came later. The living was pretty good from the early 1880s until about 1930. The railroad was there almost from the beginning, so they were able to build small frame houses soon after arrival. Each generation added to the original house and modernized it a bit. When electricity came, that was added, then indoor plumbing, and so forth. Today, one finds these relatively large frame farmhouses in the countryside, and they are the same farmhouses as were originally built on the land, just added to over the last century. In almost all cases, Pete and I discovered by driving up to these farm houses and introducing ourselves that the pioneer families are still living there, including many Eisenbrauns, but not my immediate family.

Q: How did your family get to Iowa?

EISENBRAUN: My grandfather, Julius, who was born in Russia in 1884 and came to America in 1893. Eventually he settled down and developed a farm in South Dakota and raised a family of nine children. Life for the family was pretty good, but he died suddenly in 1932 of appendicitis on the day after his birthday, and it happened to be a surprise birthday party at that. The party didn't happen, as Uncle Pete recalled to me, because my grandfather had to be bundled into the car by his brother Reinhold and his wife, Elizabeth, and rushed to the nearest doctor, about 35 miles away in Winner. The next day, my grandmother returned to report that grandfather had died, and a partial obituary quoted in Seibert's book said it had happened en route to the doctor. His death left a wife and a bunch of children, the oldest boy being my father, about 21 years old, to try to run the farm. That was just at the time the depression was getting into high gear, with the Dust Bowl and drought, so with the bad economic conditions and the terrible weather year after year, the two oldest boys were unable to keep the farm together. By the mid-30s, they sold the farm and most of the family moved to Rapid City.

My father, Arnold, who was then a combination farmer and rancher and had a saddle horse and a pistol and all the things that a cowboy would have needed, literally walked out to the road, which you can imagine didn't have much traffic around 1935, and hitchhiked to seek his fortune. I remember he told me it depended on which direction the first car came whether he went west or east. The first car to come along was headed east to Sioux City, Iowa, about 200 miles away, so my dad got in and headed off to Sioux City, never to live again in South Dakota.Q:  Did your father go to college or not?

EISENBRAUN:  No, he didn't go to college. He worked, in those latter years of the 1930s, as a farmhand for a family he was very fond of that lived near Sioux City, which is on the western border of Iowa near the Missouri River. He worked there until World War II came along, when he volunteered to go into the Navy. Do you want me to go into his occupation from there on?

Q:  Yes, yes.

EISENBRAUN:  All right. So he was in the Navy then throughout the war years, and when the war was over- oh, in the meantime he had met this lady, Doris Brower, living in Sioux City, and they married. I could talk about her for a minute, too, because she influenced his work life from then on.

Q:  Okay.

EISENBRAUN:  My mother had graduated from high school and become a hairdresser in the late 1930s, which was a sort of standard thing for middle class girls to do in the Midwest in those days. So, when my father got out of the Navy in 1945 he didn't really want to go back into farming and here was my mother, who had done pretty well as a hairdresser. She had moved to a medium-sized town in Iowa, so their base became Marshalltown, a prosperous and very pretty town of elm trees and with a population of about 25,000 people. So my father decided to use the GI Bill and go to cosmetology school in Des Moines. That's what he did after the war, and then, using his savings from the Navy, he, with my mother's help, established a ladies hairdressing salon in Marshalltown. He prospered and eventually bought a second salon in a neighboring town.Q:  All right. On your mother's side, where did her family come from?

EISENBRAUN: Well unfortunately, I don't have as much information only because everyone on that family side has passed on. I was told a lot of stories as a child, but I can't remember much of the detail now, but here's what I can recall. My grandmother, Erna Wagner, and a few other female relatives came across the Atlantic from Germany at the turn of the 20th century. The family had lived in the city of Hamburg and I believe they were merchants, but I don't know any details. All the stories I heard as a small child involved just my grandmother and great-grandmother after their arrival in America, so I can only speculate that they may have come across because the father of the family had died. But I don't know that for a fact. It was only the women who came, to the best of my knowledge. They passed through Ellis Island.

Q: Yes, they might have, I'm not sure when it was established.

EISENBRAUN: They did because I checked it out once on the Ellis Island website. I was told they got on a train immediately and headed for Sioux City, Iowa, where I believe there were already relatives.

My mother was born in Nebraska, 20 miles west of Sioux City, in a little town named Dixon, also founded about 1885 or so. My grandmother had met a fellow named Charles Brower, also of German background, who was working in the bank in Dixon. Now, these days Dixon doesn't qualify for a bank and in fact the town hardly still exists, but it was a fairly prosperous farming town in the early days. Must have been because it not only had a bank and a high school, it had a municipal band. I know my grandfather was not only one of the bank officials, but also the band director of the town. He died suddenly in1929, also with appendicitis, just as my paternal grandfather did at about the same time.

Q: And so, your mother grew up in Nebraska?

EISENBRAUN: She grew up in Dixon, went to high school there and graduated in 1938, and then she faced this decision of what to do for an occupation. I remember her telling me that there seemed to be only two obvious choices in 1938 for a girl in her circumstances. Well, she saw it as only two choices, anyway. One was to go to a teacher's college in the nearby town of Wayne and become a school teacher. .The other was to go to hairdresser's school in the big city of Sioux City, and she thought that had many more interesting prospects than teaching. As it turned out, I'm rather sorry that she didn't pursue the teaching because she was always reading and had the intellect and personality of someone who should have gone to college and should have become a school teacher. However, she prospered for a few years as a hairdresser. She was a freshly graduated hairdresser when she met my father sometime probably about 1941 and they got married.Q: Where did your father serve in the Navy?

EISENBRAUN: For probably about 18 months he was assigned to Fort Pierce, Florida, where the Navy built a huge-from scratch-amphibious training base for the anticipated landings in Europe and the Pacific. My mother traveled from Marshalltown eventually to join him for a year or so, and I grew up with these romantic stories of newlyweds living in tropical south Florida. That area obviously was not developed the way it is today, and so it was really exotic for both of them; I'll bet it was almost like a Foreign Service posting. She wrote vivid letters I still have to her friends about the cultural traditions of the South as she observed them; she was a very skilled writer and really painted quite a romantic and exciting story of living down there for part of the war. But then, unfortunately, she had to go back to Iowa because my father was shipped out to the South Pacific. He served as a crewman on a liberty ship, and the end of the war found him in Manila. He was there for some time before being able to leave the Navy.Q: Well, you were born in '47. Did you grow up in Marshalltown?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, I did. Because by the time I came along my parents were already settled in Marshalltown and my father had already opened his hairdressing salon, which was called Arnold's Beauty Studio. It isn't there anymore, but it was from maybe '46 through 1970 when he sold out, retired and moved to Florida. It was a well-known establishment in Marshalltown in the years I was growing up. We were quite stable there and my parents became pretty active socially. At the time, I took their social involvement for granted, but it occurred to me only after I was grown up that they were active in community activities because it was probably good for business. My mother, for example, was in charge of the Methodist church nursery in the same years that I was in the nursery. And, by the way, the Methodist church was a very large church, over 1,000 members. The only other church that could begin to come that close in size was the Catholic Church. My father for many years was also an usher at the church and was active later in Boy Scouts when I was also in Boy Scouts. So they were fixtures of the community, and I led a very good life in a small but prosperous town in Iowa. It was a very pleasant experience growing up there.Q: You say prosperous. Is this from farming?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, but Marshalltown was unusual because it was also the corporate headquarters for several major business corporations. One was Lennox Heating and Air Conditioning, which is still prominent nationally, and the other was Fisher Governor Company, which made controls for steam turbines, I guess. These were two big, prosperous companies, and since they were the corporate headquarters, it wasn't unusual that I had classmates whose fathers had gone to Harvard Business School and/or Harvard Law School, yet here they were in central Iowa raising their families. The combination of large factories with their corporate headquarters in town, plus the fertile farming land around, created a very prosperous town. The Fisher family was very generous, so there was a beautiful Fisher Community Center, and there was the Fisher Foundation for providing scholarships to college students, and I had one of those scholarships later.

Q: Well, it sounds like you had the, oh, Andy Hardy-Booth Tarkington type of boyhood. Did you or not? Picket fences and bicycles?

EISENBRAUN: As a matter of fact, that was true. It was a nice, safe, friendly community. For ten years my parents lived on the older, original side of town, and then in 1956-57 they built a house on the new side of town, where I lived for another ten years. Geographically, I probably moved about a mile and a-half, but it was a different world because the older portion had tall, beautiful, stately elm trees and large homes with big porches and sidewalks, lots of leaves in the fall and that kind of a traditional small town environment. On the newer side, there were ranch-style houses being built on former pastures with few trees. My parents were so worried when they moved in 1957 to their new house that I would find it hard to adjust to a new elementary school as I started fifth grade, but as it turned out, practically everybody else in the class was new, too, because their .parents had moved to the rapidly expanding new section of town. The friends I had in the new school were as good or better, closer that is, than I had had before.Q: Well, let's talk a little about family. Did you have brothers or sisters?

EISENBRAUN: No, I was an only child.

Q: What about family life? You know, dinnertime, sit around the table and talk about things? Did the outside world intrude? What?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, we had a set dinnertime every evening, and my father would come home from work and we would say a little prayer, and so it was a fixed routine like that. My mother didn't work. She had helped him establish his hairdressing establishment in the late 40s, but then when I came along she didn't work any longer. She was at home the whole time; she did a lot of church volunteer activities at the Methodist church in my earlier days, but she was still at home a lot, so she had the ability to have the dinner ready every night at 6:00 pm.

And yes, we did talk a fair amount about national politics. My earliest memory of national politics was the 1956 presidential election, and my parents were quite strong supporters of Dwight Eisenhower, because of his war hero image. I remember that they were not impressed with Adlai Stevenson, who was not seen as having the same strong credentials. The 1960 presidential election, of course, captivated the whole country, and it was a big topic of discussion around our dinner table too as we debated- well, there wasn't a lot of debate actually-, because they favored Nixon's experience and thought Kennedy was just an upstart.

I can still remember some of the discussions we had around the table. This may be an obscure point in American history, but the Quemoy and Matsu islands were a topic in the 1960 campaign. Kennedy said these islands of the coast of mainland China weren't worth a world war over and Nixon said no, they were that important. And my parents saying, see, Nixon knows, just like Eisenhower, the importance of standing up to the communists. So yes, there was a lot of talk about national politics and even international politics.

Mind you, they weren't very well-schooled in international matters, but they did pay attention. I remember another time there was a great deal of discussion about the Berlin Crisis. I came home from school one day in the early 60s and my mother said, I've now done some reading and understand the full meaning of the Berlin Crisis. She got out a piece of paper and drew a circle for Berlin and then divided it into four sectors and explained who controlled each sector. So, in answer to your question, yes, there was a lot of interest in foreign affairs and that really captivated me, even from an early age.

Q: Was the paper the Des Moines Register?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, but there were two newspapers in my life. The Marshalltown Times Republican was the newspaper everyone read because it had all the local news and included the Ann Landers column, which everyone liked. The other was the Register, as it was known locally.

Q: Ann Landers was an advice columnist?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. Ann Landers was the sister of Dear Abby, another advice columnist, and so everyone had to talk about whatever Ann Landers had said to whoever had written the letters of the day. But as I got a little older, I realized that there was another newspaper around, the Des Moines Register, which for us was the newspaper of record because no one read anything beyond, at least not in my circle. Luckily, it was and remains a very good newspaper.

Q: No, I mean, it immediately springs to mind because it was like, really one of the very few important regional newspapers in the country.

EISENBRAUN: Well, probably between Chicago and the West Coast it was one of the more well- known newspapers.

Q: Yes, I think it had a better reputation than say, The Chicago Tribune.

EISENBRAUN: I didn't realize that. I grew up knowing that the Register was important. In high school, we were very proud of the fact that the Des Moines Register was the paper we were assigned to read.

Q: Schooling. Even beyond schooling, you say your mother read a great deal as a means of teaching herself, as I think so many people did, because her generation basically didn't go to college. I mean, in my oral histories very few senior officers who I've talked to had parents who were college graduates. I mean, that will change as time goes on. What did you read as a child?

EISENBRAUN: I was really a bookworm. I can tell you the very first book I ever read, it made such an impression on me. I was in fourth grade, and I read The Biography of Lou Gehrig.

Q: Oh yes.

EISENBRAUN: That's what started me reading. And the next book I read, I do remember it so well, it was a science fiction novel called Space Captives of the Golden Men. And from then on I sometimes was reading two books at the same time.Q: Did you have a Carnegie library in town?

EISENBRAUN: As a matter of fact, we did. Yes, it was a beautiful building, right downtown with big stone columns and a plaque that read "Gift of Andrew Carnegie" from about 1900 or something.

Q: That was one of the greatest gifts made by anybody, I think, the Carnegie libraries around the country.

EISENBRAUN: They had a children's section and a grownup section, and my mother allowed me to use-her card to take books out from the adult section before my eligibility when I was in ninth grade. I checked out Tarzan of the Apes, the very first Tarzan book in the series, in the latter part of fourth grade. The librarians thought that that book needed to be in the adult section! For some reason the librarians didn't question the fact that I was using my mother's card.

So I went through phases in what I read. There was a period of science fiction, then detective stories, then World War Two stories and so forth. I was constantly reading. I read Gone with the Wind twice over in eighth grade. Later, I discovered Herman Wouk, first his story of the war, The Caine Mutiny, and then I read all of his novels published up till then. On my own prowling of the library, I discovered The Great Gatsby.

***Q: Let's take elementary school. How'd you find it?

EISENBRAUN:  I survived. I was probably an indifferent student until we moved across town to the new school, Anson Elementary School, named for Cap Anson who was a famous professional baseball player from Marshalltown in the early days of baseball. I did much better at Anson. In fact, I have to say, since this recording is a matter of record, that the teacher who turned my whole life around was my sixth grade teacher at Anson.Q:  Who was that?

EISENBRAUN:  It was a gentleman named Duane Meyer. He was young; I recall that he turned 27 during the time we were in sixth grade together. He was a wonderful man and an inspiring teacher and he clearly liked all the kids, and I thought he was absolutely tremendous. Everyone else thought he was tremendous, too. He also coached basketball and was very active in the Methodist church. I blossomed under him and I got all A's and I studied for the first time in my life. I knew at the time that this was a wonderful experience. I couldn't wait to go to school on Monday mornings.

At the end of the school year, this would have been 1959, all we did on that last day was go and get our report cards. My mother said, you really ought to tell Mr. Meyer how much you've enjoyed this year and how much you thought of him. But of course when I got there and everyone was hanging around his desk, and Mr. Meyer was wishing everyone well for the summer, I was too shy to say anything. .

Let me jump ahead for a moment. I went back to my hometown in 1983 after an absence of 16 years and spoke at the Rotary Club. After that talk, I went out to the elementary school where Mr. Meyer was principal. He did not know I was coming to town, and he hadn't seen me for 20 years or so. I found him directing traffic to help the little kids across the street as school was letting out for the afternoon. I parked, walked up, and he said, "Oh hi, Steve. How are you?" No problem remembering my name. He showed me around the school. It was in the older section of town and was the very school, Franklin, that I had gone to for kindergarten through fourth grade. When I was leaving that day, I told him that he had turned my whole life around, I got good grades thereafter, I was interested in things academic from the time I had him in class and now as an adult looking back, I could say that he was the great inspiration of my academic life. And that I had been too shy to tell him at the end of 6th grade how much I had liked his class. That day is one of my finest memories, and one doesn't get to go back and set things straight too often in life.

EISENBRAUN: When I entered junior high, that was the post-Sputnik era and the interest in the educational system throughout America and certainly in my school was on math and science. The school system in Marshalltown was very progressive, so they enthusiastically embraced this concept. I was asked in seventh grade if I wanted to be in the accelerated program for science and math that was supposed to continue, and actually did continue, all through high school. So there was a commitment in about seventh grade to go all the way through high school and take accelerated courses in science and math. That proposal to me happened to coincide with my period of reading science fiction and I said, yes, absolutely. But my interest was more in science than in math.

The junior high formed a special class of only about 15, and so then year after year, pretty much, we were together in science and math. Instead of taking shop as everyone else would have done in eighth grade, we got to take science, and again in ninth. Then it was biology in 10th grade, chemistry in 11th grade and physics in 12th grade. We still stayed together more or less as an accelerated class. That was fine except that as I got a little older, my academic interests changed to English and social studies, but I still finished up that science curriculum, getting harder and harder for me as my interests changed. What I most wanted to do in high school was read Newsweek or Time about events in Washington and international affairs rather than worry about science and math.Q: What about social life in high school and all?

EISENBRAUN: Well, a lot of social life for me revolved around Scouts. I was really pretty enthusiastic; I joined Scouts kind of late, in the eighth grade. I think most kids would have done it a couple of years earlier. I had a tremendous time and did virtually everything there was to do in Scouts; Senior Patrol Leader, Order of the Arrow and so forth, with the exception I did not become an Eagle Scout; I lacked two merit badges. By the time I got to that stage, which was about the time I was entering high school, my interests shifted and I simply didn't care enough to pursue those last two merit badges, and one of them was citizenship. That's a bit ironic, since I've lived my whole adult life in government and public service. But it didn't seem to matter much that I didn't become an Eagle Scout. In fact, the same group, essentially we grew up together and it was at the Methodist church, and the same group of kids, we all went from Scouts into Explorers, the senior part of scouting, and then it became more of a social club and we didn't do so much camping.

Q: What about-

EISENBRAUN: I should say another thing, if you want, about schooling and sports?

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: I thought I was a pretty good swimmer in junior high and even in those days, the junior high had a pool and the new high school had an Olympic-sized one. So I got to high school, which in those days began in tenth grade, and I tried out for the high school swim team. I found out I wasn't nearly as good of a swimmer as I thought I was, and I about killed myself learning it. But I still wanted to be on the team, so I asked the coach if I could be the manager. So, throughout the high school years I was manager of the swim team. I had a lot of fun with the team and got to travel to all the meets around the state and so forth. I wasn't good enough in basketball or football or whatever but I did have fun with the swim team.

Q: Well now, what about looking back on it and all, what about social diversity, ethnic diversity, even gender diversity. How would you describe your experiences?

EISENBRAUN: Life was pretty homogeneous in central Iowa, kind of like Garrison Keillor's descriptions of Lake Woebegone. There were Lutherans and Methodists and Catholics. There were a few African American families and they contributed many of the star athletes at the high school. But I don't know remember any other ethnic groups. There were no Asians; there were no people from Cuba, although in the later part of the sixties, people from Cuba began to come into Iowa, but not when I was growing up. The distinctions in central Iowa were between whether you were from the town or the farm. The town people thought they were superior to those who came from the farm, but of course we kids in town didn't realize that our whole lives depended upon the farming community around us. Q: Were there Jews in the area?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, there were a few families. The kids from those families were invariably the smartest kids in the class. We knew they were Jewish but that didn't make any difference to us. It wasn't an issue, at least as I remember looking at it through a child's eyes. I don't think in central Iowa in the 50s and 60s, at least among young people, there was much of any overt anti-Semitism. I can't recall any conversation or incident along those lines, except when we learned about the Nazi period and then that was a historical thing to kids. .Q: How about the division of being Protestant and Catholic?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, it made some difference because there was a parochial school, meaning Catholic school, in Marshalltown, and the kids who went there were socially isolated from the public school kids, because about 95 percent of the town's children went to the public school. The town was very proud of its public school and its great basketball team year after year, and the Catholic school seemed lost in the shuffle.

(End tape one, side on)

Q: You were saying there was a sort of Protestant-Catholic distinction of some sort.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, but from the eyes of a boy growing up in Marshalltown, I can't really tell you what all of the manifestations were. I know we didn't make fun of kids who were Catholic, but we were quite aware that the Catholic Church was as large or perhaps larger than the Methodist church. There might have been 30 or so other smaller churches in town; about every denomination was represented, but it was the two main churches that we were aware of. It was really, I think, a pretty egalitarian society without much discrimination, or at least I wasn't aware if there was any.Q: And did you ever work when you were in high school?

EISENBRAUN: I didn't work in high school until the spring of my senior year. I was pretty much involved in swim team and other activities to think about working during the school year, except in the latter part of my senior year, I went down to the local theater and got hired as an usher. I thought that was a pretty good deal because I got to see all the movies free and saw all my friends come in and they said, hey, this is good that Steve is an usher because he can tell us which the best films are. Of course, in fact, everyone went to all of the movies that came to town. Q: Were you a movie buff?

EISENBRAUN: No, but I certainly enjoyed that time as a theater usher. The other work I did was limited to the summertime when I worked as a camp counselor at a YMCA camp, Camp Foster, which really was one of the major influences on my youth. I remember it was fourth grade and the director of the Marshalltown YMCA came by our elementary school and gave a presentation about going to Camp Foster for two weeks. It was in the northern part of the state on one of the big lakes there, Okaboji. I came home and said, this is what I want to do. So I did, I went to camp for two weeks in the summer of 1957 as the youngest camper, and I went again and again and again, year after year until I became the oldest camper, and then I became part of the staff and was a junior counselor, a senior counselor and so forth. I did that from 1957 until 1966, so I was actually into college and I was still a camp counselor. I contrived, in those latter three years, '64, '65, '66, to stay all summer at the camp. When I wasn't being a counselor I worked as an assistant caretaker one summer and another summer I was in charge of cleaning up the dining hall, and the final summer I was the camp secretary.

They didn't think in terms of having males as camp secretaries, but the professional secretary who was supposed to run the affairs of the front office got sick and couldn't do the work and so the camp director said, I don't know what I'm going to do, the camp opens tomorrow and I don't have a secretary. I said, I'll be your secretary. He blinked a bit and said, okay. I had a pretty good time. It was not the usual camp experience, working in the office, but I enjoyed it. I should say, at that camp I did everything as a camper that was possible on the lake, and that didn't involve just swimming but evolved into boating and canoeing, and sailing, and later, I became an instructor for those activities and I became pretty darned adept, too, at sailing. That was my entire summer life. I didn't get paid a whole lot for doing it but all summer long, from the first of June to the end of August, that's what I was doing.

Q: Was the camp one that reached out to, I guess we'd call disadvantaged children or, you know, poorer children or not?

EISENBRAUN: No, it was not. The camp was open to anyone who wanted to come, but in fact it had pretty much a middle class, white kid group, similar in background to my own.

Q: Well then, I think, looking at the time, this might be a good place to stop. I'll put at the end here where we'll pick this up. So, you graduated from high school when?

EISENBRAUN: In 1965.

Q: 1965. How did some of the big national issues of the day affect you? Did the Cuban missile crisis cause any concern in your area?

EISENBRAUN: Oh, yes. Very vivid memories, very vivid, not only from my family's perspective-

Q: This is 1962.

EISENBRAUN: October of '62. Yes, I was a sophomore in high school and we were completely aware, even in that small town in Iowa, of what the story was, and there were a couple of days in October when we wondered whether there wouldn't be nuclear bombs dropping.

Q: And also the Kennedy assassination the next year, '63.

EISENBRAUN: The Kennedy assassination made a huge impression on me because I followed national politics very closely, even as a high school kid. I remember that was a Friday and I had just come from lunch and I was in study hall and my best friend, Larry Demry, leaned over and said, I heard Kennedy was shot. And my immediate thought was, "Oh, wow, but shot didn't mean killed." Then suddenly we were called to an assembly, and the student body president, a senior, was the one who addressed the student body, not the principal. While the senior class president was saying his introductory words, that we understand the president was shot in Dallas, someone like the principal, probably, who didn't walk out to the microphone but called the student president over and told him, and the boy came back to the microphone and announced that the president had died. I wonder what that boy thinks now, as he was the one who told this news to over a thousand students sitting in the auditorium. Then school was dismissed, except I still had to go to swim practice, but afterwards, I went home and watched the coverage on television for the entire next four days, all the way through the funeral.

Q: Your family was basically Eisenhower Republicans, but did the Kennedy time spark anything in you as far as government service and that sort of thing or was it already there?

EISENBRAUN: Oh, I don't think I had formulated any thoughts of working for the government at that time. But all of my interests were in national politics and paying attention to what was going on internationally as well. Those were my interests even though I hadn't thought through what it might mean for a career.

Q: Given your later career, had you been reading about India and the Raj and all that, the Kipling, the John Masters, the other things of that nature?

EISENBRAUN: I didn't read very much of that in high school, but I remember it was about my freshman year of college I read a long novel about China, it was The Sand Pebbles.

Q: Oh yes.

EISENBRAUN: About gunboat diplomacy on the Yangtze River in the 1920s. That really captivated me. About that time I read Doctor Zhivago. That interested me in matters involving Russia. I would say that my reading about international matters didn't start until I was about a freshman in college and then it took off.Q: Well, we'll pick up, going out, you graduated, again, we're talking what year did you say?

EISENBRAUN: 1965.

Q: 1965. And so we'll pick it up in 1965 and we haven't covered anything about college. We'll pick that up next time.

EISENBRAUN: All right. I look forward to it.

Q: Great.

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It is the 11th of January, 2005. Steve, where did you go to college?

EISENBRAUN: I went to the University of Northern Iowa, in Cedar Falls, Iowa. But sir, before we get into college, could I tell two anecdotes?

Q: Absolutely.

EISENBRAUN: About high school.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: They occurred to me after the last session had ended. The first one has to do with the senior year English class that I had. In the fall of 1964 when I was a senior, advanced placement was just getting started as a concept in the country and this particular school system in Marshalltown was pretty advanced, so they wanted to experiment as well with advanced placement. So in the spring of '64, looking at the rising seniors, the principal asked all the junior year English teachers to suggest their best and brightest to go into a very small, elite advanced placement English class. That's the only advanced placement they were going to try that first year. So about 10 students were picked and I was not one of them, although I thought I should have been.

Then the Fall of my senior year began in 1964 and that year the school had hired an absolutely wonderful and brilliant English instructor named Allen Gates, and Mr. Gates had come from the prep school world and had had some international school teaching as well, and he was more erudite, more polished, more learned, more read than perhaps most college professors. He really was something. He was chosen to teach the advanced placement class, which was to be at 7:30 in the morning, an hour before school started. But I wasn't in it. I was in one of his regular college prep English courses. About four or five weeks into the fall semester he asked me if I wanted to join the advanced placement class. He thought a mistake had been made in the spring of the junior year and that he thought I should be there. There was another girl also he asked to join, so the two of us were brought into the advanced placement class. Well, in that class were most of my best friends anyway, and it was tremendous to be there. I just have to put it on record that Allen Gates was a great instructor and that advanced placement English class at 7:30 in the morning was probably better than most college freshman composition classes, because that's what it was, a composition class.

Q: I like for you and others to acknowledge teachers who were influential. I mean, it gets it on record regarding people who often don't get the credit for what they've done.

EISENBRAUN: Well, I wanted to do that, and I have a further anecdote about Mr. Gates. I hadn't been in the class more than a week or two and we had a writing assignment and when Mr. Gates handed back the papers, he chose one of them to use as a model for a critique, that is, don't do this when you're writing papers. Now, by the way, this was, frankly, a brilliant student. Gates explained that one ought not to make such and such mistakes in a paper. That student went home and created a poster about two feet by two feet. On the poster he wrote out a short poem by Stephen Crane and it went like this: "Think as I think, said the man, or you're abominably wicked. You are a toad. So, having thought about it, I said, I will then be a toad." Russ substituted "Mr. Gates for "the man." He presented it to Mr. Gates, who was absolutely delighted with it and put it above the clock in his room. From then on, we would refer to the class as "the toad class." My yearbook is filled with references from students in the class to always be a toad, never a toady.

There's one other anecdote from high school. In the spring of my senior year, the school decided that it wanted to send a delegation to the Iowa State Model United Nations. They had a competition at my high school and gave interested students an oral exam to see whether they could qualify to be on the team. I did qualify for the team, but I was really embarrassed because one of the questions was to define apartheid. I had never heard that term. I drew a complete blank. I want to follow this up. In my Foreign Service career, in 1990, I was assigned to work in the Office of UN Political Affairs doing African matters. The first assignment was to develop a new U.S. policy on apartheid for the UN General Assembly that year, and I went to New York to help negotiate the resolution against apartheid that year.

Q: Good story. We started this, and you said you'd grown up in Marshalltown.

EISENBRAUN: Yes.

Q: Which I'd never heard of before and not too long ago I picked up The Washington Post and there on the front page was Marshalltown. What was it, a cougar?

EISENBRAUN: I read that story too, and I was amazed to learn that Iowa is being overrun by cougars that are migrating from the western states. .

Q: But anyway, there it was on the front page.

EISENBRAUN: Yes it was. We had almost weekly assignments to do short essays based on matters that we had read, and the things we were assigned were not what ordinary high school seniors would have been reading. We were given H.L. Mencken, for example, to read. And then we had to write a critique. Mr. Gates was trying to teach us not only the basics of composition but also the basics of critical thinking. That course was the foundation for all the writing I've done since, and my whole career has involved writing.

Q: Now, you graduated from high school when?

EISENBRAUN: In 1965.

Q: And off to where?

EISENBRAUN: I went first to Marshalltown Community College, which was right in the same town. I did not necessarily want to go to MCC but at the same time, it was really well regarded in Iowa, and my parents said, look, it doesn't cost very much money. Then I was awarded a Fisher Foundation scholarship, and so, poof, I didn't have any costs whatsoever from tuition, which were nominal anyway, and I lived at home. I did it because my parents thought it was important that I stay close to home and that it wouldn't cost a penny. In fact, MCC turned out fine for me. The faculty was first rate and inspiring; they were really dedicated and, substantively, it was probably the best place for me at that time. I was really excited by the instructors and by the courses and by the fact that Mr. Gates, the same fellow from high school, transferred to the community college that fall. I was right back in his class again and that was good.

Q: Well, I would think, though, community college in Iowa at that time you would still have, I mean, you could have a fine faculty but have an awful lot of farm boys and farm girls or something there who are out to get, you know, a semblance of higher education but not going anywhere.

EISENBRAUN: Well, that's probably true. I think that most of the students seemed to spend the bulk of their time playing poker in the student union and trying to avoid being drafted into the army. I should say that by this time, this would be the fall of '65, there were a number of returned veterans, even then, from the Vietnam War who were four or five years older than the other freshman. This small contingent was by and large a serious element at the school, men who were dedicated to getting an education. I got associated with a few of those students in tutoring them English. I should say though, it's true, a lot of the students were there at the community college because they weren't sure they wanted to really go to college and they were curious to try it out. It seems to me that the enrolled population was something like 1,000 students. I graduated the following year with about 110 in my class, and of that 110, there were about 10 of us who were very serious, and many of those went on to influential careers. I ended up graduating number two in the class, beaten out by a fellow named Bob Hildebrand. I learned later that he went off and became a professor of history. He was a brilliant student and no doubt became a fine professor as well.

Q: Well then, where'd you go?

EISENBRAUN: After that, I transferred to the University of Northern Iowa.

Q: This would have been '67?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. That school had a fine reputation as a teacher's college, and I wanted to be a teacher. So it seemed like the logical place to go. Once again, it turned out to be a good school for me. The faculty, again, was very inspiring, and I really enjoyed the courses. I started out as an English major, under the influence of Mr. Gates. But when I got up to Cedar Falls, I pretty quickly realized that my real interests were more in history than in English, so I changed to history as a major with English as a minor. That first semester, the fall of 1967, I took a survey course on China. It was a little bit of history and a little bit of culture and so forth and was taught by a former diplomat turned professor named Cheng hsi ling, another person I have to note here.

Q: How do you spell that?

EISENBRAUN: C-h-e-n-g was his family name and then his first name h-s-i hyphen l-i-n-g. He had been a diplomat with the Chiang kai chek government on Taiwan, the Republic of China, and he had fought against the communists on the mainland before and during World War II., Later, he had joined their foreign service and most of his posting had been in the United States, including about 10 years at the UN. After that, he had become disillusioned with the foreign service and diplomacy and arranged to stay in the United States and went to Columbia and finished his advanced degrees and then came out to lowa. Well, he was pretty unusual on that campus because he was flamboyant, articulate and took a big interest in his students, at least those who were not afraid of him, which was the majority. His-ling, whom I got to know very well and even more so in the years after college, was the major influence on me in those years, and contributed to my enduring interest in Asia and in the Foreign Service.

Q: While you were there, this would be '67 to '69, Vietnam was really going all out, wasn't it? How did this impact you?

EISENBRAUN: It didn't impact where I was particularly because student deferments were handed out routinely to undergraduates, at least by my draft board, so I didn't really have to worry about being drafted during my college years. Of course, the war was a major social and foreign policy issue which I followed fairly closely. I don't think most students at UNI paid much attention to the details of the war, however, once they had their deferments in hand. I was quite impressed with Robert Kennedy as he evolved into a critic of the Vietnam War. My girlfriend Diane and I were both quite enamored of RFK, and we were shocked, as all were, when he was assassinated. We were not fans of Lyndon Johnson because of his policies on the war.

Q: But were you, I mean, on the campus in a tumultuous period in politics. Were there teach-ins and the whole bit on your campus or weren't they following the University of Wisconsin model?

EISENBRAUN: They weren't. The University of Northern Iowa had a student population that was not radicalized in that period, unlike Wisconsin, let alone to say Columbia or Berkeley. So basically we read about the student uprisings and so forth in the newspaper. There was almost no influence on the campus except that several people came to speak on campus and created quite a stir. One was the poet, Allen Ginsberg, who roiled things up a bit. Then there was a Marxist historian whose name escapes me right now but who created another uproar.

Q: Herbert Marcuse?

EISENBRAUN: No, it wasn't Marcuse. It was another fellow whose name I don't remember. The American Legion mobilized (including my father, who was commander of his local branch in Marshalltown) and came in force to have a silent protest while he addressed students and faculty, and yet these were isolated events. I'm afraid that the campus did not get radicalized during my era, nor ever, I expect. At Christmas of my first year, that was 1967, I went to New York City for two weeks over Christmas and met at a party in the Village some highly politicized students from Colombia and NYU, and it crossed my mind to just stay on in New York and never go back to Iowa, but that wasn't feasible because of lack of money and the draft that might get me if I didn't stay continuously in school. Later, when I moved to the East Coast as a prep school teacher and met many serious students from Columbia and others who were into the counterculture as poets and political activists, it underscored what I already knew about the isolation of the UNI students. Iowa and UNI weren't the places I wanted to stay at, but UNI served me well when I was there, and frankly, I wasn't sure enough of myself to have jumped off just then.

Q: Right. What sort of history were you taking?

EISENBRAUN: I took a number of America history courses, but my specialization, as much as it could be, developed into Asian studies. The school was just starting a foreign areas program and I was one of the first to sign up for it. That was the influence of taking the China course with Cheng hsi ling. Another course was a survey on India by another influential professor of mine named Emily Brown. After that, there were courses on the recent history of China and India, and another on modern Indian literature taught by a visiting professor from Cambridge University in the UK. So those were the kinds of courses I took, even during two summer sessions. They were general survey courses more than really specialized courses.

Q: Did this interest in history translate into I want to teach history? I mean, was this how you were viewing this?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, that was my immediate goal. I thought that teaching on a college campus would be where I hoped I would end up, but I didn't have a clear idea how to pull that off. I was certainly interested in Cheng Hsi ling's stories about his life in the Chinese Foreign Service also. I can't say that I specifically identified the American Foreign Service as a goal of mine at that time, but certainly the seeds were planted.

Q: At that time were things such as the Peace Corps or Fulbrights, were those things you considered to get some foreign experience under your belt?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, I did apply for a Rotary International scholarship and I was down to the semi-finalist round but I didn't get one. You have to remember that the Peace Corps and study programs abroad were problematic because one could expect to get drafted instead.

All through college, I tutored English. A number of my students at the community college were returning veterans, really serious, but they needed basics on how to write, on grammar and so forth. I did this through what at the community college was called a writing improvement service that Mr. Gates had started. Gates told me that there was a program at the University of Northern Iowa of actually grading freshman themes of students in the big survey classes of 200 students they had there. In the summer of 1967 when I was attending summer school at Cedar Falls, I walked into the office of the professor who ran this program for freshman theme graders and introduced myself and said, I'd like to do this. Well, as I learned later, that was unusual because what the professor, Charles Wheeler, did every year was to pick the three or four best students from his own freshman courses and invite them to take a special course from him, no credit, on how to grade themes and then, if things worked out, enter his system.

So here I was walking in cold. I guess he was impressed by my temerity, so he invited me to join his non-credit training class starting the next week. It turned out to be very enjoyable, not least because one of the other students was a girl named Diane Cox, who I dated quite seriously for the next year. There were about six of us in the class. We learned Wheeler's system on how to analyze an essay. That turned out to be fairly easy for me because of the good grounding I had had from Gates. When the course was over and the fall semester started, I became a theme reader, which was a hard job, frankly, but it provided me with pocket money and good experience. Interestingly, it has formed the basis of much I have done ever since, because writing has been much of my life as a political officer in the Foreign Service. I'm still grading essays, too. For example, I'm on the selection committee for fellowships on international relations that are awarded by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and part of my duties are to read and grade the essays of those seeking the fellowships.

Diane Cox and I went our separate ways after college, each marrying someone else, although we almost went down that road ourselves. I learned later that Diane ran for the State Senate in Iowa, losing in a close race, worked for the Republican National Committee, and finally joined the staff of The Des Moines Register. In 1995 while driving to work in Washington, I heard Diane, identified as the Executive Vice President of The Register, interviewed on NPR regarding a political issue of the day.

Q: Wow. Well, was there any spillover to your school from, I guess it was the University of Iowa, where there was a very renowned writer's course?

EISENBRAUN: No, not to my knowledge.

Q: It was '69 and you're graduating. What happened? I mean the war in Vietnam was going full blast and you know, here you are out. What happened?

EISENBRAUN: In March of 1969 I was invited by the U.S. Government to take a pre-induction physical. I had to get up about four in the morning and drive down to Des Moines, which was about 100 miles away, and present myself at the military base for the physical. I discovered virtually every guy from my senior class was there. I hadn't seen most of those boys since graduation. So, that was kind of nice, although that was the only fun thing about the day. They ran what seemed like about a thousand of us through the exam, and the result was I came up with marginally high blood pressure that hadn't seemed very important to me but important enough to them that they wanted to have further tests. I was given a form to take back to the college medical office and over about a two-week period, the doctors there took several more tests to see whether the results would be consistent. They were. So the draft board gave me what at that time was called a 1-Y deference, that is, a status of not being drafted on the basis of medical conditions unless political and military matters deteriorated to the state of a national emergency.

Q: Talking about conditions, not your condition but-

EISENBRAUN: If there would be a national emergency. Unexpectedly, I had this 1-Y deferment and didn't face going into the military. As a postscript, one or two years later, when President Nixon began the lottery system, I think my number, based on my birthday of July 23, was 365, which meant I wasn't going to be drafted regardless. That was fine with me. Now, when I look back some 36 years later, I think, well, service in Vietnam would have been really interesting, provided I didn't get shot in a rice paddy. But at that time, it seemed, and was, dangerous and forbidding to go off to Vietnam. Now that I look back, having spent all this time in government service in some very difficult foreign environments, I wish I had had the Vietnam experience.

Q: I volunteered to go there as a Foreign Service officer; I wanted to see the elephant, as they used to say. It's a Civil War term, you know, if you've been in battle, have you seen the elephant? Well, I mean, this wasn't quite the same thing but anyway...So, what did you do when you graduated in '69?

EISENBRAUN: The first thing, just upon graduation, I got married. My bride was another student at the school. That spring I was offered a graduate assistantship to teach in the foreign area studies program while pursuing a Master's degree in history at UNI. But I turned that offer down on the advice of a rather flamboyant professor, Hume Crowe, as a professor in the India program. I never had him as a student but I became friendly with him nevertheless. He was British and, before his academic career, he had been in the Indian army, that is, the British Indian army, in 1937 to 1947 and had risen to the rank of captain in the cavalry. He advised that it wouldn't be a good move academically to study South Asian history and politics at UNI because it was just beginning its program. He said if you want to be serious about this line of study, you need to apply to an established program, such as those at Wisconsin, Chicago, or Pennsylvania. I took his advice in that regard and said no to the teaching assistantship. But at the same time, I was just getting married and my new wife, Jane, still had a year to go to graduate because, although we were the same age, she had taken a year off to go to Norway, where she had taught at an American oil company school.

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So, newly married with a wife who still had a year to go, I took a job teaching at a small-high school ten miles away in a town named Dike. I applied only to two or three places and Dike called me first, and I went out and interviewed, and poof, I had a job that easily. I was hired to teach seventh grade English, seventh grade social studies and ninth grade government and also to direct plays in the high school, although I had no experience in drama, let alone directing. But I survived the teaching and the drama coaching, the latter with the help of my new sister-in-law, who volunteered to help me out. It turned out to be a lot of fun, but filled also with a lot of angst.

Q: What's the background of your wife?

EISENBRAUN: Jane also grew up in Iowa, in Davenport. When I met her at Christmas time of 1967, she was a math major, and she was on her way to New York to catch a flight to go off to Norway. I was going out to New York also with my roommate just to see the city. Jane had answered, just as I had, a notice on the dorm bulletin board to join up with a student who lived in New York who was driving back for Christmas, and she said, if you'll help me drive out to New York, you can stay at my house during the vacation. So my roommate and I did this and here was this other girl in the car. Jane said she was just along for the ride and planned to catch a flight from Kennedy a day or two later and go on to Norway. That's how I met my future wife. She was headed to Stavanger to stay with relatives and explore the country. As it turned out, she got a job teaching at an American school and stayed until the following August. The experience in Norway convinced Jane that she really wanted to be a language major instead of math major, so she came back and started taking language courses. I know that first semester after we were married, a year after she had returned, she took both Norwegian and French. Two languages simultaneously, if you can imagine that. So that was our first year of marriage, she as a student and I as a teacher at Dike.

Q: And then, so this takes us to 1970.

EISENBRAUN: It takes us to the spring of '70, that's right. I should say, teaching at Dike was pretty challenging. It was a nice community, but my first year of teaching was hard because I was a rookie, and I was quite worried about the drama duties.

Q: I'm sure it was hard.

EISENBRAUN: To keep seventh grade students interested in English and social studies was no joke, and there was no curriculum, really you could develop anything you wanted, complete freedom. I hope the students learned something; I think they did.

I taught this government course in ninth grade. Interesting how I came later to Washington and worked in the government all my career, but-

(End of tape one)

Q: This is tape two, side one with Stephen Eisenbraun.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. Talking about the government course in Dike, Iowa, in 1969.

Q: How do you spell Dike?

EISENBRAUN: D-i-k-e.

I was teaching this section for a week or two on how the courts work. I had prearranged it so there was some incident of attempted theft in the classroom when I was called away, and we had a trial, you see, and some of the students were on the jury and someone was elected as judge. Well, during the mock trial it came out during the testimony that I had set this up with a few students. So, the student judge threw out the case and charged me instead with contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Then I was put on trial. I had, of course, told the principal that I was going to do this mock trial with a set-up theft and had gotten his permission. When I was testifying, the student lawyer asked if anyone in the administration was aware of this plan, I had to say yes, the principal. They subpoenaed the principal. So the principal came in, took the stand, and played the role seriously. It took several days to develop this whole thing, and I have to say I was kind of nervous when I was on the stand and later was convicted. I don't remember my sentence. The students learned something, I think, and it was fun. It shows how smart they were to take over the episode and still deal with it seriously.

The two plays I directed, the one in the fall was Pillow Talk and the one in the spring was State Fair, were one of the highlights of my memory of Dike, despite all the worry I had had about putting them on. They were a tremendous success with community, especially the latter one.

Q: It was the Will Rogers version, more or less, of State Fair?

EISENBRAUN: I believe so.

Q: I think Will Rogers did it without music. Of course, it's set at the Iowa State Fair.

EISENBRAUN: It is the Iowa State Fair indeed, and the prize hog is Blue Boy in the play, and everyone in the audience raised prize hogs and went to the state fair. It was standing room only for the one performance. There were many talented kids, tremendous talent really, in that little school. There was one girl, Patti Miller, just a sophomore, who had natural acting ability and was also quite a good vocalist. I got her a scholarship later on.

Then it was the spring of 1970. Jane didn't have her degree yet and so graduate school for me was being postponed, but I was anxious to go out and see the world. I got this great idea of applying to prep schools on the East Coast to be a teacher. During Christmas vacation, Jane and I drove out to the East Coast and interviewed at a number of prep schools. We were hampered by a ferocious snowstorm in New England, but we started in the South, in Virginia at Foxcroft School, and then we went up to Lawrenceville School near Princeton and then up to New England. I had an interview at Northfield School and another scheduled at Choate, but unfortunately we were snowbound in central Massachusetts and I didn't make that interview. Anyway, I got hired at Foxcroft School, which is one of the premiere girl's boarding schools in America. So in June of 1970, we packed up our car and few possessions in a U-Haul and drove out to Middleburg, Virginia, unpacked and joined the faculty at Foxcroft School.

A few days later, we drove up to Newport, Rhode Island, where we had also been hired to teach at a girls' summer program at a school named Burnham-by-the Sea. The small campus was on Ruggles Avenue and along Cliff Walk near the Vanderbilt estate, the Breakers, if you know Newport. Anyway, teaching there was a great deal of fun, and we did it for four successive summers. Nice place to be in the summer, especially because that first summer, 1970, the America's Cup was held off Newport, and we watched the boats practice each day and were invited once to a clambake with the crew of the French boat. On another occasion, we went to the Newport Jazz Festival, where we saw, among others, Nina Simone, and I still have a watercolor of her performing. It was painted on the spot by an artist, Ed Connolly, who was on the Burnham faculty and who was also the official artist that year for the Jazz Festival.

Burnham had a good summer program, with an unusual faculty consisting of some distinguished professors from good colleges, including Columbia and Duke, and many top grad students from the Ivy League. That was where I first met the hipper students of the era, who didn't by the way refer to themselves as "hippies," but as "freaks". Two of those young faculty members were budding poets, and today, both, Jack Driscoll and Nick Bozanic, are award-winning, established writers. Jane and I got hired at Burnham because of our connection to Foxcroft. The two schools catered to the same types of students. By the way, I got one of my students from Dike, Patti Miller, a scholarship to Burnham that first summer, and she enjoyed it, learned a lot, and was a big hit at the school. Thanks on that scholarship are due to George Waldo Emerson and his wife Stuie, the owners of the school.

That first summer we were in Newport, 1970, George Emerson asked us if we could stay on for a week after school ended and help out with the coming wedding of their daughter, Mary, to Jack Driscoll. The Emersons put up all the guests, who came for a long weekend, at the school's main residence, Seaview Terrace, a former mansion which had 65 bedrooms. Among the guests was Stuie's brother-in-law, Adali Stevenson IV, the son of the man who had contested twice for the presidency. Big Ad, as the son was called, was running that summer, as it turned out, successfully, for U.S. Senator from Illinois. By the way, I overheard a Newport resident say that Jack and Mary's wedding ceremony, held on the terrace of Seaview Terrace and overlooking the ocean, was the most elegant one in Newport since the Jack Kennedy-Jackie Bouvier wedding seventeen years earlier.

Q: That was great. OK. You were at Foxcroft from 1970 until when?

EISENBRAUN: 1970 to 1973.

Q: Talk about Foxcroft, because this is an important institution.

EISENBRAUN: Foxcroft, as I learned after living there and meeting the parents and so forth, was a leading school for socially elite girls, and to this day I think it's still a girls' school, even though most such schools have become co-ed.

Q: It still is a girls' school.

EISENBRAUN: It's one of the few girls' schools in America. You apparently know the school.

Q: Well, I do. My granddaughter was accepted there and at Oldfields, which is in Maryland. She chose to go to Oldfields because her family lived close to Foxcroft and felt it was a good idea to get a little farther away.

EISENBRAUN: Well, as I discovered, Foxcroft had a number of local girls because Middleburg is an enclave of the very wealthy.

Q: Fox hunting country.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, people who are interested in horseback riding and hunting, and one of the major activities at the school was riding. They had something like 60 horses and they were boarded in stables built by the Dupont family. Foxcroft appealed to the old money families from the late 19th century, such as the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers and so forth. There was another small group that liked Foxcroft, and this was wealthy foreign families, such as Japanese industrialists and a little bit of European aristocracy. During my tenure, we had the Panamanian dictator General Noriega's daughter also, and a few of the very wealthy from around South America. It was quite a collection of girls and parents to meet, especially for a boy from Iowa.

Q: Well, how did you find the girls, because you know, these are kids who are used to being spoiled and getting their own way, at least that would be the conception. How did you find them?

EISENBRAUN: It wasn't that way. It was a lot of fun, and the students seemed pretty ordinary (at least in the confines of the school) and nice. I have to say I was really aided by my wife, Jane, who fit in perfectly and made good friends among the students. She started a modern dance program because she had done modern dance in her background as well. The students were really enthusiastic about that, probably about 20 of them, and so suddenly she had all these really nice girls who were instantly good friends and she was taking them to concerts in Washington practically every week. I should add that Jane was also taking classes, including modern dance, at George Washington University, paid for by Foxcroft on the agreement that she was finishing her bachelor's degree, so she became plugged in to the Washington dance scene.

The faculty was very impressive. It was a whole new social world for me because most of the faculty were, well, they were divided into two groups; they were either older Mr. Chips types, pipe smoking tweeds and all that, or they were young whippersnappers from the Ivy League who had been invited that year to join the faculty to try to modernize it and bring the school into the 20th century.

Q: How did you find the headmaster and all? I mean, what sort of a hand was really upon your shoulder from up above?

EISENBRAUN: I was pretty lucky in that the headmaster, Alex Uhle, was a dynamic and committed fellow trying to develop Foxcroft from a school with undoubted social cachet into a school that had equal academic standards. He was aggressively recruiting really smart girls, and they were establishing a scholarship program to become more diverse. Alex wanted to enhance the school's reputation academically and he did.

Foxcroft had a continuous series of speakers and visitors coming to the campus, sometimes just to give evening speeches, sometimes to stay all day. These people were recruited by the board of directors, who were the captains of industry and social life in America. We had people like the anthropologist Loren Eiseley and the columnist/humorist from The Washington Post, Art Buchwald; learned professors and many others, week after week. I was asked to start a course in Asian studies. I hadn't been to Asia but somehow the school had faith that I could teach such a course. I created one that focused on India, China, and Japan, with a bit of Vietnam too. I got a cadre of about 12 to15 girls who ended up taking a number of classes from me, including the Asian Studies class that first year. We had a tremendously good time. I also taught American history and team-taught a humanities course for all the freshmen and that was a lot of fun, especially because of the other three faculty members involved, who became close friends.

I do want to get into my Foreign Service career, but maybe I can just say a couple of things about Foxcroft and then we'll move on.

Q: Yes. Sure.

EISENBRAUN: This Asian Studies class was unusual, and though I hadn't been to Asia, I was lucky in that there were a few retired Foreign Service and CIA people living around Middleburg and a few came to speak to the class. Through them, I was introduced to a gentleman at the Indian embassy, a Mr. Ganguli, who was the cultural attachï¿½. He and I hit it off, and I invited him to come out to the campus and talk about Indian politics. This was my second year; it was the fall of 1971, which is pretty important because the major issue in South Asia then was the fighting going on in East Pakistan that led eventually to the independence of the new country of Bangladesh, which was to have a great influence in my later career. But back to Foxcroft: the fall of 1971 was when Ganguli came to talk about South Asia from India's perspective. For some reason I didn't get anyone from the Pakistan Embassy to come out to the campus.

As a class, we followed the developments in South Asia day by day in the press. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, came to Washington in December of 1971; tensions were very high between India and Pakistan and there was fear of war between the two over the issue of repression in East Pakistan, and the fact of 10 million refugees in India who had fled East Pakistan. The United States was clearly more sympathetic toward Pakistan; that's the famous tilt toward Pakistan in US foreign policy of the time.

Well, this has to do not only with Foxcroft but with my further career. Ganguli invited my Foxcroft class, 10 or 12 of us, to attend an event at the National Cathedral with Mrs. Gandhi immediately after she had met with President Nixon in the Oval Office. She drove up to the Cathedral and met with the Indian community and the whole place was crammed full. Right there in front, like the third or fourth row, were the 12 girls from Foxcroft and me. To have Mrs. Gandhi addressing the concerns of the entire South Asian community about war and peace in South Asia was about as topical as one could get.

Q: Oh, boy.

EISENBRAUN: Bangladesh and South Asia figured soon after in my Foreign Service career, and we'll be talking about that in a bit, but even before I came into the Service, I was observing the birth of Bangladesh, if from a distance.

I was beginning to think about what I was going to do after Foxcroft and after graduate school. I identified Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), as the school I wanted to go to. In the meantime, I thought I'd better have some more economic background than I had. So I took two night courses at American University in economics. They were graduate level courses, but they were also general survey courses in economics. I talked Alex, the headmaster at Foxcroft, into letting me start an economics course at Foxcroft. I said to him, I don't know a whole lot about economics, but what I intend to do is take my material from my night classes at American and teach it the next morning to my students. Pretty much the same 10 or 12 students signed up that were in my Asian studies class and they were serious students who wanted to know more about economics too. I used the same textbooks at Foxcroft as I did at American and I just came back and reproduced what I had learned the night before. That was my third year. Well, I guess I'm a little bit biased, but I thought that my students at Foxcroft were as good as or better than the professor's students at American University. I told him what I was doing. He was a nice guy who in later years became a good friend. He, Calvin DePass, was a serious academic who also worked at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington. He was fascinated by what I was doing. So I said, well, why don't you come out to Foxcroft as a guest lecturer and judge for yourself about the quality of the students. So he and his wife came out and made a day of it. He met my students and they peppered him with questions and he said afterwards, you're right; they are darned good.

For the China portion of the Asian Studies class that third year, I invited Cheng His-ling from the University of Northern Iowa to come out. The headmaster was not too enthusiastic because the majority of people who came to Foxcroft had Pulitzer Prizes if not Nobel Prizes and this fellow did not have any great prizes or publications to his name. Well, Hsi-ling set the school on its ear because he was an artist, a calligrapher, a historian, a former diplomat and an all-around polished gentleman. He talked to English classes, art classes, my Asian studies class; he did something with the whole school. He spent about 24 hours there and set the place on fire. By the way, I recently called out to the history department at UNI to see if Hsi-ling was still alive, as we had lost contact in recent years. Not to my surprise, he has passed on. As I related earlier, Hsi-ling had been with Chiang kai-chek fighting the communists in China up to 1949, and when he passed through National Airport after leaving Foxcroft that spring day in early 1973, he bumped into Madame Chiang kai-chek.

That spring of 1972, my second year at Foxcroft, was the year Nixon went to China, creating the dramatic opening of American-Chinese relations. I was teaching the China section that winter. We went right from the India-Pakistan conflict to- the same class- following events day by day of Nixon going to China. The school had a well-endowed speaker's program, and they were able to get a fellow named Mel Elfin to come out to the school. Elfin was the Newsweek bureau chief in Washington and he had been in the press entourage in China with Nixon. Elfin had no more than gotten off the plane from Beijing than he came out to Foxcroft to give a series of lectures, informal talks and breakfasts and so forth about the trip. He told us step-by-step, blow-by-blow of what had happened with Nixon in China, as Elfin had been able to observe. So how about that for being topical?

Q: Oh, boy.

EISENBRAUN: It was something else.

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Q: So this takes us to '73 I guess?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. Teaching and living on the campus at Foxcroft was very satisfying and comfortable, but I was ambitious and wanted to go to graduate school, see the world, and work somewhere in Washington. I spent the fall of '72 applying to graduate schools and other programs and then in the spring of '73, I was accepted at Johns Hopkins, SAIS, and also got a fellowship to go to India to study Hindi. I was keenly aware that I didn't have any foreign experience, nor foreign language, and I had to make up for that in some way. Fortunately, the professor from the University of Northern Iowa, Emily Brown, who was the India specialist and the one who had offered me the graduate assistantship some years earlier, was on the board of the American Institute of Indian Studies, headquartered at the University of Chicago, and she suggested I apply for one of the Institute's nine-month fellowships in India to study Hindi. I know she was instrumental in making certain the board selected me for a fellowship.

So then I got the fellowship to India to study Hindi for a year at Delhi University and also got admitted to Johns Hopkins SAIS in Washington to pursue a master's degree in international relations. I visited SAIS, explained to admissions that I had this fellowship offer in hand, and asked if they would defer my entrance for a year. I also said, you know, I'm going to be studying Hindi out there and I'd like to use Hindi to fulfill the language requirement at SAIS. At that time, SAIS didn't teach Hindi. They do now and they have a developing South Asia department, but they didn't then. The assistant dean in charge of admissions, Roger Leeds, said, all right.

Luckily, I went home and wrote a letter to Leeds saying thank you for deferring me for a year to go to India and thank you for agreeing that I could use Hindi to fulfill my language requirement. That's important because a year later when I showed up to start SAIS, they said, we don't teach Hindi, so you'll need to start a different language. But I said, no, Roger Leeds (who's still at SAIS these 30 some years later) said I could. I produced a copy of the letter that I had written to him. To SAIS's credit, the school said, oops, I guess we'll have to honor what Leeds said. They not only allowed me to take Hindi, they provided tutoring as well. So I am quite grateful to SAIS for that and to Roger Leeds.

Q: Well then, you were there taking Hindi at Delhi University?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, concurrently with classes at the American Institute of Indian Studies. We had Institute classes in the morning and university classes in the afternoon. Fortunately, we lived during the first months within walking distance of the campus in a building named Riviera Apartments, can you believe, because elegant, as the name implied, they weren't.

Q: What was your impression of Delhi University and India at the time?

EISENBRAUN: We arrived in August of 1973 and I had done a lot of reading, certainly, about India and teaching about India, so I thought I knew something about the country. Well, I didn't know enough. We were both in for huge culture shock; it was very unsettling and we were told, well, go out and find an apartment. It better be close to Delhi University because you'll be taking classes there. And what? Just go out and find an apartment in Delhi? And around the university, which we discovered was not the most Westernized part of the city. I mean, it was so daunting. But we did it somehow. By the third day, I got horribly sick with dysentery, the first of many, many, times I got sick like that in the years to come in South Asia. I was laid up, absolutely flat out. I used to say that if I hadn't been too sick to get out of bed, I would have gone to the airport and caught a plane home, but I couldn't. Subsequently, I spent about 10 years in South Asia. But at any rate, it is fair to say that the year I spent in India changed my life. It broadened my horizons, it changed my perspective on international affairs, and it verified for me that I wanted to join the Foreign Service.

I had chosen SAIS with the idea of the Foreign Service, and India helped solidify that career direction. Although Delhi University was about 30 miles from the US Embassy, I met a few people at the Embassy and became convinced that the Foreign Service was the way to go. And also, one of the other people in the program had this in mind, too. So it turns out four of us took the Foreign Service written exam at the embassy in New Delhi in December of 1973. Four of us took the written exam, three of us passed it, and two of us eventually passed the orals and came into the Foreign Service. Amazing, huh, considering the odds.

A week or so before I departed the States in the summer of 1973 I went to a party in Reston, Virginia, and met one of the guests, a professor at Syracuse University. I told him that I was going off to study in India. He noted that Daniel Patrick Moynihan was the Ambassador in New Delhi at that time and that he also was a former faculty member at Syracuse. So, my new friend said, you've got to look up Pat and Liz, they're good friends of mine. He took out his card and wrote on the back, Pat, you've got to meet Steve and his wife Jane. You'll really enjoy them. He said present this at the embassy. Well, even to me, as naï¿½ve as I was about the Foreign Service, I couldn't imagine such a thing but now looking back after 35 years, I find what happened even more amazing. In the middle of September, my wife and I made our way out to the American Embassy and presented that card, just a business card from this professor, and said, I'd like to meet the Ambassador. Eventually, a young Foreign Service Officer, John Yates, came down and talked to us and set up an appointment.

Q: Is John around? I tried to get ahold of him to finish an interview. Do you know where he is no?

EISENBRAUN: No, I don't. I know he became an Ambassador in West Africa, and I know a bit about his career, but I'm sorry I don't know where he is now. At that time, Yates was a special assistant to Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He said, I'll do what I can. We were sharing an apartment six blocks from the main campus of Delhi University, 30 miles from the embassy. And so I was given an appointment, I forget how that was communicated to me, I guess it was a letter. Now, given how the Foreign Service works, if that wasn't unusual enough, a few days before the appointment, there came a knock on the door of the apartment, and a Marine guard in uniform presented a letter to me from Yates, saying we're really sorry but someone else has come to town-it might have been Pearl Buck-and so the Ambassador was sorry he wouldn't be able to see me on the scheduled day but would the following day at 4:00 pm be all right?

The next day we arrived at the embassy and we were shown in to Moynihan. He was quite cordial and invited us to sit down on the sofa and have a drink. He had a Scotch and water. It was about 5:00 in the afternoon. Well, we all know from our Foreign Service experience that this just doesn't happen. I was just a kid at school. I mean, what is he doing? Well, he carried on a monologue for about 45 minutes about the issues he was dealing with and humorous anecdotes regarding India and the bureaucracy and this, that and the other, which we just listened. Finally, he got to the point and asked how we knew professor so-and-so? I said, I don't know him. I just met him at a party a couple of weeks ago before we got on the plane to come out here but he said to look you up. Moynihan, with a distracted tone in his voice, replied, well, isn't that very interesting. What are you doing in India? I said, well, I'm a student at Delhi University. He replied, well, it was nice of you to look me up, and that was the end of the meeting. That incident still qualifies as one of the more bizarre things that happened to me in my pre-Foreign Service days.

Q: Well, how did you find being an American in India in '73? This was after the creation of Bangladesh, Kissinger particularly had sent the Enterprise into the Indian Ocean and yes, it wasn't a great time, I mean, for Americans.

EISENBRAUN: No, it wasn't. Americans were not appreciated at any level in India. Just as you said, the residual antagonism from 1971 was alive in everyone's mind. So much so that in our orientation by the American Institute of Indian Studies, they said, you're going to be harassed on campus and maybe it's better to say you're Canadian. Well, we were harassed in some cases, yes. Students surrounded me on two or three occasions, eight, 10 students who jeered at me and so forth. But I never felt in danger. It was just pranksterism, you might say. But we felt antagonism from almost every sector of Indian society, especially the smaller bureaucrats and, let's say, bank officials, for example. We got a monthly fellowship stipend, and we were required to deposit the money in our local bank, the Punjab National Bank, and then we had to make withdrawals from that account in order to have access to cash. We all felt that the bank officials were antagonistic to us, cold and harsh. On one occasion, I signed and presented my withdrawal slip, but the clerk just swept it away and sneered, that's not your signature, go away. I said, hotly, that that is my signature, and that' s my money in the bank and I need it. He just repeated, go away. In the end, the bank manager came and gave it to me grudgingly. We all had these kinds of experiences.

So, I have to say, we felt a good deal of antagonism because we were Americans, but I have to qualify that. India's a very friendly country to Americans in general and there were many people who were extremely gracious and helpful to us. Any foreigner can be adopted by Mother India if they want, welcomed into peoples' homes and so forth. That eventually happened to us. I must say a large part of that had to do with my wife, Jane, who played the flute and started taking more flute lessons because flute is big in India. Because she was into modern dance in the States, she started taking some Indian classical dance lessons and pretty soon we were going to classical dance concerts all over the city.

Eventually we left the apartment we were sharing with another Amercian couple on the program, and moved in with an Indian family. So then we began to learn a lot something about Indian life. It took a lot of time to become culturally more adjusted to India, especially from a student's point of view because they don't think too highly of foreign students or didn't at that period, let alone American foreign students. But we learned to adjust. Eventually, we lived with two different Indian families; first with a Christian family and then with a high caste Brahmin family that did everything very formally, including dressing in coat and tie for dinner. They always referred to us as Mr. Eisenbraun and Mrs. Eisenbraun.

We learned that Indians were just as frustrated with daily life in India as we were, in their having to cope with traffic and the buses and the bureaucrats that would treat them harshly too. The first family we lived with, the Dayals, asked us to try to buy them black market cooking oil and rice from local merchants, as the quality of these products available via the ration cards all people had to use was really poor and inadequate. For example, most products were adulterated, that is, the rice was cut with small rocks. I was unsuccessful in getting anything on the black market, however.

Q: Well then, how'd you find Hindi?

EISENBRAUN: In fact, it's almost impossible to learn good Hindi in Delhi. That's not where you should go to learn Hindi. The institute that brought us to India acknowledged that, but for political reasons, I suppose, that's where the classes were. One of the reasons it's so hard to learn Hindi in Delhi is that Delhi is such a cosmopolitan city that it draws from all over India, especially from North India. There is a very large Sikh community and they speak Punjabi primarily. All these other groups in Delhi were speaking variations of something the British in their colonial days called Hindustani, a little bit of Urdu, a little bit of Hindi, a little bit of Punjabi and you sort of mix them all together and it comes out Hindustani. That was not what they were teaching at the Institute, nor at Delhi University. They were trying to teach us classical, proper Hindi. You could learn Hindi in school and you could read it in the newspaper and you could hear it on All India Radio, but nobody spoke it. Well, the very well-educated did, but that's it. So I was hearing things on the bus while riding back and forth to classes, or stuff in the bazaars, and I would try that stuff out in class. The professors would recoil in horror at what came out. So in fact I didn't learn a whole lot of Hindi. I learned a lot about India, but I didn't learn very much Hindi.

I should say too that with that last family, the high caste Brahmin family, the Shashadris, I invited a few of the friends I had met from Delhi University to their home and that was an education for me because I discovered how socially conscious the Indians are, very class conscious. I suppose every society is but the Indians are especially so. These students suddenly got very self-conscious because they realized they were in a proper Brahmin home and they were being judged. The lady of the house, Mrs. Shashadri, she was very gracious. She had in her youth been the private secretary to a maharaja's wife and had traveled to Paris and London. After meeting my friends, she would analyze the students and give her opinion, and to her, the most important factor was not the quality of their English, but the quality of their Hindi. These students at Delhi University had perfect English, very upper class English from the best of missionary schools. But she judged them on their Hindi and she insisted on speaking to them in proper Hindi.

I met a lot of Indian students, and here's how I did it. It wasn't so much in the classes for Hindi, because they were for foreign students from various countries around Asia. Those students were interesting as well. However, to meet Indians I tried to audit a few courses at the Delhi School of Economics. The concept of auditing a class doesn't exist at Indian Universities, but I tried it in an international economics course, and the professor let me do it. So I sat there and listened to his lectures day after day and I monitored a couple of other classes too. After class, it was a tradition that the students would leave the lecture and go down to the coffee shops around the classroom buildings and have coffee or tea and gossip. I was an object of curiosity, so students would sort of hang around me and start asking me questions.

The students were pretty friendly, actually. The students were a bit pointed in their questions. One of the students asked, early on, why are you studying here in India when every one of us has the goal of studying in America? It doesn't make sense. I replied that I'm going to be studying international relations at Johns Hopkins but I wanted to come to India and broaden my horizons and learn something about Hindi; it seems reasonable to me. But they said, it doesn't seem reasonable to us because Hindi isn't important. They went on, saying that there's only one conclusion; you have to be a spy. They weren't joking. They said you must have an ulterior motive, you can't be here as a student and clearly you don't know as much economics as we do. That was certainly true; they were sophisticated students of economics and I was not. My reply was, well, if you think I'm a spy, what secrets do you think the U.S. government is going to learn here in this coffee shop and around the campus? Well, they had to laugh and acknowledge that there probably wasn't much to learn. So we had a good time and I got to be quite friendly with a number of students, and those friendships continued for a good number of years.

Q: Well then, after this year, you came back where? You went to SAIS?

EISENBRAUN: I did, yes. I must say just for a moment, when the fellowship was finished in April, my wife and I went up into the foothills of the Himalayas to a missionary language school. In the summer months, the school was in the hills at about 8,000 feet among the pine trees, looking out over the 20,000 foot snow caps in the distance. I attended for a couple of months. The other students were missionaries from around India. We enjoyed living in the mountains, and getting to know the missionaries, but I couldn't compete with them because they really did know a lot of Hindi. I learned the 23rd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer and other famous Biblical passages in Hindi, and they sound as good in Hindi as they do in English.

I came back to the States in the summer of '74, just in time to witness on television the resignation of Richard Nixon. Then I drove up to Washington from Florida and presented myself for the oral exam to the Foreign Service.

Q: Tell me, what did they ask you in your oral exam?

EISENBRAUN: I wanted to mention that also because in later years I was on the Board of Examiners. The oral exam that I had in August of 1974 worked to my advantage, but I would not say the exam was as professional as it is today. The reason for my comment is that the board asked me in a letter some weeks before the oral if there was a country that I would like to talk about and have the exam slanted toward, and I wrote back and said, yes, India. Two of the three examiners on the board had served in India.

The exam consisted of three examiners asking me questions for an hour or so, seemingly about whatever topics they wanted to talk about. Since I had said I wanted to slant the exam toward India, the first 20 minutes of the exam were spent essentially chitchatting about India and U.S. relations with India. And, well, it wasn't perhaps chitchat; they were, after all, asking specific questions. But they were softballs because I had just come back from India and I had paid a lot of attention to the U.S.-India relationship while I was a student there. So these were easy questions that put me at ease, and then we moved on to other questions. But by that time I was sitting back and was relaxed, and the examiners appeared to be relaxed too. I think that, professionally, exams ought to be the same for all candidates, but the exam I took was tailored to me.

There's another question that I remember that is really hard to imagine that they asked. This was hardly a week after the resignation of the president and they asked something about that. They said, well, in the wake of the resignation and the Watergate scandal, do you think there has been a fundamental shift in the relationship between the executive and legislative branches? Imagine that. And I said, yes, I thought so and added a few thoughts on the subject. Well, all right, that was an opinion but in retrospect I do wonder if that was probably a little bit too topical. One of the examiners sat back and said, you really think so? I said, yes, I really think there's been a fundamental shift in power.

Q: I think they were just- you know, part of this was to see how you handled yourself and could you carry on a good discussion on a topic such as this.

EISENBRAUN: Well, they probably had at that time good professional reasons for asking questions like that but the board of examiners would never ask anything so topical today.

Q: Well, I was giving oral exams about two years after you took it, that was '76, I think. And then I did it again in the 80s and I noticed a certain change in the 80s where they were trying to make the exam look very professional but mainly to make it appear as though it was untouched by human hands, you know. They wanted to make sure it was absolutely fair, which was problematic, but also so they could defend it in court.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, that's right. That became the driving force in the recent years. The exams had to be legally defensible, and to be legally defensible the questions had to be essentially the same for all candidates. Not the precise questions, but they had to be a range of questions that would be the same for all candidates.

Q: I suspect you came out with the same candidates no matter what.

EISENBRAUN: Well, the oral exam seemed pretty easy to me at the time. I was grateful. Twenty-five years later when I served on the board, I wondered, could I pass this process today? I think most of the assessors in the current period wonder that, too, because it's a darned hard process. Of course, it was very selective back then, too, and I was thrilled, absolutely thrilled, it was one of the happiest days of my life, to walk out of there having passed the orals. The first happiest day, professionally, was when I handed in my documents to the embassy after learning I had passed the written exam. My wife and I got dressed up in our best clothes and went out to the embassy and presented the packet of information with my autobiographic statement and all the rest that they asked for. The consular officer put the material in the pouch because who could trust the Indian mail? Then afterward- have you been to New Delhi?

Q: No.

EISENBRAUN: No? Well, there's a beautiful hotel within walking distance of the embassy, at that time called the Ashoka Hotel. We walked up to the Ashoka, and the only thing we could afford in the Ashoka was ice cream. So we sat out on this beautiful terrace and had ice cream and I thought, this is what life will be like from now on. I'm going to come back to New Delhi and stay at the Ashoka Hotel as a Foreign Service Officer. And, I did, only two years later.

Q: So, you came back to the States and there's usually a hiatus between being accepted on the oral exam and coming in. How long did it take?

EISENBRAUN: It took six months. Virtually the day after I'd taken the orals, I presented myself at SAIS as a new student. I didn't have any firm expectation that I would actually come in the Foreign Service, because the Board of Examiners made a point of saying, you have to get through the medical and the security investigation and so forth and you'll be put on a rank order list, and who knows how high on that list you'll be. In those days, you took the test on a conal basis, and I had chosen the political cone, which they made perfectly clear was the most competitive, so I didn't have any great confidence that I was going to be in the Foreign Service. I was just thrilled that I had passed the orals.

When I showed up to register at SAIS, I was given a faculty advisor, Nat Thayer, who himself had been a former Foreign Service Officer. When he heard my story, he said, oh, you're already in the Foreign Service. He said, everyone who passes the orals is going to come in the Foreign Service, provided they don't have medical problems or big security issues. So you'd better start thinking about how you're going to handle your career at SAIS when the Foreign Service is going to intervene. I said, you really think so? No doubt, he replied.

I registered at the end of August, and I took the standard courses in the fall. I added an extra course in the spring semester. I got a call the middle of February to join a Foreign Service class on March 13th. I didn't have any financial aid at SAIS that first year. I was paying my own way from savings from Foxcroft. I was faced with the prospect of losing my spring tuition money that I had already paid if I left school and joined the Foreign Service. I accepted the offer to come in the Foreign Service, but I went to the director of the A-100 course, and said, look, could I continue my classes at SAIS, while in the A-100 course? We negotiated that back and forth a little bit between SAIS and the A-100 course, and they both finally said, okay. I had deliberately signed up for a number of night classes, so I was able to finish the semester while going to the A-100 class in the day, and going to SAIS at night, with about one SAIS class during the day, which I was allowed to attend. It was pretty hard, but somehow I did it.

When I finally went overseas in 1976, I still had one semester, four courses, left at SAIS to get my master's degree. I finished the degree in 1983, taking one course per semester, with the Department paying. In every case, the courses between 1981 and 1983 related to what I was doing on the job at State, so their funding was completely legitimate. By the way, about the same time, that is, the spring of 1975, I received a full tuition fellowship for the second year at SAIS about the same week I joined the Foreign Service, and I had the pleasure of writing the James Merchant Foundation about my new circumstances, and they passed the fellowship to the runner up, which I had been the year before. That spring, I passed the Hindi language test at SAIS, clearing my way for eventual graduation there, and the Hindi language exam at FSI (the Foreign Service Institute) with a 2/2, getting me off language probation, so my gamble of going to India and learning Hindi paid off all around.

Q: What was your impression of your A-100 course? The composition of the class and the people?

EISENBRAUN: The course met for five weeks at that time. We had a very small class, only 18, because it was in the middle of the winter, and not too many people were available. It was the 118th class. They started a new numbering process after 1980, but my class was the 118th in the old system.

Q: I was in class one in '55. They'd just started renumbering at that time too.

EISENBRAUN: Wow, my goodness. That's quite a distinction. Many of my classmates had been in graduate school around the country and had had to drop everything and lose their tuition and rush out to Washington, and when they found out that I was continuing to go to class, they were a little miffed. But, after all, I was living in Washington and walking back and forth to class. I had planned it that way to be in Washington.

At that time, the A-100 class was almost entirely an orientation; there was very little core training in those days, and so it was a succession of speakers talking to us about our upcoming careers. The first week was really enjoyable because we also did field trips. The first one was to the CIA headquarters. The first person we met there was the William Colby, the Director, if you can imagine that. And so here's the 18 of us in a conference room off of his office, and he spent an hour with us. Keep in mind that the CIA was embroiled in controversy then, and Senator Church was holding hearings on Capitol Hill, and many people thought the country didn't need an intelligence service. I guess the Director of Central Intelligence, Mr. Colby, was taking every opportunity possible to influence people, and he thought it even important to influence the new A-100 course at State. Imagine. In the meeting with Colby, one of the new officers asked him whether the U.S. used sex to entrap foreign nationals to be spies, as we had already been warned would be tried on us by the Soviets. Colby said no, money worked better.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: The next trip we took was over to the Pentagon, and while I don't remember meeting anyone very high ranking, we saw the National Military Command Center, which was the Pentagon's operations center, where we also saw the celebrated hotline telephone between Washington and Moscow. A-100 was not a demanding course intellectually. Its purpose was to be an introduction to the Federal bureaucracy and the foreign affairs community, and it served that purpose pretty well, and it charged us up to get going on our careers. Most of my classmates thought they had figured out how to game the system in order to become an Ambassador, everyone's goal, it seemed, and they plotted and schemed regarding that first assignment. Of the 18, three eventually became Ambassadors, I believe.

Q: Well then, when did you finish the A-100 course?

EISENBRAUN: I started March 13 and I would have finished probably about the latter part of April, 1975.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop today. Where did you go afterwards, I mean so we'll know what your assignment was?

EISENBRAUN: I went to Bengali language training en route to Bangladesh as a political officer. Not a rotation, but as a full time political officer.

Q: Okay, we'll pick this up at that point.

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Today is the seventh of March, 2005. Steve, you took Bengali. In the first place, how was Bengali as a language?

EISENBRAUN: It was wonderful. I had a tremendous time. Bengali, or Bangla, is a very beautiful language and related closely to Hindi, both of which are based on Sanskrit. The fact that I had had Hindi and then went into Bengali made me a better Bengali speaker, but it blew apart my Hindi.

But before I get into the language training, I want to spend some time talking about the four months I spent on the Bangladesh desk in the summer of 1975 before language training started in August. Can I go into that just now?

Q: Yes, please.

EISENBRAUN: I was pretty fortunate because they put me on the Bangladesh desk, and I began to learn a bit about how to work in the bureaucracy. That office was very good at integrating me. At the time I thought it was a crazy office, so busy. I learned the hard way that that office was merely typical of the way the building operated.

I remember hardly being there but a few days and they said, here, do this briefing paper for an official going off to Rome to a world food conference. I hadn't any idea what a briefing paper looked like, let alone the issues. They didn't offer anything either. There was about a four-hour deadline. Fortunately, the issues had to do more with AID (Agency for International Development) than it did anything else, and the AID officer for Bangladesh was quite helpful. Miraculously, I discovered him and went over to his office and he specifically explained what I should have in this paper. So then I literally jogged back around to the fifth floor where the Bangladesh desk was, running down the hall, and then scribbled down what I thought seemed reasonable, ran back to his office for a clearance, then running around to a few other key offices to get agreement on the text, literally running, since there was so little time to get it all done. Somehow it got done and that was my introduction to the bureaucracy.

There was a new deputy assistant secretary for South Asia that summer, a senior officer named Adolph "Spike" Dubbs. You probably-

Q: I know Spike, yes, we served together in Belgrade.

EISENBRAUN: Well, you know, he wasn't a South Asia man, he was-

Q: No, he was a Soviet handler.

EISENBRAUN: Right. Yet he was the new DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in charge of South Asia in NEA (Near Eastern Affairs). I happened to mention to my office director, Peter Constable, that I'd done this paper at SAIS only a few weeks earlier on the 1971 conflict between India and Pakistan and the American tilt toward Pakistan. He said, bring it in and we'll show it to Dubbs. He read it and then Peter Constable read it too and said it was accurate and not bad. So I felt pretty good that what I had done at SAIS immediately translated into the State Department.

I spent a few weeks on the Bangladesh desk, and then I went up to INR (Intelligence and Research) to work on Pakistan matters to give me a broader experience on South Asian matters. William Dean Howells was the director of the office, a real old-fashioned gentleman. I did a lot of reading about Pakistan and especially about Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister. I did one short paper on him, and then I got this call to come back to the Bangladesh desk. This would have been probably about the first of July.

Steve, while we were talking off mike, you were mentioning something about being a volunteer to go on a special task force about this time. Can you tell us more?

EISENBRAUN: It was late June, 1975, when I volunteered for an emergency task force and worked several night shifts in the operations center.

The American military attachï¿½ in Beirut, Ernest Morgan, had been kidnapped by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP). The kidnappers' demands had been for food and clothing for poor people living in the Beirut harbor area. During the course of working on the task force, I learned that Yasser Arafat had approached the Americans to help in the release of Morgan. Whether the Department worked with Arafat, I do not know. I was impressed, however, that the Americans had some channel of communication with Arafat, and that he was willing apparently to help us in this one instance, at least. Later, I learned that Morgan was released when an anonymous donor provided the demanded food to the people of the Beirut neighborhood in question.

Q: Thank you for relating that incident. Now, you were discussing previously that they asked you to leave INR and come back to the Bangladesh desk to work for the balance of the summer of 1975?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, they said we'd like you to spend the rest of the summer on the Bangladesh desk as the acting desk officer because the regularly assigned desk officer wanted to travel to Bangladesh and then take a course at the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: Who was it, do you remember?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, her name was Ann Griffin, and she was really something. A relatively junior officer, but she was already a bright star. She left the Foreign Service a few years later; I don't know what she ever did then, but she was truly exceptional. She had good bureaucratic sense, she could draft fast and well, and she was already virtually fluent in Urdu. Actually, everyone in that office was impressive, and unfortunately, I know most have now passed on.

Q: Everyone else?

EISENBRAUN: Well no, Gordon Jones, he was the econ officer for Pakistan; he is retired and around town. I don't know what Ann ever did outside the Service, and she is likely still living because she was young in 1975. But everyone else, including secretaries, has passed on.

But at any rate, so, there I was, acting desk officer. I want to mention one or two things from that summer because they have some significance.

The first is more just a curiosity but one day a tasker came down from the seventh floor to do a human rights report on Bangladesh. This is now, remember, the summer of '75, and that was before the big exercise we now know as the Human Rights Report came into existence.

Q: From the Carter administration. But this is a congressional mandate.

EISENBRAUN: What I was asked to do was probably not because of a Congressional mandate, but it came about two or three years before the mandate we all now know so well came into existence. I work right now as a retiree in the human rights office at State, doing editing of the human rights reports on South Asia. But, in 1975, that was the first human rights report done on Bangladesh, and it took me all of an afternoon to do it. I showed it to somebody more senior and they said, it's not right. I was advised to concentrate more on the legalities such as the constitution of the country and the official safeguards for human rights, such as did the constitution guarantee freedom of speech and so forth. So I just did it over.

Then I was told to go around to this particular office and defend it. I sat first in an anteroom and there were two or three other desk officers waiting their turn and then we were called separately and grilled by three other more senior people about the paper. They commended me for being so candid about Bangladesh, although I didn't know any better and thought it was mostly a paper on the paper protections of human rights in Bangladesh. I tell this story only because in the official history of the human rights reports, they are said to have started in 1978. So what was I preparing in 1975? I don't know, but at least I can report that human rights was on the Department's mind even before the Carter Administration and the Congress made it more official and public in 1977-78.

I want to talk about something else, though, that really is important from a Bangladesh point of view. This material has been published by one or two journalists, but it isn't generally known. In the summer of 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the self-appointed president of Bangladesh, which had become independent only at the beginning of 1972. Sheikh Mujib was a Bangladesh national hero and had been the symbol for the resistance of the Bengalis against the Pakistanis, although he spent the time of the fighting in prison in Pakistan. When he came back to the new country of Bangladesh in early 1972, he was given a hero's welcome and was named prime minister. But he wasn't an administrator, and the country had great needs. He responded by consolidating power in his own hands. Bangladesh was falling into an autocratic form of government. It was terrible, actually, in the summer of 1975, I guess, to be on the streets of Bangladesh. Mujib had established his own private security force that ferreted out dissenters for punishment. The private security forces, called the Rakkhi Bahini, snubbed the army, which had fought for independence, so eventually, plots of coups developed, even threats to Mujib's life. People in Bangladesh would whisper this to the embassy. This reporting was coming back to Washington so steadily that it became clear that this isn't idle chatter. Sheikh Mujib's life seemed in danger. I remember the discussion of whether we had an ethical responsibility to warn Sheikh Mujib about the danger to his life. The decision was that, yes, we did have that responsibility. And the Ambassador did go in-

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

EISENBRAUN: Davis Eugene Boster, who died only recently. He went in to Mujib, this would have probably been late July or early August of 1975. I might have drafted his talking points, but I can't remember for sure if I did. Anyway, the essence of what Boster was instructed to say was, we hear many threats of a coup and threats of violence against you. He didn't name names. He merely warned Mujib to be careful. As my memory has it, Mujib was casual about it and said, don't worry, I know my people; they love me and everything's under control.

Well, the last day of my assignment on the Bangladesh desk was Friday, August 15, and I had essentially checked out. All I had to do that morning was just come in and say goodbye because the next Monday morning I was starting Bengali language training at FSI. Ann Griffin as the desk officer had come back and taken over responsibility the day before. So I came into the office that morning to absolute hubbub. There was frenzied activity because Sheikh Mujib and all of his family had been assassinated a few hours earlier. Yes. It was a horrible massacre, where renegade mid-career army officers had come to his house in the middle of the night and shot him and his wife and all the children, probably well over a dozen people.

Q: Does that fall within the culture, you know?

EISENBRAUN: No, Bangladesh generally doesn't have that culture of violence, but there had been considerable violence since the struggle for independence, starting in 1970. People were desperate. There is, I guess, a history of sporadic but great violence all over South Asia that has broken out occasionally when the tensions have become too great to bear. This was one of those times.

Q: I'm thinking of the family. I mean-

EISENBRAUN: No, that is not in the culture. The coup plotters murdered everybody with automatic weapons. It seemed not so different from the killing of the royal family in Russia in 1918. My memory has it that the actual perpetrators, the majors who did it, were not necessarily the ones we'd been hearing about in the days before the coup. The Americans were caught as much by surprise almost as much as the Bangladeshis. I say this because there was one surviving member of the family, the daughter, Sheikh Hasina, who was not in the country at the time. In 1996, she became Prime Minister of Bangladesh when I was serving my second tour in Bangladesh, and I know that she believes the Americans knew about the assassination plot in advance and did nothing to stop it, and in fact may have had a hand in it. It's my understanding from working on the desk in 1975 that the Americans did warn Sheikh Mujib, as I described; but that they were surprised by the people who actually carried out the coup and the assassination. Believe me, it was a shock on the desk that day.

Q: Well now, was the Sheikh popular? I mean, were we seeing him warts and all or was he somebody we really wished would go away? Or how did we feel about him at that time?

EISENBRAUN: Sheikh Mujib had no administrative ability, and as it turned out, an authoritarian streak. He was turning Bangladesh into a dictatorship and not addressing the tremendous economic development problems. .

Q: Well, how were we looking at him? I mean, as somebody to be endured or were we hoping that somebody else would come in there and take charge. I mean, I'm just trying to capture kind of the American feeling-

EISENBRAUN: Ambassador Boster wanted to keep the U.S. at arm's length from Sheikh Mujib, as Mujib became more and more authoritarian and was suspending rights and was developing his own personal army, practically. We had an economic aid relationship as we poured in a tremendous amount of resources, a lot of food aid because the needs were limitless. They were recovering from a devastating hurricane just before the war, then nine months of civil war and genocide; the humanitarian needs were infinite, and we responded generously. However, we made a distinction between the economic assistance and the political sphere. Mujib was willing to be friendly with the Soviets and the Soviets had a huge presence in Bangladesh. He talked socialism, which was not welcome in Washington. His comments on that score were essentially rhetorical, since I don't know that he particularly implemented any policies that you could say were socialist; he didn't have very much structure in his government, frankly; the Bangladeshis were still groping to put together a government. So our relationship was cool politically, and Kissinger hadn't the time of day as the Secretary of State for Sheikh Mujib.

Q: Did you get any feeling, I realize you're the brand new boy on the block, but did you get any feel for the power relationship within NEA, one, for Bangladesh vis a vis India-Pakistan and two, India-Pakistan, well I mean, what we call the sub-continent and the Arab-Israeli problem?

EISENBRAUN: Bangladesh didn't count in the power relationships within the NEA bureau. It was just a humanitarian disaster to deal with. Kissinger actually went out to Bangladesh; he stopped through en route to another destination and probably didn't even spend overnight. But he did show up and he made some comment, probably an aside, of Bangladesh as a basket case, and unfortunately, that's what stuck as the essence of the American policy attitude. Bangladeshis even today, 30 years later, remember Kissinger's basket case comment.

Q: Well, you know, I mean, this is something that lingers on with me. I've never served there, or been there, but you know, I mean, it was kind of referred to as a basket case.

EISENBRAUN: Well, it was economically. Their needs were infinite and they were confused, and mind you, the best of their entire generation had just been massacred by the Pakistani army, so there were really valid reasons why the country was in chaos. It's just unfortunate that Sheikh Mujib, who had such potential because of his initial popularity, squander his great opportunity to start the country on a sound basis. Of course, within NEA, looking at South Asia, they were- it was always a balancing act between Pakistan and India, you know, trying to be friendly with both. In Pakistan there was Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto who was in charge and things weren't going so well over there either.

Q: Yes. And you have the very chilly relationship with Mrs. Gandhi, I guess.

EISENBRAUN: That's right. Mrs. Gandhi had no relationship with President Ford, but Nixon and Gandhi detested each other. Partly that's because they were two very powerful personalities, practitioners of real politic who probably were very similar and probably could have been good friends under other circumstances, but they were rivals in world politics. Nixon was certain that Mrs. Gandhi had misled him over Indian intentions of attacking Pakistan when she came to Washington in December of '71. And apparently she-we can check this in the archives, I guess-but she basically assured him that Indian intentions were not belligerent but that they couldn't live forever with the 10 million Bengali refugees in West Bengal, to say nothing of the political uproar on their Eastern border. The United States in the early '70s was quite partial to Pakistan, and Mrs. Gandhi couldn't stomach it. Pakistan under Ayub Khan, and Yahya Khan later, was willing to be friendly with the United States, and they were easy to deal with because they were relatively straightforward military men. We could provide them with military assistance, and India at the same time was friendly with the Soviet Union and the Soviets provided a good deal of military assistance and technology to India. So we had our own Cold War going on in South Asia. Bangladesh was essentially a humanitarian project, but we wanted to keep them at arm's length politically. We had no national interest in Bangladesh besides humanitarian.

Q: Had you had any real contact with Bengalis before?

EISENBRAUN: Before I went there?

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: No.

Q: So often one's first contact is with your language teachers. Were you picking up something about Bangladesh in your-

EISENBRAUN: I'm glad you reminded me about my language instructor. Minoti Roy; she was Hindu and she was from Calcutta. She had never been to Bangladesh herself. She was brand new to FSI, and I was her first and only student for most of the year, except that a fellow named Ron Hagen came in for a few months about halfway through the year. Minoti and I got along really well. She took it upon herself to teach me about Bengali culture. Not Bangladesh culture only, but the culture of greater Bengal, which included the Indian state of West Bengal with its capital of Calcutta. Historically, the whole area of East India that was Bengali speaking was called Bangladesh, or the land of the Bengali or Bangla-speaking peoples. The West Bengal state in India as well as East Pakistan, it was all known as Bangladesh in the old days. She stressed to me that the Hindus of West Bengal in India felt a little bit put out that these upstarts, when they declared their independence in 1971, called their country Bangladesh, because the Indians in Calcutta said, we're Bangladesh, too.

Minoti decided it was her mission in life to make sure that I spoke the best Bengali I possibly could and to make sure my accent at least was right. I'm a pretty mediocre language student, but I'd had the Hindi study, and she said that that made me sound more like a Hindi speaker trying to learn Bengali, rather than an American. I thought she was being nice and just trying to build up my confidence, but in fact I heard this comment later when I got to Bangladesh. So, achingly, hour after hour, she worked on that accent. When I got done, those of us in the Foreign Service will understand, I ended up with a three-three in Bengali, but I had a better accent than that score would suggest.

Q: You got to Bangladesh when?

EISENBRAUN: July of 1976. There had continued to be political turmoil after the assassination in '75 and then, not to go into that whole story, it's very complicated, but essentially the enlisted men in the army came to a general named Ziaur Rahman, this was in November of '75, and they asked him, essentially, to lead them. The country was in chaos. More bloodshed had happened after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib and so the army stepped in and there was martial law. Now, there were three chief martial law administrators; one from the army, the navy, and the air force, but the army leader, General Zia, was the major one.

Q: You were there from '76 to when?

EISENBRAUN: '76 to '78.

Q: Now, what was your job?

EISENBRAUN: I was political officer, the junior one in a two-person political section. The chief was Craig Baxter, who arrived a few weeks after I did and left about the time I did too. Baxter was an institution in the Foreign Service because he was not only a diplomat, he was a scholar on South Asia. After his career in the Foreign Service, he taught at the college level for many years and published extensively about South Asia, including Bangladesh. I learned a great deal from him about South Asia and how to operate as a political officer.

Q: Who was the Ambassador when you got there?

EISENBRAUN: It was Gene Boster's last six weeks, so our paths hardly crossed at all. Then a man named Ed Masters took over from him for about nine months and then he went on to be Ambassador in Indonesia. I'm going to come back to Ed Masters because he and I had a relevant conversation about those years in Bangladesh just recently at a Christmas party. Anyway, Masters was replaced in early '78 by David Schneider. Of the three, Ed Masters was the one who was there during the most interesting times for me.

Q: How did you find your initial assignment? How were you trained or did you just absorb being a political officer? What were you doing?

EISENBRAUN: Well, frankly, there wasn't any training. As we all know, it's just figure it out for yourself. Baxter would offer some advice; usually after the fact. I would do a draft cable and then he would show me how it could have been done better. In a sense it was practically the perfect assignment for a junior political officer because it was just the two of us, and the whole country was our beat. I could do anything I wanted. I could talk to anybody just below the senior level. Baxter made clear that the senior people were off-limits; that was either Craig's or the Ambassador's province, but such a distinction hardly mattered, because senior people wouldn't talk to junior officers anyway in Bangladesh.

(End side two, tape two)

Q: This is tape three, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: There was martial law in 1976, with a curfew from midnight until six a.m. Many of the major politicians from Sheik Mujib's Awami League were in prison or had fled the country, so there were few Awami Leaguers to talk to. This factor came up on a subsequent tour I had to Bangladesh between 1996 and 1998, when the Awami League was finally back in power under Sheikh Hasina, Mujib's daughter. I didn't know any of the senior party leaders, but I knew many people in the opposition. Anyway, back to 1976:

There were still politicians around that I could talk to, or whisper to. There was a clandestine sneaking around on their part. They acted nervous to talk to us, but they did it anyway. So it was just a matter of learning by doing. The embassy asked me, why not try to go around to the university and meet some of the students. University politics had been really important in the break with West Pakistan. The whole independence movement had exploded from Dhaka University. But to get to know students in 1976, I can tell you, was impossible, because the authorities were so strict and the students so cowed by the authorities that they all were afraid to talk to Americans. There was still suspicion about the Americans because we had supported Pakistan in '71, so the Bangladeshi students remembered this and didn't trust Americans.

You couldn't walk on Dhaka University campus. You probably would have had stones thrown at you; you just couldn't do it. There was too much antagonism. I was lucky in two regards, however. I got this idea that I wanted to study French more. I'd taken French in high school and there was a very active Alliance Francais in Dhaka and all the students from Dhaka University were at the Alliance learning French. So, I got this idea, why don't I sign up and be a student over there too? I did that for about a year. I learned a little bit of French and I met some students. That worked a bit. I can't say that I got to be bosom buddies with anybody, but I met some students and there was some exchange. Then, luckily, I hooked up with a young assistant professor of political science who had been a student at Dhaka University. He filled me with good information, and eventually I knew practically everything going on at the university. So in the end I cracked that nut, but I didn't do it by walking on the campus.

Boster had resisted having a military attachï¿½ at the embassy, so in the early days of my tenure, there was this hope that I might get to know junior officers in the army. It was an absolutely forlorn hope, impossible to do. They were really well disciplined and they had orders, no talking to any foreign diplomat, and certainly no talking to Americans. So there was never any opportunity to meet or befriend anybody in the military.

Q: One thinks of so many universities as being just, at their heart, anti-American because the kids, frankly, are going- this is on a worldwide basis, going through their Marxist phase and all that. Was this happening there?

EISENBRAUN Yes, it was. It's fair to say that the politics at Dhaka University was quite to the left and Marxist oriented, and they were so antagonistic toward Americans. But at the same time, you know, I have to emphasize again, they're just such nice people that if you could spend 10 minutes with anybody you'd have a friend. But that first 10 minutes, at that particular time- and it was true later on in Pakistan, too; you couldn't just walk on a campus. I had a subsequent assignment to Pakistan; you couldn't walk on campus there either. You took your life in your hands if you did that. I had been on Delhi University campus some two or three years earlier and that had not been a major problem. I made some good friends at Delhi University, but it wasn't true in Dhaka or later in Lahore, Pakistan.

I want to say something about the atmosphere and what it was like in Bangladesh. First of all, it was a poor country, of course, and it had been devastated by the civil war a few years earlier. Then the country had descended into famine in '74 and '75 prior to Sheik Mujib's assassination and the whole country was traumatized over that assassination. The country was barely recovering, and I credit General Zia with much of the recovery; he was a solid administrator, a moderate who had logical policies and one who rallied the Bangladeshi people.

On a personal level, I had the sense of being as far away from home as I could possibly get. It was an exotic place, but it was also lonesome. But the exotic parts were something else; the main mode of transportation was by bicycle rickshaw, for example. I lived in an area called Farmgate, which no Western diplomat now knows anything about because it wasn't the area where Westerners lived.

Q: Were you married?

EISENBRAUN Yes, I was married. No children. So my wife Jane and I showed up there and they put me in this house; it was really quite a nice sprawling house with a beautiful garden in this busy area, a crossroads, actually. The embassy was going to give up the lease because previous people had flat out refused to live there. Well, we thought the house was great. So we said, hey, we'll live here. The embassy said, okay, thinking we were crazy to be in a congested area far from the area where the other expats and diplomats lived.

Farmgate was all Bangladeshis. The downtown area called Motijheel was where the embassy was located, and between Farmgate and Motijheel were a couple of miles of mainly bicycle rickshaw territory. I rode them a lot. Certainly around the embassy, a very crowded area, we used bicycle rickshaws to go into the old city. That was very exotic, believe me. And then, there was the climate. There were fierce storms that would pass over and the sky would become at midday as dark as night and there would be these ferocious winds and vivid displays of lightening. Unbelievable. But, when I returned to Bangladesh 20 years later, it was different. The climate didn't seem so dramatic. In 1976, there were a few window air conditioners but, in fact, we had such a beautiful garden, we at first turned the air conditioners off and tried to live without them. Hah. What a big mistake that turned out to be, because everything turned to mold in the house overnight. We had to turn on the one in the bedroom and I think one or two others just to survive. Otherwise, I mean literally, you could get up in the morning and put on a dark suit coat, and you could write your name on the mold on the fabric.

Dhaka smelled nice in those days, with lots of flowers around. There was the tinkle of the bells on the bicycle rickshaws, and then as it got dark, the bicycle rickshaws would light their kerosene lanterns and it was quite pretty. It was just a certain sense of, boy, this is exotic. There was no traffic noise to speak of, except some buses going by near Farmgate, but fortunately, there were virtually no private vehicles on the road, just rickshaws.

EISENBRAUN I have something to say about the social life in Dhaka. Virtually in the first week, I would come home from the office; the embassy van would drop me off at 5:00 or 5:30 and I'd be tired and just want a cup of tea and a sandwich. And then, this is what would happen. My wife Jane, who was very socially oriented, would arrive home about that time and would be in a state of excitement, and say, I just met the most interesting ladies out shopping or whatever, and they're having a big party tonight and they invited us around. My attitude was, I want to go to bed early tonight. In the end, I always went to the party. This was how I learned about what was going on, socially and politically. We became fairly integrated into the Bangladeshi social life. Jane had the ability to meet interesting artists, and women of substance, such as those starting cooperative ventures in handicrafts who were ambitious and intelligent.

We'd be invited around to parties and be the only westerners there. The parties were quite fun. There'd be no less than 50 people and it'd almost always be the same 50 people at every party, but they were the young movers and shakers in Dhaka. They were mid-career and even some senior government officials; they were businessmen; they were lawyers and some politicians. Because of the terrible times and the genocide and what have you, that sector was pretty thin at that time. There was a sense of Roaring '20s about the social life, an almost unnatural gayness; many Bangladeshis were having romantic affairs and were flirting outrageously at these parties. This was a Muslim country coming out of genocide and civil war and famine. It didn't make sense.

Well, I'll jump 25 years into the future. I was having lunch with a Bangladesh lady here in Washington in about 2002. We were talking about old times in Dhaka, and she agreed that the social life in the 70s was frantic and unnaturally crazy. We remembered the dance parties that lasted all night and included breakfast, because of the curfew until 6:00 am. She said she thought that there had been some catharsis going on, that politics and life had been so awful, and then when political life began to settle down, the social life took off in some kind of explosion that didn't continue too many years afterward.

Q: Well, how did the Muslim side of things impact at that time?

EISENBRAUN: There was no Islamic-oriented politics. When I got there in '76, Islam was hardly a political factor. And the Islamic practices of the Bangladeshi people were more moderate than most other Muslim nations in the world. Bangladeshis are pious people, and the mosques are always full, and yet Islam was almost of no consequence in politics at that time. The Awami League had been taking the country in a socialist and secular direction in the early 1970s, and when General Zia introduced politics back in 1978, he brought left and right together in a moderate party of his own creation.

In fact, there was an article in The New York Times Magazine just a few weeks ago about whether Bangladesh is ripe for a Taliban situation. I don't think that's the case, I hope not, but radical Islam is a growing factor in a part of the Bangladesh political spectrum. But it isn't indigenous; it isn't the sort of thing the Bangladeshis themselves would embrace, but then countries change. .

Q: What about the hand of India while you were there?

EISENBRAUN: India presumably did exercise a tremendous influence clandestinely in Bangladesh. We heard rumors, I can't tell you exactly how truthful those rumors were, that the Indian intelligence service was controlling a lot of political events and funneling money to leaders. The Bangladeshis felt intimidated by this great country around them.

Q: Well, talking about Bangladesh being surrounded on three sides, what about these areas in India bordering on Bangladesh? Could you find out or?

EISENBRAUN: I had no way of knowing from my posting in Dhaka what was going on in those states.

Q: But was there any spillover?

EISENBRAUN: No, there wasn't much spillover, although there were rebel insurgencies in some of the remote areas. They continue today. India was afraid that some of the remote areas of their northeast would break away, so they wanted to make sure that Bangladesh was within their sphere of interest.

Q: Well, as a political officer in a country with quite tight controls under military dictatorship, what'd you do? I mean, were you just sort of reporting on general atmospherics or what?

EISENBRAUN: Well, yes, there was some of that. There also were a whole lot of visitors from Washington. Steve Solarz was a Congressman interested in Bangladesh, and he visited several times during my tenure. There were lots of other officials coming out. The Peace Corps wanted to establish a program but it never did get established in that era. Muhammad Ali came out a couple of times, but he didn't ask anything of the embassy.

Q: Boxer, huh?

EISENBRAUN: He had his own people to organize him. But I did see him, bumped into him at the airport virtually. He had been defeated by Leon Spinks only days before, but he came out to Dhaka anyway and gave some exhibition rounds with Bangladeshi boxers. I was out at the airport at the VIP lounge to pick up somebody coming in from Washington and Ali was departing. This was maybe a week after he had been defeated by Leon Spinks and his face was still so puffy and beaten up, I was quite shocked. He was immensely popular in Bangladesh. People went wild over him.

But, what did we do on the political reporting front? I traveled around the country a bit to remote areas in the south, and in Dhaka I had plenty of time to go around to meet political leaders in dark and grubby Chinese restaurants in obscure locations. We'd sit and whisper and they'd tell me what was bubbling under the surface. After about a year of this, I was getting bored because there wasn't much of a story to tell Washington. But there were some high points nevertheless. Shall I tell a story or two?

Q: Sure.

EISENBRAUN:  In October of 1977, a terrorist group called the Japanese Red Army hijacked a Japanese airliner in the Middle East and flew it eastward across India. Nobody was giving the plane landing rights for refueling until Bangladesh did. It landed in Dhaka with a full international passenger list, including many Americans. Then began days of drama and tension as the Bangladeshis negotiated with the hijackers, as well as the Japanese Government, to release the passengers, to meet the hijackers' demands for the release of Red Army prisoners in Japan, and for the Japanese to pay a ransom of some millions of dollars. Then events got out of hand.

Do we have the time to go into that?

Q:  Sure, sure.

EISENBRAUN Well, it fell to the head of the air force, General Mahmoud, to negotiate with the hijackers. He set up his command post at the airport in the control tower and his negotiations were carried live on Bangladesh radio. The whole country could listen to the negotiations:  we in the embassy, the man on the street, everyone; the whole country listened and came to a stop. Foreign journalists poured into the country, and we were for days a center of international attention. There were dozens of Americans onboard, and because of the heat, many passengers were getting sick. General Mahmoud conducted very skillful diplomacy. Absolutely a textbook case; if it hasn't been developed by teachers of crisis negotiation as a case study it should be. He was brilliant in developing camaraderie and rapport with the hijackers.

The American Ambassador, Ed Masters, was in the middle of it, as you can imagine, trying to do all he could for the American citizen hostages. He was a good friend of General Mahmoud as well, and so he used every influence he could behind the scenes to try to get those Americans released. I bumped into Ambassador Masters only a few weeks ago at a Christmas party (December 2004) and we reminisced over this incident. He reminded me, which I had forgotten, that certain Americans were authorized to be released but there was another person, an elderly man, who was not among those to be included, but Masters demanded that he had to get off too, and it worked.

The Japanese brought a plane from Tokyo and theoretically it had the released prisoners and the money. The plane parked at the end of the runway. Why it was parked about two miles away from the hijacked plane at the terminal we didn't know, but we could only imagine there were also commandos on the plane.

Well, about 5:00 am on the fourth or fifth day into this hijacking drama, a military coup broke out, led by enlisted men in the air force while General Mahmoud was in the control tower at the airport. Soldiers attacked the airport and were after Mahmood to kill him. There was fighting going on between pro- and anti-rebel factions around the airport, and some of the rebels got to the radio station and announced they were taking over the country. Before he went off the air, General Mahmoud said to the hijackers, there is trouble here in the terminal and you may see some armed men running around near your plane, so defend yourselves.

The hijackers tried to take off. They revved the engines and they were going to just on their own try to get the plane turned around and tear away. But they couldn't. The Bangladeshis rushed some vehicles out to block the plane's movement. The hijackers were going crazy because they couldn't leave and suddenly their trusted interlocutor was gone. They wouldn't talk to anybody else, and there were still hostages on the plane.

General Mahmoud was not killed. He told me twenty years later that he was lined up along the wall to be shot, but one of the rebels said no, he's a good guy. So they spared his life. He told me this over tea in about 1997 when I was back on my second posting in Dhaka.

The coup was put down in a few hours. The enlisted men didn't have enough support. It was the air force which had mutinied, but the army, with the greater number of soldiers and equipment, stayed loyal. That afternoon, most of the hostages and the Japanese ex-prisoners and the money were exchanged. The plane was pushed away from the terminal and took off for parts unknown. It ended up in either Libya or Algeria, I can't remember which, where, in the end, the hijackers got away and the final passengers were released.

Q: What had caused the coup?

EISENBRAUN: There were parochial matters like pay and living conditions of the enlisted men. The rebels had obviously been disgruntled and probably thought that with all the senior leadership of the air force in one spot in the control tower, they could be killed and the takeover would be successful. But the army remained loyal and put the mutiny down.

General Zia showed another side to himself in the weeks after the mutiny. He had seemed a moderate political leader, but he was also ruthless in maintaining his power. He had men hanged right and left in the military who were suspected plotters. No one knows for sure, but probably hundreds were just shot or hanged one after another after another in the ensuing weeks. Very bloody and it was all totally secret. They had non-public military trials; I don't even think we knew much about it in the embassy. We heard some rumors about secret trials and executions, but we didn't know the whole story. That didn't come out until years and years later.

After the coup and the hijacking, Ambassador Masters was really impressed with General Zia. Masters thought that Zia was the answer to Bangladesh's troubles, its instability. And so if we heard rumors that certain people in the military were being tried, well, the embassy attitude was that they probably deserved it. Masters worked with the State Department a couple of months after that, before he left post, to get Zia invited to the White House, at least for a luncheon. It didn't happen.

One of the reasons it didn't happen is that when I went back to Washington in the summer of '78 and Deputy Assistant Secretary Jane Coon took me to lunch, she told me that no way would Zia get invited to the White House. Jane was absolutely clear. She knew the rumors of the bloodshed following the coup attempt, and she said that because of Zia's human rights record, he's not going to get invited to the White House. She was the one in the Department responsible for stopping the proposal, and the White House may not even have known of Masters' efforts to get Zia an invitation.

Well, jump to Christmas, 2004. Masters and I were guests at a reception at Jane's home in Washington, and we were reminiscing over our days in Dhaka. I reminded him of his efforts to get General Zia to Washington to meet Carter. Masters replied, yes, but I never pulled it off. I said, well, I know who stopped it. He said, who was that? I replied, it's our hostess, Jane, and I related to him what Jane had told me some 26 years earlier. Masters looked over at Jane and said, rather bemusedly, is that so? He hadn't known. I told him I was doing this oral history and asked him if I could relate this story. He said OK, go ahead. By the way, Zia did get his invitation to the White House, however. Sometime after Masters left Dhaka, President Carter and General Zia met in Tokyo at the funeral for the Japanese Prime Minister. Carter and Zia hit it off, and Carter issued the invitation, as I understand it.

Q: Did you get any feel for Bengali culture and all that while you were there?

EISENBRAUN: Oh, a lot of it, yes.

Q: One always thinks of, really out of Calcutta, the poetry, the movies.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, Calcutta is the center of greater Bengali culture. In Bangladesh, the people would invite us into their homes and we went to endless weddings and traveled around and got to be friendly with lots of Bangladeshis, and I have to say, there's a soft spot in my heart for Bangladesh because the people are so nice. Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize-winning poet from the early 20th century, wrote beautiful poetry about shonar Bangla, golden Bengal, and I'm telling you, when you go out into the countryside in the Autumn and see the rice fields ready to be harvested, and it is golden. In fact, one of his poems, Shonar Bangla, is the national anthem of Bangladesh.

Q; You know, when you talk about Bengal, as an uninformed reader of the paper, I would have thought that at least once a year you're at least up to your knees in high water or something like that. How about when you were there?

EISENBRAUN: That's very true because about, oh, the southern 20 percent of the country is about one or two feet above sea level. It's a jungle, one of the few rain forests left with a few Bengal tigers still prowling around. There are little islands in the general swamp, and there are people living on those islands. When the cyclones periodically come in off the Bay of Bengal, all they have to do is raise the sea level five feet and you've inundated 100,000 square miles or something. I may be exaggerating, but yes, it's terrible. And that happens periodically.

When the monsoons hit, it's something to behold when rain comes and there's no proper drainage in Dhaka, and the place is mostly under water, it really is. The whole point of raising rice is that the rice fields are about four or five feet deep with water in the early stages. That's planned during the monsoon season and so you drive out onto the few roads that are built up above the rice fields and you see water everywhere. You'd think you're driving through an enormous lake or something. They have these low draft sailboats that are sailing across the rice paddies. Where is the country, you ask? It's all water. That's the way it is annually, and if there is any bad luck with storms, people die by the thousands.

Q: When you were there what happened?

EISENBRAUN: You mean with the weather?

Q: Weather-wise.

EISENBRAUN: Well, fortunately during that period there was no great storm. But I'm not finished with Bangladesh quite yet; I have two more stories.

Q: Let's finish Bangladesh and be as complete as you want.

EISENBRAUN: All right then. There was a mini Cold War going on in Dhaka between the Americans and the Soviets in the '70s. I heard that in the early '70s the Americans tried to recruit a Soviet as an agent, but it was botched and bad blood developed between the embassies. The Soviets had a large presence there, with the wall around the embassy topped with barbed wire. There were many Eastern Europeans in Dhaka too. Why those Eastern European countries were there, I never stopped to ask, let alone did I wonder what purpose the Soviets had in being in Bangladesh by the hundreds. Perhaps we were trying to figure out what the Soviets were doing in Bangladesh and they were trying to figure out what we were doing, yet there was no contact between the two missions. You'd never see Soviets on the larger social circuit except for one annual occasion.

The Iranian embassy, this is during the days of the Shah, would have a national day reception that would be a big bash, inviting literally a thousand people. They'd invite all the diplomats right down to the most junior of every embassy. They'd have it in this big field, and it was quite enjoyable because suddenly you were discovering all these attractive people, many from the Eastern Bloc and other embassies that you hadn't even known were in Dhaka.

I met a Soviet diplomat at one of these receptions, a young counterpart about the same rank as I. Nice guy, perfect English, and very friendly. He immediately invited my wife and me over for dinner at his home. Well, it was unheard of for such a thing to happen. I went back to the embassy the next morning and said, this is who I met, and he invited me to dinner. The senior people at the embassy speculated, what are the Soviets up to? Our people thought the friendliness was planned. The Soviet must have come with the intent of meeting some Americans, knowing that the Shah's reception would be their one occasion to do so. Our embassy people told me to accept the invitation and see what he had in mind.

My wife and I went off and had a delightful and apparently harmless evening. We invited the Soviet couple to our house, and soon, I was being invited into the Soviet embassy itself to a Saturday night party. Here I was, the only American, in fact the only Westerner, there. And everybody in the embassy seemed to know my name and they'd shout, hey, here's Steve. It seemed that the purpose of the party was to get drunk as fast as possible. All this vodka, cold vodka, wonderful stuff, was passed around; shots of vodka everywhere. People would be toasting me from across the room; people I'd hardly met: Steve, Nostrovya, and down the hatch. I would fake it; there was no way that I could drink that much vodka. But they seemed to be doing it. The party almost immediately degenerated into just shouting and fun and laughter and singing and flirting, and I'm thinking, what am I doing here? Our embassy people wondered that too when I would come back the next morning and report the stories-there were rules requiring that all contact with Soviets and Eastern Bloc peoples be reported, so my reports were detailed. Suddenly, during this flirtation with the Eastern Bloc embassies, a Bulgarian diplomat and his Russian wife showed up at our house in a rickshaw one evening...

(End side one, tape three)

Q: You were saying a Bulgarian and his wife arrived by rickshaw.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, but on reflection, I don't think I should go into the details of that even now after 30 years, honestly. It has to do with U.S. privacy laws.

Q: Oh, well, okay.

EISENBRAUN: The political section, the Ambassador and so forth, were wondering what on earth could be going on. There was thinking that maybe this Soviet who first invited me over wanted to defect, because he would always ask me about our ability to travel freely, about being able to travel to Bangkok, which we did frequently. He asked me a great deal, in fact, about travel and the obvious freedoms that we had that they didn't. The thought occurred to people in the embassy that maybe this guy's considering defecting. Our continued contact was encouraged. It was toward the end of my assignment in the spring of '78, and it was the end of that guy's assignment too. As it turned out, he began to ask me for documents, unclassified things. He'd say, I understand that President Carter gave a speech the other day. Can you get me a copy of the speech? I'd go back to the embassy and find the document and pass it along, all with permission from the seniors at the mission.

Q: Yes, sure.

EISENBRAUN: Every move, every contact, was coordinated with Washington, and nothing at all was freelanced. Today, I don't think that guy was considering defecting, that was just bait; when I responded, I think the Soviets began an effort to recruit me. Who knows? I left Bangladesh at the end of my posting, and that was the end of the Soviet embassy fling. I have no idea whether any kind of rapprochement continued in Dhaka between the two embassies, but I doubt it. When I left and the Soviet left his posting about the same time, my guess is that that little rapprochement came to an end.

I was bored with political reporting in the spring of 1978. As I said earlier, there wasn't much of a story left to tell. There was no open politics. I hit on this idea, however, of going around and looking up some of the historical figures in politics who were retired. About the third person I looked up lived in the old city. His name was Mashiur Rahman, known by his daknam (nickname) of Jadu Mia, the Magic Man. He had helped found the leftist National Awami Party in 1957 with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani. It seemed that Jadu Mia was retired from active politics and was living in the old city, smoking his hookah on his balcony. We sat together and shared impressions of Bangladesh politics. A week or so later, a young boy showed up at the embassy, saying Jadu Mia wanted to see me immediately. So I took a rickshaw to the old city, and this time, he was dressed in a beautiful starched white shirt and was clean shaven, which he hadn't been before. The hookah was gone. He had a twinkle in his eye and seemed a new man, despite his age, somewhere in his 70s.

He told me that General Zia wanted to start a political party, but he didn't know how , so he had gathered a few of the old timers in politics to meet late at night to give him advice. Jadu Mia named the others present, and I recognized that they were people from the left, such as Jadu Mia, and people from the right, which meant the Muslim League and other Islamic leaders. Practically everyone from the late 1960s on had been Awami League under Sheik Mujib, and now these were the people who were in jail or in exile around the world. The only political people in Dhaka were the far left and the far right, so Zia was bringing a handful of them together secretly in the cantonment, the military base, at midnight, to help organize a new political party. Jadu Mia said, I've been authorized to tell you this.

So, I went back to the embassy and told Baxter, who told the Ambassador. No one had heard anything about this, but we reported it to Washington nevertheless. A few days later I was summoned back to Jadu Mia and was told more about the secret night meetings, word for word supposedly of what was going on, and what Zia wanted to do. I then reported our conversations to Washington. Those curious today about this incident can look up these reporting cables in the archives, all these cables that were going out of the embassy in the spring of '78 on what General Zia was up to in starting a political party.

Well, as the weeks went by, the Ambassador began to pick up a couple of things, and Baxter began to hear a bit of the story. But I was continuously being given the specifics, not just rumors, about what was being planned. One of the imminent young barristers in Dhaka at that time was named Moudud Ahmed, who later became prime minister in a different government, by the way. Anyway, Moudud was one of those original conspirators in the creation of the new political party, soon named the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and I was told that Moudud took the lead in drafting the party constitution. Well, it got down to June of '78, and now the rumors were all over town. But I was still getting the inside scoop, to the point where Jadu Mia said, in a week or two, Zia's going to announce a cabinet, the formation of the new party, and the holding of parliamentary elections. Jadu Mia named most of the people who were going to be in the cabinet and what their portfolios would be. But he didn't tell me who was going to be chief minister/prime minister. I asked him about that, but Jadu Mia said Zia hadn't decided who would be the leader of the cabinet.

The day I left Bangladesh, it was the very end of June, 1978, my house was all packed up, and before I left for the airport to catch the noon flight to New Delhi, I glanced at the newspaper and there was the story in big headlines:  General Zia announces the formation of a new political party, a cabinet, and parliamentary elections to be held in the near future. The chief minister was Jadu Mia. I never had a chance to say congratulations. I heard that Jadu Mia had a stroke some months later, and he died in March of 1979. However, his organizing ability helped the new BNP win 208 of the 300 parliamentary seats in the election in February, 1979.

General Zia was murdered, viciously, in 1981, but Zia's widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, took over leadership of the BNP, and she's the Prime Minister of Bangladesh now, as we speak in early 2005.

When I went back for my second posting in Bangladesh in 1996, I was at dinner at the Ambassador's one night, early on, with some of the senior leaders of the BNP. I decided to tell the story of the party's creation as I knew it. I figured, well, it was really hush hush then, but eighteen years later, what does it matter? So I told this one gentleman, Khandakar Delwar Hossain, the party whip in parliament. He listened in rapt attention and hardly asked a question. When I finished, he commented, that's correct. That's the way it happened. .

Q:  Well, I think it is often junior officers, American junior officers, who can get out without causing a great deal of fuss or attention and talk to people and act as a conduit or a listening thing, you know, that the political counselor or the Ambassador couldn't, because this would draw attention. And in a way you're, you know, you're sort of sanitized, you're junior, you can talk to them, you know, and it's something that's often not appreciated when people look at how diplomacy gets conducted.

EISENBRAUN: General Zia and others probably sat around the table at midnight, and Zia might have said, the Americans need to know what we're doing. Jadu Mia may have said, oh, I just met this young guy from the American Embassy. Zia probably replied, okay, that's about the appropriate channel at the moment to let the Americans know what we're up to.

Q: By the way, while you were there, what was your feeling about the Carter administration and particularly his human rights stance and all? Was that having an impact on you all at the embassy?

EISENBRAUN: No, no. It didn't have much of an impact at that time. I believe Carter made some reference to human rights in his acceptance speech the night of his election, and we heard that even in Dhaka, and Baxter said, mark my words, human rights will be important in this new administration. But I cannot remember that it filtered down to us in any practical way at the beginning.

Q: Then '78, whither? Where did you go?

EISENBRAUN: I went to Lahore, Pakistan. Jane Coon happened to come out to Bangladesh in about March or April of '78 and we hit it off nicely. She was the deputy assistant secretary responsible for South Asia in the Department. I was her control officer and took her around Dhaka on her calls, and that's how we got to know each other. When we were at the airport waiting for her flight, she pulled out a piece of paper that had the positions coming open that she was recruiting people for. She was just sharing this information with me because she didn't have anything in mind for me.

She said that one of the hardest positions to fill was the number two spot at the America consulate in Lahore, the political officer and deputy principal officer job. She said I just don't know who can fill that job. I said, I can do it. But she replied, no, you're too junior. It's a rank above you. But I repeated that I could do the job. She thought for a minute and replied, yes, maybe you could. I said, unfortunately, however, this new bidding process has just started and they told me I had to go out of region and pick up consular work. I added that I had just gotten a cable that morning assigning me to Oslo as consular officer, and I was supposed to confirm my willingness to go there. Coon said, ignore the cable. Don't answer it till you hear from me.

I left the cable assigning me to Oslo in my in-box, and about 10 days later, another cable came out assigning me to Lahore, without any reference to the previous unanswered message.

Q: All right. Well, we'll pick this up, 1978 out in Lahore. Great.

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Today is the 25th of March, 2005.

Well, Steve, we're 1978 and you're in Lahore. You were there from when to when?

EISENBRAUN: I arrived in the latter part of September of '78 and I was there until the summer of 1981, so it was a three-year assignment. My wife and I arrived in Lahore with a two-month-old son, John, who had been born during our home leave. We had stayed with my father and his wife, Jeanie, in Florida for the birth. (My father remarried after my mother died in 1968.) Jane had gone back to the States a few weeks earlier than I from Bangladesh to have the baby, but luckily, the little one waited for me. Jeanie nicely took a Lamaze course with Jane so that she could be in the delivery room if I couldn't make it back from Dhaka on time, but I did, and I had the benefit of the final Lamaze class before John was born. Then, after a few weeks of camping out with my dad and then a quick visit to Iowa to visit Jane's parents, we were off to Pakistan. Neither of us worried much about John's health, going out to such a difficult health environment. We in the Foreign Service take our chances, don't we?

Q: Yes, it's a bit much sometimes. So you arrived there. What was the situation in that part of Pakistan when you got there?

EISENBRAUN: In 1978, General Zia ul-Haq was into his first year as chief martial law administrator. Maybe he had named himself president by then. At any rate, he had seized power the previous July by overthrowing Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and the army had then taken over the country. There was no active politicking going on, much like Bangladesh, as I had told you earlier. The Punjab is the political heart and soul of the country, so there were a lot of unemployed politicians around to talk to. One had to be a little careful because they didn't want to get themselves in trouble with the military authorities and there was a military governor in Lahore for the province of the Punjab. My job in Lahore was the number two in the consulate; there probably all told were about 10 of us including the three people at USIS (United States Information Service.). I was the deputy to a very fine gentleman who had 37 years' experience in the Foreign Service, David Gamon was his name. He was a really fine officer. He was at the end of his career and retired six months after I arrived. My responsibilities were to look into political, economic, and commercial matters, a very broad mandate. There were virtually no taskings from Washington, and few from the Embassy in Islamabad, so I had a lot of flexibility.

One of the first things I did was to move around and meet some of the provincial authorities as well as some of the well known political figures across the spectrum, from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), to the Islamic parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami. The latter weren't so enthusiastic about meeting Americans, but with the consul general I was able to meet the senior Jamaat leaders occasionally. There were a lot of retired politicians and former CSP (Civil Service of Pakistan) leaders, people who had been very important in Pakistan in an earlier era, and I looked up many of those people as well.

I hit upon this idea, looking at what I would do differently in Lahore from, let's say, what I had done previously in Bangladesh, and came up with idea of traveling in the countryside. The consul general encouraged this, and Pakistan is a pretty exotic place, romantic in the old-fashioned sense of the term. Rugged hills and barren deserts and hospitable, colorful people in the far west, blending into Afghanistan tribal chiefdoms, and in the more settled areas of the Punjab, there were big landlords friendly to Americans. I began a series of trips. I had a wonderful Foreign Service National, Mahmoud Ali, as a guide. Generations at the Lahore Consulate had benefited from his enthusiasm and knowledge Pakistan's political environment. He knew everybody and everything; so he and I went out on the trail, along with a driver, usually Mr. Khan or Mr. Beg. The three of us, much like boys out looking for adventure, drove all over the countryside on week-long trips. Over time, we explored every district in Punjab, and then we started over.

On one trip, we went to the southern part of the Punjab to Bahalwalpur, smack in the Thar Desert. Bahalwalpur had been a princely state, run by a nawab, one of the largest in the unified subcontinent under the British colonial rule. So, we went down to the nawab's palace, which could rival in its heyday anything in the Loire Valley in France, but the heyday had been 60-70 years earlier. It was a little decrepit but dramatic nonetheless. A twenty-something son of the old nawab lived there alone with about a hundred servants. The palace had maybe 50 acres perhaps, and inside the high walls it was green and beautiful with peacocks strolling around. Outside the wall, it was desert.

The old fort of Bahalwalpur was about 20 miles out in the virtually trackless desert. Not quite trackless, I guess, because in the 19th century a telegraph line had been strung out to the fort. The road had long since been covered by sand, but you could still tell the direction to the fort by the telegraph poles. The local official of the Pakistan government, that's the Deputy Commissioner (DC), loaned us a jeep with four-wheel drive, and we drove out to the fort. It had been abandoned for generations but was still in the nawab's family. So you're driving in the desert, and there's camels occasionally wandering along, and it's 110 degrees. Then this imposing fort, right out of Rudyard Kipling, comes up over the horizon and we drive up to the vast entrance, honked, and a lone watchman opened the gate so we could explore inside. I asked to see the dungeon, and there were cells with doors swinging with the wind, with sand in the cells. There were even a few cannonballs lying around on the parapets. I think the cannons were there, too, and the cannonballs were just scattered on the ground. The place was still furnished, but the doors to the nawab's private chambers were locked.

I don't want to go on too much about all these travels but every one of them was exotic in some fashion. In the north, for example, in the salt range of mountains, there was an old salt mine. We went down into the mine, which was as close to hell as you can get, I think, because it's deep, straight down, a deep hole that almost immediately became pitch black and there was at most 18 inches of a ledge carved out of the side of the wall that you had to inch along down into blackness. I think that one of the guides had a flashlight, and halfway down in this almost pitch black came some little donkeys with saddlebags of salt. They were not being led by anyone; they knew exactly what they had to do and they were hugging the wall too. They just sort of pushed us out of the way. We were right on the edge of falling into the abyss, but somehow we got to the bottom. Once there, we found men hacking at the walls, with flaming torches lighting the area. If it was 110 on the surface, it must have been 125 down at the base of this pit. These men were laboring in utter blackness except for burning torches stuck in the walls, and with pickaxes they were pounding away at the salt rock and loading up the saddlebags on the donkeys. I thought the lifespan of these men working down there must not be very great. That was a gruesome thing to see.

Q: At that particular point, what was the attitude of the Pakistanis towards the United Sates?

EISENBRAUN: The Pakistan government was rather disillusioned with the United States because there had been twenty years or more of hot and cold relationships from Washington. We had been quite supportive during the Cold War and we had supported them in '71 when they had their war with India, but then we had backed off a number of times and this period of '78-'79, my first year there, we were, because of the military overthrow of the elected government, we were pretty cool to the Pakistanis. I think that we had curtailed a good part, maybe all, military aid. It manifested itself on the provincial level in that it was sometimes difficult to get prior permission to go out on these travels. But in the end, I don't think I was ever denied. When I got out into the districts and met the local officials, the Deputy Commissioners and the Superintendents of police and others, they were always pleasant enough. Proper; I wouldn't say- they were not effusive, but they were accessible. The Pakistani people were very friendly, and even farmers knew a lot about the American-Pakistani relationship. They knew that America had been a close friend at one time and wasn't so friendly anymore, so there was always this question, why can't America be steadfast in its friendship? But they were predisposed to be friendly.

Q; Well, how was the disposition of Bhutto seen at that time?

EISENBRAUN: Bhutto was in jail and he was being tried for murder. There had been a local politician in Lahore who had been ambushed, and by mistake, the father traveling with him was the one who got killed. I met the politician on many occasions, that is, the one who escaped, and he was convinced that it was a trap set by the government on Bhutto's orders. I don't know that anyone will ever know precisely, and I don't quite remember why the trap was allegedly set except that the fellow had been too critical of Bhutto. There was also a feeling amongst many people that this was a contrived affair and that General Zia was going to make sure that Bhutto was out of the picture, locked up or whatever forever, whether the charges were true or not. And so there was a lot of discussion from PPP leaders about what the United States could do to bring pressure to insure that a fair trial was held. If my memory is correct, I think most people from other political parties, across the political spectrum, also assumed the charges against Bhutto were trumped up.

Q: Did you, I mean, was Bhutto a loved leader? I mean, was this a particular section of Pakistan where his base was, or something?

EISENBRAUN: His base was not in the Punjab as much as it was in the Sindhi province to the south, where the Bhutto family was from. He also had plenty of support in the Punjab too, however.

Q: Did we have a position in this? I mean, were you fed your instructions? Did you play it neutral or be concerned or what else?

EISENBRAUN: It's my memory that we played this pretty neutral. I have to be careful because I don't know what was going on in the embassy, but I don't believe that we were fighting the military authorities on behalf of Bhutto. We were essentially observers.

But to finish the story of Bhutto, it was February of 1979 and it was probably a Friday, which was not a day of work in Pakistan, and a friend of mine, Nur Hyatt Noon, came over to my home mid-morning to report that time was getting really short for Bhutto, that he was in danger of being executed at any moment. Nur said the Americans have got to do something. And so David Gamon and I drafted a message to Islamabad, which explained this because we did not know if Islamabad had this information or not, and we argued in the message that we ought to put pressure on the government to make sure that due process was followed and so forth.

Well, Nur was right. Bhutto was hanged the next day at dawn, and it took the country by complete surprise. Everyone thought that this would probably be the ultimate conclusion but it happened so quickly that suddenly the country was told he was hanged and buried and gone. There were riots and demonstrations around the country. In Lahore, there were thousands of people who came out on the street, but the police were able to maintain basic order. I don't think the army had to get involved. It was quite a shock, I think, to the Pakistani people that such a charismatic man who had been so popular, especially in the days after he'd assumed power in '72, that he could be gone.

Now, it happened about the same time, I want to mention the abduction and death of our Ambassador in Kabul, Spike Dubbs. A few months earlier, at Christmas (1978), he and his wife, Mary Ann, had come down to Lahore for four or five days of relaxation. I was asked to go out and play golf with them. I'm not much of a golfer, but it didn't matter because Mary Ann wasn't very good either, though the Ambassador was. So, it was just the three of us, and it was very pleasant. They were such gracious, nice people. Several of us in the consulate took them into the old city because it was also the time of Muharram, a holy time for the Shias, and someone knew a balcony we could all watch from as the processions went past. Many of the men were flailing themselves with whips and chains, because the occasion was one to mourn the death of Ali, the brother-in-law of Mohammad. My point in saying this is that all of us in the consulate were involved in the Dubbs visit.

Well, it was Valentine's Day, February 14, 1979, when I got the call mid-morning from the political consular in Islamabad, Herb Hagerty, saying that Spike Dubbs had been kidnapped in Kabul and was being held at the main hotel in Kabul. There wasn't any action for us to take in Lahore, but we were all traumatized to hear this and an hour later, just after noontime, Herb called me back and said the Ambassador had been killed in a hail of bullets as the government stormed the room where he was being held, even though we had told them not to. What a shock. My reaction, I got the call, I walked into the consul general's office and said, let's lower the flag. But he was old school, so he said we have to wait for Washington's instructions on that. And Debbie, the secretary, was crying at her desk. It was a terrible circumstance even for us in Lahore.

Q: In the first place, you say you traveled around. Did this include the so-called tribal areas? I don't know Pakistan but these, I gather, are sort of a wild west areas of Pakistan.

EISENBRAUN: I couldn't go into those areas. That was somewhat farther west. The Punjab boundary bordered on the northwest frontier province and Baluchistan in its far western areas, and then farther west from there along the Afghan border, that's where the tribal areas were. So I was not allowed by the Pakistan government to go anywhere in the rural areas outside the Punjab. So no, I was not literally in the tribal areas. That's not to say that in the western part of the Punjab it wasn't pretty wild also, but at least the Pakistan government had a presence, which was not the case in the tribal areas. But there were still some pretty fierce people in western Punjab, and remember thinking that the Russians would have their hands full if they ever thought to invade Pakistan.

I remember it was somewhere in western Punjab, probably in Mianwalli district along the border with the frontier province, I had a meeting at about five in the afternoon with whoever was the local power out there and he had already arrived at the meeting place. I walked into this room and there were probably 30 men there with rifles and shotguns and bandoliers across their chests. They all stood up simultaneously, and I did a bit of a double take, thinking, great Scott, what have I gotten into? Then the man in charge introduced himself, and we had a good talk. It was clear that these people could be a challenge to the government if it got tense because they had plenty of weapons and they were pretty independent minded.

Q: Were you getting any feel for Islamic fundamentalism and what it was doing to the attitude of people?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. That was a period when Islamic fundamentalism was relatively new or it manifested itself in politics pretty much for the first time in Pakistan and its first expression really had been in the open demonstrations that tried to bring Bhutto down in 1977. Then Zia, when he took over in mid-1977, began to promote an Islamization of the society. He himself was a devout Muslim and perhaps he also saw it as politically useful to, rather than to oppose this element in politics, to try to meet some of its concerns, maybe co-opt it. I don't know exactly what his master plan was, but it fit in with what the Islamic element in Pakistan, or at least the militant wing of Islam, wanted. The urban middle class, well educated, maybe western oriented people, they didn't know what the rules were, but suddenly there was prohibition and everyone was being encouraged to go to the mosques on Friday. Not everyone had done that previously, but I know a number of people started going to the mosques, and I think they began to take fasting more seriously during the holy month of Ramadan.

Q: This is tape four, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: There was such a huge unemployment problem in Pakistan and so- anywhere in the urban areas there would be literally thousands and thousands of young men unemployed, idle, hanging around on the streets all the time. And in the early evening when it was teatime, they would be in the tea stalls. You thought, my goodness, this is a volatile group of people, because they were the very types that the Islamic element could bring out on the streets and they could do it in an hour's time. And you could see anyone would have to take this element seriously in politics. So that sums up the first year, essentially, that I was in Pakistan.

Q: In your area, your consular district, what were the economic factors?

EISENBRAUN: Well, that's an interesting question because I did follow commercial matters and economic matters as well as political events. The backbone of the Punjab economy was the spinning of cotton into textiles, which were then exported. A lot of cotton was grown and there were a lot of cotton gins. I visited practically every textile mill in the Punjab and some of the owners were fabulously wealthy. Some of them were new wealth; that is, they had created their wealth through the textile industry and then branched off into other things, whether it was banking or processed ghee, that's a form of butter. They had branched out and they had become enormously wealthy and they lived in fabulous homes and so forth. Spinning mills were a mainstay of the economy, but another money-maker for the large landowners was the growing of mangos. Almost all the great landlord families, and this is a feudal society with great estates, they all grew mangos. Now, you wouldn't think that great fortunes could be made in this trade, but you would be mistaken. I don't know if it would show up on the trade statistics about the export of mangos or whatever but that was important. There also was a growing assembly sector to the economy and I noticed that the Japanese were coming into Lahore and they were setting up television assembly plants and transistor radio assembly and so forth. They were really small operations with 50 people or so and I was able to go around and I toured some of these. Generally, the local Pakistani manager would acknowledge that, well, they weren't making much money but they were putting together pretty cheap television sets and they were available on the local market. And they said, you wait, we're going to expand. And even in the three years I was there, from '78 to '81, I saw that these assembly plants were expanding. Now, from time to time American businessmen would come through Lahore too, and they were looking at investment prospects and bidding on contracts from the government. The contracts at that time were mostly to do with telecommunications, setting up line-of-sight telecommunications around the country and so forth. They were multimillion dollar contracts, which the Americans weren't always successful in getting. The American businessmen complained that others, the Japanese particularly, were using other means to get contracts; it wasn't a level playing field. I'm referring to cutbacks. I don't want to single out the Japanese but whatever the competition, the Americans always said, we can't compete because it isn't a level playing field. I think the Americans also couldn't give the best financing, because many other governments worked closely with the private sector to extend terms that the Americans couldn't match. I would say to American representatives, I remember Motorola came through, and I told them about the Japanese assembly shops, look at what the Japanese are doing, and the Americas scoffed and said, we don't deal with setting up little factories of 50 people to assemble cheap televisions; that isn't what we do. Even at the time, I thought, well, this seems pretty shortsighted. I can tell you that even by the time I left in '81, with a three-year perspective, the Japanese assembly factories weren't so small anymore and I don't know what their balance sheets were, but I'll bet they were all right, and I can guess they were doing this not only in Pakistan but in many other parts of Asia. There was no America capacity for that kind of investment anyway because it seemed the Japanese had sewn it up entirely in Pakistan.

Let me turn to the dramatic events of November 1979. That was the attack on the America embassy in Islamabad and the consulate in Lahore and other America interests throughout Pakistan.

Q: First, had the unrest in Tehran prior to the takeover of the embassy, had that had any effect, I mean, was that just something you were watching or what? Because the embassy had been overrun once, I think on Valentine's Day of '79 and then-

EISENBRAUN: Yes, that's right. That was happening the very same day as the Spike Dubbs murder.

Q: Yes. And then, you know, the Shah had fled, and I was wondering whether that was going to mean any repercussions or not.

EISENBRAUN: Well, it certainly created a lot of tension within Pakistan and with the Americans. But it did not directly affect our day-to-day activities, although we buttoned up security a bit. It was certainly a tense situation and it was about to get a lot tenser.

The day before Thanksgiving 1979, the consul general, Clive Fuller, and I went out to the Jamaat-e-Islami headquarters to pay a courtesy call on the head mufti, and that was always kind of a tense situation. We wanted to keep as cordial relations as possible, and they were willing to meet us. It was not friendly meeting, but they listened to us. Fuller was under instruction to try to get the Jamaat leaders to intervene with Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran to release the American hostages. The Jamaat leader said he would pass our message along, and we drafted one on the spot. Who knows whether the Jamaat leader, a Sunni, had any influence at all with Khomeini, a Shia? He did not promise to lend a helping hand, just pass along the message.

Well, we got back into Lahore about noontime, and we noticed a tremendous amount of activity on the streets and that there were flyers being handed out all over. We had no idea what was up, but we got a flyer, in Urdu, which we couldn't read. Fuller and I lived a block away and behind the consulate, so we both went home for lunch, separately, and then we reconvened about an hour later at the office. It was probably about one o'clock in the afternoon and a whole bunch of police, like about 200 of them, had shown up and formed a ring around the consulate building. There were groups of young men all around reading this handout. We had someone on the staff, a Pakistani national, quickly translate it, and it said something about Islamic militants had taken over the grand mosque in Mecca. I don't remember if that publication said the Israelis were behind it; yes, it might have, and by implication the Americans because of our close relationship with Israel.

Actually, police had shown up before at the American consulate in large numbers and so it wasn't completely unusual. We were still open and functioning. Then I got a call from the German who ran the American Express office down in the central part of the city, about two miles away, and he reported that thousands of angry people were on the streets and they've come by and broken our windows and trashed the front of our office and then moved on because the American Cultural Center, USIS (United States Information Service), was nearby. It was a very nice building, right around the corner from the American Express Bank, and there were three Americans working there. The German said they're attacking the USIS center. But the USIS center hadn't called us; no authorities had called us. It was just his phone call.

It was quiet around our office. I walked next door to Fuller's office and told him what was happening. And he said, you better call the embassy in Islamabad. He picked up the phone to try to call the governor, whose office wasn't that far away from the American Cultural Center. I went back to my desk and put a call into the political counselor's office in the embassy in Islamabad, about 300 miles north. I got a busy signal. I then tried the DCM; busy signal. I thought, this is really peculiar. I'm sitting on important news, and I need to get this out immediately so I called our American Consulate in Karachi, about a thousand miles to the south. I got Dick Post, the Consul General, on the line. He yelled into the phone that the embassy was in flames because thousands of people had attacked it. He said I'm under attack too. I'm in the safe haven (vault) in the consulate. Then the line went dead. I put the phone down; it's still perfectly quiet around us. I went back into Fuller's office and reported what I'd just learned.

Then more calls starting coming in from Pakistanis telling us what was going on. They said the American Center had been overrun and the place was in flames. All this news landed on us in just a few minutes. We didn't have any idea what might have happened to all of our colleagues, Pakistani and American. In the meantime, Fuller was frantically trying to call for the police, the DC, the governor, anybody, but nobody was available. We couldn't send a cable to Washington because our communications went through the Embassy in Islamabad, which was off the air. There was no official in Lahore in his office, or nobody was taking our calls. Later, we learned that all the senior government leaders were in a meeting, and they weren't to be disturbed. In fact, they were taken as much by surprise at the public uprising as we were, although someone had had the presence of mind to send police to our office.

Jeff Lundstead, the consular officer, then ran upstairs from the consular section, where he had been hearing the same stories. The American staff gathered in the area around the consul general's office. Essentially the question was, what do we do now? If there was need of a flash cable, it was then, but we couldn't send one. Our only precedent had been Teheran, and the staff had not been able to leave the embassy then. In fact, they'd all gone into the embassy vault and then eventually had to surrender. Do you know, we never considered abandoning the consulate? We had classified material, and in that era we thought our job was to stay put. Fuller was constantly on the phone, trying to raise somebody and get some action going for more protection but without success. Then I got a call that the crowd was moving up the street from the American Center to the consulate with the intent of burning us down too. I told this to Fuller and added that we'd better start destroying classified material. He said, no, no, wait. We've got a lot of police around here. I said, but they're coming, and he said, we'll be okay.

Lundstead said, I'm leaving. This is crazy. And he went down and opened the back door to the consulate, but then slammed it shut. He shouted, it's too late; they're coming over the walls! And they did, thousands of them. We were stuck inside with our indecision.

We sound now so incompetent, frankly. We must have called the American School, which was about a-half mile away and told them, but I can't guarantee that that call was made. Yes, there was an emergency contact network, but this all happened probably in twenty minutes, and yes, I believe we tried to alert the rest of the America community. There was a malaria research laboratory with a handful of American scientists working there. Our incapacity to alert others became an issue in the community in the months to follow because it looked like the consulate could care less about the American School or others.

Then we were engulfed. The rocks came flying, and bricks, and the windows were breaking, and we realized what it's like to be under siege. We hadn't a clue what was going on outside, since we could hardly be near the windows with all the shattering class, despite their protective grating. All we could hear was this hurricane of noise and then explosions. We learned later that explosions were cars burning around the consulate and their tires blowing out. I happened to look out one of the top windows that didn't have a curtain on it and I could see this great big cloud of black smoke coming from the direction of where my home was only a block away. I had called my wife to alert her, and Fuller did the same but then the lines went dead. All we had was this terrific noise, with bricks flying, glass breaking, and explosions hurting our ears.

There was a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) agent with us, and according to our previous plan, he stationed himself at the fortified door at the bottom of the steps to the first floor and had tear gas in one hand and a revolver in the other. He was ready to lay out that tear gas if they broke through the windows and doors and got into the lower level. Our plan was to go into the vault on the second floor. The vault had no escape. It turned out we didn't have to go in because the hundreds of police ringing the office were actually beating off the demonstrators and kept them from getting inside. The demonstrators threw into the broken windows burning rags, but they didn't have gasoline, so the damage was not great. They had used up all the gasoline at the cultural center. The carpets and the curtains charred a bit but they did not catch on fire. The police kept them from breaking through the windows, which were all, of course, reinforced with heavy wrought iron, but that can't withstand the fury of a crowd. The police save us. The attack went on for a couple of hours, this horrific noise and the bricks pounding against the walls; in fact, it went on so long that it began to get dark outside. We couldn't get out, we couldn't call, and we were trapped. I said, we better be destroying the classified material. But Fuller said no, I don't think we need to. Let's just wait. Absolutely not one document was destroyed.

There must have been a radio because the Pakistani army made communication with us eventually and said, it is quieter now and getting dark; open your doors and we'll evacuate you. We did, the back door, and they came in nervously. They were taking this situation very seriously. They said, you're going to be evacuated with army trucks. They had put down a lot of tear gas around, which was now coming in the door, enough to make us uncomfortable. The soldier in charge ordered, get out quickly. The trucks pulled right up to the door, and we were pushed inside and made to lie down and were driven away. They asked where we wanted to go. We had a small apartment building farther out in the suburbs that had three units for American staff, so we said, go there. It was quiet out there. The demonstrators did not know that that was American property. The army dropped us and left with no further offer of assistance, to my memory.

So here it was, full night and there were about seven or eight of us and, now what? Somehow, yes, there were phones working out there and we got a few calls. I found out where my wife was and where the consul general's wife was; they were together. You don't mind all this detail?

Q: No.

EISENBRAUN: The story of how the two wives got out of their homes near the consulate is a good one. In the midst of the initial attacks, when the demonstrators were charging all around the neighborhood, the demonstrators did not know that the American consul general and the number two's house was there in the otherwise Pakistani suburban area right behind the office. My cook, Omar, was smart and brave enough to go and take the flag down at the consul general's house and take our names off the gate. Those servants stayed in the houses throughout the day.

In the meantime, the wife of a doctor, Dr. Anwar, a pediatrician we used for little son John, (my wife was also seven months pregnant) came roaring up in her car and said, this is too dangerous, you've got to get out of here fast. She pushed them on the floor of the back seat and covered them with shawls and whisked them away. She went to the home of Nasim Saigol, about a half mile away. The Saigol family was a very powerful and influential family, and their home seemed like a safe haven, and that's where they spent the afternoon.

I should add that Dr. Anwar ten months later saved my wife's life one hot afternoon by inserting a critical intravenous drip when she was going into a coma at home because of a severe attack of hepatitis.

All right. So, Fuller and I and the others, we found ourselves at six in the evening, it's completely dark, the rioting, we learned, was all over the city and all over the country. We learned it occurred throughout the Islamic world because the rumor spread from Morocco to Indonesia that the Americans were behind the Israelis who had taken over the grand mosque in Mecca. As it turned out, these were Islamic radicals with no connection to any outside force, to my knowledge. But they were holed up in the grand mosque in Mecca and the Saudi authorities, I think it took them the better part of a day to clear them out, but there are other people who are more expert on what was going on in Saudi Arabia.

But for us, we were still cut off, we had no idea what was going on in Islamabad. We were totally on our own. People dispersed to their homes and the consul general and I got somehow a ride, I don't remember who gave it to us, to Nasim Saigol's place. His beautiful home in its compound was perfectly quiet. He was there too, and he said, supremely confidently, don't worry, you're safe here. He meant it. As a matter of fact, to show how safe it was, the DC was there, as was the superintendent of police, using his house like a command post. Not in their offices because Pakistan was teetering at that moment, and the officials did not know if the crowds would turn and attack Pakistan government symbols of authority. They could have marched on the governor's mansion which was only a half mile from the USIS center, but they didn't. As it turned out, the Pakistan authorities were about as frightened as we were. If the crowd had turned, I suspect the government would have fallen, because it would not have been likely that the army would have fired on its own citizens. Literally, the Government of Pakistan was just about as threatened as the American interests in the country were that day.

Well, it's not my personal experience, but you probably should know what happened in Islamabad just very briefly. Others in the oral history program have probably told that story in great detail. But just to give a picture. Huge crowds of people came pouring in, thousands upon thousands of people came pouring into the vicinity of the American embassy and the embassy was caught just at lunchtime. There were lots of other Americans in the cafeteria who weren't associated with the embassy, and the Marine guards could not possible lay down enough tear gas to hold off the demonstrators. They just came over the walls and broke through the gates, so quickly everybody inside the embassy rushed into the vault. There was an escape hatch from that vault, but the demonstrators quickly wired it shut. It all happened almost instantaneously. One Marine was killed and two Pakistani employees were also killed, caught up in the fire which burned the entire compound. There were apartments there and the whole mission was in flames.

There were probably well over one hundred people in the vault and they had a phone line out; the Ambassador happened to be at his home, he'd been caught at lunch. I think the DCM was out at lunch as well, at home, so the ranking people were Herb Hagerty, the political consular, and Dave Fields, the admin counselor. They could talk to the Ambassador and the Ambassador had an open line back to Washington. I'm told that President Carter got on the phone to General Zia and said, save our people in the embassy. The embassy is burning around them. I understand General Zia said, don't worry, I will. But he didn't. The Pakistan army took all afternoon to get to the embassy, even though the Army cantonment was only a maximum 10-15 miles away. It wasn't until about six in the evening when observers outside watching all this told those inside that the demonstrators had left. It was getting unbearable in the vault because it was so hot, and the air was getting bad. The escape hatch had been wired shut. The marines opened the vault door into the smoldering corridor and a couple of them ran down the corridor, got up onto the roof and opened the escape hatch, allowing all inside to climb out. One dead marine who had died in the vault during the afternoon from a gunshot wound also had to be gotten out.

They saved themselves. That was the cover of- one of the international news magazines, either Newsweek or Time. The correspondent for the magazine had been caught in the embassy and had been in the vault, and he told the story. This is what I was told:  The correspondent wrote a draft story of the way it happened. The point was that we saved ourselves; the Pakistan army did not. The Pakistan army was right there, was arriving about the time we were climbing out, but they didn't have to do anything. The Americans came out themselves. The head office of the newsmagazine balked at the story that the embassy employees had saved themselves because it was at odds with what the American government was saying in Washington, which was that the Pakistan Government should be praised for saving our people in the embassy. The correspondent said, no, that isn't right, and you print the real story or I'm resigning and will tell my story anyway. So it got printed the way it actually happened.

Q: In Lahore, was there any suspicion that everybody, all the government officials, were staying away or was it a matter that they were actually out of touch?

EISENBRAUN: Apparently they had been in a meeting. The meeting was not because of the demonstrations. That meant that all the authority was tied up in one room and no underling in any other office would take any responsibility. I must reiterate, however, that someone had the good sense to send those extra police to the consulate, and the police did not back down from the demonstrators.

Q: What about, though, with General Zia, the fact that he didn't respond and the Pakistan army didn't respond, that must have lingered for a long time.

EISENBRAUN: It did. It did.

Q: I mean, was there-

EISENBRAUN: What, repercussions? What was the explanation? I don't know specifically what the Pakistan senior authorities told the Americans in Islamabad or Washington. Basically, their story was that it took time to get from the cantonment in Rawalpindi to embassy in Islamabad, a distance of a dozen miles or so. I think they always denied that they had anything except the best of intentions. It's undoubtedly true that it caught them as much by surprise as it did us. But it did take them an awfully long time; I think they were afraid the fury of the mob would turn on them, so they lingered until the situation resolved itself.

However, to repeat, the police saved us in Lahore. As it turned out, down at the USIS center, the American and local employees got up to the roof, and that included all the patrons who were in the library too. No one died or was seriously injured. They all got up to the roof and eventually off the building. The center was reduced to a smoldering hulk, though.

The story was not quite over, however. We all dispersed to our homes for the night. A phone line was established with Islamabad from people's homes. We got the word that night that Washington had ordered the evacuation of all non-essential Americans from the country for the following evening. We were told that a Pan Am 747 had been leased to come to Islamabad to pick up all dependents. That plane had a maximum capacity of around 300, maybe 350 seats. But there were more than 350 Americans in Pakistan, so it had to be decided on the spot, who went and who stayed. Who were official Americans? We were told, figure it out. As far as Lahore was concerned, they said that PIA had agreed to bring a special flight into the airport. The plane had 40 seats, so identify 40 people to be evacuated on that flight that would go up to Islamabad to meet the Pan Am flight. That was it. This was less than a two-minute order, and then the line was dead.

So, Fuller and I convened at the office early the next morning. The interior was okay, but the exterior was a shambles, a mess. The parking lot was filled with burned cars. The Pakistan Government sent around a cleaning force, even though we had not asked for it, and they cleaned up the exterior in a few hours, towing the cars out of public sight, and by noon, the consulate looked pretty good. Glass was reinstalled in the windows. I don't believe we ever asked for this, it was just provided, and we were back in operation. I guess the Pakistani authorities didn't want any evidence of this trouble to be tinder, you might say, for further demonstrations. Of course, they couldn't help the smoking building down at USIS. As for our work, the challenge was to figure out how to communicate with all the Americans and let them know that some of them, but not all, were going to be evacuated that night.

It didn't sit well with us, but we decided somehow that the American teachers didn't qualify as official Americans, that is, as U.S. government employees. We thought that's what it was defined as. We had to define it ourselves. The school was operating independently in that crisis; this is not a nice chapter in the relationships there among the Americans. They just made their own decisions. In fact, what they did is, the American teachers got in cars and headed for the Indian border 15 miles away. From there, they went to Amritsar and New Delhi. They were out of the country fast as far as I understand. I was pretty ashamed, you know, that the consulate didn't think of them first.

But still the question was, who are official U.S. government-funded people? Well, they were the U.S.-funded scientists at the malaria research lab and their families and there were some other U.S.-funded contractors around, plus the consulate staff and families; it wasn't hard to find 35 or 40 people. So we were calling and saying you're all being evacuated tonight. There's no choice, you have to leave with one suitcase. You've got to go. Everyone's in shock. That was Thanksgiving day, yes, and there had been plans for a huge American community picnic. I know that in our house, our cook was planning to cook about seven or eight turkeys that somehow they had found around the community and so the decision was okay, cook the turkeys. In the meantime, my wife was frantically packing, getting ready to fly off to the States. But who knew what would happen in Washington? There was no communication with the States. We were unable to call anybody in the States; that was impossible in those days.

We established a rallying point, the same apartment complex where we'd been evacuated to the night before. We had a departure of something like 7:30 in the evening and the army said, you gather your people and we will transport everybody in army trucks to the airport. And we're leaving right on time. They did. Everyone gathered in a chaotic and tearful scramble.

The army trucks arrived, and the soldiers said, get in right now. No one argued. There was a convoy of about five or six trucks, big ones. Totally anonymous. I mean, they're army, of course, but otherwise the canvas was down and they didn't want anyone to know that there were Americans inside. They drove through the dark and foggy night to the airport. We expected that we would go through the usual check-in procedure. What's this? No. The trucks went around to a far entrance off on the field. They had no more pulled onto the end of a runway than a small propeller plane landed and pulled up to us, keeping its engines running. All this was in minutes. We got off the trucks and the army said, get on this plane as fast as possible. People exchanged a few hugs and kisses, and it was all over in minutes. The engines never stopped. The plane turned around and roared back down the runway, leaving just four of us standing in the dark on the field.

The four were the Fuller, the consul general, Lundstead, the consular officer, Jim Larkin, the admin officer, and me. We sent away our communicator and the secretary. It was crazy for us to make that decision, but in our haste we thought, well, all of our communications went through Islamabad and that's destroyed, so what do we need a communicator for? Well, we didn't realize how valuable a communicator was, because they do more than communicate electronically. We didn't have a clue how to make up a diplomatic bag, for example.

And so we just waved good-bye to the plane. It was about 8:00 at night. What do we do? We're in shock. I said, you know, I've got all these turkeys back at the house. So we came back to my place and ad a big Thanksgiving dinner. Afterward, Lundstead said, I don't want to go back to the empty apartment at the compound where all the families had just left, can I stay with you?

So he stayed in the guest bedroom and he said he slept in his clothes. I did not, at first, but I had this vivid dream in the middle of the night; I dreamed that the phone rang and that somebody on the other end said, they're coming for you to finish you off. That was it, and I put the phone down. Then I awakened. The dream was so vivid that I believed it. I jumped up and got dressed and ran to tell Jeff, and there he was with his clothes on too. It's three in the morning. But then we began to realize this was a dream, so I got back in bed. I think I kept my clothes on, though, just in case I had to flee. I had that same dream the second night and the third night. Well, the third time around I recognized I'm having a dream, so I didn't jump up and get dressed.

(End side one, tape four)

Q: Well, maybe we can finish up the time- what happened afterwards? Or, how do you feel about it?

EISENBRAUN: Let me take another 20 minutes or so? I'll finish out 1979. There's something kind of interesting- we're not recording it, are we?

Q: We're now recording, yes.

EISENBRAUN: OK. Well, this is ironic because life returned to normal in Lahore, although not so in Islamabad. The skeleton crew left behind there had to find new office quarters. They camped out in a USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) building, I believe, but they were traumatized in Islamabad. We were not traumatized in Lahore. We were just left empty. But it's remarkable. The demonstrators evaporated and life returned to normal. We had told the FSNs, that is, the Pakistani employees, to leave the building while there was still time, and they did, but they anonymously mixed with the demonstrators. The consul general had an officially assigned bodyguard, and he stayed inside. In the moments while there was still time for him to get out the door, we said go, but he replied that it is my duty to be here. So he was prepared to burn down with us if necessary. I have to note that, I don't even remember his name, but he was loyal, and he didn't even work for us, he worked for the Punjab police.

All the FSNs were outside milling in the crowd and they reported that the leaders weren't Pakistani. They were Iranians and Palestinians. There was a large element of both Iranian and Palestinian students in Lahore. Of course, the Pakistani youth made up the bulk of the thousands of people in the crowd, but the leaders, they said, weren't even speaking Punjabi or Urdu, they were speaking Arabic or Farsi. So I think we should put that in the record. That actually made quite a difference to our personal reactions with the Pakistani public because the consulate was flooded with letters and telegrams and calls from Pakistanis expressing their condolences and outrage at this event.

I recall that a night or two after the attack and evacuation, I went to Nur Noon's for dinner. He let me use his phone to try to find my wife in the States. Nur had the only phone with international service available because he routinely kept an employee of the telephone company on his payroll so he could make any calls he wanted. Otherwise, one had to book an international call several days in advance, and it hardly ever went through anyway. By the way, on the way back home around one in the morning, I had a flat tire, just as I was passing Punjab University, a hotbed of radicalism. I didn't stop to change that tire, I drove home on the flat.

Let me relate what I learned later about my wife's experience on the chartered Pan Am flight back to the States. We learned subsequently that it was chaos up in Islamabad and that Pan Am flight came in and poof, they got all crammed in and just took off. Well, it so happened that my 15-month-old son, John, was developing an ear infection which we didn't know about. On that flight home, he cried and screamed the entire way. He had been crying in the hours before when he left Lahore, too. I guess to say crying is to understate it; he screamed the whole flight back to Washington and traumatized everybody, as several people told me later. The crew finally put him and my wife up in first class, as far away as possible from others. So, they arrived at Dulles and no friends or relatives knew they were coming. Where should they go from Dulles? It was Thanksgiving weekend. She called her mother in Iowa, but no answer, and no answer from her sister, also living in Iowa. So, what do to?

The authorities from the State Department met the plane, and I understand they were basically handing out tickets to go on somewhere else. I guess they had rented some rooms for those not planning to leave Washington, but there are others who are more knowledgeable about what happened in Washington than I. I expect the Department y did the best they could, but it was chaotic, said my wife. She decided on the spur of the moment to call some friends in Kansas City. She got them and said, can I come? They said yes.

So she caught a flight out that night and stayed about three or four days in Kansas City before she was able to establish contact with her family and eventually fly up to Iowa. It was hard. In addition to his ear infection, it turned out son John had an intestinal infection which took weeks to clear up. They continued to be traumatized, the dependents. How to survive, financially, for example. The Department wasn't handing out money at first, and weeks later only a pittance, and people didn't necessarily have any spare cash. It was a great personal crisis for these evacuees, those who didn't immediately have families to retreat to. I must add that my wife was seven months pregnant during that evacuation.

As for me, life returned almost to normal in Lahore. It was the start of the cold season, which meant the start of the social season for the Pakistanis. The consulate was all cleaned up. We didn't have any official communications at the office, but I was still writing reports by hand and typing them myself with the intent that they would be sent off soon, telling the story of the attack, and other political reporting.

I should say that, actually, things got pretty quiet and pretty lonesome. I continued my rounds of meeting political leaders and typing reports that we couldn't send. One of the political leaders I had been meeting with all year long was a gentleman named Malik Wazir Ali, a retired Civil Service of Pakistan official who had become the general secretary of a party called the Tehrik-e-Istiqlal, which stood for the return of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan. It was headed by a retired air vice marshal, Asghar Khan. I never met him because he lived in the Islamabad area.

But anyway, I had been friendly with Malik Wazir Ali. On the day after Christmas, a lonely time, by the way, I paid a call on him in the morning at his home. It was a beautiful sunny day, cool, and we sat out in the garden and had tea. He said our discussion would have to be briefer than he wanted, as he and his wife were planning a family trip that afternoon into the western part of Pakistan, to Mianwali district. About the time he told me this, his wife Nasra, whom I had never met, and his daughter Shahnaz, a teacher at the American School, came home from errands and joined us for tea. On the spur of the moment, they invited me to come along with them on their planned trip to this rugged area. I had already been to Mianwali on my office trips, and I knew it was a pretty wild and interesting area. I said it would be great to go along with them.

I went back to the office, and secured Fuller's permission. He thought it would be worthwhile to travel with a Pakistani family into the countryside. He didn't have any qualms about the fact that I was traveling with a Pakistani politician. He said, well, I don't think it matters from a perception point of view because you'll be with his family. So I got a consulate car and adjoined them in Faisalabad that night, a town about 75 miles south where they said they were going to spend the night. They'd given me the address where they were staying with some friends.

I mention this because, first of all, the Wazir Alis were very gracious and it was a lot of fun, and second, I learned more about Pakistani rural life than I could ever have learned on my own, despite the fact that I had been off and around the Punjab on my official travels. We made our way slowly out to a little town called Bhakkar in Mianwali district. We stayed in the town home of the local zamindar, that is, the local landowner and power broker of the area by the name of Captain Ahmed Nawaz. His town home was rather Spartan, as he used it only for meetings from time to time, living the rest of the time in the countryside.

It turned out to be fascinating to see how a local landlord conducted his business, which we watched for the better part of a week. I should note that Pakistan was then, and still is, one of the last remaining feudal societies in the world, where landlords controlled everything, the land, the economy, the politics, and the government bureaucrats who came on short postings and then went on.

Ahmed held court all day long outside in the cool sun. He sat in a chair with a couple of attendants nearby and a telephone that had a long, long cord that went back into the house. He didn't dail on that phone, he just picked it up and got the operator in town. There were always 30 or 40 or 50 local people, mostly farmers, people of very modest circumstances, who were queued up or milling around the gate, respectfully, quietly, waiting to see him. Ahmed Nawaz's guards would let them in a few at a time for an audience.

While he was being shaved, or having tea, he met people and heard their problems. He was generally very cordial, and always offered people tea. If he thought somebody was hungry, he offered them food. Many people were too proud, perhaps, to admit their hunger, but others accepted and were given rice and chapattis. They came because they needed him to solve their problems, which is what the local landlord was supposed to do. We just sat and watched, and Wazir Ali was able to hear enough to give me an update from time to time of what was going on. The men-never women-would present personal problems, such as a wife having run away, or a brother-in-law stealing from the family business, and so forth.

Having heard the story, Ahmed Nawaz would just declare, ah! and pick up the phone and bark out orders to the local official he got immediately connected with, whether police or whatever, and I was told that they always carried out his decisions. He would decree that this is the way it's going to be, he would make decisions on people's lives, whether it was legal or social or political or land disputes, whatever it was, he would make decisions right there on the spot. Then he would put down the phone and he'd offer tea or food. The man with the problem would express their humble gratitude and would leave, sometimes after having some food. And this went on all day long. All day from eight in the morning until dark he sat and heard people's problems. And I had no doubt that Ahmed Nawaz was probably a wise man, especially after Wazir Ali would summarize some of his decisions for me. I relate this story because I think it represented the way life was in the countryside, as this pattern was happening wherever there was a big landlord.

One other event I observed is worth relating about rural life. One afternoon, the four of us, Wazir Ali, his wife Nasra, and daughter Shahnaz, went out to a village. Virtually as soon as we arrived, Nasra and Shahnaz were surrounded by the village women who were asking questions and imploring them to do something, which I couldn't understand. I wondered what on earth was going on. Here's the story:  These women, recognizing that educated Pakistani women were in the village, were asking for answers about birth control. I learned that they said they felt like prisoners to their husbands because of constant babies to tend to, and they wanted to know how to avoid getting pregnant so frequently. I have no idea what Nasra and Shahnaz told them, but they took the questions seriously and tried to give good advice. This was the major concern of the village women.

Q:  Of course. Well now, did we have any AID program to do anything on this?

EISENBRAUN:  Yes, in general, I think there had been family planning programs, but at that time, there was virtually nothing going on because we had virtually stopped our AID programs in response to the overthrow of Bhutto. So I doubt there were many programs out there in the rural areas at that time.

Wazir Ali got up very early each day and listened to the BBC news on his small portable shortwave radio. One day in the latter part of that week, I joined him in the garden after the news, and he said, well Steve, what would you say if I told you that the Soviets have invaded Afghanistan and the Americans have re-established a close relationship with Pakistan and are sending military assistance to prepare against a possible Soviet invasion of Pakistan? I replied, well, that would be a good Hollywood story. He responded, well, actually it's happening. The Soviets invaded during the night, and Jimmy Carter called General Zia and offered unlimited military assistance. And all this is happening not two hundred miles from where we were sitting. That's how I learned about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: Well, I think this is probably a good place to stop. And so we're really essentially at the end of '79, you've just heard about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the American response and we'll pick it up and see what happens.

EISENBRAUN: That sounds good.

Q: Today is the sixth of April 2005. Steve, we're now at the end of 1979, Soviets are coming into Afghanistan in force. What happened to you?

EISENBRAUN: Well, after coming back from Bhakkar on the first of January, a lot of things began to happen. It was never the same in Lahore. The job wasn't the same, life wasn't the same. First to remind you, the families had all been evacuated about five weeks before.

Q: This is because of the-

EISENBRAUN: Of the attack on the Embassy. For me, one of the first things to happen is that I became acting principal officer because the embassy wanted to send as many as possible of the skeleton crew back on R&R (rest and recreation) to the States. So, the consul general, Clive Fuller, went back to Washington and left me in charge of what had now become a very small post. A few American staff had come back, one USIS person, and the secretary, Fran Kendrick, and a new communicator, Dick Gary.

The Ambassador in Islamabad, Arthur Hummel, had gone to Washington at the end of the year, and he returned to relate that no one in Washington could understand why the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan.

Q: I'm still asking the question. Did you come up with any answer?

EISENBRAUN: Well, I want to tell you the thoughts of the Pakistanis on this subject. Art Hummel invited anyone on his staff and at the consulates to send in an analysis. He said you can send it directly to Washington, bypassing the embassy, which had reestablished communications. So I took this on as a big challenge. I thought, this is my chance to be George Kennon, you know, and explain it. Not that I had any original ideas, particularly, but I had the privilege of talking to a lot of very sophisticated Pakistanis in Lahore, a lot of people who were very thoughtful and very articulate. So I explored their thoughts-this was, after all, the topic everyone wanted to discuss anyway. Everybody in Lahore I talked with, whatever his or her position on the political spectrum, thought the same thing, which was this.

The Soviets really had a strategic plan in mind and they ultimately wanted access to a warm water port and Karachi was that warm water port, the main commercial port of Pakistan. Working with the connivance of the Indian Government, the Soviets had in mind the dismemberment of Pakistan in the effort to get their port in Karachi. Mind you, the Pakistanis were still just recovering from the 1971 war, so complete dismemberment didn't seem so radical a concept. They'd already been cut in half by India in 1971. The invasion of Afghanistan was only the first step in the master plan, they thought, and Pakistan was in mortal danger. My contacts pointed out that the Americans must agree because they were sending in considerable military and economic assistance.

I spent a lot of time drafting what I thought was a good cable and send it in. It went under my name because I was the head of the office, and I slugged it, at the Ambassador's direction, for the NSC (National Security Council) at the White House and for the Secretary of State. The embassy put in its own analysis, as I'm sure Karachi and Peshawar did.

So, Fuller was gone for the month of January, and then I was slated to go to the States for the month of February because my wife was due to give birth.

In the first days of January, 1980, a cable came from the Secretary of State ordering every post in the Islamic world to destroy all of its classified material, or ship some of the vital material immediately back to Washington. The point was, within a couple of days, don't have any classified at post beyond a working file that it could be burned-and this is really important-in five minutes. Because Washington fully expected more attacks. Who knew what post would be overrun next? .

It's hard to imagine, but in the small consulate in Lahore, classified wasn't really destroyed. Virtually nothing, only maybe ten percent of what we held, as it turned out. Fuller felt that our holdings were of historical significance. They went back 20-some years, and there was a lot of fascinating archival information, and he said it just wasn't appropriate to destroy it. And second, it just wasn't feasible to box it up and ship it back because we were barely functioning with diplomatic pouches. Also our classified and our unclassified were mixed together to a large extent. Imagine file after file after file, things all mixed together.

On the roof of the consulate there were five burn barrels. You may remember the era when there were burn barrels in of our consulates and embassies around the world. I'll bet that few posts ever tried to use one of those barrels. We decided to try one out. The idea was that in an emergency you just dumped everything you had, even typewriters, in there, absolutely anything; and then light the fuse. Fuller said, let's use one of them and see what happens.

We gathered some of the classified material and half-filled one burn barrel and lit it. Well, that was quite a show. It worked. It was like a Saturn rocket going the opposite way, with its tail of fire going up into the air and the rocket theoretically going down into the ground. The flare went up 20 feet or something. It was just unbelievable and created quite a spectacle. People going by on the street no doubt wondered what on earth was happening. You couldn't get within 10 or 15 feet of the burn barrel, and there was no way of putting it out.

Well, we were mighty impressed. Fuller said, well, in five minutes time if we had to we could bring up all our files to the roof and use the other four burn barrels. We could dump everything in there indiscriminately and light the fuses and that's five minutes. The cable from Washington asked for a written compliance cable from the ranking officer saying we were down to five minutes. Fuller drafted it under his name and sent it, certifying that we had complied. But we hadn't complied. We may have been the only post that didn't comply

Fuller went back to Washington, leaving me in charge. The mood was tense. After all, on one side of us was Iran where the hostages were being held. The Soviets were invading to the northwest of us and the fighting was pretty fierce and refugees were coming into Pakistan. We had our own worries because we were convinced that the demonstrators would finish the job and burn us out. We knew that all the perpetrators of the attack were still out there in Lahore, probably passing by our consulate every day, rankled by the fact that the flag was still flying. So we felt deep in our bones it was a given that there was another attack coming. I know that Islamabad felt that way too, even more so. So, while life appeared to go back to normal, deep inside we felt that they were coming for us again, this time with a lot of gasoline.

I was in charge and I didn't know the extent of our classified holdings. The communications officer, Dick Gary, came to me a couple days after Fuller departed and said, you know, back there in the vault is an incredible amount of classified stuff. As you know, in our missions abroad, nobody goes back into those deep areas of the communications center except for the communications people themselves. He invited me back and showed me file after file, whole cabinets. And in the outer officer area by my desk and in Fuller's office there were other files thick with historical material with the classified and unclassified put together that went back 10, 15 years. I hadn't even realized what was back in the secure area. Dick asked, how could we have sent that cable saying we were down to five minutes destruction time? Clearly, this whole building is full of classified.

So, we had a meeting, the four of us. We agreed we couldn't live with this subterfuge. We had to tell Islamabad, this is national security information here, we can't keep it. So it was agreed that I would go up to the embassy and tell the DCM the situation. Mind you, I'm telling you stuff that was kept really quiet at the time, but I don't know that it has to be so quiet 25 years later. This was awfully sensitive at the time. I flew up to Islamabad and met with the DCM.

Q: Who was the DCM?

EISENBRAUN: Barry King.

Q: I know Barry.

EISENBRAUN: Good man.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: Barry was a rather crusty senior man who'd seen it all and done it all, but still, he practically fell out of his chair when I reported our situation. He couldn't believe what I was telling him because there had been an order from the Secretary of State. It wasn't a casual cable. This was one of the more dramatic things in front of Washington at that time, the security of our embassies in the Islamic world. So he said, all right, you're ordered to go back to Lahore tonight. I will send you a cable to give you the additional authority to destroy. You go in there tomorrow morning, even though it's a weekend, with the staff and destroy everything. Then you send me a cable of compliance. Real compliance.

I thought my career might be over because I was essentially turning in a senior officer for non-compliance on a really important issue. But I also thought I didn't have any choice. I'm in charge of the consulate for an entire month, and at any moment we could be overrun again. That's the way the other people felt in the consulate too, we were unanimous in this attitude, but we were also quite junior except for Dick Gary, the communications officer. We all felt that we'd really done something pretty bad and disloyal. Necessary, but we thought that there could be some serious repercussions for us. I certainly thought that I could kiss this career good-bye.

I went back to Lahore, and we all came in early the next morning. We opened up every file and worked virtually all day. We even opened the one in the consul general's office, his so-called personal file. We found some really sensitive stuff, almost current nodis cables. The communications officer knew it was there, of course, because he had given it to the consul general, but I as deputy hadn't known the material existed. Fuller's secretary didn't know it existed. We pulled all that stuff out and spent the day with the shredder. We estimated when it got done it was 22 cubic feet that we had destroyed. It took hours to go through the classified and unclassified together. I think we've probably learned this all over the world, don't mix the two because it's impossible in a crisis to sort it. By the time we went home at four or five in the afternoon, we were confident that the consulate was clean. We kept literally three or four cables in a chron file that could be burned with a match. I sent the second compliance cable.

(End of side two, tape four)

Q: This is tape five, side one. Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: Right. So, this was kept very quiet. The other consulates didn't know what- had happened. All they saw was a second cable, this time from the embassy, reiterating the first instruction for complete destruction, and they innocently replied that they were down to nothing. Fuller came back from the States at the end of January, and I left the next morning. We hardly had an hour's overlap. I remember he called me over for a drink in the evening, and I filled him in on all the details and said, well, you know, this cable came down from Islamabad defining what classified meant, so we had to throw everything away. He asked, everything was thrown away? Including the stuff in my safe, my personal stuff? I replied yes, everything that was classified had to go, there was no question. So he sighed and said, all right, I guess that's the way it had to be.

I did not tell him that I had gone up there and initiated this. I had been told by Barry King not to discuss it. He said, you take care of the consulate and don't worry about anything else. So I was, essentially, out of the loop and I guess, the DCM thought that was the best thing, that a junior officer didn't need to be privy to all that was going on. I wasn't proud of myself for not telling the consul general, however, about what I'd done.

Q: Well, I mean, I'm not quite sure- you're caught in this thing, you know, I think King was protecting you but I mean, you're supposed to do it. And one has to think about a worst case scenario and the worst case scenario wasn't that far from being reality.

EISENBRAUN: No, that's right. We all thought that the next attack was just around the corner, so there wasn't any choice.

Q: But during this time you're talking about, you had Iran doing its thing, the Soviets doing their thing in Afghanistan, was India pretty quiet? I mean, because they're right, 17 miles away or something. Did you feel any threat from them?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, the people in Lahore felt a threat. They were sure that the Soviets were going to roll into the Punjab next. They were sending division after division of their best troops into Afghanistan. What, just to fight the Afghanis and to subdue them? The Pakistanis couldn't understand why the Soviets would expend all this effort on the Afghans. There had to be another purpose. The Pakistanis were sure that the Soviets would be striking next into the Punjab and that the Indians were going to cooperate in some fashion. So there was a lot of tension in Lahore. On the other hand, it seems reasonable from the Indian point of view that they were about as shocked as anyone else with the Soviet invasion. It's one thing for the Indian government to have a close military supply relationship with the Soviets and to be allowed to produce some of the materials under license that the Soviets allowed them to do, some of the war materials, but it was quite another to have the Soviets really in their backyard. And after all, India has for decades seen itself as the major player on the South Asian subcontinent and Pakistan as a nuisance. From the Indian point of view, Pakistan was an important rival but still it was India's sphere of influence. And the Soviets weren't any more welcome than the Americans were within their sphere.

Q: I would assume.

EISENBRAUN: So, in fact, I think that the great tension felt in Lahore regarding India was perhaps unfounded. It turned out to be unfounded, in fact, because nothing ever happened, but I don't think that India was doing anything belligerent to fan the flames. But nevertheless there was a palpable sense of tension.

Well then, at the end of January came and I went off to the States and attended the birth of my daughter, Annie, in Iowa.

I barely made it. She was born in the middle of a snowstorm a day or two after I arrived. I stayed several weeks in Iowa. In addition to new daughter Annie, I had to get reacquainted with my 18-month-old son John, who was OK, having recovered from his ear and intestinal infections. Then I had to return to Pakistan in three weeks, leaving my wife Jane to cope with a newborn and a toddler, all camping out with her mother.

So then it was the latter part of February when I returned to Pakistan. I stopped in Washington for some days and talked to people in the NEA (Near Eastern Affairs) bureau, and got caught up on what had happened in Pakistan in my absence. I asked the desk officer, the country director and then the principal DAS, Peter Constable, whether by chance they'd seem my cable from Lahore on the issue of Soviet intentions in Afghanistan. But they all said, no, they couldn't remember having seen it. I went over to the NSC (National Security Council) where a friend, Tom Thornton, was handling South Asia, and over a lunch of sandwiches in his office I asked if he had seen the cable. No, he said he couldn't recall any cable like that. So anyway, I left Washington with a little lesson in humility that not a soul could even recall my cable. In fact, I think probably what happened is that it went directly from my pen to the archives and was never read. Someday maybe I'll do a Freedom of Information request and try to find it.

Well, I flew back out to Pakistan at the end of February. Fuller told me it had been pretty quiet in Lahore while I had been gone, and we settled down to business as usual for a few days. Then, the Ambassador called Fuller up to Islamabad.

Q: What was his name again?

EISENBRAUN: Clive Fuller. He came into the office that morning and said, I got a call from Islamabad last night and they want me to fly up to Islamabad this morning. He added that he didn't know what they wanted. The next morning, he came to the office and related to me that he had been relieved of his duties, that the Ambassador said he no longer had confidence in him and that he was being sent back to Washington. He handed me his in-box and said, here are the things I'm working on, they're now yours. If you have any questions , let me know. I'm going home and start packing, and I'm not coming back in the office. We didn't talk further.

We just sort of sat there, that is the secretary, Fran, and I and Dick Gary, and I guess Jeff came up from the consular section and we were all stunned. First of all, Fuller didn't tell us why he was dismissed, and nobody had told us anything from Islamabad, so it was just as much a surprise to us as it was to him. Of course, we could kind of figure that it might have been the issue of the nondestruction of the classified material. To this day no one has ever said a word to me about the incident; it was just complete silence from the embassy on this matter.

So, a few days later Fuller got on a plane and departed, and I was left in charge of the office again. That was about the first of March, 1980, and I served in an acting capacity until the middle of July.

Q: Were you there when Assistant Secretary for Human Rights Pat Derrian came through?

EISENBRAUN: Yes.

Q: How did that go?

EISENBRAUN: Well, that was quite an experience because she was a fiesty lady. She came through about a month after I had assumed charge. Her visit didn't get off to a very good start because I set up meetings for her and reported back her proposed schedule that included what I thought was a balanced introduction to a wide variety of the important people in Lahore. About 24 hours before she was to arrive, a cable came back from wherever she was on the road and it said I don't like any of the people you set me up with so cancel all those meetings. Here are the people I really want to meet. They tended to be almost all people from the Pakistan Peoples Party or even on the far left beyond that. One name on the list was a journalist whose name I don't remember, an older man, really charming and thoughtful. He and his wife were really pleasant to talk with. They were considered, well, communist sympathisers, if not outright communists. I don't know where she got that list from, but it was all skewed to the left. There were no Islamic leaders, there were no moderates; it was all of one persuasion only.

So, okay, it was kind of embarrassing, but I had to call up all the contacts and say there's been a change of plans. We scrambled and set up all the alternate meetings she had requested. Personally, we got off to a good start, because at that time I was subscribing to The Village Voice and I had a whole year's worth of back issues in her guest room in my house. She dropped her bags and came out of the room, saying I have never been in a Foreign Service house yet where there was all this wealth of information, meaning The Village Voice.

I took her around to these meetings she had requested. One was with a young barrister, Ethizaz Ahsan, who later became the Minister of Law when Benazir Bhutto bcame Prime Minister. He's a charming guy, very articulate, and I believe an Oxford or Cambridge graduate. He played her like she was a violin. They got along famously. He told her stories that were not literally inaccurate, but his point was a little off, reflecting his bias rather than the actual facts. She, however, thought he was tremendous and encouraged him with the equivalent of right on several times. Afterwards, we went out and got in the car, and she exclaimed, that was just a wonderful meeting. And I said, well, you have to keep in mind his perspective and that not everything he said was quite accurate, could not be taken to the bank. She angrily replied, I'm quite capable of making my own analysis, I don't need your thoughts. And I said, okay, but that's what I thought I was here for. And she said, no, you're here just to facilitate my visit.

When I put her on the plane, I thought, well, I didn't handle that visit that very well. That was my first major duty as the acting principal officer. Amazingly, she told people in Islamabad I had been the most helpful of any of her Foreign Service contacts along the way and that Lahore stood out as the best part of her visit to Pakistan. Go figure.

Q: It is a littleinprofessional to come into a strange country and get what amounts to a snow job and not accept some of these people on the ground to say, you know, this is a snow job.

EISENBRAUN: Yeah, that's what I thought.

Q: Well, was there a Benazir Bhutto coterie at that time in Pakistan?

EISENBRAUN: Oh yes, there certainly was. But of course, that was only just developing. She was not an active political player in my tenure, '78 to '81. Part of that time she might have been in the Sindh and mostly under house arrest, if I remember correctly. Other times, I believe she spent a lot of time in London, or at least out of the country. General Zia had her pretty much wrapped up. But everyone assumed that she was going to be important some day. I've not met her to this day. There were a lot of people in Lahore who would gladly have facilitated an introduction during the time she was not under house arrest, such as when she was in London However, I figured it would have been considered bad judgment to even bring up such a prospect to the embassy in Islamabad.

Q: Then, the rest of the time you were in Lahore, what was developing particularly as the Afghan conflict was concerned, its impact on where you were?

EISENBRAUN: Well, it never affected our lives very much in Lahore. After the great scare in the winter and spring of 1980 that the Soveits would come marching in, things went pretty much back to normal. We were aware that there were literally, what? Millions of refugees in the northwest frontier province a couple of hundred miles away from Lahore, but no refugees had made their way down to Lahore. I did go out and do a little bit more traveling. Travelled up to the northwest area near the frontier and I did see some refugees on the road but they never made their way into the heart of the Punjab. We were aware that a resistance force had been developed, the mujahidin, Afghan freedom fighters, who were back in the country fighting, and everyone knew that the Americans were helping supply them, but the details I wasn't aware of. There's a book out now called Charlie Wilson's War, which describes Charlie Wilson, the congressman on the appropriations committee who took it as his personal mission to fund the mujahidin. Wilson had to overcome a great deal of skepticism and inertia even inWashington before sufficient resources went out to turn the tide against the Soviets and that took years. But we weren't aware of that in Lahore. All we knew was that American assistance was flowing.

I continued as acting principal officer until July, when a really find gentleman named John Brims, who had been the deputy in Karachi, was named the consul general. So he came up and we got along really well.

Months and months dragged on in the spring of '80, February, March, April and the dependents were not being allowed to come back. After these shocks of the December-January period, Pakistan settled into pretty much into business as usual, and our fears began to recede that there would be another attack. There was a lot of pressure mounting to bring the families back. It became obvious eventually why the families weren't being brought back because there was this hostage rescue attempt being planned in Washington. That happened, I think, in April of '80. I got no advance warning, of course, because it was, after all, a super secret event. Seems to me it was a Friday afternoon when I heard, and I was at the swimming pool. A call got to me that the DCM was anxious to talk to me. What's going on? He said there's been this rescue attempt in Iran to try to get all the hostages out, but it went wrong and so you should inform the Punjab government and ask for extra security for the consulate. So we got another big contingent of police around the office. The Pakistanis were really very receptive to any security requests we asked for. There was a worry that there would be some kind of retaliation against the United States for this rescue attempt. There was none, however. Afterwards, it was obvious why the families hadn't been allowed to come back for so long.

During this same period, the Chinese premier made an official visit to Pakistan,and General Zia brought him down to Lahore, and the governor held a banquet. It was the only time I was at the governor's mansion in Lahore, which is really quite a splendid place. I was invited to this official dinner, and I think the Pakistani protocol people kind of had fun with the seating assignments, because although there were hundreds of guests, they seated me next to the Iranian consul. This while the hostage crisis was in full swing. Now, it just so happened I knew the Iranian pretty well from prior to the days when the Shah had fled and the Iranians were the only other consulate in Lahore. The diplomats at the Iranian Consulate had been very friendly with the Americans, and his wife used to bring their kids to play at our house. So, how could I give him the cold shoulder a few months later, even though officially I was not supposed to talk to him? He was pretty nervous and I was kind of nervous. Eventually, I asked how's your family? He seemed relieved and replied, well they're back in Teheran, and how's yours? I told him of the birth of my daughter in the States. He seemed grateful that I had acknowledged his presence, and we chatted a little further about the weather and so forth. I didn't report it to Washington.

In early part of June of 1980 the families were allowed to come back and they did. I should say it was kind of dramatic in my case. My wife flew first to Athens with my oldest son, who was 18 months old, and the newest baby, Annie, who was six months old. They intended to visit American friends there for a few days. But while there my son, John, got seriously ill and had to have an operation. So at the last second, I was allowed to fly to Athens to join them. The operation turned out all right, and I was able to accompany them back to Pakistan.

After my wife returned to Lahore, she saw all her old friends and we were back on the social circuit. I had kind of dropped off because I didn't have the energy or the interest to run around to all the parties, and I don't think I was quite as interesting as my wife was, anyway.

The third year, 1981 to '82, was pretty uneventful. The dramatic events of the previous year tended to recede a bit. I was recruited to be the political officer on the India desk in the Department starting in the summer of '81. That was still in the days when the American government was using its excess rupies from India and Pakistan, and the government allowed those posted in India and Pakistan to travel on the Cunard Lines across the Atlantic. There was only a small contingent of us that knew about this travel prospect because the Foreign Service was not advertising it, but I know about a dozen officers and their families who were able to take advantage of that travel. Strangely , Cunard put a caveat on this travel which said one had to go first class, there wasn't any tourist class that they would accept. So the four of us in my family went back across on the Queen Elizabeth II in July of '81, first class. That was a nice way of going back to the States. And so we arrived back in the States in July of '81 and I took up my duties on the India desk.

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Q: I was just thinking, you were on the India desk from when to when?

EISENBRAUN: Summer of '81 to the summer of '83.

Q: Did you find it, I mean, having been immersed in Pakistan, how it was it at the India desk?

EISENBRAUN: I was familiar with India because I had been out in the region for the previous five years and had been a student in India for a year, so India was not a foreign country to me. But it was a completely different type of work to come back and learn how to function in the Washington bureaucratic environment. India is such a big country with such diverse interests to Americans, from political to scientific to military to commercial affairs, and it was a huge challenge to learn about all these things.

Q: Well then, were you picking up what the Indian reaction to the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan during this period?

EISENBRAUN: It was not something that dominated our relationship with India, but the Indian Government never lost an opportunity to protest all of the aid we were providing Pakistan. The Indian reaction to Afghanistan did not seem different from the Washington perspective than I had mentioned previously, that it, India did not like to see the Soviets in Afghanistan any more than we did.

Q: Who was the prime minister when you were on the India desk?

EISENBRAUN: Indira Gandhi., who did not have warm feelings for the United States. Most of her coolness probably came from her 1971 experiencewhen she hadn't gotten along well with Richard Nixon and she didn't feel that the United States was sympathetic to India's plight in the events that led to the creation of Bangladesh. I imagine she didn't understand why the Americans didn't give her-or India-its due as a world power. As a matter of fact, she was not alone in that regard. Probably every intellectual in India who dealt with foreign policy, and all those who didn't deal with foreign policy for that matter, couldn't figure out why it was that the Americans couldn't understand that India was on the verge of being a super power and accord them the status they deserved. They wanted even then to be on the UN Security Council, for example, and we would have nothing of it. They were developing a blue water navy, but we saw that as a potential threat. We were focusing a lot of attention on China because Nixon had opened up China some years earlier, and Soviet affairs occupied Washington's attention, not India. In strategic terms, Washington saw India as a friend of the Soviets, so that kept our relationship cool. The Indians couldn't understand how we wouldn't have a bigger strategic point of view and accommodate their interests more. But their interests and our interests hardly ever matched. They saw themselves as the preeminent power in their part of the world, and we were unwilling to recognize that to the extent that they wanted. So there was always tension in the relationship.

Q: We'll pick up some of the other issues later that came up during that period. Great.

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Today is May 2, 2005. Steve, we're talking about when you were on the India desk from '81 to '83. Did anyone at the Department look at the relationship with Indira Gandhi figure out how best to make the relationship a little more friendly?

EISENBRAUN: Funny that you should ask that question because that's just what I had planned to talk about. In our relations with India in 1981, we were still recovering from the early 1970s when Mrs. Gandhi got such a frosty reception in Washington. The relationship had not improved very much, especially as we became more friendly with Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistgan. Also, another major constraint to better relations had to do with India's nuclear program. They had exploded what they called a peaceful nuclear device in 1974; actually I was in India as a student at that time and I saw the outburst of national pride among the students at Delhi University. Even though India said it was a peaceful detonation without military implications, India continued its nuclear research, and some of it had to do with weapons research. We were quite concerned with a particular power plant in India, named Tarapur, that did not have safeguarded fuel, for example.

(End of tape five, side one)

Q: Yes?

EISENBRAUN: I came onto the desk in August of '81, just at the time that a new American was named the Ambassador to India. This was Harry Barnes, the first career Foreign Service officer to be named to New Delhi. Harry was a very vigorous and ambitious individual, and he had it in mind from the first day that he was going to do everything in his power to improve the relationship between India and the U.S. He had a variety of ideas for that. Central to his plan was to get Mrs. Gandhi invited to Washington, not on a working visit but on an official, full blown state visit. In one way or another, his whole focus in that first year of his in office was to get her to Washington and he was successful. She came in July of 1982.

A state visit wasn't all Harry had in mind for improving relations. He was not going out to India just to be a representative of the U.S. He was going out there as an active agent for change, positive change. Another of his initiatives for improving relations involved developing a number of bilateral commissions. I don't mean to do injustice to Harry here, but I don't remember how many he created, four or five of them; one for cultural matters, another for commercial affairs, and there must have been some kind of a political commisison. His intent was to get very distinguished people from India and America, movers and shakers, who would be able to meet together on a periodic basis and develop programs that would tie the two countries together in such a way that there mutual interests would trump the larger bilateral strains.

He reiterated his goals for the commissions once to me personally as we sat together in Roosevelt House, the Ambassador's residence in New Delhi. I was on a visit to India in September 1982, and over a drink, he had asked me if I had any ideas how he could be more effective in Washington. I said he needed to find some way to be more critical of India, as he had developed a reputation in the Department as India's greatest cheerleader. He ignored my point, saying, Steve, you just don't quite understand that the whole point is to develop closer relations, using the commissions, and here he put his fingers together to form a web, to create an intermeshing of the important institutions and personalities in New Delhi and New York and Washington. His mission was to improve the relationshp and I think by and large he did so within the greater constraints that he couldn't really control, that is, the greater strategic issues.

But anyway, I was jumping ahead. The first I spent on the desk was nothing but, in one way or another, developing Harry's relationship all through Washington and New York, wherever there were influential people that needed to know something about India. Harry would in some way or another contrive to meet everybody on Capitol Hill, in the business community, in the arts and cultural world, you name it. Of course the big business community didn't really care about India at that time because India had closed, essentially, its borders to major foreign trade and investment. Harry had only limited success with the business leaders in America, but he tried. His ultimate goal was to introduce Indians to these people.

His efforts happened to coincide with one of these strange events that happen in American popular culture occasionally when certain countries become the fad, and India was immensely popular just then, having caught the American imagination in the early '80s, evidenced by the fact that the movie Gandhi came out in in 1982 and won the Academy Award as the Best Picture of the Year. Well, Harry was very happy to take advantage of that public interest.

Let me spend a fair amount of time describing the preparations for and then the execution of Indira Gandhi's visit to the United States in the summer of 1982. That visit is a case study, I think, of how American foreign policy sometimes is made.

Q: Can you first, if you don't mind, what had happened to sour the relationship when she came in 1971 when Nixon was president, just to pu tthe issue in contrast.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, we talked about that earlier, but it's probably worthwhile to just review that for a moment. Mrs. Gandhi came to Washington in December of 1971 and met Kissinger and Nixon at the White House, and the issue was, essentially, the civil war that was going on between East and West Pakistan and those who would say that there was genocide in East Pakistan, in what became Bangladesh. At the time, there was a huge outflow of refugees, up to 10 million of them, into India, primarily into neighboring West Bengal. Mrs. Gahndi said this cannot be tolerated, first on a humanitarian basis and then economically. Her country could not absorb 10 million refugees, and there were terrible things, anyway, being perpetrated by the Pakistani army upon the civilians in what became Bangladesh.

For American strateic reasons, we did not want India to intervene in that situation, which would essentially mean some kind of a conflict, a war between India and Pakistan. We didn't want that instability in South Asia, largely because Nixon and Kissinger were working secretly with Pakistan as a conduit to China. Pakistan and China always had had a close relationship, and Nixon had his goal of being able to open up the doors to China. Kissinger actually flew from Peshawar to China, all facilitated by the Pakistanis. So that's the immediate concern, that we didn't want to have anything jeopardizing the basic stability and relationship of the South Asian countries. We didn't want a war between India and Pakistan that would likely result in the breakup of Pakistan, and who knew how far India would take this because India was going to prevail by force of numbers and who knew if they would keep moving and not just dismember East and West Pakistan but dismember West Pakistan, too. No one knew for sure.

So this was not in American strategic interest to have a war, and I think Mrs. Gandhi we didn't want a war. She thought, however, that she had all the right on her side. The Pakistani army was committing genocide in East Pakistan and why couldn't the American see that? Plus, she had the economic burden of the 10 million refugees. She felt that she had all the cards in her hand, and couldn't understand why the Americans would be so obstinate. And not only obstinate but belligerent. The Americans sent the carrier Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal as a warning to the Indians not to go too far. The clear intent was to tell the Indians, don't go too far vis-ï¿½-vis the Pakistanis.

Q: This was the so-called tilt toward Pakistan.

EISENBRAUN: That was the tilt toward Pakistan, that's right. So Mrs. Gandhi felt that she was not treated with proper respect in Washington, that Washington simply did not understand the politics of South Asia, and that only confirmed her hostility anyway toward Americans over the years that went way back to when her father was prime minister when we always favored Pakistan as far as she could see. Then the Americans were equally antagonized because they thought they had assurances from her that there would be no war, and within weeks she attacked. So each side felt betrayed.

So now that ill-will lingered, that legacy. That was '71 and so now it was '81, 10 years later. You'd think in 10 years things would calm down and cool off, but they didn't sufficiently. There was still a great deal of antagonism in New Delhi and in Washington and you know, India didn't matter as much then as it does now. India is now emerging onto the world as a major player, and it is now a nuclear power and so forth, but in the early 80s, India didn't matter quite as much then to American strategic planners, who had their eyes fixed on China and the Soviet Union and the Middle East. And so India was second or third tier.

Well, Harry Barnes, looking at his relationship as Ambassador, was going to change the realtionship as much as possible. He lobbied the Indian government to open up their country to American investment and trade. He had to work both sides. To say nothing of the political relationship, he wanted to impress upon the Indians that we had no choice strategically but to support Pakistan when the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan, but he also argued to the Indians that look, you shouldn't really be so antagonistic about this because you don't want the Soviets on your doorstep either. Fine to be friendly with them, but the Soviets had gone too far and they're threatening your interests in South Asia and so we're merely doing essentially your bidding and you don't have to do anything except recognize it, be friendlier to us. He had a fairly strong argument there, he wasn't whistling in the wind. In addition to all the commissions he was developing and all the other arguments he was making to policymakers, I think it's fair to say that the idea of Mrs. Gandhi coming on a state visit originated with him. I can't remember any other element within the U.S. government that was leading this. I think it was Harry Barnes; he created it and he made it happen.

He was aided in this by the fact that there was a very friendly, gregarious president, Ronald Reagan, in the White House. Several of us had a chance to meet him a couple of times in this period. The White House started this practice; I don't know if other administrations had done it, of the President meeting the Ambassador and his family before their going out overseas, and including desk officers in the Oval Office meeting.

Q: I think he was the only one.

EISENBRAUN: He may have been. And getting a photograph taken and sitting down for 15, 20 minutes and chitchatting, and it was nice to include the desk officer in this. So in October of '81 Harry Barnes and his wife and I believe his daughter, we all went over to the White House to the Oval Office. I just watched, but at one point, someone motioned that I should join one of the photographa but I said no. Obviously, this was Harry Barnes and his family's time. I think that was the first time that Harry had met President Reagan, but not the last as I'll tell later, but anyone who met him, even for five minutes, could be charmed by him because he was just such a nice guy. I think Harry Barnes realized this was a great political asset, that if Prime Minister Gandhi and President Reagan could get together, she too could be charmed, regardless of her famous reserve. Turned out to be the case.

Did you want to ask a question?

Q: Oh, no, no, no. I think this is excellent.

EISENBRAUN: I think it's a case study in the making of foreign policy, where the personal relationships factor in. Because it runs contrary to a lot of what we learn in graduate school about the making of foreign policy. We learn so much about the institutional pressures or the historical pressures and the military alliances and the commercial relationships and so forth. Those are the determinants of foreign policy. And of course they are. And so it's true also in this case, we're talking about the history of 1971 as a factor in '81 and the strategic relationships in Pakistan, Soviet invasion, these were major background factors. But there sometimes is a persoanl factor too, as there was in this case.

As background, let me point out that it's a bureaucratic miracle when any foreign leader gets invited to the White House as part of a state visit. I think the Gandhi visit in '82 was the first of the Reagan Administraton.

OK, so in the weeks in the summer of '82 leading up to the visit, we on the desk were engulfed in the creation of all the papers that go into the briefing books, both for the State Department officials and for the White House. Anyone who's worked at the State Department at the desk level knows that it's all encompassing for months in advance, and I didn't do all the papers; I was one of about four who worked on various aspects, but I did the political papers, or I did the first drafts because they were massaged a lot on the way up the line, too. Still, I was able to observe some of the ad hocism that developed.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig resigned suddenly in the summer of '82 over issues related to Israel and Lebanon. George Shultz became the Secretary of State a week or ten day s before Mrs. Gandhi was to arrive in the latter part of July. Harry Barnes had had a meeting scheduled with the Secretary to give him a short brief a few days before the visit. It turned out that now it wasn't Haig but George Shultz getting the briefing. It happened to be Shultz's first day in office. I went up there to join the briefing with Harry. Shultz said, well, I'm certainly pleased, Harry, that you're here to tell me a bit about this coming visit, because I don't really know a lot about the America-India relationship. That was Harry's opportunity to give Shultz the lecture on the importance of the improving the relationship, which Shultz didn't disagree with.

Mrs. Gandhi's office communicated to the embassy that she wanted to send a personal and secret envoy to Secretary of State Shultz to talk about this visit a few days before she arrived. This envoy's visit was not to be made known even to the Indian Embassy in Washington. Utterly secret. The Americans said OK. There was a lot of curiosity about the meaning of all this because there was no advance briefing about what the secret envoy's mission was going to be about.

Now, I am sorry to say for historic purposes I do not remember the name of the imminent individual. He was an elderly and distinguished gentleman. I'm smiling as I recall this gambit; we on the desk kind of believed the ploy at the time, or at least were willing to play along with the game. Now, looking back after 23 years, I think, I silly-how could this man's visit be secret to the Indian Ambassador in Washington? But that's what the Indians in New Delhi were asking us to believe. So, the afternoon that he was scheduled to come to the Department, I was sent down to the lobby to meet him. As I entered the C street lobby, I saw coming in the door Hemant (HK) Singh, the first secretary for political affairs from the Embassy, and my principal contact and good friend. I had been meeting him almost every day to go over details of the visit. Here he was, walking in the lobby all by himself just when the "secret" envoy was to arrive. I was astonished, I'm playing the game, so I stepped behind a pillar. Fortunately, HK went on into the Department apparently for some other meeting, and he missed me hiding behind the pillar.

I then walked out of the C Street entrance and stood on the sidewalk under the portico, not knowing exactly what was going to happen next. I expected a limo to pull up, but instead, here came this elderly Indian gentleman strolling around the corner and up the drive by himself. I assumed that this must be the man, so I walked down and said I believe you are here to see Secretary Shultz. He replied, yes indeed. I said, well, I believe he's waiting for you. We walked into the building, and there wasn't much of a check-in process in those days, and I took him up in the secretary's private elevator, which had been pre-arranged. We got out on the seventh floor in the anteroom in front of the secretary's office, and there were four or five officials out there; you know, the logical people who would attend such a meeting. But somebody from the secretary's office said no, no, no,this has to be a small meeting. So, the only Americans who went in were assistant secretary Veliotis and myself, with Shultz. None of us knew what the agenda was.

I'd like to report that it was earth shaking. It was not. The envoy was relaxed and friendly and reported that Mrs. Gandhi was looking forward to her visit and constructive talks, and she hoped the Americans were doing the same. There was no bombshell, nothing else; it was merely that she was coming with an open mind and a friendly smile. However, we thought this was pretty important.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

EISENBRAUN: This news relaxed us, and although he and Shultz spent a few minutes reviewing some of the major issues to be discussed, there wasn't any real substance to it. The envoy had only one message, and he had given it, so he took his leave, and I escorted him back to the Department entrance, where he walked off down the street.

Q: Actually, it was a very clever move, I mean, to set the tone because otherwise it could have been a bit like two suspicious dogs sniffing each other.

EISENBRAUN: Well, that's right. I see it as the personal side of the making of foreign policy, and also another example of the ad hoc nature of foreign policy because it came up suddenly only a few days before the visit. But there was more that took everyone by surprise.

Mrs. Gahndi arrived in New York. Let me tell a little vignette about where she stayed. A skilled, young and beautiful lady named Gail who worked in protocol handled the logistical details of the visit. Gail later became President Reagan's personal secretary. Anyway, the issue was that Mrs. Gandhi let it be known that she would stay only at the Carlyle Hotel in a particular suite. We were told her family, the great Nehru family had been coming to New York for a 100 years and they had always stayed in that suite and so she was going to stay there again. As luck would have it, there was someone else booked in that suite. Since the Carlyle is a pretty fancy if discreet place, I imagine that that guest was important too. Somehow, Gail worked it out, and Mrs. Gandhi got her suite. That's neither here nor there, I just thought it was an interesting little side story of the visit.

Anyway, Mrs. Gandhi arrived in New York for a day before coming to Washington. I went up to join the American entourage escorting her to Washington. We had done all our papers for the White House, the Secretary was briefed to the extend he deemed necessary, everything was set. Then we were told by the White House that they had a different idea than we did of how the meetings were going to be conducted at the White House. We had provided extensive background papers and talking points for those meetings, which we assumed the principals, including the President, would use as they conducted the meetings. The White House or NSC staff, however, decided to change the plan.

We were told that President Reagan and his people were not going to play a substantive role in the meetings. The President planned to turn everything over to his secretary of state. But that isn't how we had prepared any of our briefing books. Secretary Shultz didn't have adequate material to conduct the entire process himself. At the last minute, the office director, Howie Schaffer had to recast everything almost single-handedly. Howie told me later that that was the hardest day of his 30-some years in the Foreign Service. .

The ad hocism didn't stop there. The next morning we all went to the White House to enjoy the impressive welcoming ceremony of a major leader on a State visit, with its colonial marching band and speeches, and twenty-one gun salute, and so forth. Somehow we learned that at the very last moment the White House had decided that President Reagan was going to have a one-on-one meeting with Mrs. Gandhi in the Oval Office after the pageantry. There were to be no handlers, no notetakers, no one else. That hadn't been in the plan, as far as I knew. It occurs to me now that such a meeting might have been planned all along, and the White House hadn't considred it important to tell us at State, but I don't think so because of what developed after the receiving line and the two leaders went off to the Oval Office and shut the door.

What were they going to talk about? Anyway, as the receiving line ended, a few of us were invited to step into a smaller room off the grand foyer, maybe the Red Room. The few us were the Vice President, George H.W. Bush, Secretary Shultz, the First Lady, the Indian Ambaaador and the Indian Foreign Minister, and maybe a half dozen others, including my wife and me. We just stood around, waiting on the President and Mrs. Gandhi. There was nothing to do but stand around. Nobody even sat down, and there weren't enough chairs anyway. I remember introducing myself to the Vice President, and introducing my wife tohim, and we chatted for a moment about the nice weather.

In the meantime, Nancy Reagan took Shultz aside to a corner, and talked earnestly and quietly to him, and he listened intently with hardly any question or comment that I could see. Remember, he had not been on the job more than a week or so. This may have gone on for 45 minutes, this standing around, with Nancy off in the corner with Shultz. Sometimes she gestured with her finger, emphasizing a point, and he listening like a schoolboy. I have no idea what she was talking about but whatever it was it was really serious.

I was enjoying just standing around observing all this, and then, unfortunately, I was called away and had to go out to the foyer by the grand staircase, where there was a phone. It was someone in protocol calling from State. The question was, what to do with Mrs. Gandhi's son Rajiv, who had come on the visit with his family, although he was not listed as an official member of the delegation. Protocol had assumed he would take part in the White House meetings, after the one-on-one. Now, protocol had learned that Rajiv was not to be in the meetings, so what to do with him? I suggested, or maybe I just agreed, that he would go around and see the monuments with a car and an escort.

By the time I was finished with that meeting and had walked around back to the Red Room, the Oval Office meeting had concluded, and it was time for my wife and me to leave. Historians will have to look into the archives to see if there is any record of that one-on-one meeting, but as we understood it at the time there was no observer. I can only imagine that President Reagan used his personal charm, and I don't think there was any guile to it, I'll bet; it was just that he was interested in getting to know this lady. I suspect they didn't talk very much about bilateral relations, either. I don't know what they talked about and in the week that followed, there was no readout, no report. Perhaps no one knows. That's hard to believe. Does our government work that way? Whatever, I'm sure the full brunt of his charm was brought to bear, and I think it worked, because it turned out to be a really pleasant week-long visit. There were no tensions that I can remember. She was true to her word; she was friendly. And of course the President looked like he was having the time of his life.

The White House really made an effort to impress and show respect to the leaders of India. The conductor of the New York Philharmonic at that time was Zubin Mehta, originally from India. It was a natural for the whole Philharmonic Orchestra to come to the White House to give a concert on the eveing of the State Dinner, to which my wife and I were invited. We were told this had never been done in the history of the White House. Fortunately, it was a beautiful night, and the concert was held out on the south lawn.

My desk colleague, Dan Waterman and his wife, also attended from the office. We didn't have any idea how one should arrive at theWhite House, and we never thought to get protocol's advice. I changed into my tux in the men's room at State and strolled over to the White House gate behind the Old Executive Office Building, and my wife drove downtown in our little VW Rabbit. Fortunately, at that hour, about 6:30 pm, it was easy for her to find a parking place around the White House. Mrs. Waterman had done the same, and the four of us met up at the gate without any advance planning.

In the meantime, there is this long parade of big black limosines lined up coming into the White House. All the other guests were savvy enough to have figured out that one rented a limosine for the evening. Quite stately and slowly, they went up the drive, stopped under the portico and as the guests stepped out and handed the invitation to a doorman, their names were announced on a loudspeaker. But we didn't have a car, so the four of us just strolled up the driveway. Fortunately, we did get in because we had our invitations. .

The evening was quite something. Our office had been asked to suggest people for the guest list, but our list had been small, and there were several hundred guests present. The trouble with White House dinners like this is that there is no guest list posted, so you don't know who else is there unless you recognize a face. You only learn when the guest list is published in the paper the next morning. You just have to mingle and find out who is who. The singer Wayne Newton and his wife were there, and my wife and I hit if off with them and later sitting with them during the concert.

Q:  Well, how did the rest of the tour go?

EISENBRAUN: The rest of the tour went without a hitch. I was lucky enough to be part of the group that travelled with Mrs. Gandhi to Los Angeles and Honolulu. It is standard that the White House offered one of the Presidential planes for the in-country part of the visit, and the plane we used was also Air Force One when the President was onboard. She flew to Los Angeles, and the California governor, Jerry Brown, was waiting for her and so was the mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley. I think she had a very fine visit in Los Angeles, marred from her side just slightly by the fact that there's a large Sikh community in California and so there were noisy demonstrations outside of the hotel demanding that she recognize their interest in a separate homeland for the Sikh communithy in India. I don't know to what extent Mrs. Gandhi was affected by them. It certainly didn't appear that she even paid any attention. She essentially set her own agenda in California, and we had little to do but sightseeing for a day. Howie and I took a stroll down Rodeo Drive to the Beverly Hills Hotel. I know Mrs. Gandhi had a meeting with Armand Hammer, who was a real friend of India and the Nehru family, going back decades. He was the chairman of one of the major oil companies.

Q: Occidental.

EISENBRAUN: Occidental, that's it

Q: This is tape six, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: A lot of her meetings in California were personal, although there was a big reception in the evening. Amazingly we saw some of the same Indians and Americans at the events in Los Angeles as we had in Washington, including Zubin Mehta.

Ten we flew on to Hawaii and by the time we got there all the major meetings were over and it was just- time to relax and have a good time. Some wealthy Americans in Hawaii gave an elegant dinner for her and she presented a baby elephant to the zoo. That brought an end to her seven days or so in the States. Mrs. Gandhi was relaxed, friendly and joking at the zoo in her presentation of the elephant, and you could see that the Indian delegation thought this visit had been a great success. She had been received lavishly and that had made a difference, I think, in the relationship between New Delhi and Washington. So this helped Harry Barnes in his quest for improved relations.

I want to recount an incident in Hawaii after Mrs. Gandhi departed. Harry Barnes had engineered a luncheon with Admiral Robert Long, the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, at his hilltop office overlooking Pearl Harbor. Howie and I joined the lunch, but all I remember of it now is that at the end, Admiral Long asked Howie and me if we had had a chance to visit the Battleship Arizona memorial during the trip. We said no, there hadn't been time, and the plane was leaving in an hour or two. He replied, you can't leave without seeing the Arizona, and he turned to his aide and ordered, Lieutenant, use a staff car and escort these people down to Pearl and to the memorial! So the lieutenant did, moving us through the various security checkpoints rapidly enough that we got to join a tourist boat out to the memorial and then get to neighboring Hickim Field in time for the flight. I am grateful to Admiral Long for making that visit possible, as I haven't been back to Hawaii since. I am doubly grateful also because, at that time, there was a veteran volunteering at the memorial that had been at Pearl Harbor during the attack on December 7, 1941. He answered lots of questions about that day and about serving on a submarine from the war, also berthed there. I wanted to tell this story for the benefit of my oldest son, John, who is now a lieutenant in the navy and serves on a nuclear submarine in the Pacific.

OK, almost immediately after returning to Washington, I began preparations for a long trip out to India. I spent three weeks or so on that trip, going to all the major cities before heading off to Lahore again, then London. Everywhere, the topic of discussion was Mrs. Gandhi's trip. Many astute Indians asked what had been achieved by the visit. On most visits, it would be standard to sign some kind of agreement or come to some understanding of how relations would be improved, but there was none of that to point to. In this case, it was mostly atmospherics. Some of the observers in India probably didn't share the same enthusiasm that I was conveying, that oh, this had been a very fine visit and that this will make a difference, at least in the short run, in bilateral relations.

I found the situation there troubling for Mrs. Gandhi. Everywhere I went, after they talked about the visit, political leaders of all stripes talked about how difficult Mrs. Gandhi's political situation was in India and that she had serious trouble with this Sikh rebel movement in the Punjab that was seeking an independent homeland called Khalistan. That was the group which had demonstrated in front of her hotel in Los Angeles and that she had ignored. I heard also that the Congress Party that she headed was not being responsive to people's needs on the local level and that it was a shadow of what it had been in its heyday under her father, Jawaharlal Nehru. I was surprised. I think it's fair to say this kind of reporting was not coming out of the embassy in Delhi in great quantity.

I remember I came back to Washington and wrote a trip report entitled Political Potholes for Mrs. Gandhi in which I noted the Sikh problem and the lack of responsiveness of the party. That paper should be in the archives and probably still sits there. I'm curious what exactly I said in light of what happened a few years later, that is, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi by members of her Sikh bodyguard.

Maybe I can turn to just a few other items during my tenure as desk officer and then we'll put that era to rest.

Q: By the time she made her state visit, I believe there had been a serious incident at the Golden Temple. Had that happened yet or not? I can't remember.

EISENBRAUN: No, that happened in June, 1984. Sikh militants had taken over the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the holiest spot for Sikhs, and the Indian army was called to flush them out.

Q: How about Bhopal? When did that happen?

EISENBRAUN: December 1984. Poisonous gases leaked out of a pesticide plant, causing approximately 2,000 deaths, the worst industrial accident in history.

Q: What company was that?

EISENBRAUN: It was the American-owned Union Carbide company.

Q: Union Carbide, yes.

EISENBRAUN: Are there any other questions before?

Q: No, no.

EISENBRAUN: There are a few other personal things that were kind of interesting during that tenure. One, of course, was the movie, Gandhi, which had its American premiere in Washington in the winter following Mrs. Gandhi's visit. That would have been late '82 or early '83.

Q: It was a British production?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, it was a British film, with its world premiere in New Delhi. The Washington event was held at the Uptown Theater on Connecticut Avenue, if you know it. The event was a pretty glittering thing. Virtually nobody at the working level at State was being invited, but I was able to get tickets for my wife and me and Howie and his wife, Tezi.

This is how that happened. There was a gentleman who was Under Secretary for Cultural Affairs in the Reagan administration by the name of Daniel Terra. He was an influential man on the arts scene from Chicago. He took a major interest in India during the two years I was on the India desk, and certainly was a figure in the social side of the Gandhi visit. I had become friendly with his office staff, including his secretary. OK, so the movie premiere was coming and nobody that we knew of in the State Department was being invited. So I called up Daniel Terra's secretary and pointed this out and said, it sure would be nice if a couple of tickets could be made available. She said you're absolutely right. So she made six to eight tickets available to us. It was only through her good will that she did it, not because we were important.

I think it was supposed to be a 7:30 pm event, so about six we were at the Department and our wives were meeting us separately, just like the White House dinner. We all got in a taxi together to head up to Connecticut Avenue. The traffic was at a virtual standstill, with little movement from Dupont Circle on. We could see a spotlight reflecting off the clouds, and we said, gee, there must be something important going on, I wonder what it is? We were so naï¿½ve. As it turned out, the spotlight was for the film, and all the traffic was backed up because of the film and all these limousines and VIPs and so forth arriving and, once again, we were caught completely by surprise, but somehow we did manage to get in. Afterwards, there was a beautiful reception at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, where I met the director, Sir Richard Attenborough. Ben Kingsley, the actor who played Gandhi and who won the Oscar some weeks later as best actor for his performance as Mahatma Gandhi, was not at that reception. I listened to Attenborough as he described the filming in India. He reminded us that Hindus believe in reincarnation. He said that when they filmed at the actual locations where Gandhi had done many of his famous things, there were people around who could still remember seeing the real Gandhi doing the same things, and some people declared he had been reborn.

Q:  By the way, on the movie, you know, you get these movies and then all of a sudden a country that's portrayed or something turns it into, you know, takes umbrage at something. I remember I was in Yugoslavia when Lawrence of Arabia came out and the Turks were making a big fuss about it. We had a- we were showing the movie in our embassy club and they were being- we couldn't open it up to the diplomats because the Turks were raising bloody hell. And I was just wondering whether- did the Indians seem to like, I mean, really care for the movie?

EISENBRAUN:  I believe so. I never heard a word of criticism from anyone in India. Maybe my memory has dimmed on this, but I remember nothing but praise from the Indian side for this movie, this sympathetic portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi and the fight for independence. I don't know that it was so appreciated, though, in Pakistan because Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the political leader that led the creation of Pakistan, and who was a rival of Gandhi's, was not treated very sympathetically in the film. I certainly heard this from my Pakistani friends, that they didn't appreciate his portrayal.

Q: I might mention this offhand. A USIA (United States Information Agency) officer whose name I forget but I knew he played the British general who brought about the massacre.

EISENBRAUN: In Amritsar.

Q: Yes. He got very, very British and they drafted him for that.

EISENBRAUN: Wow.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, that is a very dramatic moment in the film and a terrible moment in history, too.

Now, just a few other things, just fun, but I have to tell them. At another point during my two years, this would have been after the Gandhi visit, I got another call from Daniel Terra's secretary one morning and she said the undersecretary is going to be meeting with the actor Danny Kaye in a few minutes and would you go down to the entrance and meet him and escort him up? I said sure. So I dropped my pencil and went down to the lobby, the same where I had hid behind the pillar when the Indian gentleman had come. Well, in this case I went again outside the doors and this time there was a red carpet put out; some real VIP was coming into the building, but it wasn't there for Danny Kaye. This limousine pulls up and he peeked out the door, saying to me, is it OK to get out, seeing the red carpet.

He's passed on now, so there's a generation that perhaps doesn't even know who I'm talking about, but Danny Kaye was a major Hollywood actor that I recognized immediately. He said to me, is it OK to get out, and I replied, sure, come on in. We went upstairs, and Terra invited me to come in for the meeting. Danny Kaye was there because he was the UNICEF Ambassador of goodwill, and he was a good friend of India and he'd either just been to India or was just about to go. We spent the rest of the morning, at least an hour and a half, being entertained, as Kaye told us story after story.

One story was about this big European palace where he had met some king, and Kaye said he didn't have a clue what to do, and he made this into a sidesplitting monologue. He got up and mimicked or pantomimed what he had done; this long walk up to the throne, stumbling and mumbling. All the while I was thinking, what a lucky guy I am, because I grew up watching Danny Kaye in movies like White Christmas with Bing Crosby

Q: No.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, I think so.

Q: I wouldn't swear to this.

EISENBRAUN: I think so.

Q: It was Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire.

EISENBRAUN: I'm sure it was Danny Kaye in White Christmas. Whatever the case, I grew up watching Danny Kaye in movies, and here I was sitting in the State Department, lucky enough to spend all morning with him. I got a photo shot with him, which is on my office wall at home, along with the photo of the Reagan reception for Mrs. Gandhi.

Sometime in that second year, Walt Rostow, the former national security advisor for Lyndon Johnson, was asked to go on a speaking tour to India. He called up the desk asked to get a briefing in person from the desk officer, that is, me, before going to India. To the younger people listening to this or reading this, they may not even be sure who Walt Rostow was, but he was quite a controversial figure during the Vietnam War because he was a super hawk and that made him very a lightening rod for criticism during Lyndon Johnson's presidency. And here I was, talking to Walt Rostow on the phone, and he said I want to come in and get a briefing about current events in India and our bilateral relationship. And I said to him, well, I'm happy to talk to you but on the other hand, there are more senior people above me you should speak with. He said no, I do not want to meet anyone more senior, I don't want to shake their hand or even know I'm in the building. They'll just give me a line, I don't want to have to hear a line, I want to have a candid, off the record, chitchat. I said okay.

Well, I told my boss, but we followed Rostow's instructions. I went down and met him in the lobby and he came up to my office and we shut the door and nobody came in to shake his hand, no one said a word. I'm sitting there one on one for an hour or more with the former national security advisor. He asked very perceptive questions about India. I wanted to ask him about Vietnam but was too timid until he brought it up. He said people didn't understand our position in Vietnam, and he spoke with passion about the memory. I thought, here I am, a kid from Iowa, seven or eight years into the Foreign Service, and first it's Danny Kaye and now it's Walt Rostow.

In the spring of '82, before the Gandhi visit, around mid-afternoon, my colleague who handled the science and technology matters walked into my office and said, can you imagine this? I just got off the phone with NASA (National Air and Space Administration) and it turns out that America is launching a communications satellite for India from Cape Canaveral tomorrow at 2:00 in the morning. NASA's sending a private jet down to observe the launch and they're asking me if I want to go along. He said, are you crazy, at 2:00 in the morning? That was his attitude. I said, well, wait a minute. I'll go. He said, well, if you want to, here's the NASA telephone number. So I walked into Howie's office and said, hey, let's go down to Cape Canaveral tomorrow. He said great, let's go. So the next day we went over to National Airport, where NASA had this Lear jet for the Indian Ambassador to the UN and us, plus a NASA guide.

En route to Cape Canaveral, a great storm came up that forced the plane to land somewhere remote in Georgia. NASA was fast on its feet and got us to a local Marriott for dinner until the storm abated. Then we had to fly way out into the Atlantic to go around the storm before we could land in Florida. The storm caused the postponement of the launch until the next night at 2:00 am. We were put up at a little Holiday Inn on Cocoa Beach. As a kid, I had gotten up early each time for the first space launches, such as John Glenn's and others, which were all televised.

The question became what to do with us for a day while we waited. So NASA put together an inside tour of the space center that included quite a bit of going around to the original launch pads where the Redstone rockets sent Alan Shepherd into orbit and then where John Glenn was launched. In 1982, these sites had fallen into disrepair, with grass growing out of the launch pad and they had been abandoned, basically, for the bigger launch pads being prepared for the space shuttle, which had not been launched yet.

That night at 2:00 in the morning we all got on the bus and went to an observation spot about a half mile away from the launch site. For people who haven't observed a night launch, it is something else. The brightness of the rocket, and this wasn't even the largest rocket that's in the American inventory, but it was just, I mean, I had no idea how bright the glare would be from the exhaust and how it lit up the entire landscape from horizon to horizon, , like the second coming of Christ. And then, as bright as it had been, the rocket disappeared in the clouds and the glare faded away.

Q: Well, back just a touch to this time, this '81 to '83 period. In December of '79 the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and a war was developing there. How were relations as we observed them between India and the Soviet Union during this period?

EISENBRAUN: Well, I touched on that earlier. The relationship continued to be close.

Q: Basically I really was asking, by '81 things had developed. Where did the relationship stand while you were on the desk?

EISENBRAUN: The Soviets had given the Indians license to produce locally many military items, such as a fighter jet, if my memory is accurate. This was a potentially destabilizing element in South Asia, and the commercial relationship was fairly strong as well. There were a lot of really bright Indian students who were being sent to Moscow for training at no cost to the students. I met some of these students later. They said that although they appreciated the free education, but they had had virtually no interchange with the Soviet people. The Indians said they sensed a certain degree of condescension from the Soviets. I don't know that that people-to-people relationship paid off very much. The Indians got educated, but it didn't buy the Soviets any particular goodwill.

A phrase we often used in our briefings was that we sought "a constructive" relationship. By that we meant we know it's not going to be warm and friendly despite one-on-one meetings in the White House and so forth, there were great strategic barriers to having a seriously close relationship. But hopefully the relationship wouldn't deteriorate into verbal insults and trouble back and forth either. And so the middle ground was a constructive relationship. If anyone goes back to look at our talking points, if they're ever possible to find, you will see that word constructive appearing a lot. I know that was one of Howie Schaffer's favorite phrases.

I don't remember whether this was prior to or after Mrs. Gandhi's visit. Anyway, she gave a speech in which she blamed the foreign hand for whatever the trouble was at that moment in India. Well, that's code in India for either interference from Pakistan or interference from America. In this case it was pretty clear that she meant America. Her remarks broke in Washington in the morning, and Larry Eagleburger as Under Secretary for Political Affairs called in the Indian Ambassador, a man named Narayan who later became the president of India. I was there as the note taker, and I have to tell this about Eagleburger, he was a master at controlling situations either with brilliance, humor or toughness. In this case there was hardly any pleasantry, he simply shook the Ambassador's hand and sat him down and there was silence for a moment or two. It was Eagleburger's meeting, so the Indian was waiting.

Then, Eagleburger dropped the palm of his hand down on his leg very hard and sudden, and he got the angle just right, so the report was like a shotgun going off. We all jumped a foot in the air. Then he said I don't want anymore of this nonsense. What is this foreign hand baloney we're hearing from Mrs. Gandhi in New Delhi? I won't stand for it. That's crazy and you know it and I won't have it and you go tell her so. And that was the end of the meeting. The Indian said, yes, sir, and left.

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Q: And then in '83 whither?

EISENBRAUN: In the summer of '83, I decided I wanted to stay in Washington another assignment, and I was looking around at several prospects to do something new. I had been involved in South Asia for 10 years if you include my student years, from '73 until '83, and I just wanted to do something different. I had a choice, the Philippines desk or the Tunisia desk? I had no background in either area, but I chose the Tunisia desk because I would be the only officer working on the country.

I moved across the hall in the State Department and I took up residence on the Tunisia desk. I was there '83 to '85. I had to learn a whole new set of issues, of course, from scratch. I didn't know any Arabic, and my French was not so great. I immediately started taking early morning French at the Foreign Service Institute, and did it for two years. That was quite enjoyable and important because there were a lot of Tunisians who came through the office and didn't know much English.

Q: What was of interest to the Americans in Tunisia in this '83 to '85 period?

EISENBRAUN: There were a number of matters of mutual interest. Tunisia had been ruled by a relatively benevolent president named Habib Bourguiba, who had been the first president of Tunisia after its independence in 1956, and still was president in '83. There was no democracy in Tunisia, but Bourguiba was relatively benign as long as one didn't cross him. He had been very friendly to Americans in the post-war years because the Americans had shown interest in him years earlier. Throughout his time as the leader of Tunisia, he maintained a staunch and close relationship with the United States, and at the same time, he had stature in the Arab world from the days of his struggles for independence from the French. America had lavished a great deal of attention on Habib Bourguiba in the post-war years, and he had become something of a quiet spokesman for American interests in the Arab world.

In 1983, Bourguiba was elderly and frail. I met him briefly because in 1985 he was invited to Washington for a working lunch with the president, and my last day on the job I flew up with a few others from State on a plane provided by President Reagan to meet Bourguiba at JFK. I was shocked at how feeble he was; he could barely walk. He was supported by his wife and an aide or two. By the way, Peter Sebastian, our Ambassador in Tunis, attended the White House lunch the next day, and he told me later that any semblance of serious discussion melted away when Bourguiba early on began to flirt outrageously with the French-English interpreter. If my memory of Peter's story is accurate, this lady, the interpreter, was familiar to Bourguiba from other visits, so he started talking directly to her, complimenting her on her good looks, suggesting that they get together later, and generally acting silly. President Reagan reported roared with laughter and everyone had a good time thereafter.

Bourguiba's friendship with the United States remained steadfast from the 1940s until his death in the 1980s. I'm happy to tell the story of how that friendship developed, if you would like. After I unearthed it at the National Archives in 1984, I discovered also that the story had been lost to the State Department.

Q: This is Hooker Doolittle?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. Hooker T. Doolittle was the American representative in Tunis in the early '40s and into the period of Operation Torch and Eisenhower's invasion of North Africa in November 1942, starting in Algeria. Doolittle and Bourguiba, then an Arab radical fighting for Tunisian independence from the French, became good friends. Here's how I learned the story.

In '84, the office director, Peter Sebastian, was named to be Ambassador to Tunisia. Sebastian was the ranking American working on North African affairs, with 30 years of service in and around the area. When he was preparing to present his credentials to Bourguiba in the fall of '84, he asked me to do some research on Doolittle to find something from the archives, some unpublished letter or memo that Doolittle might have written praising Bourguiba that Sebastian could present as a gift. He knew that would please Bourguiba because Bourguiba made no secret to any American how much he thought of Doolittle.

My search in the archives was instrumental in my learning more about North Africa and the American relationship. I went to the National Archives building on Constitution Avenue and obtained access to Doolittle's original dispatches from Tunis in the early '40s. He was unusual as an American representative because he had made an effort to get to know the Arab radicals. These were bomb-throwing insurgents, and they weren't the people American representatives tried to befriend in those days, or thereafter, for that matter. In those days, the Arabs were willing to talk to Doolittle, who would meet them in the bazaars and coffee shops. He and Bourguiba hit it off, and Bourguiba was flattered that an American wanted to know him.

I read Doolittle's original hand-typed dispatches at the Archives. These were produced in some cases while the Nazis were coming, being pushed from Egypt by the British, and pushed from Algeria by the Americans and the free French. I found that Doolittle had reported on his talks with the Arabs, Bourguiba among them, but there was very little that I could use because, although Doolittle might say some kind words in a sentence, the tone of the reports was not very complimentary. Maybe that was the only way he could get the reports to be read in Washington, perhaps because he couldn't be seen as having been co-opted by these people. I remember he wrote one letter to Robert Murphy, who was a major figure in the Department...

Q: Well, he was in charge of a whole series of consular officers, both in Algiers, Morocco and Tunis before and under Vichy. Later, Murphy helped get our troops ashore.

EISENBRAUN: I didn't know that.

Q: He was consul general in Algiers. Murphy met Mark Clark and all on the beach-

EISENBRAUN: I guess Doolittle was writing to him in Algiers. The gist of what Doolittle was saying to Murphy was, come over and visit and I'll take you down into the bazaar at night to meet these people. Doolittle said you'll be surprised how bright they are, they really have something to say. Well, this condescension wasn't going to serve Sebastian 's purposes in '84. Nevertheless, I learned that Doolittle was doing things that no other American representative probably considered. To this day, I remember vividly that in one of his dispatches or letters, he said we're going to be successful in this war, and afterwards, we're going to have a remarkable position in Middle Eastern politics because all these lands are going to become independent. Doolittle said that the British and the French had so poisoned the well that they would have no influence, but the U.S. would because we are seen as the only honest brokers in the Arab world. The whole area's going to fall into our sphere of influence. His predictions could have been right, but it didn't turn out that way because he didn't anticipate the creation of Israel. It's haunted me ever since, this opportunity that he saw for American foreign policy in the post-war years that could have been ours to take.

So, Doolittle. What happened to him? Even Peter Sebastian didn't know despite his 30 years working on North Africa. It had been lost to the State Department. In the Archives, I found the original paperwork reporting that no less than General Eisenhower got angry over what he saw as this renegade American representative in Tunis running around meeting Arab nationalists when he should have been cultivating the French, in Eisenhower's eyes. There was a dispatch from Eisenhower ordering Doolittle removed, because, as Eisenhower declared, he doesn't seem to understand what we're doing. He said the reason Doolittle is in Tunis is to talk to the French and to create the closest bond possible with them; he has no business antagonizing the French by meeting Arabs, so let's get him out of there. Doolittle was relieved of his duties as the American representative. I can understand the needs of that time were to smooth the way with the French.

In the long run, however, Doolittle's personal diplomacy paid big returns for Eisenhower while he was President, because we saw Bourguiba as an important friend in the region. I wonder if Eisenhower ever made the connection to Doolittle. As it turned out, ironically, I had to work with the Eisenhower Presidential Library to find a flattering reference by Eisenhower to Bourguiba, which I got released and which Sebastian used to good effect with Bourguiba.

During my orientation trip to Tunisia in 1983, my uncle Pete came with me. He had served in the 109th Combat Engineers Battalion of the 34th Infantry Division during Operation Torch (and afterwards in Italy.) Pete told me that while the 109th laid mines very responsibly with their location recorded as map overlays later forwarded to the 34th Division and II Corps, he had always been bothered by the fact that landmines likely had not been entirely cleared. He also wondered what had happened to all the Nazi tanks and other equipment abandoned on the side of the road in the German Army's haste to evacuate to Italy. Pete and I asked about this in 1983, and we learned that occasionally, someone in the countryside was still killed by these land mines. I also learned from the Tunisian army that a fair amount of the Nazi equipment was still in Tunisian warehouses, and in many cases, tanks and trucks were still in good working condition. The Tunisians rented them out to film companies making movies of World War II. During my travel into the Sahara in the southern portion of Tunisia, I even saw a Nazi tank parked in an oasis. It was being used in the filming of a French war movie starring Jean Paul Belmondo.

Let's jump to the 1983-85 period in US-Tunisian relations. The relationship was a pretty close one in political, commercial and military terms. The driving force was that Colonel Qaddafi was next door in Libya. In those days Qaddafi was creating a good deal of tension within North Africa because it looked as though he had aspirations to undermine and take over the rest of North Africa. Tunisia crafted its whole foreign policy on the threat from Qaddafi.

Tunisian Ambassador Habib Ben Yahya's job in Washington was to remind us daily how terrible Qaddafi was and how dangerous he was to the sovereignty of Tunisia. Ben Yahya left Washington eventually to become Foreign Minister. He was acknowledged to be one of the more skillful of the foreign Ambassadors in Washington because he had a simple message Qaddafi was a dangerous man. Ben Yahya spread that message all over town, not just at State. He knew everybody and had the same message over and over; that is, you may think Qaddafi's bad, but we know he's even worse than you suspect. Ben Yahya reminded us that we needed to provide Tunisia with ever-larger amounts of military assistance, and this fit with Washington's concerns at the time.

In my first weeks on the desk in the late summer of 1983, our office was invited to the White House to give Vice President Bush a personal briefing on U.S.-North African relations, as Bush was preparing to visit Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. There were about eight of us in Bush's office, while Bush sat in an easy chair with his legs crossed and listened to our presentations, occasionally asking perceptive questions. I had some brief remarks prepared about Bourguiba and his life-long friendship with Americans, and that, luckily, seemed to satisfy Bush. Peter Sebastian took care of the details, not only because he was office director, but because he was the only one of us who was thoroughly knowledgeable about the region. At the last moment, Sebastian was asked to travel with Bush on the trip, and I learned later that Bush was instrumental in getting Peter his posting as Ambassador in Tunis.

Q: Well, did the French play much of a role in Tunisia during this '83 to '85 period?

EISENBRAUN: I would imagine they played an important commercial role. I expect that French investment and trade probably was the largest foreign investment in North Africa and in Tunisia. They followed events very closely because Tunisia was within their sphere of influence, and there were many Tunisians in France. I cannot remember whether the French provided the Tunisians a great deal of military assistance, but they must have provided some. We didn't coordinate much with them. When I was in Paris in 1983, I went by the French Foreign Ministry to share views after having spent two weeks in Tunisia and Morocco on my orientation trip, but that meeting seemed rather perfunctory. Surely they had important interests in North Africa, but their interests, I think, were more commercial than they were military or political. I'll leave it to the North African scholars to correct me on this.

One matter that stays with me from my trip to Tunisia in 1983 was something my Uncle Pete and I noticed everywhere, and that was the large number of young Tunisian men lounging around all day long on the streets and in the coffee shops. I'm talking literally thousands of them, and not just in Tunis. I saw huge numbers of young men, apparently unemployed, in every town around the country. I had read of the major unemployment problem in Tunisia (and in Morocco too at that time), and the potential these unemployed had to cause political trouble if antagonized. That problem erupted in January, 1984, in food riots around Tunisia. The authorities put that civil unrest down, but unemployment I think remains a major problem today in Tunisia.

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Q: Well, then, you left the Tunisian desk in '85. Whither?

EISENBRAUN: I went out as Deputy Chief of Mission to Sierra Leone, in West Africa.

Q: And you did that from '85 to?

EISENBRAUN: One year, '85 to '86.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

EISENBRAUN: He was a fellow named Arthur Lewis, a career USIS official. Before his Foreign Service work, he'd had had a career in the Navy, rising to Chief Petty Officer, so he had a lot of experience. He had been the ranking African expert at USIS, and Lewis took a great deal of pride in the fact that he'd been to every African country at one time or another on official business.

It's worth telling how I got that assignment. I was on the Tunisia desk and I was interested in still broadening my horizons further regarding Africa, and I happened to mention this to a friend of mine from the India office days then working on West African affairs. So in the fall 1984 when Art Lewis was back on consultations and looking for a new DCM, my friend mentioned my name to him. I met Lewis, we hit it off, and I found myself assigned to Freetown.

Q: What was the situation politically and economically when you got there in '85?

EISENBRAUN: It was a time of transition in Sierra Leone. There had been a long-serving president, Shaka Stevens, who was quite elderly, and while I was in country, he retired and named a successor, General Joseph Momoh. Stevens had been president of Sierra Leone virtually since its independence from Great Britain in 1961. I think it is fair to say he was a benevolent dictator. I don't think there were any great human rights abuses during his tenure, as long as his people gave him his due. There was a friendly relationship with Washington. Our interests in Sierra Leone were limited primarily to providing a bit of economic assistance, and not much of that either, and maintaining a large Peace Corps presence. We didn't have any strategic or significant commercial interests, outside of one extraction plant that produced rutile, used in the production of paint. We hoped for occasional support in international bodies like the UN, but that didn't happen often because Sierra Leone felt it had to support the African bloc on most issues, and that was generally not friendly to the United States.

Sierra Leone has great natural resources, principally diamonds that can be dug right out of the ground, and even though their diamond deposits had been exploited for most of the 20th century, there were still diamonds to be had too easily. They played a terrible role in financing the civil war later in Liberia and that spilled into Sierra Leone in the 1990s. They could have been a great resource for the country, but their mining didn't benefit the people of Sierra Leone at all because of the smuggling, organized partly with the connivance of government officials for their own benefit. There were some gold deposits as well, and then there were abundant fishing fields off the coast, which were being exploited by others, including the Soviets, with no payment to the government, except for bribes that may have gone into officials' personal accounts

The Sierra Leone people didn't benefit from the fish, they didn't benefit from the diamonds, and they didn't benefit from whatever gold was left. The country was exploited by one group or another, including its own government, and by the resident Lebanese, who had grown wealthy from the diamonds and the fishing and whatever other commercial opportunities they could exploit. In the meantime, the infrastructure that the British colonial authorities had developed had virtually ceased to function, like the railroad lines that was torn up and sold off as scrap.

I found Sierra Leone a country that was suffering a lot, but it was still a peaceful place when I arrived in '85. I guess you might say the Peace Corps contingent was the engine of American foreign policy in the country at the time. They had 250 volunteers at the height of their involvement, which started as soon as the Peace Corps was organized back in the Kennedy Administration. The Sierra Leonean people really liked the American Peace Corps volunteers, who did a lot over the years to further bilateral friendship. The truth is, there wasn't much foreign policy to conduct; it was mostly a matter of showing the flag and meeting everybody and being nice.

Q: Well then, I'm thinking this is probably a good place to stop, Steve, and we'll pick this up in '86. So onto '86 next time, what happened then?

EISENBRAUN: I was in Sierra Leone one year as DCM, and a fair amount of that time, about six months if all added up, I was in charge of the post, that is, Chargï¿½ d'Affaires. After that, I was at a crossroads in my life because I was just separated from my wife and I had two little children and the question was what to do next. I literally had a weekend to decide whether to go back to Washington as Kenya/Uganda desk officer, or go to Rabat as a political officer, which was offered to me by the Ambassador there, who was a friend from my previous days in Washington as Tunisian desk officer.

Q Who was this?

EISENBRAUN: That was Tom Nassif. He offered me a political job in Rabat and the stars seemed all aligned, because I knew and liked Nassif, the DCM, and the political consular. It would have been perfect. But I was just getting separated and I thought it was better to be in Washington for my children, so I went back to the Kenya-Uganda desk. But there are a couple of stories I'd still like to tell about Sierra Leone before I go into that.

Q: Sure

EISENBRAUN: It turned out I did not see eye to eye with Lewis. He had a different management style than I did. Of course, my style was still developing, and he was a very seasoned officer used to bullying people to get what he wanted. It became pretty evident within days that this relationship wasn't going to work. However, I was Chargï¿½ for quite a long period when he was out of the country. Then a new Ambassador was appointed, a political appointee, imagine, even to a small country like Sierra Leone, in the spring of '86. The question became whether I was to be continued as DCM. The new appointee, Cynthia Perry, called me back to Washington to meet me, and we seemed to hit it off very nicely and she said I could continue as DCM. So I flew back to Freetown thinking I was set, but then she changed her mind a few weeks later and didn't provide a reason. So I scared up the two offers I mentioned earlier. Later, Cynthia and I had six weeks of overlap when she arrived at post in the summer of '86. I asked her then why she had not kept me on. She replied that she felt she would not be able to trust me. I might pick up the phone and report directly to Washington if I didn't like how things were going at post. She thought she had reason to feel that way, as it had turned out.

Before I had left Washington in the summer of '85, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Africa bureau, Jim Bishop, a really decent individual by the way, said to me, if there ever comes a time when you need to call me for something that comes up at post, don't hesitate to phone me directly. At the time, I filed that away with appreciation, but I couldn't imagine ever doing such a thing. I don't know whether he said this to all out-bound DCMs, or whether he knew there might be good reason for me to need to make such a call. My guess is a little of both, because he was an astute manager and probably suspected I would encounter serious difficulties with Lewis in Freetown.

As it turned out, I did need to place that call, and the result was that I got sacked by the incoming Ambassador who felt she wouldn't be able to trust me. Bishop was quite helpful to me, however, when I got in trouble, telling me on the phone that while there was nothing he could do regarding the loss of the DCM job because the new appointee had friends in the White House, he could engineer my return to the Kenya desk, and some months later he also arranged my posting as Principal Officer in Mombasa, Kenya, a real garden spot. It all turned out very well for me in the end, thanks to Jim.

Q: Go on, please.

EISENBRAUN: OK. I was in charge of the embassy when a vote was coming up on the annual UN General Assembly resolution we sponsored condemning Cuba for various wrongdoings. I had worked this issue previously on my desk officer assignments without much luck. It seemed to me that Sierra Leone had no direct interests regarding Cuba and that they might be persuaded to support us. Ordinarily, Sierra Leone would have been unwilling to go against the Africa bloc at the UN, which supported Cuba. Anyway, I made it my own personal lobbying effort with the Foreign Minister and the President to get their support. I didn't know exactly when the vote was scheduled in New York, but at a reception in Freetown, the Foreign Minister, A. K. Khan, took me aside and said, hey Steve, did you see our vote at the UN on Cuba? I replied no, I haven't been informed from Washington. What happened? He said, we voted with you. He gave me a high five and I returned it.

I had to go back to the office and cable Washington to ask if this story was accurate. They did some checking and confirmed that it was true, and I think they added that Sierra Leone was the only sub-Saharan nation to support us. That latter has to be checked; my memory could be faulty. However, my next point was, well, if they did support us, then we've got to gin up a letter from somebody ranking to show our appreciation. So a letter came out, and I had the pleasure of going over to State House and thanking President Momoh for his support.

The new Ambassador, Cynthia Perry, came out in the summer of '86 and presented her credentials at State House in an impressive ceremony. Afterwards, she said to President Momoh, let me introduce the members of my country team. She started with, this is Mr. Eisenbraun, my deputy, but Momoh cut her off to exclaim, "Oh, you mean Steve, he's one of us!" and he shook my hand warmly. That was a nice way to end my tenure in Freetown.

Q: That's great. We never covered why you had trouble in Sierra Leone. Was it the fact that your politically appointed Ambassador to Sierra Leone didn't like the fact that you were too well regarded, I mean, too well connected in Sierra Leone or what was it?

EISENBRAUN: No, there was a particular incident, which we didn't discuss. It made her feel she couldn't trust me. Do you want to go back and cover that?

Q: Yes, yes.

EISENBRAUN: OK. That came up in December of '85. I was Chargï¿½ d'Affaires, that is, acting Ambassador. Lewis had left the day before for about a six to eight week vacation in the States. As it turned out, the Peace Corps Director had also departed the previous day for an extended vacation, leaving his deputy, Jan Auman, in charge. I came to work the first day as Chargï¿½ and found the Peace Corps/Embassy nurse, Ebun "Ebu" Shears, a local citizen employed on a contract, in my office, sobbing. She had had her contract terminated by Lewis the previous afternoon. She cried that this was unjust, as she had a sterling record as nurse for the previous seven years, and now she was being thrown over. By the way, the combined Embassy/Peace Corps medical section had only one nurse and no doctor at that time to take care of the needs of the embassy staff and the 250 volunteers scattered around the country. She had been discharged, and neither I nor the Peace Corps deputy had been informed. So here she was, distraught. She knew her medicine, had been trained in Britain, and had a good reputation. Her contract had been up for renewal, which I had not known, and the Ambassador stepped in arbitrarily and said I'm not going to renew it.

Q: Do you have any idea why?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, Lewis wanted to appoint the wife of one of the newly arrived officers, a lady who was also a nurse. She might have been a good nurse too, but this wasn't the way to go about it. First of all, she was American, she didn't know the medical situation in the country, and it was not appropriate to dismiss somebody out of hand after seven years of exemplary service. Well, that's only the beginning of the issue. She was also white, and that ended up also being a major factor. Ebu cried that the embassy can't destroy my family and my professional life like this. I had to figure out a solution to this problem. I talked to Jan Auman over at the Peace Corps and found he was just discovering the issue too.

Auman and I asked Ebu if she would stay on while we looked into the situation. She said she would. However, later that morning, I got a call from one of the western-trained African physicians in Freetown who headed a medical association of the dozen or so physicians who had agreed to be medical consultants to our mission. He said we understand that Ebu has been terminated. He said, we see this as discrimination, as she is Black African and the proposed replacement is white and American, so we're going to boycott your mission and not see any patients until Ebu is reinstated. The medical association head said also that there had to be an apology from the embassy stating that it had acted wrongly, as well as a renewal of her contract.

This was really serious stuff because in Sierra Leone there are all kinds of mysterious fevers striking people down all the time, and there was always a Peace Corps volunteer being medevaced on an emergency basis, to say nothing of our embassy staff and their children. There were all kinds of vulnerable people out there in a very tenuous medical environment. The nurse was still on station but she couldn't get the local doctors to stand down until she was officially reinstated. This was a full blown medical crisis. I had to call Jim Bishop in Washington that morning to report this problem.

In the meantime, I had learned that the resident doctor, Tom Watson, at the neighboring embassy in Liberia was coming over on a previously scheduled consultation. He didn't know about the medical crisis brewing in Freetown. I got this idea that he could look into the problem as an outsider but also as someone qualified medically to evaluate the situation. He could determine if the present nurse was qualified, and give a recommendation on next steps, acting as an arbitrator. I suggested this to Bishop, who liked the plan. Bishop added that he would inform the medical section in the Department and handle all communication on that end.

So Dr. Watson arrived. I briefed him on the situation, and he agreed that the dangerous medical environment demanded a quick resolution of the problem. He interviewed the nurse, whom he knew only slightly, and looked at her evaluations. It took him about two days of really careful evaluation before he concluded that she had been terminated inappropriately and that she was the only person who could fill the nurse role because she was African and had the support of the local doctors. He made a recommendation to me and to Med in the Department that the nurse be reinstated; I backed that recommendation, as did the acting Peace Corps director.

I told Bishop in Washington that we should reinstate her and write a letter of apology to get the medical association back with us, and Bishop said the Department agreed. Ambassador Lewis was never consulted, only informed once all action had been taken. This was Bishop's doing. The nurse was grateful; she continued working; the boycott was withdrawn, I wrote a letter of apology and hand delivered it to her and her husband at their house on Christmas Eve.

I had ended up thwarting the Ambassador's intent, as well as the newly arrived spouse of the admin officer, who wasn't very happy about it either, to say the least. Lewis was eventually briefed by the Africa bureau in Washington after it was all finished and everyone had signed off, including the medial office and the inspector general's office, which also had been brought into the matter. Even Assistant Secretary Crocker had signed off on the resolution, according to Bishop, and had lectured Lewis on his dubious management practices. Lewis wasn't very happy, mind you. He called me from the States and asked what on earth I had been doing at post.

Soon after Lewis and his wife Fay got back to post, Fay took me aside at an evening function and told me that she would be my sworn enemy for life because of what I had done to her husband. Lewis and I virtually never talked for the next five months.

Almost immediately, the post was engulfed in a previously planned inspection, but the focus changed from a routine one to a referendum on Lewis's management of the post, in light of the nurse incident. The inspectors were not pleased with Lewis. They also did a written review of my work, which in those days was not a mandatory thing for them to do as it was later. They said they did this to protect me from the Ambassador's wrath, as my annual EER (review) was about due. Their report was exceptionally good, and I was promoted that fall.

Once the inspectors left post, Lewis announced that he and his wife were returning to the States. When they came back to post some six weeks later, they packed up. In his last month or so, Lewis came into the office in the mornings, smoked a lot, met some people and talked on the phone, but I cannot remember that he conducted any serious business. He told me to take care of my duties myself; I think what he actually said was, I don't care what you do. So I did the usual things a DCM does to coordinate the running of the mission, and I hardly informed him of what I was doing, and he didn't inquire.

The afternoon of his departure in early June, I went into his office, uninvited, to ask if there was anything I should know, as I was about to assume officially the running of the mission as Chargï¿½. He didn't offer anything. I asked what he was going to do once he returned to the States. He replied, I'm going to retire. He added that he had been on the short list to be Ambassador to Zimbabwe, but I had ended any hope he had for that post. That night he flew out, and I was once again in charge of the post for the last six weeks until Cynthia Perry, the new Ambassador, arrived in July.

When I left Freetown, in recognition of my efforts on the nurse issue, the FSNs in Freetown awarded me their own Meritorious Honor Award, outside of the Department-issued ones. All the African staff signed it, as did Cynthia Perry.

Q: Amazing. Well Steve, we'll pick this up in 1986 when you're on the Kenya desk.

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Q: Okay. Today is the 16th of May, 2005. You've come back to Washington?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. That was the summer of 1986.

Q: And you were on the Kenya desk?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, it was combined Kenya and Uganda desk.

Q: From when to when?

EISENBRAUN: That was summer of '86 until about January of '88, when I started five months of Swahili language training.

Q: All right. So, describe how the Bureau of African affairs was set up at that time. Who was in charge?

EISENBRAUN: The Assistant Secretary was Chet Crocker, an articulate and thoughtful man from the academic world. He had been at Georgetown University, and then he went back to Georgetown when he was finished at the end of his eight years as assistant secretary. I thought he was a really astute fellow; everyone thought he was an astute fellow. He had made his mark in international affairs and I think caught the eye of the early people putting together the foreign policy team of the Reagan administration when he argued for constructive engagement with South Africa instead of total and utter isolation. That appealed to the Reagan administration, I believe, and that's what brought him in as assistant secretary.

So I dealt with him on Kenyan affairs, which were not his primary concern; his primary concern had to deal with South Africa and other matters in southern Africa, including Angola, where there was still an on-going conflict. I had to learn from scratch matters related to East Africa. It didn't take long because the American relationship with Kenya and Uganda was not that complex. There was a reasonably good bilateral relationship with Kenya, but it was going downhill steadily because of the corruption of the existing government, that of Daniel arap Moi, who had been in power for many, many years and who ran a relatively benign authoritative government, if such a thing can exist. In other words, if no one in Kenya crossed Moi, then life went on pretty smoothly. But anyone who crossed Moi or members of his party, KANU, then they were in big trouble. There was an element of tension and human rights abuses and certainly corruption within the government, causing difficulty in our bilateral relationship.

Q: Well, let's stick to Kenya first, then we'll move over to Uganda. Who was our Ambassador out there when you were on the desk?

EISENBRAUN: I arrived just as Elinor Constable was preparing to go out. My days in the August-September period of 1986 were taken up virtually exclusively by helping prepare Elinor for her Senate hearings. She also didn't know anything about East Africa or Kenya; she had dealt with other matters, economic matters primarily. So both of us had a lot to learn and it was pretty worthwhile for the two of us to go around together. She wanted to meet a lot of actors up on the Hill and in New York and elsewhere; anyone who had political or business interests in Kenya, and that included military interest also. For example, she and I went on a day's trip to CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, which had the responsibility for U.S. military interests in Kenya, as well as the greater Middle East.

Q: What were our military and business interests in Kenya at the time?

EISENBRAUN: First the military interest. That involved me also, as I eventually went out as principal officer in Mombasa, which was a port city with a US Consulate devoted to the interests of the US Navy using it as a port of call for refueling and R & R. I'm getting ahead of the story. The military interests were essentially one of pre-building infrastructure for military use, and pre-positioning equipment for any potential conflict in the Middle East or the Horn of Africa. There was also some provision of military assistance to the government. Building infrastructure meant deepening the harbor of Mombasa to accommodate US naval vessels including carriers, and lengthening the runways in Mombasa and in Nairobi to handle the very large cargo planes the military might need to bring in during a regional conflict. .

Q: Were we looking at that time- I mean, the Middle East is always in turmoil, but were we looking at Somalia and Ethiopia as possible trouble points?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, we were, certainly, looking at Somalia, not necessarily as a point of intervention of U.S. troops but nevertheless as an area of concern to us. I think that, though, our military interests in Kenya were more aimed at the Middle East, that is, we wanted a friendly environment where we could land equipment and troops for staging purposes. We learned that there's a lot of redundancy in the military, deliberate redundancy, in pre-positioning elements all around the world, redundancy with the idea that if political conditions exclude the U.S. from one point of entry, there will be three or four other points of entry, so they aren't going to be shut out of any situation strategically. .

The U.S. business interest in Kenya was limited. There was some trade back and forth, some tourism, with Americans on safaris. There was little American direct investment. There were some sales of agricultural products-bulk commodities such as wheat and some rice that came in through the Port of Mombasa. Later on I was to see those ships come in and have to deal with all their problems. We did have an aid relationship and we were trying to work with the health infrastructure, for example, and yet that was a source of tension, that is, the economic assistance relationship because we were demanding a lot of conditions upon our aid, conditions of transparency in the use of the monies provided.

Q: Was AIDS a major problem at that time or was that not yet known?

EISENBRAUN: No, HIV/AIDS was a major concern. This was 1986 when AIDS was already pretty well known, and researchers had discovered how extensive it was in parts of Africa. And at that time it was said that Kenya, and especially the coast of Kenya, had about the highest prevalence of HIV of anywhere else in Africa, if not the world at that time. I think we had some HIV/AIDS programs in place, but probably not very much. We also had a large Peace Corps presence in Kenya as well.

Q: What were we doing, say, with the Moi government? I assume the embassy was reporting on it but you always wonder what an embassy can report on when a government doesn't tolerate opposition.

EISENBRAUN: Well, that's a very perceptive question. There wasn't a lot of political reporting, in comparison with what comes in from India, for example. In fact, when I later served as principal officer in Mombassa, that was the follow-on to the Kenya assignment, I wanted to move around and meet politicians and try to report what was going on. I found that there wasn't anything going on, essentially. There were party activities of the only party allowed, KANU, that is, the Kenya African National Union, Moi's party. Later, I met Moi's major political hatchet man on the coast, but the truth was, there wasn't a whole lot of political activity. But I'll get to that story later. There was a little bit of underground activity which I was able to tap into a bit but that's a later story.

Q: That was a different time.

EISENBRAUN: Right, that was between 1988 and 90. What little happened politically was all focused in Nairobi, unlike in South Asia, where there is a lot going on in the countryside and you might get a distorted picture by spending all of your time in New Delhi or Islamabad. In Kenya, what passed for politics, at least on the surface, was juggling of responsibilities and authorities within the government and the in-fighting of the various politicians within the official party.

Q: So basically a court battle-

EISENBRAUN: Yes, essentially.

Q: Well, what was our evaluation of President Moi at that time?

EISENBRAUN: We had good and correct relations with him, but we also were quite suspicious of him because of his suspected personal corruption. We knew he had a heavy hand and that he seemed to tolerate, if not foment, corruption throughout his government. So we did not have an easy relationship with Moi. On the other hand, he had been friendly to American interests through the years, the military interests I've spoken of and whatever business interests were there, so we wanted to keep that friendliness alive. It was a balancing act between trying to encourage him to be more responsive to the needs of his citizens, to practice good governance, the rule of law and human rights, while being friendly to our strategic interests.

Q: Were the Soviets or the Cubans messing around in Kenya at the time?

EISENBRAUN: No, I don't think so at all.

Q: How about border events, when there was Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan...

(end of side two, tape six)

Q: This is tape seven, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, you were asking about the regional relations that Kenya had with its neighbors, and I said that there was some tension with Somalia where central authority was breaking down in Mogadishu and there were bandits coming across the border and robbing Kenyans. And there were some refugees moving across already into Kenya so that was an unstable situation in the north. And then there had been a great deal of trouble in Uganda during the Idi Amin years. By the time I got to the desk, Idi Amin was in exile and another fellow named Musevani had assumed control. He was a pretty responsible leader, so Uganda was returning to political stability.

Now, there had been an attempt in the earlier years to develop a regional trade and political bloc between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that hadn't worked very well. However, there was still stability among those three countries and Rwanda- there was stability on the western front as well with Rwanda. So except for Somalia, there wasn't a great deal of regional instability at that time.

Q: Well, was there any reflection of the ever lasting conflict of the Sudan between the north and the south?

EISENBRAUN: The Sudanese rebels had- the SPLA (Sudan Peoples Liberation Army), John Garang was the leader. By the way, he was killed in a helicopter just recently after patching up his long conflict with the government in Khartoum. The SPLA had representatives in Nairobi, and some American Congressmen occasionally met the SPLA there. Our embassy tried to keep very close contact with them and that was a source of some reporting. I think the Kenyan foreign policy toward Sudan was to recognize the government in power in Khartoum while looking the other way, essentially, with the rebels in the southern part of Sudan. Because after all, the rebels were essentially Christian, the government in Khartoum was Muslim, and Moi himself was Christian and he had a very large constituency of Christians in Kenya.

Q: How did the constructive engagement policy vis a vis South Africa work? I mean, how was it perceived by Moi's government?

EISENBRAUN: I don't recall ever dealing with South African issues while on the Kenya desk. The Kenyan Government would probably put in every one of its meetings a statement regarding the need to urge the apartheid government of South Africa to cede its authority, or at least to recognize the majority interest, the Black Africans. They would probably always say that but they weren't particularly antagonistic, as my memory goes, toward our policies of trying to deal with the de Klerk government at that time in South Africa. .

Q: Did UN votes come up at all, getting Kenya to vote in the UN?

EISENBRAUN: That wasn't a major part of our policy. In fact, our interests were fairly limited. Kenya, after all, was going to vote with the African Bloc in the General Assembly. We would certainly lobby them as we would all African countries on certain issues in front of the General Assembly. I those days the General Assembly was stridently against the de Klerk government, and there were some very harsh resolutions against South Africa. I did not follow that issue until I got back to Washington in 1990.

Q: Well then, sort of moving over to Uganda, how was the government there constituted at the time and who was our Ambassador and what were the issues we had with them?

EISENBRAUN: Musevani had assumed control. I believe that they had had some elections and the southern two-thirds of the country had stabilized pretty quickly after some horrific human rights violations and deaths, but the northern third of the country was still unstable and there were a number of indigenous groups fighting against the southern authorities; it was essentially tribal based. And yet Musevani dealt with a fairly benign hand with the situation in the south and it seemed that he did not have the resources or the inclination to go up into the north and try to subdue that area, so there was sporadic fighting going on, a low level insurgency all the time. In fact, this is 2005, it's still going on and Musevani is still in power. Bob Houdak was our Ambassador in Kampala. He was a life-long Africa specialist, a very pleasant, thoughtful, and vigorous individual. I got a chance to travel around the countryside with him for a week in January of '87.

After Elinor Constable had had her rounds of consultations in Washington and her Senate hearings, which were completely non-controversial, she went out to Kenya. I settled in to the daily affairs of the Kenya desk.

One of the first things that came up that autumn didn't have anything to do with Kenya, but with Sierra Leone in that the Peace Corps had its 25th anniversary celebration in Washington. As part of that program, they had a series of country updates so that returned volunteers could go to these panel discussions on various countries and get updates. And as I had recently returned from Sierra Leone and I had been pretty involved with Peace Corps activities while there, the Peace Corps office in Washington was kind enough to invite me to the 25th anniversary celebration and ask me to be one of a panel of speaker for the Sierra Leone country update. When I got there for that program, I discovered that there were about three or four other people on the panel, most of whom I had known while in Sierra Leone, and maybe 200 people in the audience. So here I was with friends to participate in the update on Sierra Leone.

I'm mentioning this because afterwards, several of these people on the panel introduced me to a larger group of their friends, maybe 10 or 12 people, all of whom had served as volunteers in recent years. There happened to be this lady who had served in Sierra Leone from '83 to '85, departing just before I had arrived in Freetown. I'm mentioning this because I ended up marrying her. We all went to an African restaurant for dinner after the program, and Lorraine and I exchanged telephone numbers. I had just become separated from my first wife, so I was technically available for dating. I didn't have any money and I didn't have much time because I had two little kids living with me, so dates were a cup of coffee or an ice cream cone and maybe a walk around the block. Lorraine had been back from Sierra Leone a year. I already knew I was going out to Mombasa, and Lorraine had been there as a tourist after her Peace Corps tenure in Sierra Leone. So it was pretty logical for us to get together and start dating. Men always say logical. It was pretty romantic, in fact. We got married only weeks before we left for Mombasa in the summer of 1988.

Q: That's very interesting.

EISENBRAUN: In that fall of '86, there was another encounter with the Peace Corps related to my Sierra Leone days. The Director of the Peace Corps in those days was a very popular lady named Lorette Ruppe. She seemed to wield a lot of authority in Washington because of her activism on the part of the Peace Corps. She was popular with volunteers because she traveled around a great deal, she would go out to volunteer's villages, she would sit on the floor of their mud huts and eat whatever food they were eating.

It had come to her attention that I had also spent a great deal of time with Peace Corps volunteers in Sierra Leone, so she invited me to her office as a gesture of thanks. We talked a bit about Sierra Leone and then, since I was on the Kenya desk and there was also a big Peace Corps program in Kenya, we talked a bit about Kenyan affairs and the Peace Corps activities there. Now, it just so happened that I had become quite friendly with the former director of the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, a gentleman named Habib Khan, who I knew had his eye on being Peace Corps director in Kenya. Habib was a naturalized citizen born in Pakistan. I said to Lorette Ruppe, I know that Habib Khan has his eye on being the Peace Corps director in Kenya and I just wanted to say I worked with him really closely in Sierra Leone for an entire year and I think he's pretty good and I hope that you'll give him some very serious consideration for Kenya. This was at the end of a 45 minute cordial meeting, and she said, yes, Habib, well he will never, ever be director in Kenya. I know he wants to go there, but I'll never appoint him. I asked with much surprise, why would that be? We had just agreed he had been effective in Sierra Leone, where there was one of the largest programs in Africa, and perhaps the world. She replied, yes, but he's of Asian origin and there is a large Asian community in Kenya, and Asians don't get along there with the government.

Q: In fact, Idi Amin had thrown them out of Uganda, right?

EISENBRAUN: That's right, in the, what was it, the late '70s? I had learned that the Asian community in Kenya feared that the same might happen to them. So here is Lorette Ruppe saying Habib, because of his national origin, would never be Peace Corps director there. I was shocked to have a federal official telling me this because I think even then it was illegal to discriminate on the basis of national origin. I replied that that's all the more reason for you to show some courage and appoint him as Peace Corps director, in the same fashion that the White House had just appointed Ed Perkins, an African American, to be Ambassador in South Africa.

Well, she was infuriated by my comment about showing some courage, and gone was the niceness of earlier. She said you don't understand anything about this issue; it's completely different from the Ed Perkins situation in South Africa. And that was the end of the conversation, and I was essentially hustled out of the office.

I feel it important these 20 years later that I should relate this story of blatant discrimination. Well, Habib Khan did not become director in Kenya, although he went on to work with USAID in South Africa, ironically. And I burned my bridges with the Peace Corps.

At any rate, I enjoyed my tenure as Kenya desk officer, partly because it was refreshing to deal with new topics, and partly because I was dealing with some very pleasant people. The director of the office was a fellow named David Fisher, who was laidback and knowledgeable about the area, and he let me do whatever I wanted, essentially. And it was a little surprising, at first, that whatever briefing papers I did for the secretary or any ranking official and later on for the White House, they were just passed up the line. I mean, after all, Kenya wasn't that vital to U.S. interests and so it wasn't like the India desk, where every word was agonized over and there were multiple drafts of every document. When you discover that what you are writing is going up unchanged to the most senior levels, it causes you to be a whole lot more careful.

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: In the spring of 1987, President Moi had a working visit to Washington. He came and had lunch with President Reagan, and another lunch with Vice President Bush. As was usual, I as the desk officer had the responsibility of preparing virtually all the briefing papers for the secretary and the others, including at the White House. It's not so complicated to do these papers when it's a relatively small country. It's a mammoth undertaking, however, for a country like India, where I had cut my teeth as a desk officer preparing for a big visit.

The reason I'm telling this story is that President Moi was scheduled to have lunch with Vice President Bush. There were only going to be about 20 guests at the luncheon. When you had to do a briefing paper for Vice President Bush, you just did one, whatever you thought was worthwhile, there were no rigid requirements. So that left some room for creativity. I did write a pretty good paper for the vice president, I thought, and when the office director saw it, he said, did you write this?

Anyway, so it went over to the White House as a backgrounder for the VP's luncheon with President Moi. The morning of the luncheon, I got a call from Don Gregg, who was the chief of staff for Vice President Bush. He said, there's this luncheon today, and the vice president wants to invite you to attend as a guest in thanks for the great briefing paper you did for him. I said, what s that again? Gregg repeated that Bush thought the briefer was unusually helpful, and now there happens to be a place at the table and he wants you to come over and join. I replied, okay, and strolled over. The luncheon was not at the White House, it was opposite the White House just off Lafayette Square; there's a corner house as a museum, called the Stephen Decatur House. He had been a naval hero during the Civil War.

Q: During the Barbary Wars.

EISENBRAUN: Oh? I see. Well, thank you for setting me straight. He had had quite a lovely home on Lafayette Square, which I should go back and tour properly someday, reading all the signs. On that occasion, they had taken over the dining room of the home for the luncheon for President Moi. There were only two other Department officials present, Assistant Secretary Chet Crocker and Ambassador Elinor Constable, and neither knew I was invited. In fact, they knew specifically I wasn't on the guest list because they had seen all the briefing papers. Anyway, I just walked over and had my name checked off and there I was. It was very nice, particularly because I didn't have any official duties; just drink the wine and chat with the Kenyan officials. Afterwards, there was a moment to thank Vice President Bush for including me on the guest list, and he was very gracious about it, saying he hoped that I had enjoyed it.

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Q: Well then, in '88 you moved on?

EISENBRAUN: To Mombasa. My new wife, Lorraine, and I went there in the summer of 1988 after about five months of Swahili language training, and six weeks after getting married.

Q: Wow. And you were there when?

EISENBRAUN: I was there two years, from '88 to '90.

Q: All right, describe Mombasa to me.

EISENBRAUN: In some ways it was for me almost the perfect Foreign Service assignment, almost a throwback to the 19th century. On the one hand, Mombasa is very much up to date as a center of European tourism, the Riviera of East Africa. The beaches are glorious, there's one luxurious hotel after another, Europeans by the tens of thousands came down during the season. It had a glamorous side, and the major responsibility day by day was which exotic restaurant to go to. So how does that square with the 19th century?

It was also about as far away from Washington as you could get. The embassy was consumed with its affairs in Nairobi, and they figured nothing much happened in Mombasa except tourism and shipping, so they let the consulate go its own way. Just don't get in trouble, essentially, was implied. Show the flag and keep us informed, but you can pretty much do what you want. I had a communicator at the beginning, so there was the usual telegraphic capability of sending things to Nairobi and Washington. However, I had almost nothing to report directly to Washington.

Mombasa was a port city where about four different ethnic groups got along pretty well. There was the indigenous African community; there was the Swahili element, that is, the Arabs from the Persian Gulf, Yemen primarily. The Arabs had come down over the pass millennia and settled the coast of East Africa in for a distance of five or 10 miles inland and created an Arab-African hybrid called the Swahili culture. Then there was the Indian community of those who had come from the subcontinent at the end of the 19th century to build the railroads and then stayed on and got rich. Finally, there were the white Kenyans, by this time second and third generation, children or descendants of the original pioneers, and a few of the original pioneers left in retirement. So that's the white Kenyans, the African Kenyans, the Swahilis and the Asian community. Four communities living side by side and getting along pretty well was impressive. Mombasa was the principal port in East Africa, so it was a very busy place with lots of ships going in and out of the modern harbor, and sailing dhows plying between the Persian Gulf and Zanzibar Gulf still using the old harbor.

Q: Was it a well run port?

EISENBRAUN: Well, it seemed so at first in that lots of ships went in and out. It looked to the casual observer like a pretty busy place. My job was to get to know all of the shipping interests there. They weren't American; they were German and Dutch and British interests. Their representatives told me a different story from what it appeared to be, that is, they said that the place was rife with corruption and incompetence and inefficiency. Apparently there were major managerial problems with the port, and ships that should be able to come and go in a matter of a day or so, what in Singapore would have been a 24-hours turnaround, would take five or six days. There'd be no reason to take that long in Mombasa except for deliberate inefficiency, usually caused by not paying a sufficient bribe to move things along more quickly.

Q: What about our military connection there? How did that play out while you were there?

EISENBRAUN: The consulate was there primarily because of military interests. When I got there, I inherited a number of Navy people on the staff, but they departed as the scaled back. As I said mentioned earlier, the ships of our sixth fleet would come in and refuel and restock and give their crews some R&R. Our Navy did this occasionally, but the British Navy was in port almost weekly, and ships from about every navy in the world made it to Mombasa at some point in my two years there.

I went around and saw the lengthened runways at the airport, which the Kenyans were getting the benefit of from all the tourist planes coming and going. The port had been widened and deepened, which was beneficial to the Kenyans from their commercial point of view, but when our aircraft carriers came they chose not to enter the port. A skipper of one of the carriers told me no way were they going to get into that port, it was just too tight as far as they were concerned and they felt vulnerable from a security point of view. So they would anchor a couple of miles off shore and ferry men back and forth. So the fact is, the USG spent all that money and widened and deepened the port but the Kenyans got the benefit, not us.

I was surprised to find that we had offices built and stockpiled, ready to go, and secure warehouses with desks, typewriters, file cabinets, wastebaskets, phone connections, everything ready in case it needed to be used. In case of emergency, you can imagine huge planeloads of people coming in and boom, all they had to do was turn on the lights.

Q: Okay, you were saying so we had the, you know, everything was ready to go.

EISENBRAUN: That's right. Our navy did come in for occasional joint exercises with the Kenyan navy.

Q: Yes, when you bring an aircraft carrier in with its whole task force, what was it like?

EISENBRAUN: Within two months of my arrival, I had the Carl Vinson carrier come in with its entire battle group of about a dozen ships. The Carl Vinson is a Nimitz-class nuclear carrier, the biggest and most modern of them all at that time. The carriers don't operate on their own, they're part of a battle group of anywhere up to a dozen ships; destroyers, cruisers, probably a submarine, although that was never acknowledged, and a number of supply ships. So you're talking five or six thousand men and women, a really big deal. And they would never come in for less than about five or six days. The Carl Vinson visit in October of '88 was typical in its size, but atypical in that everything went so well. There had been some real problems in the past where some ladies of the night had been killed by sailors, and there had been highly public trials, and so forth. But I needn't have been concerned, even about the new worries about AIDS. The Navy was prepared. Those men were so scared of AIDS that instead of going and hanging out in all the bars, the sailors signed up for upcountry tours and went off on safaris. So there was virtually no incident, nothing serious. With all these men walking the streets of Mombassa, you can imagine it was a circus atmosphere. The military had its own MPs everywhere; they were determined that there wasn't going to be any trouble on that ship visit.

The main reason I enjoyed the Carl Vinson visit was that a few days before the group got to Mombasa, the admiral of the group asked if I would like to put a group of local officials together and fly out to the ship for a lunch and an air show. I did it, and my secretary, Sharon, and my wife Lorraine went along, as well as the Mombasa Mayor and other officials. We landed on the Carl Vinson and indeed we had a great air and artillery show. The cruisers fired their guns at a target that the airplanes had dropped out in the ocean, and the planes flew over and broke the sound barrier right above our heads, which we weren't told was going to happen. We had lunch with the admiral and everyone was very friendly. That was great public relations.

A day or so later, the ships arrived in the harbor, with the carrier remaining offshore. I had arranged a lot of public relations activities, so there were volunteers from the crews to go and paint an orphanage and I think we may have painted a school as well. I took the captain of the carrier and the admiral around to meet the mayor and have our pictures taken for the papers. In the evening, we hosted a reception held at my residence, a beautiful compound on an acre or two with a pool, a tennis court and plenty of space outdoors for 300 people, plus the ship's band. It was all very pleasant.

We had another battle group visit during my tenure in Mombasa, and that was the carrier Midway with all its ships. In between, there were perhaps a half-dozen individual warships.

Lorraine helped a great deal in Mombasa in a whole manner of ways, from working very hard to hold social functions, both elegant and casual, to getting to know a wide variety of local people, especially members of the Asian community. She also, by the way, had a shrewd eye for hypocrisy and sincerity, a real gift, and advised me accordingly so I didn't go over as many cliffs as I no doubt did before she was there.

Q: I would have thought that, you know, the beaches were full of Europeans, I mean, usually when you say Europeans usually you're talking about an awful lot of young women, secretaries and the like. I would have thought this would have been a bonanza for both the young women and the sailors. Or not?

EISENBRAUN: Well, it was, it was. There were many men who went upcountry, as I told you, for a couple of days on safaris, but there was always that whatever, 10 or 20 percent, that hit the beaches and bars. For years, the professional sex workers from all over East Africa had been coming to Mombasa when the ships arrived. They could make a huge amount of money really quickly. But not to the extent that had been the case in the '70s and early '80s. By 1988, there were stories in the press that the women had little to do and the bars were complaining of no business, comparatively speaking, because all the men were upcountry.

Q: AIDS is a great inhibitor.

EISENBRAUN: My hat is off to the U.S. Navy for the way it educated the men about AIDS. One has to remember that there were women on these crews too. It wasn't just men coming off the boats. And remember, the ships were there to re-supply the ships, so a lot of people were working hard, with smaller boats plying the harbor and helicopters whizzing overhead. It was really a sight to see a whole battle group come into a relatively small town like that.

Q: Were you there when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait?

EISENBRAUN: No, no, I had left the first of July of '90 and that happened about the first of August of '90. It is interesting as a footnote, I told all about this military prepositioning of supplies and equipment, but when the actual Gulf War came, they didn't use Mombasa. They used other facilities that were better and nearer.

Q: Diego Garcia was certainly one.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, Diego Garcia, and I think Djibouti was very important, and Saudi Arabia was cooperative.

Q: Everything was duplicated or triplicated because you just don't know.

EISENBRAUN: In 1992-93, when we did have the major military humanitarian effort with Somalia, the facilities in Mombassa were used extensively.

Q: Were there any signs of Muslim extremist activity at that point?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. During the two years I was in Mombassa, '88 to '90, I would hear second hand that there were some extremists mullahs in the mosques who on Fridays would preach some very incendiary, anti-American remarks and fire up the local people. I reported these stories back to Nairobi and then on to Washington, and Washington pricked up its ears and was interested to know more. I did what I could to try to develop contacts that could tell me more of the story. But it was always secondhand; I did not meet any mullahs myself.

Q: That was probably the only way you could in any case.

EISENBRAUN: We were aware that there was unrest in the Muslim community along the coast and it was anti-American, primarily because of U.S. policy vis-ï¿½-vis Israel.

Q: There was a bombing recently of hotel in Mombasa owned by Israelis. Was there much Israeli connection in your time?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, there was a bit, but it must have grown quite considerably. The bombing you're referring to happened about 2003, I believe. When I read the news reports about very luxurious Israeli hotels on the coast, with jumbo jets back and forth from Israel bringing Israeli tourists in, I was amazed. Nothing like that was going on in my time. I don't remember any hotel catering to Israeli tourism.

Q: What about the tourism? As a former consular officer of many years I always think of tourists getting in trouble. Did you have much?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, I wanted to talk about that because here I was a political officer in charge of the consulate, but I was the only officer, actually, so I had to do everything, including consular work. I would issue half a dozen visas a day, that's all, but I took care also of any Americans who got in trouble. That duty ended up being the most fulfilling, the most interesting of my responsibilities during my two years there.

I'll mention just a few cases. One involved about eight or nine young backpackers, one of whom was an American and the others a mix of Dutch, New Zealand, and British. They'd gotten in trouble one night on the beach. I learned of this when on a Sunday afternoon my wife and I drove up the coast 40 or 50 miles just to have lunch and sightsee. We were waved down on the road by a young western backpacker who simply told us the story. He said I know that eight or nine people like me were arrested the night before in Kilifi, the next biggest town up the road from Mombasa, and they're in jail. It was Sunday, and I hadn't been informed of the arrest of any American, as was the protocol. I drove over to the police station to see what the story was, and I learned that indeed there had been these arrests and they had already seen the judge and he'd sentenced them to 30 days of hard labor in the Mombasa prison, where they had already been taken. The charge was marijuana possession.

The next morning I went around to the prison and asked to meet the American, or first, to confirm that there really was an American in the prison. Yes there was. To make a long story short, I was pretty convinced after talking to the American that they had been railroaded with the charge of marijuana possession. The young American told that they had been partying on the beach at night, drinking some beers, I guess, which was not illegal, and had a campfire, and the police just swooped down on them at midnight, beaten them up and thrown them in jail. Later, the police claimed to have found these joints in their backpacks. The American said they didn't have any marijuana, it was planted.

I believed them because everyone knew how serious it was to have any kind of illegal drug in Kenya, and I think these people did too. Anyway, there hadn't been any due process, they were just simply beaten up, the evidence was found and then they were sentenced to 30 days at hard labor in the tropical sun breaking rocks. The consulates and embassies hadn't been informed. There had been a pattern of this kind of thing happening on the coast.

I protested, but of course that didn't do any good. By the way, I ended up looking after the interests of the entire group, all nationalities, because I was the only official consular officer on the coast. I should say that several of those arrested were women.

A day or two later, I went to a social function and mentioned this story to one of the most prominent of the attorneys in town. He said our procedures weren't followed, and he too thought it sounded like a trumped up case. He said, I'll represent them pro bono, or better, I'll charge them one shilling. So I went out pretty excited the next day and I met the American and asked it the group wanted to let this Kenyan lawyer represent them. He consulted, and the answer came back yes. By the way, he was telling me pretty awful stories of their treatment; their heads had been shaved, for example, and they were out there breaking rocks in the sun. By the way, Mombasa is right on the equator, so it was pretty darned hot.

The attorney took this on. In the meantime, it just happened that the New Zealand state minister for legal affairs was visiting Kenya on an official visit, and he raised the issue in Nairobi. Then he came down to the coast and he met with me and he went around to all the authorities. So the New Zealanders took this about as seriously as they could. I got the newspaper clippings eventually; it was big news in New Zealand. So the New Zealanders and I were the ones that were pressing this. But New Zealand didn't have any representation on the coast; I don't even think they had an embassy in Nairobi.

Q: Usually the Brits would take this, being part of the Commonwealth.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. Well, they had a very fine honorary consul in Mombasa who backed up everything I did, but he ceded the authority because I was the official representative. Not to say that he didn't take responsibility; it's just that I took the lead.

The Kenyan attorney prevailed. He got a court order to release these people. They served about 20 days of their 30-day sentence. He got a release order around five in the afternoon, gave it to me and with the order in hand I went out to the prison, presented it to the warden, who was pretty darned surprised, but he couldn't do anything but release the prisoners. so all these people were called together and just released, with their original backpacks and clothes, and told to leave the country the next morning.

There were about ten of them. I'd taken a big van from the office, maybe I had two vans. So they had to be out of the country within 24 hours, but what to do that night? I brought them all back to my home. So from breaking rocks and eating gruel, they went to grilling hamburgers around the pool, swimming and listening to Blood, Sweat and Tears on the stereo. It was a surreal and unbelievable party, and they never went to sleep. My wife and I stayed with them until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning listening to them compare stories of prison life, especially the differences between the women and the men, until we got too tired and had to go to bed.

It was a human rights bonanza as they told what conditions were like in the prison, what had happened to them and then the women and the men were comparing stories back and forth. There was everything you could think of from maltreatment to sexual harassment to you name it; virtually everything came up. I don't think they were personally mistreated but they witnessed it to the Kenyan prisoners, beatings and so forth. I asked them if they minded if I reported back to Washington what they were relating, and they said fine, do it. There was a vivid cable that went back in the following days telling about this. The next day, I took them around to the travel agent's and to the lawyer's office, where they made a great ceremony of giving him the one shilling, which I think I had to loan to them. By 4:00 in the afternoon, they were all on planes and gone.

A number of these people kept in touch for years. One invited me to his wedding in Amsterdam.

One day, an American man came around and reported that he and his lady friend had been mugged. He was not too hurt, but she was badly beaten and was in the hospital. He said he had to catch a plane. I went around to the hospital to meet this lady. She had broken bones and was in terrible condition. However, she wasn't American; she was German. She'd lived in America for about 30 years, in Minneapolis. So I took care of her as though she was an American citizen. The German consul didn't really have a role; he sent flowers around, but all the business had to do with me to contact her employer in the States and so forth and eventually get her on a plane. She had to go in a wheelchair to the airport. The Kenyan authorities were very helpful, and her employer in the States sent money for the ticket. She sent a letter to me later, saying I had taken such good care of her that she realized it was time for her to become an American citizen.

Q: Did you have, you know, I'd heard reports about Nairobi and how the security situation had gone down and gone. I mean, roving gangs of people, you know, really quite dangerous. Was that reflected in Mombassa or not?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. First, your story about roving gangs terrorizing homes, like 10 or 15 descending upon a home and robbing it and taking off, that was the case in Nairobi. It did not happen in Mombasa, fortunately. A few tourists were killed in ad hoc situations. But no, these roving gangs had not yet developed on the coast by 1990, but I was told that in subsequent years it became just about as bad in Mombasa as in Nairobi. We were pretty well protected in our compound and there was a panic button in several strategic places, one in the kitchen, one in the bedroom so that we could alert a local security guard office. Sure enough, in the first week or so my wife, mid-morning, bumped that panic button. I don't think she even realized it because it wasn't as though bells and whistles went off in the house but they did go off in the security office down the street. She realized she'd bumped it but since she heard nothing, she didn't think anything was going to happen. But within 30 seconds, 15 or 20 machete-wielding guards came storming in the gate and overwhelmed the entire compound, looking for miscreants to kill, I guess. They were quite disappointed when there was no one to be found.

Q: Well, anything else to talk about Mombasa or not?

EISENBRAUN: Well, I would say that American naval vessels never caused me any problem, but probably once a month an American freighter came in, usually carrying bulk grain. They would spend maybe 10 days in port while the grain was being laboriously taken out. It wasn't even bagged; it was just dumped in the hold. I don't think they do that anymore but they did then. That meant a crew of 15 or 20 was loose on the streets, and they could cause more trouble than you can imagine. I had one seaman do a drug overdose and die. I was one of the few consulates in the world that still had to deal with the merchant marine. So I had all the books on official procedure, and had to consult them constantly. One day I got an anonymous call from a mate on a ship that had pulled in that morning. The caller said I had better investigate his captain because he's crazy and had just taken someone to the airport and dismissed him and not followed due process, which was to discharge before an American consul.

Q: And signed off.

EISENBRAUN: Needed to be signed off and had to be paid off in U.S. dollars and had to be properly given a ticket. Well, none of that had happened. I called the agent because I knew all these agents, then got to the captain and I said I'd like to come down. And he was very accommodating, he said yes, why don't you come and have lunch. So I went down for lunch on the ship. I said I'm here to investigate the fact that you discharged a sailor and took him out to the airport. And he said yes, that's true. Well I said, I'd like to look at your log. So he showed it to me, and there was the discharge. I asked why he had not brought the man by the consulate for discharge. He replied, Oh I just, I don't know quite why, I guess I was too busy or I forgot there was an American consulate in town or something , but he said, oh don't worry, next time I'll do it. And he also paid him off in shillings, not dollars, as required.

I'm telling you this story only because before lunch, I said, I'm going to have to report you to the American Coast Guard, which was the standard procedure. And he said oh, no, no, no. Please don't do that. I said I've got to; it's my job, that's why I'm here. We had our lunch and talked about other matters entirely. And then as I was leaving, he said again, are you sure you can't reconsider the need to report this to the Coast Guard? He added that he was going to be back in port in about six weeks and if there was anything I wanted, anything at all, I'm in a position to make sure you can get it, what would you like? It's the only time in my Foreign Service career when I was offered a bribe. I thanked him for his generosity but said I would have to report his infraction anyway. I did, and I never heard another thing about him or his ship.

I came back from lunch when another merchant marine ship had come into port, and the waiting room was filled with people in coats and ties and a bride in a white wedding dress. The groom had come from the ship, and he thought I could marry him and the local African girl whom he had met on a previous port visit. I didn't know I had this authority so I had to look it up and of course it turned out I could not do that. They had to get married by the Kenyan authorities down the street. So the entourage and the bride left with her gown and her trail dragging down the steps. There is a sad ending to this. Months later, she came back to the office, very much pregnant to report that she had never heard from him again. I steered her to the local agent of the shipping company, but I'm sure that didn't do any good.

One morning in late November , 1988, the Kenyan newspapers reported that Benazir Bhutto had been elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. A few days later, a front page story headlined that Benazir had appointed four women to her cabinet. Reading the story with interest to see whether I might know one of them, I was nonetheless startled to learn that one of the women was Shahnaz Wazir Ali, who had been named State Minister of Education. I had known her as a teacher at the Lahore American School, and I had traveled with her and her parents out into the countryside of Pakistan in December, 1979.

Around the same time I read about Shahnaz's elevation to government minister, the administrators of the American schools in Africa had a conference in Mombasa, to which they invited me to give the welcoming address. I remember my theme to them was:  treat your teachers with respect and value what they have to contribute, as they will have good ideas, and you never know when a staff member will be suddenly elevated to high position. The administrators liked that theme and afterwards, one of the participants mentioned a similar story to that of Shahnaz, but set in an African country. I think that that concept of treating all staff with utmost respect is a pretty good one, regardless of whether one is managing a school, an embassy, or a commercial office.

I said earlier that there was not much political activity going on challenging Moi's government, yet I became aware that there was some underground political activity. I finally was able to meet one of the principal coast opposition opponents to Moi. His name was Ahmed Bamahriz , of Arab descent, though he'd been born on the coast. He challenged Moi at every step, and he'd been arrested a few times. He was quite friendly and wanted to talk to me, but he had to be awfully careful. We would meet in obscure restaurants in the quiet parts of town, sitting far in the back. Through him, I got a picture of people who were trying to challenge the Moi government.

I took him around to the Mombasa Club for lunch one day. The club was a wonderful environment, right out of the 19th century British colonial days, with the building opening out onto the old harbor and next to Ft. Jesus, built by the Portuguese in the 15th century. I doubt the club had changed much physically in a hundred years. I didn't think it would be a problem taking this leader of Arab descent into the dining room for lunch. It created quite a stir, however. The dining room staff was almost universally African. They were amazed to see Bamahriz at the club. To my astonishment, we were treated like royalty by the African staff, and during the course of the lunch, every single one of them made it a point to come by to shake his hand and ask if there was anything that they could get for him. It was quite an education for me to see that he had such an electrifying effect in the club and clearly enormous respect, even among Black Africans. .

I had hardly gotten back to the office when one of my friends, an African attorney prominent in the club, came to see me. He said Steve, it's not appropriate to bring somebody like that around to the club. He said, you surely can appreciate that we take great efforts to keep the club utterly and completely apolitical, and to bring in an opposition politician is just too dangerous, frankly, for the club's interest. He asked that I not do it again. I realized immediately he was right, and was rather embarrassed. In retrospect I don't know what I was thinking. I didn't realize Bamahriz was that popular, frankly; I didn't think that anybody at the club would know him. I apologized for using the club in that fashion. He said well, okay, I just wanted to make sure that you don't ever even dream of doing this again. I didn't. Fortunately, there were no other repercussions.

I learned at least that the political opposition was stronger on the coast than I had thought.

Q: Could you have brought in Moi supporters?

EISENBRAUN: I never tested that. I never saw any of the officials from the government at the club.

Q: So it was just, you know, I mean, it wasn't they would take one side but not the other; they just didn't want to get involved.

EISENBRAUN: No, they didn't, and for some reason the Kenyan political leaders ignored the club. Now, I should say the club was completely integrated with members from all the ethnic groups on the coast, although the largest contingent was the white Kenyan settlers, many of them quite elderly.

I want to say a few things about the new Ambassador, Smith Hempstone, who came out to Nairobi in December 1989, replacing Elinor Constable. Hempstone was a political appointee who knew a lot about Kenya, as he had lived in the country decades earlier as a journalist. He said he had met Ernest Hemingway in Kenya, which was interesting, as Hempstone seemed to pattern himself after Hemmingway. He looked like Hemmingway, had a sense of adventure that probably would have appealed to Hemmingway, and he wrote about as well as Hemmingway did. Hempstone started traveling around the country and got to know even the most remote places well. He also set about trying to clean up the mess the embassy was in after the neglect of Constable, with her uncanny ability to destroy morale while doing little of substance.

Hempstone early on came down to Mombasa and started out by taking Lorraine and me to lunch at the Tamarind Restaurant, where we spent the afternoon getting drunk together in what was no doubt one of the world's most beautiful settings overlooking the old harbor. We had met each other in Lahore, Pakistan, around 1980, when he added Lahore to his schedule at the last moment on Tom Thornton's recommendation (he was on the NSC staff) that I could introduce him to some useful people. Hempstone was visiting Pakistan to do a piece for one of the major journals, the Atlantic Monthly, I believe. I took Hempstone around to Nur Noon's for dinner, where he met several senior PPP leaders important under Bhutto, who had been hanged by that time. I was surprised and put off that Hemptone was willing to convey to these Pakistanis that they, as feudal landlords and their sycophants, didn't represent Pakistan's political future. He didn't say this directly, but he had a contemptuous manner that clearly rubbed the Pakistanis the wrong way, although they were too gracious to say anything directly, then or later.

Now in Kenya, Hempstone came to Mombasa on successive visits and met all the local politicians and personalities I knew, something Constable had never even considered. Hempstone had the right priorities in that he quickly figured out that we ought to know more about the Islamic leaders in Mombasa, but that was easier said than done. I put together a meeting with Hempstone and a variety of Islamic personalities, but we were never able to crack the nut of meeting anti-American Imams preaching in the mosques. But we got some good information second-hand. One of the meetings I set up for him was with a fellow named Shariff who was Moi's important political hatchet man on the coast. It was not a friendly meeting, dominated mostly by Hempstone's pointed observations about growing corruption, political misrule, and economic deterioration from the days he had been in Kenya previously.

The next day, a hot and sunny Sunday, Hemptone, Lorraine and I went down to the ferry en route to spending the day on the southern beaches and meeting a few American friends of ours who lived there. While we waited for the ferry, we bought a few papers from the hawkers, and to our surprise, the bold headlines proclaimed that Shariff had told off the American Ambassador the night before for some unfavorable things he had said about Kenya in a meeting with Shariff. In truth, Shariff had said very little at the meeting, but he got back at Hempstone via the press.

On one visit to Mombasa after he had been in country a few months, Hempstone and I went together to a big Kenyan Government program at the fairgrounds, and I was surprised that Hempstone did not chose to sit with any of the government officials, despite their offers. At one point, he turned to me and said, look at those clowns, nodding at President Moi a few feet away, acting like friends of the people while they steal the treasury bare. I was taken aback by the scorn in his tone and his willingness to speak so bluntly when he could have been overheard by any number of Moi's ministers just around us. His point was true, of course, but his distaste seemed too personal, to say nothing of his lack of discretion.

After I left the country, I continued to hear about Hempstone's adventures there. He let his dislike and contempt for Moi and other Kenyan leaders be known publicly as Hempstone campaigned for better human rights and stricter accountability of US and other donor assistance, some of which was undoubtedly going into secret personal bank accounts of Kenyan government officials. I heard that Hempstone became a household name and a hero of the common man for his open antagonism to the Kenyan Government. This is hardly the usual role of an Ambassador. I wonder how he ever got any work done with the government. He appropriately entitled his memoirs Rogue Ambassador.

I've often wondered why Washington let Hempstone create his own foreign policy of being in open contempt of the government he was sent to try to work with, while encouraging behind the scenes reform in the very areas Hempstone was publicizing widely. My theories are that he had sufficient protection in the White House that no one at State wanted to confront him. It is also possible that Hank Cohen, the Assistant Secretary for Africa, didn't care sufficiently to confront Moi because Hempstone's open antagonism fit with our own policy of dislike for Moi's corrupt government.

Q: Interesting question. Political appointees sometimes do things at odds with usual practice.As for you personally, where did you go in 1990 after your assignment in Kenya?

EISENBRAUN: I went back to Washington and worked in the officer of UN political affairs. My portfolio had to do with African issues in the UN, in both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

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Q: Today is the 20th of July 2005. Steve, you're going to international organizations, IO (Bureau of International Organization Affairs). You were there from when to when?

EISENBRAUN: I was there from August of 1990 until August of 1992.

Q: Who was the head of the office?

EISENBRAUN: The IO bureau was headed up by John Bolton as assistant secretary. The Office of UN Political Affairs where I worked was headed up by a nice woman and masterful negotiator named Molly Williamson.

Q: So what was your particular piece of the action?

EISENBRAUN: I was asked to be the Africa watcher. My work was to follow African issues in both the General Assembly and in the Security Council. What I thought was going to be the bulk of the job would be the annual General Assembly meeting even though it only meets for six months of the year. I didn't know what I would do the other six months, as African issues generally didn't consume the interest of the Security Council, which could meet at any time there was a need. Things changed because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

All of the twelve resolutions in the Security Council that went into shaping the international response to the invasion were drafted in our office, and the instructions to our mission in New York and to our missions abroad on how these drafts were to be negotiated were written by us. Once the Gulf War was finished, my attention was taken up by UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, which culminated in the effort in Somalia.

Q: Okay. Well, let's first go back. John Bolton today is a very controversial figure. As we speak he is in line to be Ambassador to the United Nations but with tremendous opposition within the Senate. And partly the problem with him was his administrative approach. How did you find Bolton, both as a boss and his outlook?

EISENBRAUN: There were several layers between him and me, so I didn't interact with John on a daily basis. But I did see him very frequently, as I was in his office weekly for various meetings with foreign officials. On the personal side he was gracious, a very soft-spoken individual, at least in my presence and in the meetings I attended. He always seemed a bit distracted, never quite focused on the issues at hand. He didn't even seem to care very much, as far as I could see, about the day by day workings of our United Nations activities.

Q: This is tape eight, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes. We were talking about John Bolton.

EISENBRAUN: That's right. I just said that his personal relationship with his staff I thought was very good, very pleasant. On the policy side, it was a very complicated thing. Of course we were consumed by the invasion of Kuwait in August. I presume Bolton was too, but it didn't seem that way. As the autumn developed and it became clear that we were going to work this issue steadily through the Security Council, it's not as though John Bolton had strategy meetings with us. .

We had constant interaction, however, from his very effective principal deputy, John Wolf. I think Wolf almost single handedly was responsible for the nuts and bolts of how we worked the Security Council resolutions. He was in constant contact with Ambassador Tom Pickering in New York, who also was completely involved in both conception and implementation of the UN policies. Maybe Wolf was following Bolton's lead, but it didn't seem so. And I doubt Pickering paid much attention to Bolton. It seemed as though Bolton had delegated almost full authority to Wolf.

And then Molly Williamson as director was on the phone with her mid-level people, especially at the Pentagon, constantly negotiating and badgering them to get on board with the diplomatic strategy. She and Wolf together couldn't have been a better team. They were the right people at the right time. But John Bolton to me seemed not completely in the picture.

Many would argue that Tom Pickering was one of the more effective UN Ambassadors we have ever had, and he was the right man to have there when the invasion came along. He skillfully worked with his Security Council colleagues from the other four permanent member states to get these resolutions through the Council. From our level, it seemed that Pickering, Secretary of State Baker and John Wolf were the principal players at the senior level.

We got a lot of policy guidance on the Gulf situation around mid-morning, after the Secretary's daily staff meeting. I don't know what John Bolton's role was in those meetings. Maybe he conceived policy ideas the night before and had them blessed in the morning meeting. That's possible. But I don't think so. Instead, I think that he was getting his marching orders, and he simply conveyed them.

Q: We had a very powerful secretary of state with his entourage and then you had Tom Pickering at the UN, so there probably weren't many loose ends to be taken care of at the mid-level.

EISENBRAUN: One other person was intimately involved, and that was the President. He set much of the policy and helped implement it by working the phones to world leaders. Because I concentrated on African matters, I simply do not know what role Brent Scowcroft as National Security Advisor played, nor his staff at the NSC. But no matter how much good senior leadership exists, there will be a million and one details to work out in the implementation, especially with an operation as complex as Desert Shield and Desert Storm. So I could not agree that there weren't loose ends. They were there by the bucket full.

Q: Well now, were you drafting some of the issues, you know, in a way to get the war going? In other words, to bring the alliance together. And I realize your job's the drafting level, but one of the things we're interested in is, you know, the view from the working level. What was- regarding getting, essentially getting allies together in this war, can you recall any of the issues that you were involved in drafting that particularly caused this concern?

EISENBRAUN: I want to make it clear, first of all, that I was not the principal drafter of any of those resolutions. That was in the hands of two other people who were dealing with the Middle East, Kathy Fitzpatrick and Will Imbrie. So I don't want to inflate my role. I was ancillary on the Gulf War in that I worked the African issues, that is, doing talking points crafted for the three members of the Security Council from Africa. I did draft resolutions on other issues regarding peacekeeping and other general assembly issues regarding Africa.

To answer your question, there was a lot of work to be done to get the Chinese and the Russians on board with the resolutions. There was always the fear of a veto, or more likely, an abstention, which would have hurt considerably the forward thrust of our diplomacy. These two countries had a lot of opposition to our proposed drafts, and we had to accommodate their concerns. Talking points had to be crafted in such a way as to anticipate what the Chinese and the Russian reaction would be.

In the end, there were no vetos and no abstentions. I think all these resolutions passed unanimously. To those people who are not familiar with the workings of the Security Council, any of the five permanent members can veto a resolution, despite the interests of the other members, of which there are ten nonpermanent members on a rotating basis. Even an abstention is close to a defeat. The truth is, if one were to go back and look at the history of the Security Council, one would find that there aren't many vetoes. It's a very powerful weapon, especially on the issues of collective security, which was the case with Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Q: Was there almost a discernable period when you, I mean the whole office, began to look at how to end the war and what did we want? Or was there just a sort of a feeling, well yes, the war will end when it ends?

EISENBRAUN: I believe we all thought there was not going to be a war. Yes, we saw the enormous war preparations, but we thought Iraq would back down. Up through Christmas, we thought that Saddam would see the light and that diplomatic pressure would work. Because the military force that was being arrayed against him was overwhelming. Any high school kid following the issue could see what the outcome was going to be militarily. It seemed inconceivable that Saddam would willingly invite his own destruction.

The resolutions were always carefully crafted in such a way that it was not literally aimed at the overthrow of Saddam; it was only the liberation of Kuwait. That's the only way those resolutions could have gotten though the Security Council. Most countries in the world could support that concept; certainly the African countries had no problems with it. They didn't want to be subverted by an ambitious neighbor either, and the only reason that China might have felt differently is that they weren't in a position to be invaded; they were, you know, a potential superpower that was looking at Taiwan and so forth and they didn't want to be censured if they had to move against Taiwan, or censored for what they had done in Tibet. With the Muslim countries on their southern border, the Russians too would be reluctant to sanction the rolling back of an invasion like this.

Even Molly Williamson, our office director, who was as plugged in as anyone could possibly be at her level, talking constantly with people at the Defense Department, I don't think she expected there was going to be war. We would have our weekly staff meetings, and as it got down to the December/January timeframe, she would say if the balloon goes up, then this is what we can expect in terms of our office work. She never had an attitude of inevitability. We thought it more likely that Saddam would be forced to back down. I doubt that attitude prevailed over at the Pentagon, however.

Q: Well, that's their business to prepare for war-

EISENBRAUN: The secretary of defense's office was intimately involved in crafting these resolutions too. They were a player. They had to clear on every single thing so it wasn't as though they had exclusive province only in military matters. They were involved in the diplomatic efforts, just as the State Department and its political military offices were involved in certain ways in the military operation.

Q: Well then, going back to my question then, was there a time when- were we so locked in to liberating Kuwait that there was- did we feel that we had wiggle room? In other words, could we essentially go that extra day and trap Saddam's revolutionary guard or were we making plans of peace terms or not? Was anybody looking at that?

EISENBRAUN: That wasn't our office's work. I don't know what those grand strategic thoughts were. But I can tell you what the working level dealing with Security Council resolutions thought, and that is no way possible could we have prosecuted the war for more than a day or two more than we did. Because that would have been an invasion of Iraq beyond what was absolutely necessary in the liberation of Kuwait, and we understood why the president stopped it as he did. He could have let the killing go one perhaps another day or so, but that's all.

From a diplomatic and political point of view, the only way we got those Security Council resolutions through was that they were limited in scope. Once they had been agreed to at the Security Council, there was little room to go beyond the liberation of Kuwait. The president had the UN blessing, he had congressional support, the formal blessing and he had public support for limited operations. His hands were totally tied, or his international coalition would have collapsed. .

Q: Well then, you say you moved to peacekeeping. And up to '92, what did that involve?

EISENBRAUN: The era of the early 1990s began a much more vigorous UN peacekeeping role in the world than had been true up until then. From 1991 or '92 on it seemed as though the UN was being called upon more frequently to have peacekeeping operations. Many of these were in Africa. The big one became Somalia. I should mention John Bolton's attitude in regard to that.

In the spring of 1992, the world's attention had shifted a bit from exclusively focusing on the Persian Gulf to the humanitarian situation that evolved in Somalia, where it was anarchy. The government in Mogadishu had collapsed, and there were competing warlords throughout the country, with one who had more or less consolidated his power in Mogadishu. However, as anarchy on the streets and there was starvation and it was manmade. The world was beginning to speak up regarding the need for international intervention and even American intervention. I was quite sympathetic to that.

In early 1992, Bolton suddenly wanted a daily morning briefing memo to supplement his evening one. I knew from meetings in his office that he wasn't interested in Somalia. He did not think that it was in America's national interest to be intervening in Somalia, despite what one might read about in the press and hear about on talk shows.

Well, I didn't share that point of view because the situation was so terrible, and it seemed as though we had the military forces in the region to help. I was feeding Bolton a whole lot more information about the Somalia situation than he probably needed to know. If I had been really on his same wave length I wouldn't have given him much, but he never complained or asked me to stand down. I would pick out the most salient and gruesome information about the number dead and the suffering. He must have concluded it was worth getting because there was enough discussion at senior levels that he wanted to be well informed.

In one meeting, Bolton spread his arms and said, this is the spectrum of my interest in international affairs. And then he pointed way over to the side and he said, this is my interest in Somalia. It was pretty vivid, that he didn't think that U.S. interests were involved in Somalia. I was a little antagonistic about that.

Well, we all know the story that George and Barbara Bush were watching the television news one evening in the spring of 1992, and there was a program on this anarchy and starvation in Somalia. George turned to Barbara and said, this is really terrible; we have to do something about it. So the word came down that the President had decided we're going to move into Somalia and stabilize the situation. We would take the lead but we would work through the Security Council.

EISENBRAUN: I would like to jump back to the August-September timeframe of 1990 and talk about the general assembly and the apartheid resolution that year.

Q: Sure.

EISENBRAUN: Despite the fact that I'd only been in the office maybe a week when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait, I was still supposed to handle Africa, and I had some serious responsibilities in that regard. My first marching orders were to develop a new American policy to be used in the general assembly regarding apartheid. There was each year a major general assembly resolution regarding apartheid. In years past, those resolutions utterly condemned South Africa, calling for majority rule.

I had just come out of Mombasa, Kenya. I hadn't been thinking of apartheid. So that was rather a daunting responsibility to have. In the back of my mind was the fact that when I was in high school, I participated in a model UN program, and to get into the program, there was an oral exam, and I had not known then what the definition of apartheid was. I related this earlier.

So in 1990, I had to learn about the US policy regarding apartheid. It was an outgrowth of the constructive engagement of the Reagan years. That is, we wouldn't treat South Africa as a pariah nation. Instead, we would try to talk to them and use a variety of carrots and sticks to nudge them along to an accommodation with the ANC (African National Congress party) and the release of Nelson Mandela. How to express that in a new approach to a resolution and get other African nations to join in, I had to learn, and quickly.

Well, fortunately there were knowledgeable people around the State Department in the Africa bureau who had good ideas and who were willing to share them with me, so we worked out a new strategy. For those reading this who do not know how the Department works, developing a new strategy means writing something. The end product is going to be an instruction cable; it's not going to be a long analytical piece, it's going to be an instruction cable to our embassies abroad with specific talking points to use with the leadership in their countries. It will as succinct as possible to get the point across.

It wasn't as hard as it I thought it would be. I just had to be educated by the Africa bureau experts on South Africa. They were ahead of the IO bureau in this regard. In retrospect, I now understand that the "new policy" approach on apartheid was more that it was new for IO, and that I should work cooperatively with the Africa bureau so that IO would not be at odds in an important fight we would ultimately lose with the South Africa office.

It had to do with the General Assembly too. We were going to have a strong, coherent hand that we could use to encourage positive movement in South Africa, rather then making them fight back reflexively. In New York, we knew we had until about November to circulate our ideas, because the apartheid resolution wasn't on the agenda for discussion until December.

Q: Well, when you're looking at this new policy, was this to hang on to the constructive engagement, extend it, or reject it? I mean, what were we looking at?

EISENBRAUN: It was trying to be a little more moderate in the use of our language so that the new approach would be acceptable to those African delegations in New York that were most adamant about the end of apartheid. And so that it could still be acceptable to the South African government, which was clearly anxious to improve its image in the world and to try to come to some kind of political settlement on this issue of apartheid; their fiercest days were behind them. We wanted movement toward the release of Nelson Mandela also.

It was not a fundamental new policy. It was simply making constructive engagement more palpable to the Africans and getting them to understand that we were not backsliders on getting Mandela released.

It was decided that the Department would send up two or three people to work with USUN in helping actually negotiate the resolution. That was not usually done. Two of us went up, the deputy director of the South African office, and me.

We were joined in New York by Laurie Shestack, the staffer at USUN who was the Africa watcher. One of the Ambassadors, not Pickering, was also delegated to help. We worked together, constructively, congenially, pleasantly and USUN people introduced us to their colleagues in the secretariat and among the other delegations.

The apartheid resolution in 1990 was one of the more prominent ones in the general assembly that year. We were in New York about a week. We had meetings with the WIOG group first. For those who don't work on UN affairs, the WIOG is the western-oriented group, and that would include the British and the Canadians and the Australians and New Zealanders and others of the western world who would have a similar viewpoint to ours. Then we met with the key African delegations to get an idea of their viewpoints. The third group we worked with was the very skillful UN civil servants who actually prepared the first draft of the resolution after talking with us and others.

The UN Secretariat set the initial terms. They would go around and learn the basic parameters of what a resolution should include.

Q: How did this fare?

EISENBRAUN: There were about three days of formal negotiating. That is, we met in the secretariat building around a conference table, and the negotiations were led by a savvy Nigerian official. He was the smoothest operator I've ever seen. By "smoothest" I don't mean in the least sense pejorative. He took everyone's perspective into account and allowed everyone to speak, and when people began to get a little bit carried away he gently reminded them of time constraints. He didn't show any favoritism or reveal his personal perspective. His goal in the negotiating committee was to produce a unanimous draft for the assembly to consider. If it was unanimous on the part of all the significant players on the committee, it would likely pass in the assembly with little controversy.

We went line by line through each succeeding draft. One of us would take the main seat at the table to participate in the discussions of the words at hand, while the others were a few sentences beyond, trying to anticipate the problems and draft alternative language. Then we would move around the room, trying out that language with our supports, and then those least likely to accept it. I learned that it was most effective to have something on paper that others had to react to, rather than reacting to their drafts. All of the active delegations were doing this. To the outside observer, it looked like a beehive, with few paying close attention to what was being actively discussed and hammered out by the chairman. Some delegates sat and reacted, but the better ones were thinking ahead and moving around the room to try out ideas and garner support.

Q: Controlling the drafts is 50 percent of the battle.

EISENBRAUN: It is. This probably has been learned thousands of years ago by negotiators, but I had to learn it from scratch. You present a legible sentence to somebody down the table that you know is going to have some troubles. Or conversely, you go around to those that you know are going to support it and so you get their endorsements. The best policy is to make them react to your words so they're probably not going to say oh, that's out of the question and then start from scratch. They're just not going to do that if you've been skillful in trying to bring the points of view together. Instead they're going to quibble over this word and that phrase. You get their perspective and maybe agree to a couple of things and you write down a couple of prospects and you run around to the other delegation and say okay, they're onboard provided this. And so you're always doing that a couple of sentences or paragraphs ahead. And so that's how it works.

And I believe we were not sure we could get our perspective across because whatever we negotiated in committee then had to go down to Washington for approval. You could use that as a club, you'd say, oh, you know, we're with you in spirit here but they'll never agree to this back at the State Department or in the White House, it's impossible. Whether that was true or not, who knows, but you could use that technique. In the end, we got a draft and everyone agreed to it and it represented what we wanted. We didn't think the South African government would be antagonized; we thought that it would be a starting point for further discussions by our embassy there. It wasn't until the last day that the resolution took a shape we could be happy with. When the draft was agreed to in committee, we knew that it would pass in the General Assembly. There aren't too many governments that would stand up and challenge a draft out of committee, because the committee negotiations were open to any delegation that felt it important to participate.

In the end, the resolution was passed by the assembly about two or three weeks later. It was a good Christmas present for us all.

Q: I've heard people talk about the United Nations as being a place that's consumed with words. In other words, to get the right phraseology and all that. And not doing much. I mean, how did you feel? Did you find this an exercise in real policy promotion, you know, to get something done, or did you feel it was just rhetoric?-

EISENBRAUN: No, we felt we were working on something that really mattered. It wasn't just words, because the major African delegations had sent the final committee draft back to their capitals and had gotten approval. And that in most cases then became policy for their governments.

When people talk in general about the United Nations being just a bunch of hot air, they have to draw a distinction between the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Security Council deals with collective security, and the UN Charter says that member states can take action against other member states if there is agreement. The Security Council has the authority to ask members to contribute to a military force to back up its resolutions, as happened in the Gulf War. So the Security Council at the extreme can be deadly serious.

However, are the General Assembly resolutions just empty rhetoric? I think the history of the assembly over 60 years or more shows that they aren't just dealing with hot air. The resolutions help to formulate world opinion on matters, and while rarely is it that one resolution will change anything, a series of resolutions with the same point tends to create a world viewpoint that is powerful. It's only moral suasion, you might say, regarding general assembly resolutions. Some of these resolutions are quite antagonistic toward American interests because after all, we're only one country out of practically 200 now, and no matter how much diplomacy we want to exert, the UN General Assembly is going to take many positions that are antagonistic to our interests. But the goal, the trick, is to try to have as much influence as possible because these resolutions in the assembly collectively, historically, help to form world opinion.

Yes, there are occasions when a country or even the United States will pursue policies completely contrary to world opinion, but that doesn't happen too often. In the post-war world, that was the idea of creating not only a United Nations, but all the other international organizations, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank and so forth. The whole concept was to tie the world together in a variety of treaties and agreements and forums so complex that they all would be a foundation for a more peaceful political environment and would be a force for stability.

This is being recorded in 2005 and in the wake of the war in Iraq. American actions have been criticized as being unilateral, of ignoring world opinion. Whatever the pros and cons of that issue are, the point is that there are times when governments feel they have to act alone; the stakes are high enough that they have to act outside of world opinion. But to do so carries high risk and is damaging to that country's standing in the court of world opinion, and I think it will be shown that the US is no more immune to this than any other country. In fact, we're more affected, because we aspire to world leadership, and the world expects us to lead, and if we're out in left field, the world is left wondering what to do. That's a vacuum, which can't last, and if we are on the sidelines or are too controversial to play a leading role, eventually other nations, and other viewpoints, will fill the vacuum, and we won't be the leader anymore.

Back to that apartheid resolution in 1990. We felt that we were crafting world opinion in such a way that it would have a substantive affect on the South African government, and on the relations of other key African nations dealing with South Africa, that there could be serious movement toward the release of Nelson Mandela and an accommodation with his party, the African National Congress. As it turned, those events came to pass in South Africa. Was it because of our resolution? No, of course not, but the resolution didn't hurt the process; it served to focus world opinion in a more helpful manner.

Q: And the proof of the pie is in the pudding; apartheid's gone.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. And I think it's gone because the world presented a united front over a long enough period that the South African government recognized the error of its ways, frankly. They weren't overthrown in a bloody revolution; they voluntarily gave up power.

Q: Was there any other General Assembly work that you were involved in?

EISENBRAUN: Well, we repeated the same exercise on the apartheid resolution a year later, in December of 1991, but it wasn't such a big deal. The great effort had been made the year before, and the new resolution only had minor changes to keep it up to date. The South African Government also was moving toward accommodation with the ANC, so there didn't seem much urgency to the resolution, although we went through motions of the negotiations as we had done the year before.

That fall of 1992 as the General Assembly session was starting, the office asked me to come back from the Hill for a day to give a training session for the six or seven public members who were being briefed to go to New York and help out with the Assembly. Few people know that this is an old tradition-that is, for the White House and the Department of State to choose a few distinguished citizens outside of the government to join the American delegation, in addition to those permanent staff at the U.S. mission to the UN. I gave a talk on how a general assembly resolution gets drafted and negotiated.

The training session, just six or seven of us sitting around an oval table in a small room, was very interesting, not the least because of the friendly and engaged people who had been selected. There was a president of a college in North Carolina, and a few others distinguished in the academic and business worlds, and one Hispanic lady. I didn't catch her name, but she was the odd person out in that she seemed antagonistic to much of what I was saying, and even to some of the policy interests I brought up. About half way through the hour's session, she got up abruptly and left the room without a word and never returned.

The others were clearly embarrassed by her coldness and sudden departure. The college president asked me, do you know who that was? I said, no. He replied, that was Gloria Estafan. We wondered aloud what her problem was, but they nicely tried to reassure me that her attitude had predated my talk. I don't know what she did in New York during the assembly session.

Q: Well then, back to the peacekeeping. Were you- did you leave before the Somali thing turned sour?

EISENBRAUN: Yes, I did. That happened a little bit later. I left in the summer of 1992 when the peacekeeping operation was in full swing. It was just an enormous amount of work handling Somalia, let alone the other peacekeeping operations that were going on. In fact, it was so much work that subsequently a whole other office was created in the IO bureau; the UN peacekeeping office. It was beyond the scope of one or two people; it became an entire separate office and that was justified.

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I left IO in the summer of 1992 and went up to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Q: As a Pearson Fellow?

EISENBRAUN: As a Pearson, yes. It was a Pearson assignment, named for a former senator who came up with the program. The point was that the State Department would pay my salary but I would have to find work on the Hill. I was not answerable to the State Department at all, and I had to find my own assignment up there. The terms of the Pearson assignment, given to about ten or so people from the Department each year, are that the officer finds his or her assignment on the Hill and works for a year, even while the Department pays your salary. The work didn't even have to be in foreign policy. Anywhere I wanted or that somebody would hire me up on the Hill. The concept behind the program was to help break through the great divide in Washington between the executive and legislative branches, fostering more understanding at the working level. Most all people who go up to the Hill on Pearson Assignments enjoy the assignment, and come away with a greater appreciation of how work gets done on the Hill, and hopefully, makes a few friends for the Department.

I thought it would be interesting work, whatever I ended up doing. As I said, the Department doesn't play any role in finding its employees an assignment, and it would be impossible anyway, given the hundreds of offices up there dealing with the full range of policy matters and given the lack of influence the Department has on the Hill. I do not mean to denigrate the Department by saying this. No executive branch agency has much influence up there, except perhaps the Department of Defense.

Every year I think somebody who is given a Pearson doesn't find a job on the Hill. It was a surprise to me to see how hard it was to get work there. I thought, you know, I'm a mid-level Foreign Service officer with a fair amount of Washington experience, and I was free labor and I thought that people would be interested in me. They weren't.

I went first to the obvious people to look for work; that is, a congressman from Iowa named Jim Leach, a former Foreign Service Officer and a graduate of SAIS. I was told in advance by former Pearson Fellows at State that he would be friendly but would not offer any work. But I thought, hey, I grew up in Iowa too, we were both Foreign Service officers, we'd both gone to Johns Hopkins SAIS, I thought man, it's just too obvious a fit. I thought also that he's someone I'd like to work with; his policy interests are moderate and sensible. Sure enough, he interviewed me, he was pleasant, but nothing came of it.

I had one memorable interview with Congressman Dante Fascell, Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee. He spent about half an hour with me but nothing came of it. His first question was what college I went to, and then he asked, what was the nickname of the school's athletic teams? I couldn't remember, and that seemed to be the end of any serious interest he might have had in me. Still, he kept talking, somewhat condescendingly, before telling me he had someone else in mind. Miffed, I asked him how he thought the recent redrawing of his district might affect his coming chances for re-election. He was taken aback, and replied, hell, who knows? Press stories at the time said he would be defeated. As it was, he retired that fall rather than face defeat, when he could still legally keep his campaign contributions as his own money. If I remember correctly, that provision was slated to change the following year.

After another discouraging interview one day, I was trudging down the hall, fourth floor of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, and passed by the offices of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I bumped into Peter Galbraith, an old friend, who worked on the committee staff. Peter has always had a big interest in South Asia, and we had been friendly since my days on the India desk. Peter is a very interesting guy, very aggressive, and very influential in those days, as he represented Senator Moynihan's interests on the committee. We'd seen each other socially here and there at parties and receptions in the years since I had left the India desk in '83 and now this was 1992. So I bumped into him, and he said, hey, what are you doing up here? I replied, well, I'm looking for a job for a year up here. State's given me a Pearson assignment. Peter said, Really? Well, come work for the committee. I'll talk to the staff director, Jerry Christianson, and arrange it. And that's how I got the job on the committee staff, the Democratic staff.

Q: In fact, I've interviewed him. And he himself says that some senators said look, we've got to keep this guy Galbraith under control, he's running around and creating policy.

EISENBRAUN: He was.

Q: On the Kurds and things.

EISENBRAUN: That's right. That's what he's doing now. He's in fact, I think at this very moment he's advising the Kurds in his own capacity, I don't think he represents anybody, but they listen to him because he is one politically astute person.

Well, at that time he was Moynihan's man on the committee staff. I did meet a few days later with the staff director, Jerry Christianson, himself a pretty impressive man. We hit it off-he was a former Foreign Service Officer who years earlier had come for a year to work on the committee staff and had never gone back to the Department. He said, I understand you and Peter are old friends. We'd like you to come join us, I don't know what you'll do, but you can work with Peter on whatever project he will be handling then. So we'll see you in a couple of months and work out the details, but in the meantime, welcome to the majority staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. So began one of my most enjoyable experiences in Washington.

Q: So you did this in '92?

EISENBRAUN: Yeah, from summer 1992 to summer 1993. I joined the Committee staff, but I never worked with Peter Galbraith. When I showed up in August of 1993, they didn't have a very good idea of what I would do for about an hour and then it was worked out. I would do African issues and work with the senior staffer who was on Senator Paul Simon's committee. He was subcommittee chairman for African issues. The senior staffer was a really wonderful lady named Aduah Dunn, a powerhouse herself, but in a sweet and soft-spoken way in contrast to Peter Galbraith, who acquired his influence by being brash. I haven't seen Aduah since the day I left the committee staff in 1993, but we had a fine time together. She was one plugged in Hill staffer.

Q: Spell her first name.

EISENBRAUN: Well, it's an adopted name from Nigeria, Aduah. On my last day of work a year later, a few of us went for beers as a farewell, and she admitted then that her original first name had been Patricia, but there are few who knew that.

So, back on my first day in August, 1992, Aduah said she really needed help, because she said, frankly I'm not a very good writer, not so good at drafting things, but I'm good with people and policy ideas. And that she was-superb, actually, as I learned from working with her. She said help me out. Okay, I said, that's fine. As it turned out, almost unbelievably, I ended up at first with the same portfolio that I had at just left at IO/UNP, because Senator Simon had the same interests, UN peacekeeping, Somalia, apartheid., but his interests ranged over the whole African continent, of course.

I was able to draw on the knowledge I had gained in the two previous years. First off, she asked me to do a briefing paper for Senator Simon on the Somalia situation. She said he'll be meeting with some senior people when he gets back from the August recess. Well, it was exactly the same type of assignment I'd had in the State Department. I discovered it was a lot easier writing a briefing memo on the committee staff, because I didn't have to clear it with anybody; I just showed it to Aduah. She made a couple of worthwhile suggestions and it went to Senator Simon.

When we did bigger briefing papers, there was one clearance to be obtained and that was from the committee staffer on the other side, the Republican side of the committee. At that time the ranking Republican member was Senator Jesse Helms. Helms had a good fellow doing African work. Tom Callahan. I just bumped into him the other day and he's working in the Department himself now, 13 years later, as an appointee. So anyway, that was the only clearance needed. On the smaller matters, I worked just with Aduah, putting her thoughts on paper, and adding my own. We worked well together. Anyone could have worked well with her. She had the kind of inclusive personality that brought people to her, and everyone wanted to help her and be associated with her.

Since I mentioned Senator Helms and his staff, it's worth a minute to note that, as I learned, it was unusual to have someone friendly, like Tom Callahan, on the republican staff in Helms' office. People on the democratic staff said that his previous staffers had been so uncooperative, so mean, frankly, that no one could work with them, and someone high ranking, I don't know who, had put his foot down and instructed Helms to restructure his committee staff.

Helms and his previous staff had caused a lot of grief at State over the years. I remember in 1983 going up with the new India desk office director, Victor Tomseth, to meet with a few of Helms' people when, if memory serves, Helms was planning a hearing on the issue of a separate homeland for the Sikhs in India, some of whom were fighting the Indian Government. Victor's point was that these radical Sikhs were terrorists, and that to give them the recognition of a hearing before the SFRC would cause trouble in our bilateral relations with India. The Helms staffers were indifferent to this; in fact, causing trouble for U.S. foreign policy may have been their primary purpose in the proposed hearing. Victor said he knew something about terrorists from his days as a hostage in Iran and that the proposed hearing would not be a good thing; they replied, sneering, well, you weren't a real hostage anyway because you were held at the Foreign Ministry. (Victor had been the second ranking hostage and had been at a meeting at the Foreign Ministry when the embassy was attacked.) That's the kind of people they were. By the way, Victor, a modest gentleman if there ever was one, would not have mentioned his experience as a hostage, but he had been asked to do it by someone higher at State.

Q: Yes, they were infamous in their day.

Anyway, I was frequently in Senator Simon's office. He had meetings every week; he really took his responsibilities seriously as subcommittee chairman for Africa. I heard him say this on more than one occasion, and it's absolutely true. There were no votes to be had back in Illinois, his state, for his work on African affairs. Zero. His constituency did not care about Africa. But he cared. And so he did this because he was a leader. He really was a fine senator who was taking those Africa duties seriously when he didn't have to. Senator Nancy Kassebaum from Kansas was the ranking Republican on the committee, and she too was very serious and thoughtful on the issues. I recall Senator Simon thanking Senator Kassebaum more than once in committee hearings for seriousness of purpose, and adding that there were no votes in Kansas for the African issues she was dealing with. She and Senator Simon were just good public servants.

Anyway, I was in his office often. Everybody who worked on his staff, and he had a big staff, at least 60 or 70 people. His door was almost always open to staff if necessary, and at certain times during the day, he set aside time specifically for this staff. You might just sit in line; there might be two or three or four staffers there, but you knew that for 45 minutes his door was wide open for any of his staffers to walk in and discuss issues one on one. If you had something more serious, you could make an appointment. He was a very accessible man, and you could generally influence him; if you had a worthwhile point of view you could defend. I think this is pretty much true the way it works on the Hill. Once you have the basic confidence of the senator or the congressman you're working for and you know his or her perspective, you suggest something logical, and they reply okay, work it out. It's amazing the amount of influence a staffer can have. And I was only on loan from the State Department. But nobody paid any attention to that after a few weeks.

I discovered that Simon had a lot of influence around the Senate, and not just with the Democratic bloc of senators. You could say to other staffers, Senator Simon supports this measure. That would generally carry the day with most of the other Democrats, even maybe a Republican too. Many staffers would defer and say, well, if Senator Simon believes this, then I'll tell my senator to support it too. The mere fact that a staffer says this can frequently influence the way a senator then votes.

Besides a lot of briefing materials, I organized a hearing on Somalia, and at another time drafted a resolution on Sudan that was passed in both the House and the Senate. My final assignment was to try to identify what reports the Congress required of the State Department and recommend which should be eliminated. That was an almost overwhelming task. I started by asking the Congressional Research Service to do a study of what reports were required. It took them weeks, and they came back with a document an inch thick, containing hundreds, maybe several thousand, required reports. It turned out that the vast majority of these had been forgotten and had fallen into oblivion, by both State and the Hill. I asked the Congressional bureau at State also to come up with a list. Their list was about a third as long. The next step would have been for each side to establish what was really necessary. I turned that stage over to another staffer when I left the office, but I don't know what further was done.

Well, I'm about ready to wrap up the Hill experience except for one thing. When the election in 1992 was over, Al Gore became the vice president and gave up his seat in the Senate, where he represented Tennessee. A gentleman from Tennessee named Harlan Matthews, a member of the Democratic establishment in Tennessee, was appointed to fill out the remaining two years of Gore's term once he moved up to the White House.

Senator Matthews had not been in Washington very much during his previous career in political affairs. He had to learn the role of a senator. He also needed a staff to help him in the process of learning how to work issues. Matthews was appointed to the Foreign Relations Committee. Jerry Christianson, as the foreign relations committee director, asked me to serve as Matthews' acting foreign policy assistant on a temporary basis until he hired a permanent staffer. I went up there, meaning up one flight of stairs, and found it a real pleasure to work part time in his very friendly office. I did this for six to eight weeks, probably the first of February to the first of April of 1993.

One of the many things I liked about Senator Matthews was that he did not have fixed opinions about many foreign policy matters because he had not worked these issues previously. Yet, he was a very open-minded man who wanted to learn more, so he used me as his tutor, you might say. We would sit down, he and I and his chief of staff Jim Hall, and the three of us would discuss foreign policy issues of the day. He would say, now Steve, this Middle Eastern issue. Okay, there are Israelis on one side and Palestinians on the other side. Now, what's their major problem? He would go on like this, asking the basic questions. Pretty soon the questions would be, so, the capital of Israel is Tel Aviv, right, but where does Jerusalem fit into the political equation? I thought I was fairly knowledgeable about the issues, but it was soon a challenge when asked, from scratch, to explain an issue in detail. Soon I was in over my head and had to say, you know, I'm not exactly sure about that issue and I'll have to do some research. I would sit there with a notebook, and when I exhausted my knowledge of whatever topic it was and I hadn't satisfied his curiosity, I'd write down the points and then go find the answers and sit down with him later.

That was just the start of my duties with him, because he asked, what should I be focusing on as a senator from Tennessee? Give me some ideas. So I gave him a few. I didn't figure this out from day one, but it didn't take me long before I had a whole agenda lined up. I went around to a lot of hearings and briefings, and I got him interested in Bosnia, for example. I also started looking into foreign investment in Tennessee with an eye to Matthews developing an effort to lure more such investment, but the new staffer hired on a permanent basis to work foreign affairs issues didn't pursue that avenue, unfortunately, I think.

I am grateful to Senator Matthews also because a year later, he volunteered to call Assistant Secretary Shattuck to recommend that he hire me as his special assistant.

During the spring of 1993 as a Senate staffer, I was asked to join an international electoral monitoring team to the small African country of Lesotho. The objective was to observe the parliamentary elections about to take place in that country. The team included about ten other Americans from around the country, academics and writers of long association with Africa, and a few distinguished others from African countries. We traveled in small units around the country, meeting officials, observing the voting throughout the day, and watching various polling stations count the ballots into the night. We concluded that the balloting and counting had been done properly. On the final day before we caught the flight home, we were able to walk around the South African city of Bloomfountaine, the capital of the Orange Free State and the center of the then-defunct apartheid movement. Blacks and whites were mixing freely, although there were few black Africans around. Nevertheless, it was interesting for me to see the end of apartheid, considering the work I had done earlier on the issue at the UN.

After coming back from election observation overseas, I wondered what the details were of conducting elections in this country. So I volunteered to be an election worker in Fairfax Country, Virginia, where I lived. I learned how many safeguards there are, especially in the well-run Virginia polls. I've done election officer work ever since when I was in the country.

Back to the committee for a moment. I was there during the election of 1992, when Bill Clinton was elected President. And remember, I was working with the Democratic staffers on the committee. Once Clinton had won, most of the senior staff members began to talk about the prospects of getting "the call" from Clinton's transition team to work in the executive branch. The staffers mainly aspired to work at State, but some may have had hopes for the NSC staff too. I was a bit surprised that so many aspired to work at State, because I liked the Senate staff role as I was seeing it. A few had already been at State in the Carter years. I didn't see much abiding loyalty to the Senate. During the spring of 1993, I was aware of only two people on the committee staff who got the call. Early on, Dick McCall was asked to head up AID (the Agency for International Development), and somewhat later, Peter Galbraith was asked to be Ambassador to Croatia. If others got called, it was after I had left the committee in June of 1993. I know of one other fellow, Jamie Rubin, who got a call to go with Madeleine Albright to New York, where she became U.S. Ambassador to the UN, but Jamie was on a senator's personal staff, rather than on the committee.

I enjoyed the year on the Hill a lot. I liked the congeniality of the Senate staffers, and the freedom and flexibility to pursue so many diverse matters with so few constraints. I found the Senate culture to be fairly laidback; the Senate is simply not anything like the State Department. The pressure, the late nights; I mean, those things happen occasionally in the Senate, whereas in the State Department, it's 24/7 all the time, there's so much happening and so much pressure. But, the State Department is a policy-making part of the government, and the Senate is not. That's why the senior Senate staff aspired to be called to work at State; they wanted to be where the action was.

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Q: Well then Steve, '93. Where'd you go?

EISENBRAUN: I went to the Operations Center at the State Department.

Q: And you did that from '93 to?

EISENBRAUN: 1994. One year. Those are one year assignments. I was senior watch officer. There are a few things I can say about that assignment and then we can move on. Do you want me to continue for a little bit?

Q: Yes, for sure.

In the summer of 1993, I went back into the State Department cauldron. I had some shock coming back from the more laidback atmosphere of the Senate, because if there is pressure anywhere at State, it's in the most hectic office there, the operations center.

Now, for those who don't know the organization of the Department, the operations center operates 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year as the nerve center of the Department. They are constantly monitoring world events. There's a staff there at any one time of about 10 to 12 people who are constantly monitoring and alerting the key people in the Department that action needs to be taken on some breaking issue. (Additionally, there are a few intelligence and military people monitoring specialized activities, but they are not the action officers responsible to the Secretary of State.) Whatever is breaking internationally, the operations center is supposed to know it first; all our embassies worldwide are keyed to this, sending in cables or telephoning back to the Department on breaking events. Well, who do you call at four in the morning if you're an under secretary, and you want to know what's happening on your issues? You call 202 647-1512. You'll get the State Department operations center and someone's going to pick up on the first ring, no answering machines, and if the call is coming from abroad, you're likely to hear, I'm in Bujumbura and there's been a plane crash with probably some Americans on board, or a military coup is just breaking out in xxxx. And that's the first instance that the U.S. government usually learns about major events worldwide, although sometimes, the White House Situation Room might give us the first tip, or the National Military Command Center at the Pentagon, or very occasionally, the opscenter at the CIA. State's opcenter also monitors CNN, BBC and other all-news sources. Sometimes you get the first inkling of an international crisis from one of their channels. They get breaking news the same way and they're all serving essentially as operations centers for the world.

Q: Well, can you recall any particular things that, you know, as a steady stream went over your office, any particular nuggets that you recall?

EISENBRAUN: We were full of war stories at the time, but now it's kind of all blended together. You're trained by your predecessor so the senior watch officer that's just finishing the year sits down with you one-on-one and shows you what to do. My first shift was the 4:00 to midnight one, the night of the All Star Game. So my trainer said to me: we've worked for several hours on just technical details, we haven't been paying any attention to world events for an hour. We've got- to check around, look at the monitor, find out what's BBC saying, what's CNN saying, take a poll quickly about what's happening in the Middle East in the last hour, in Moscow, just in case Secretary Christopher calls in for an update. Right, I thought, the Secretary of State, call from an All Star game? Then Ding-a-ling. There was his call. I'd been on the job two hours and I've got Warren Christopher on the line. He said, what's happening? He might have said, regarding that discussion we're having with the Israelis, what did the cabinet decide this afternoon?

Warren Christopher used the operations center like that. He would call, even from overseas, and after awhile you didn't see him personally but you developed a phone relationship. So six months later, he was in Tel Aviv, and he called back and asked for me, wanting to know something on another issue he'd been working with me on an hour earlier. It's not that the senior watch officer would likely know the answer; more often, it was connecting him immediately to the right person who knew the answer. All the watch standers could do that.

One of the good things about the job was that you were always in the middle of the action but you never had ultimate responsibility except in that first few minutes. In other words, when something broke you had to decide who to call. It was often a question of whether you were justified in calling someone in the middle of the night. Then you've got to get it right when you're briefing them. I learned quickly that you don't always have to call the principal. Often, his or her executive assistant was appropriate. I learned that early on when I call the Deputy Secretary, Clifford Wharton, one morning, catching him shaving.

Q: Oh, Wharton. right.

EISENBRAUN: He was not involved in policy issues and didn't stay long. While he was shaving, he got briefed from me and said thanks. An hour later his executive assistant called me and said what on earth were you doing? You call me and I'll decide whether he needs to know. Christopher wasn't like that.

One of the things that the operations center does is that they place the calls to world leaders that the secretary of state makes, and you monitor silently the conversations, taking notes for the memos of the conversation that he to be written immediately thereafter.

(end side two, tape eight)

Q: This is tape nine, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: They silently monitor the secretary's conversations with world leaders. And the purpose is for historical record. You write an official record of the conversation, not a transcript. The White House Situation Room, which is their operations center, they create a transcript. The State Department does an interpretive document, then he said this and he replied that type of memo. Several officers, including always the senior watch officer, monitor the calls.

The senior watch officer would be listening to Warren Christopher's conversations with world leaders. This is not eaves dropping; this is creating an historical record. Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister of Israel, would talk with Christopher frequently. Rabin was very aggressive; he always wanted America to do something or agree to something. Christopher would usually listen quietly, not making any promises, only asked a few pertinent questions. Christopher was a man of very few words. I really admired his skill at listening but not being carried away by anyone's best efforts. I could feel the frustration frequently in Rabin's voice. I admired Christopher for his reserve. He only said what was important to say; everything he said was worth saying.

I don't think all secretaries of state are like that. I've heard from other watch standers that there have been secretaries that were more gregarious and are willing to kick the can down the road a bit. Warren Christopher, by contrast, was very careful, very cautious. I hope there comes a time when Christopher's tenure at the State Department will be evaluated in that light, although at the time he was seen as maybe too passive. But I didn't think so. I thought that his passivity was more prudence. I liked him; I grew to respect him greatly, although my entire relationship was on the phone with him.

It was a Sunday morning and the powers in Europe had negotiated a ceasefire in Bosnia. This would have been probably the spring of '94. The text of it was faxed into the operations center about six or seven in the morning. We then passed it to Christopher's home and were looking at it. We were reading the terms of the ceasefire agreement, which was to go into effect at a particular time, seemingly an arbitrary time later in the day. Just as we noticed this and wondered why that time had been chosen, Christopher rang up. He said I'm just reading the text of this agreement and here's this strange time for it to go into effect. Why that time? I said yes, we were wondering that too. We don't know, but we'll find out for you. That's the nature of the operations center. I called somebody senior in the European bureau who would be likely to know, and he said that's Greenwich Mean Time. It wasn't identified as such in the text. So within five minutes I was able to call the secretary back and say it's GMT.

I got off the shift at 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning, got home maybe at 9:30. The secretary was going on Meet the Press that morning at 10:00 or 10:30. So, rather than crawling into bed, I stayed to watch him during the interview. The topic was the Bosnia ceasefire. The secretary said it's going to go into effect at such and such a time, adding, that GMT, mind you.

This listening in had been controversial the year before because the opcenter had heard high officials at State saying things to the London Embassy regarding candidate Bill Clinton...

Q: That was the passport scandal.

EISENBRAUN: That's it.

Q: When they thought they might find Bill Clinton had renounced his citizenship.

EISENBRAUN: I couldn't even remember exactly what it was. I knew it was to find something derogatory about him.

Q: The head of the consular section in London was fired because she went to the passport files to see if she could find something.

EISENBRAUN: You're better informed on that than I am.

Q: Consular officers can't do that because of privacy laws.

EISENBRAUN: As a result of that trouble, the opcenter changed its policy so that only conversations of the secretary with world leaders could be monitored. The opcenter could not monitor any calls except those of the secretary, and only his calls with foreign leaders. The exception was if it was announced to the other end that the opcenter was being asked to monitor, and the other person had no objection.

One time Secretary Christopher called to a certain country's foreign minister, and that official put the call on speakerphone for others in his office to listen. After the call was over, the minister forgot to hang up. He turned to his listeners and said, well what do you make of that? And they started to debate the matter. .I was on the other end, monitoring with another officer. We were taken aback; we listened for about 20 seconds, and then I disconnected. I thought that when they discovered they had not disconnected, we could have an incident on our hands. I was mildly rebuked for that decision, as my seniors thought I had just forfeited free intelligence. That was my year in the operations center.

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Q: Okay. Where'd you go then?

EISENBRAUN: I became the special assistant to John Shattuck, who was the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights.

Q: This was from when to when?

EISENBRAUN: It was from the summer of 1994 to the summer of 1995.

Q: Well, let's talk about Shattuck and how he operated and then also the bureau of human rights

EISENBRAUN: OK. The official name of the bureau was and still is Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, DRL. It had been reorganized to be more comprehensive than merely, let's say, human rights. John Shattuck was appointed by President Clinton and had come from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he had been the senior vice president of Harvard University. John had a life-long commitment to human rights and had worked as an attorney at a senior level in Amnesty International at an earlier time in his career. He also was a very nice man, very gracious, sort of old world in that sense; a very fine gentleman. It's an example of when political appointees work right, when distinguished people are brought into the Department to handle subjects that they are truly experts on.

Q: It's absolutely vital if you want to get something done.

EISENBRAUN: Yes, that's right. John had contacts in the political world; for example, he was quite friendly with Ted Kennedy and John Kerry from Massachusetts and the entire Kennedy family, as a matter of fact, and many other people in the political world, and that made him capable of doing things that Foreign Service officers could not do. He's one of the smartest people I've ever dealt with too. His range of intellectual abilities was tremendous, and I also came to respect his editing ability because, of course, everything works on paper in the Department, and no matter how much work went into drafts of speeches or policy positions or cables or whatever it would be, at the end he would turn his attention to the draft and would fundamentally improve it.

Since you are asking for a full picture, John had a few areas he knew were problems, and on which he asked me to help. One concern was that he was a bit disorganized. Coming from the academic world, I guess, he would take a meeting and deal with a topic as long as it would take, regardless of what his schedule might say. I am sure that those recipients of his attention appreciated that. But from a staff point of view, this could create a nightmare because by the end of the day he could be an hour or two behind schedule.

I was asked to help on that. I was only helping organizing him, because he had a fine executive secretary in Linda Walker Johnson, who still today is the executive secretary for the current assistant secretary. Linda and I went back to our days together on the India desk in the early 1980s. .

The first bureaucratic issue was to recruit good staff aides. I went back to the opcenter, which had a list of the top young officers who had been recommended to work in the opcenter by their Ambassadors. The opcenter couldn't hire all of them. I went down the list and called a few to work as staff aides. In that manner, I found Brian Brown. He was an exceptional staff aide, and at the end of our year together, I recommended that he be picked up to work on Christopher's staff, which he did.

It didn't take more than a few days to recognize the barely controlled chaos that was surrounding him all the time and to see that it was reflected in his bureau's relationship with the rest of the building. I put together a one-page memo in bullet form of organizational things that he should adopt to get his office working better. As I was thinking of these items, I was on vacation in Newport, Rhode Island, with my wife. There's a little island in the harbor called Goat Island, and we were staying in a hotel there, so one morning I sat around the pool and set down points in the memo. I called them the Goat Island Principles, and that's how Shattuck referred to them later. I pulled the ideas from two sources whose office style I admired. One of them was Warren Christopher, whose functioning in the office I had seen at close hand from being in the operations center, and the other was Senator Paul Simon, whose office management I had seen when I was on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

I don't remember all of the Goat Island Principles, but a few of them were things like building in certain set-aside periods during the day. Warren Christopher had this, he'd have an hour in the morning or so and an hour in the afternoon that was unstructured time that was called reading time. He used them literally for reading memos, if necessary, but the intervals were also used as cushions to catch up on the schedule if he had fallen behind. And Paul Simon had something like that too. He had refined it to every afternoon he set aside an hour for staff time when any staffer, no matter how junior, could come in and discuss issues with him or anything else, for that matter, that seemed important. I proposed such a structure for Shattuck. After we both returned from vacation, he took me to lunch and we went over the proposals. He sat there with a pen went through them, checking off what he thought he could adopt which he didn't think would work for him. He agreed to about three/fourths of what I proposed, and Linda and I tried to implement those we could.

Q: Well, was he aware of his problem?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. He had asked me to help in this regard.

Q: ...Did his disorganization contribute to a poor reputation for the bureau?

EISENBRAUN: A bit, perhaps. Papers also were going out of our front office to the 7th floor that were not done well; it was more from a stylistic problem than a substantive one. And we had a problem with tasked items not being done on time. Brian Brown, Linda and I helped that issue a bit by instituting a better tasking system in the bureau, and reviewing the papers personally before they went forward. You know, the Department always has had a problem with style or substance in the preparation of papers for the 7th floor.

The bureau had a larger image problem, but that was something Shattuck inherited. The bureau had a reputation for being on the fringes of foreign policy, or being in conflict with things the rest of the building wanted to do. I think that problem began in the Carter Administration, with Pat Derian as the first assistant secretary. She had taken an approach that turned out to be fairly counterproductive. I dealt with this problem when she came to Pakistan, and I refer any reader to my account of her visit to Lahore in 1980. She started the pattern in the department of trying to run counter to the direction of general foreign policy, sort of a naysayer, and her effectiveness was affected. Shattuck was good friends with Derian and I know on a few occasions she came in the office and they talked, but there were times when he warned that we didn't want to fall into her trap of just being naysayers with a separate agenda.

Q: To put it in perspective, when she took over, the policy was one that was just plain not accepted by the rest of the Foreign Service apparatus, the idea of interfering in internal relations and it required- maybe it could have been done better- but basically it required somebody to hit the head of the Foreign Service over the head with a two by four and get them to fall into line.-

EISENBRAUN: Yes. That may have been the case and there may have been no other approach that Derian could have taken, but if her performance in Lahore was any indication, she was her own worst enemy. Richard Shifter after her was the assistant secretary, and I think he was fairly effective with the same approach; he was there quite a long time and then later moved to the White House. He might have then made the whole operation a bit more sophisticated. But nevertheless, the bureau still had not been accepted around the building as a major player. That was Shattuck's goal.

Q: All right, during this '94 to '95 period, what were the issues that particularly engaged the assistant secretary that you were involved in yourself?

Shattuck's style needs to be discussed a moment. As a counterpoint to the hit them over the head philosophy, his whole style was to work constructively with all elements of the bureaucracy but especially with the most senior elements. His goal was to stay in constant touch with Sandy Berger, who was national security advisor at the White House; with Strobe Talbott, who was the deputy secretary of state, and other major players in the Executive Branch and learn what they were doing and then try to become a player in that action. Nibbling around the edges, you might say. If the President was making a major address, Shattuck tried to insert a paragraph, even a sentence, on a human rights matter. The technique was hard to implement, but it worked. Shattuck was seen as a contributor to the administration's goals, not a roadblock.

Of the issues at the time, the U.S.-China relationship vis-ï¿½-vis human rights was always at the top of the agenda, whether in the bilateral relationship or at the annual UN Human Rights Conference in Geneva, where we sponsored a resolution each year. Human rights ought to have been high on the bilateral agenda; this was '95 and Tiananmen Square had been '89, but it couldn't compete with political and commercial issues.

John's approach was to try to get inserted in meetings with high level Chinese officials when they came to town. He tried to add just an element of human rights to the agenda, not to dominate it. He would also try to get his staff involved in meetings if he could. The last resort was to be in on the clearance process of the materials prepared for such meetings. .

And John went out to China and had some trouble there, I think it was in the spring of 1994, before I came on board. You would have to talk to Judith Kaufman, his special assistant just before me, about that.

Q: I have talked to her.

EISENBRAUN: She knows the story better than I. As I heard, he had some very intensive meetings at a pretty high level in the foreign ministry and elsewhere and then I think he also had opportunities to meet with a couple of leading dissidents. It must have been outside the official sphere of his meetings and he went ahead and took those opportunities and met with people that displeased the government. Now, generally in the human rights area, if an assistant secretary meets a dissident it tends to cast a certain aura of protection, you might say, on that person, because the authorities know the Americans are informed and paying attention. I guess it backfired and the Chinese government was extremely angry and the dissidents got in big trouble. John's relationship with the Chinese government was compromised almost from the beginning so he had to play catch up; all the year I was involved it was a matter of catching up.

Q: While you were there '94 to '95, the Balkan trouble was beginning; I think the war was going on essentially in Bosnia, wasn't it then?

EISENBRAUN: Yes.

Q: But in a way this almost superseded human rights, I mean, this was no longer a human rights thing, it was a war.

EISENBRAUN: Well, no, I'd say that human rights were absolutely a very major part of it because what did we say at the end of World War II, never again would there be anything like the genocide of World War II and now here it was on the European continent again.

Q: Yes, we had- I'm not sure if Shevardnadze happened while you were there.

EISENBRAUN: Well, I can't remember exactly whether it happened during our time or what but certainly this was a major issue that occupied a lot of John's time.

Q: What about- what was your feeling about the support we were getting from other governments on this issue? I mean, I'm talking about human rights per se.

EISENBRAUN: Well, I think that we got good support from what's called the WIOG group, the western-oriented group, the British, the Canadians, the Australians, the New Zealanders and other like-minded governments of Western Europe. I think that they were very supportive of our efforts. We weren't in all cases the leaders and I think from John's point of view, we didn't want always to be the leaders; better to have others carry our water and then we'd back them up to show that this was world opinion and not just an American contrived issue, which abuser governments would prefer to think.

One idea I had in the latter stage of my year with John was that we should try to identify individuals who were languishing in jails abroad and who had been pretty much forgotten. I thought we could exert some quiet diplomacy to get some of these people released. John liked the idea, but nothing came of it. I was frustrated watching the evolution of human rights work at the Department senior level. There was a lot of paper shuffling and drafting of resolutions, and briefing papers, but little happened that would improve any dissent's situation.

Q: What about labor? Labor used to be a major effort on our part but I suspect with the end of the Cold War it went off the radar practically.

EISENBRAUN: Well, it didn't occupy very much of the assistant secretary's time. I cannot remember any major labor issues that we dealt with at the time. There was a separate office in the bureau that handled such issues, but they didn't seem to cross Shattuck's radar.

I can tell you one of the issues that was evolving in the mid-'90s and that is the democracy part of the three-parts to the name. That is, rule of law programs. I think that concept was just developing in the mid-'90s, that work with governments abroad, especially in the developing world, to improve their rule of law infrastructure was a worthwhile of promoting human rights. That is, work to train judges and attorneys to be more responsive, and to have legal systems rewritten to make them more transparent and in general to make the administration of justice and law more dependable and more open. This appealed to business interests too, because American companies want to deal abroad where there is an open and transparent legal system.

Related to this was similar work with political parties to understand actual proper or more systematic grassroots development of political parties and not just concentrating on the wealthy and their needs and buying influence and manipulated people into voting. Working on good governance issues to try to develop structures that were well spelled out, on paper, agreed to with congressional or parliamentary or whatever mandates and then people would dedicate themselves to the process. All this was developing during Shattuck's era, and he was searching for ways for his bureau to contribute to the process. Today, the same bureau was money to contribute to NGOs that promote the interests I just outlined.

Q: I was going to say, this would seem to be NGOs-related.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. But one of Shattuck's ideas was to make the bureau a player in this as well. He also tried to secure some funding so that we could bring influence to bear where it could help. I think John's legacy was in seeing the potential in that kind of cooperation.

One thing that John wanted to do was to get to know more people in both the House and the Senate. His friends in the Senate included Kennedy and Kerry, and in the House, Tom Lantos and Steny Hoyer. I'm sure he was close to more than these senators and congressmen, but these are the names that spring to mind just now as a few of those really interested in human rights. I suggested to Shattuck that he might consider offering to meet with Jesse Helms, as I had heard Helms boast several times when I worked in the Senate that no one ever came to see him from State, in contrast to other agencies, notably Defense. Shattuck was interested in the idea, but he said he did not want to buck the instruction that only the assistant secretary for legislative affairs should take the lead on meeting members of the Hill. At the time, I was puzzled by his caution, as he and I had gone up to talk with Hoyer and Lantos, for example. I think now, however, that Shattuck's caution had to do more with fearing that Helms could not be trusted to keep a meeting off the record, and that he would be deliberately baited-set up-to be embarrassed or humiliated. I think now that Shattuck's caution was only prudent.

On a personal note, it was during this assignment that our son, David, was born in 1995.

Q: That's nice. Well then, in '95 whither?

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EISENBRAUN: I went to the Board of Examiners. I did that because I was up against the five-year window where you could stay in the United States for five years, and then you had to go overseas; that was mandatory in those days. I think they've liberalized it now to six years. A memo came around some time during the bidding season and said you can ask for an extension for a sixth year if you had extraordinary circumstances such as a child who is facing his or her senior year of high school. Well, that was exactly my circumstance. My oldest son John was going to be a senior in high school and I didn't want to take him overseas at that time. I was granted a sixth year to be back in the States, which meant I had to look around for a one-year assignment.

I had been interested in the Board of Examiners because I thought it was a worthwhile place to be.

(end side one, tape nine)

Q: Yes.

EISENBRAUN: So I went over there to the Board of Examiners and presented myself and asked if I could have an assignment. They weren't really taking on new staff that year because the hiring in the whole department in the mid-'90s had virtually collapsed because of a lack of funding for the Department from Capitol Hill. In those days, people didn't go over and make a formal approach the way I did. Fortunately, they took me on.

Q: How did you find BEX at that time? What was your impression of candidates and the system?

EISENBRAUN: I only spent three months helping in the interviewing of candidates; that is to say, August, September, October and then the testing period was over. I was barely learning how to do it when it was over for that season. So in the next nine months, imagine, there was no testing by the Board of Examiners.

You asked what were my impressions of those first three months of the candidates for the Foreign Service Orals? Well, the standards were so high, they had put the passing rate way up so that we would hardly see a passer let's say, maybe once every two weeks. We were turning 95 percent or 97 percent of all the candidates away. The handful of people I saw who had passed were so good that you just almost bowed down to them. They stood out head and shoulders above the other candidates. It was a very shortsighted policy, and later I was back on the Board of Examiners when the Department had money and then had to turn around in a crisis and find people to staff the building. That's another story. In the meantime, I found that the staff on the Board of Examines was a pretty attractive group of people. And so, to use the months of off-time, the office leadership dubbed the time "the year of alternate methodologies," where they got official sanction from the director general to look at any and all different ways of identifying good people and bringing them into the Foreign Service. Everything was open for discussion.

Well, that was rather interesting to participate in. Different from my usual foreign policy concerns up to that point. I learned there was something called the Commerce Business Daily, a government publication where the U.S. government advertised for solicitation of bids for concept papers and other things from the private sector, including contractors. I volunteered on the committee to look at revisions for the written exam. We advertised in the CBD for concept papers on how to identify the best candidates for the Foreign Service, and we got bids from half a dozen companies about how to do things differently. Some were more serious than others. One company made a presentation that relied on handwriting analysis. Getting responses, reviewing them and hearing some of the presentations took six months.

One of the concepts came from ACT of Iowa City, a leader in educational and occupational testing. That was important, because when I returned to the Board in 1998, the first thing I did was to join a small committee to evaluate bids for the creation and administration of a new written exam. That I had the experience on the board previously regarding differing approaches to written assessments, I was more capable of evaluating the bids. ACT won the bid.

BEX was just gearing up to do training for the next testing cycle, starting in the fall of 1996. I didn't participate in that training, or even help in the organization, but I saw what they were trying to do. Previous to that effort, I don't think the members of the Board had been given job-related training. Later, I returned to BEX and for five years conducted week-long training sessions for all assessors.

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In the summer of '96 I went out to Bangladesh as the political counselor, back to where I had started in the Foreign Service. I had been the junior political officer in 1976 and now I went as the senior political officer in 1996, a 20-year gap.

Q: You were there from '96 to when?

EISENBRAUN: '96 to '98.

Q: What was the situation in Bangladesh when you got out there?

EISENBRAUN: It was fascinating. Politically, I had paid attention to what Bangladesh had been going through in those 20 years, but I was not prepared for all the changes I found. If anyone listening to this or reading it wants to go back and look at what I said about 1975 and the assassination of the first president of Bangladesh, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, that's relevant to 1996 because, after his political party, the Awami League, had been discredited in the 1970s, it had a rebirth, and Mujib's daughter had just been elected to lead the government as Prime Minister. The daughter, Sheikh Hasina, had just defeated Begum Khaleda Zia, the widow of General Zia who had created his own party, the Bangladesh National Party, which I was fortunate to observe in 1978 and have recounted in these memoirs.

As I've said, after Sheikh Mujib's assassination in 1975, the Awami League had been discredited, and it was hardly a factor in Bangladesh politics for years. The only member of the family to escape the assassination in 1975 was Sheikh Hasina; she had been out of the country or she would have been dead too. When I arrived in July of 1996, she had just been elected prime minister in an open, free and fair election, according to international observers. I arrived maybe ten days or so after she had taken power. It was a peaceful transfer of power, which was in itself a remarkable thing in Bangladesh's unstable political history.

For all of her adult life, Sheikh Hasina has believed that the United States either had a hand in the assassination of her father or had known about the coming assassination and had done nothing to warn him. So she held a strong grudge against the United States. I went through this history from my perspective in an earlier tape, and as I recounted, I knew that we had warned Sheikh Mujib that his assassination was imminent and he had brushed us off. We had played no role, of course, in the assassination. When I got to Bangladesh in '96, all of that bureaucratic history had been lost to the embassy and to the desk. The people who dealt with the issues in 1975 had either retired or died, and those working on the issues in 1996 were, naturally, just reacting to what they were presented with at the moment.

The Ambassador at the time, David Merrill, an AID official in his past assignments, was a very vigorous, active, skillful and personable individual who liked Bangladeshis and who got quite involved in their political concerns. Merrill wanted to know the historical background once he discovered I knew something about it, and that background came to the fore once Sheikh Hasina settled in, because she went after the killers of her father, some of whom were in the US.

All those responsible for the murders had gone scott free. They had come from the army, were mid-level officers, and most had after dismissal from the army had been sent off on diplomatic assignments in order to get them out of the country. Twenty years later a few were living back in Dhaka, the capital, prosperous and happy, while a few were suspected of living in the United States.

Sheikh Hasina made no bones about it; all these people were going to be brought to justice. And that meant coming to the United States and having to work with us to get these people extradited. But we had no extradition treaty with Bangladesh. She couldn't believe that if she identified who these people were we couldn't just pluck them out and send them back for justice. But it wasn't that simple. In fact, it involved a lot of not only legalities but human rights concerns as well because the Bangladesh legal system and penal system was pretty rough and there was the issue of whether they would be mistreated in custody. Mistreated is a rather bland term-we feared they would be tortured, both as revenge and for confessions. It didn't help her cause that she arrested a few of those living in Dhaka, and we heard that they were abused in custody. It didn't take too many months for Sheikh Hasina to wise up and improve the treatment of those accused, but the damage had been done politically.

Ambassador Merrill was fully with Sheikh Hasina in her quest. He sat with me one evening and said, now just imagine if we've figured out that Lee Harvey Oswald had worked with others in the Kennedy assassination, and we learned that they were living openly in Bangladesh. Wouldn't we expect the Bangladesh Government to cooperate fully in our efforts to get them back to the States for a trial? When the issue first came up, he dedicated himself to getting them back. I don't think any of them from the States have been sent back to Bangladesh to this day, however.

This was a time, 1996, when the investment banks in America and elsewhere were looking at emerging markets around the world as the next big thing, and they came, along with other American companies, to explore the Bangladesh market. The textile industry that had developed entirely in the years of my absence served as a model. The Koreans had had the foresight to invest in Bangladeshi workers, mainly women, to assemble garments for export. The Koreans had created what became a multi-billion dollar industry.

There was also a considerable volume of natural gas discovered in Bangladesh in my absence. While there had been some minor development in my earlier tenure, it was discovered that Bangladesh was floating on a sea of gas, the same fields that run through Thailand and Malaysia, and they were ready for development. Foreign-and US-companies were in country investigating when I arrived. They all wanted to develop the gas for export, especially to India, but the government was unwilling to go that route. Nevertheless, the government had divided the country into blocks and invited international companies to bid for development rights.

Bangladesh was an emerging democracy, there was perhaps the possibility of investments of one kind or another, and American companies were coming to look. It was a pretty interesting era. The country's infrastructure was falling apart and they needed power plants badly; if they could be gas-fired, all the better, and there was a huge market over in India. The sky seemed to be the limit. The most vigorous of the proponents of Bangladeshi exports of gas to India was Frank Wisner, the American Ambassador in New Delhi, and a Foreign Service Officer who had served in Bangladesh in 1972-74 as political counselor. David Merrell worked with Wisner to encourage this prospect, but the message fell on deaf ears in Dhaka. I think that Wisner created so much fuss over this issue that the Bangladeshis simply dug in their heals more firmly.

I went out as political consular, but they decided that they would merge political and economic reporting and so I became the political-economic counselor. There was no foreign commercial service in Dhaka, so it turned out that most of my work had to do with commercial matters, particularly dealing with oil and gas companies.

Q: How responsive was this new Bangladesh government to foreign capital coming in?

EISENBRAUN: They weren't very responsive. While the Bangladeshis are enormously friendly and hospitable people and would meet the representatives for talk and tea, nothing would happen. Proposals would be made and then languish in various ministries. This is the traditional Bangladesh way of doing things. There was complicated bureaucracy, much corruption, and little vision of what could help the country.

The embassy did everything it could. In fact, the embassy became a business consultant to all these companies because the Ambassador and the DCM knew the major players in the government and the private sector. We made quite an effort to understand the decision-making process within the government, and advised the American companies accordingly.

The first week I was there, Congressman Bill Richardson came on one of his visits. His purpose was to free an American girl who had been detained a year or two earlier on possession of drugs found or suspected, I don't remember which, when she was in country. There were extenuating circumstances I cannot recall, but they were sufficiently compelling to bring Richardson out on a humanitarian mission, which was one of his specialties while he was in Congress.

Once it was clear the American was to be released, Ambassador Merrill took Richardson to meet the Prime Minister. I accompanied. Merrell started the meeting by introducing me to the Prime Minister, saying, Eisenbraun speaks Bengali. Well, he hadn't heard me speak a word of Bengali and was taking my word for it. Luckily, I had gone out to FSI and had a little refresher in the weeks preceding my arrival, but my Bengali was no more than social chitchat after twenty years of nonuse. In Bengali, the prime minister said to me, oh, how is it that you know Bengali? And I replied in Bengali, because I lived here 20 years ago when I was also posted at the American embassy. Oh, she continued, have you come with your family? I replied, yes, my wife is here with me, plus two of my three children. Anyone who's taken the FSI language program will recognize this dialogue, standard stuff in lesson one. It went on. She asked, how do you find Bangladesh? Do you like it here? Oh, I like it very much, it's very beautiful. And do you see anything different? Oh yes, there are many more people and the big buildings and the wide streets. I could knock this off as if I were a native speaker, because I knew my accent was pretty good. I was at the end of my easy ability to show off, however, and fortunately, Sheikh Hasina ended her dialogue by saying, we're glad you're here.

All this time, Bill Richardson, Merrill and the Foreign Minister were twiddling their thumbs. Afterwards, Richardson volunteered to me that it sounded good, at least. This exchange paid off at the Foreign Ministry later, because it was referred to favorably in the next two years by some of the other officials in attendance that day.

Q: During your time there, were you able to say look, I was around at the time of the assassination and I happen to know there wasn't an American hand involved?

EISENBRAUN: The occasion didn't present itself often, but I did recount the story to the number two at the foreign ministry, the state minister, and we subsequently became pretty good friends, but not because of that story. In fact, though, where my experience really helped was with the opposition, the BNP.

If people check the earlier portion of this account, they will find my story of the birth of the BNP in 1978. You may recall I had been involved in clandestine meetings down in the old city when General Zia at that time planned to establish a political party. He brought these disparate elements together from the left and the right; the mullahs on one side and the leftists on the other, to advise him. I was being briefed about the secret meetings by an elderly politician who later became the senior minister in Zia's first cabinet.

I was sitting at the Ambassador's dinner table in my first weeks, and I was seated next to the main opposition whip in the parliament, Khandakar Delwar Hossain, a senior member of the BNP. He was an older man I thought would appreciate the story, so I related it to him. Delwar Hossain sat there quietly and just listened. I probably monopolized him for 20 or 30 minutes. When I got done, he just said, that's the way it was. You're right. He didn't correct me on anything. He added, I can't believe you know that history.

He must have told other people because eventually I had what seemed an easy entrï¿½e to almost everyone in the BNP, with the exception of the former finance minister. For some reason, I never had any relationship with him. Otherwise, everybody was accessible and friendly.

Q: Well, the BNP was-

EISENBRAUN: The major opposition party.

Q: Well, what did this do to your relationship with, what was it called, the Awani League?

EISENBRAUN: Awami League. It didn't seem to make any difference for 18 months or so, but in the last six months it caused problems. In the spring of 1998, there was a violent incident in the port city of Chittagong in which two prominent members of the BNP were accused of murder because one or more people died in an anti-government demonstration. There was reason to believe that the charges were trumped up by the government. Whatever the case was, the two individuals, Morshed Khan and Salauddin Qadar Choudhury, went into hiding for a few days. While hiding out, they called me several times on cell phones, both at home and at the office, to keep me posted. I listened to their stories, wondering why they were using their phones, especially when it was suspected that the American phones would have been routinely tapped. Now, I think I have figured it out: they wanted the government to know that the Americans were in the picture.

I reported this all to the Ambassador, now John Holzman, and to Washington. A few days later, the Ambassador was called to see the foreign secretary without have been told a reason.

The foreign secretary told the Ambassador that the purpose of the meeting was to complain about the political counselor, Eisenbraun, for getting too close with some members of the opposition, the BNP. They wanted me to stand down. As he related to me later, the Ambassador replied that I had associations with BNP leaders on his orders because that's what the embassy does; it tries to befriend all political figures in the country. He also pointed out that I had a close working relationship with his very own State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan "Kaiser" Chowdhury. According to Holzman, that was the end of the meeting. He told to carry on as before.

In the meantime, both politicians came out of hiding, got good lawyers, and nothing has ever come of those two cases. Today, Morshed Khan is Foreign Minister.

It was true that I had developed a good friendship and a mutually useful working relationship with Kaiser Chowdhury, the number two at the Foreign Ministry. In a gesture of kindness one time, he arranged that I be invited to a function when Prime Minister Gujeral of India and Prime Minister Nawaz Shariff of Pakistan were in Dhaka for a regional summit. Kaiser did this without any prompt from me because he knew I had been friendly with Shariff in my Lahore days, when he was a businessman and had not yet entered politics.

In my first year, that is, the fall of 1996, one of the first new American investments in the emerging gas sector took place. Halliburton, Dick Cheney's company, got the contract to build an underwater gas pipeline from the Bay of Bengal to the mainland. Cheney himself came out to Dhaka in the autumn to try to persuade the Prime Minister to sign off on the deal, as it seemed stalled. Nothing happened as an immediate result of his visit.

In the weeks afterward, Ambassador Merrill was talking with the special assistant to the prime minister, and this fellow, quite a skilled operator himself with a close relationship with Sheikh Hasina, said the Halliburton papers had all lower-level clearances from the various ministries, but he was holding the file and was uncertain whether to put it in front of the PM. Merrill said, do it, now or never. This is important, it will help Bangladesh, there is no downside. Merrill told me this personally. The file went in to the PM, who signed it. Halliburton got its deal because of a savvy and well-connected American Ambassador.

Dick Cheney came out to Bangladesh in his corporate jet twice; as I remember. So did a lot of other major American businessmen, including the Vice Chairman of Chevron. We took care of them all, but none so much as Cheney. The DCM held weekly Cheney-watch meetings in the fall to make sure every detail was in place for his visit, including an elegant, expensively catered dinner at the Ambassador's residence. No detail was left to chance.

If it hadn't been for David Merrell, Halliburton's contract may never have been signed. That's not the end of the story.

David Merrell was soon thereafter offered a job with Halliburton, and he took it. He was up for retirement, so he decided to accept the Halliburton offer to be in charge of business development for Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh. He assured us that he had worked closely with L (the legal affairs bureau) to make certain that everything was done in accordance with the Department's ethics requirements.

Q: Well now, was it your impression that this special treatment for Halliburton was because it had to do with Dick Cheney?

EISENBRAUN: Yes. I expect the embassy front office would say it was because it was a high profile American contract and they would have done the same thing for any businessman. I believe that they would have, but all the other trimmings, that is, the expensive dinner, the high-priced wine, the catering, getting the clearances for the plane, the weekly meetings; all that was because it was Dick Cheney. It didn't happen when other high ranking corporate officials flew in on their private planes.

Let's move on. The Ambassador left Dhaka about the first of June, 1997, and then the DCM moved on too. It's very unusual in the Foreign Service to have both people in the front office leave at the same time. I went back to the States on R & R also in June. When I returned to Dhaka, a new fellow had come to post as DCM/Chargï¿½ d'Affaires, Ted Nist, a nice guy with an open mind and a desire to do things right. Ted was Charge until the latter part of September, when the new Ambassador, John Holzman, arrived. Nist was new to South Asia. He was as fresh as could be to the intrigues of Bangladesh, but he didn't stay that way for long.

I worked closely with Ted as we grappled with an issue that consumed us suddenly, the natural gas bidding process. The most lucrative of the blocs was coming up for decision-making on the part of the government about who should get the contract to explore for gas. Chevron and Texaco were in the bidding, as was Shell and a small Irish company, Tullow. I knew that Chevron had a bid in for perhaps a half billion dollars to explore for gas, and they were reasonably confident that once the gas was being extracted, they could build a gas-fired electric power plant, and who knows what afterward.

Ron Wahid, an American who ran a consulting firm in Washington, represented Chevron and its bidding process for block nine. Ron introduced himself to me and briefed me on the bidding process, which he knew a lot about, partly because he was well-connected as a result of having grown up in Bangladesh before immigrating to the States as a teenager. Ron was unusual also in that he worked so closely with Chevron's top management. He said, I have information from my own sources in the government that the prime minister is about to make decisions on this most lucrative contract, and it's not likely to be in favor of the Americans; it's going to go to this small Irish company, Tullow, or some combination with Tullow and Shell. And we've got to do something about this, he said, because Chevron has the capital and the technology to do this well, and on paper, our bid is the best. But we're going to be frozen out because of what looks like improper business practices on the part of one of the other competitors.

I briefed Ted on this information and said we need to report this to Washington and make certain State and Commerce both know this, as well as Holzman, preparing to come out to Bangladesh. I knew, however, that we needed to have more specific information on the charges of impropriety. Wahid returned to the embassy a day or two later with some further precise information supporting his conviction that, indeed, decisions were going to be made because of money passing under the table or on some basis other than the merits of the bids. We sent this back to Washington, and I recommended to Ted that we have to show the flag all over town, and go all out to support the American bids on this gas block. We must slow down this decision-making process and get it focused on the merits of the bids.

Q: This is tape ten, side one with Steve Eisenbraun. Yes.

EISENBRAUN: So we decided to do everything conceivable to raise the American profile, which is a difficult thing when you don't have an Ambassador in place. We wanted to make sure that everyone in the Bangladesh government up to the prime minister knew that we are advocating on behalf of American interests, which were Chevron and Texaco. I knew also that we had to energize Washington to help us.

We began a campaign. Ted and I went around to the energy minister and his powerful energy secretary, we called on the commerce minister and the officials in Petrobangla, the government oil and gas office, and everyone else we could think of that might be a part of the decision-making process, short of the prime minister herself. We didn't get into the prime minister, but we got to those around her in her secretariat. We sent back urgent messages to Washington that we had to have a letter to the prime minister from a high-ranking official, and Stu Eisenstadt as undersecretary for economic affairs came back with a letter close to the sample we had drafted. A letter from the Secretary of Commerce followed, and I think we got Bill Richardson involved too.

We pulled every string and every rabbit out of every hat we could possibly find to bring pressure to bear on the prime minister and her government that the decision making had to be transparent and had to be according to the best bids on the table. That's all we said, look closely at the financial details of the American bids. According to the figures, Chevron had the best offer with the latest technology behind it. Shell stepped up its efforts to lobby as well, we heard.

We succeeded in stopping the decision-making process. We learned that the prime minister deferred the decision for the time being. That met our immediate objectives, because we wanted to buy enough time for the new Ambassador to get to post and pursue this with all the resources he could bring to bear. Holzman back in Washington, by the way, was following this very closely, though he wasn't in a position yet to make decisions.

It was the work of four of us in the mission, Ted Nist as Chargï¿½, Tim Forsyth and Les Vigerie in the econ/commercial section, and me. We worked long hours, and because we had all this support from Washington, it was very gratifying. I would say this was one of my most rewarding and enjoyable experiences working abroad in the Foreign Service.

The day that John Holzman arrived at post, it looked as though the decision was about to be made on the bidding, and it would not be for the Americans. Literally, we took Holzman from the airport to his residence and we spent about two hours briefing him on developments since he had left Washington a week or so earlier. We said we needed to get his credentials presented as fast as possible so that he could work on this issue, if he agreed, of course. First of all, we had to have his blessing on what we were doing. Holzman was on board a hundred percent. Within a week, he was fully up to speed and giving us instructions. And as soon as he had presented his credentials, he was working the issue too from his unique advantage as Ambassador.

Once again, we kept things from an adverse decision. It wasn't too many weeks later that Shell Oil sent somebody very important out to Bangladesh and requested a meeting with the Ambassador. I was in the meeting, as were most of the others who had worked this issue. The Shell man said, Mr. Ambassador, your embassy has gone overboard. You have advocated too harshly on behalf of American interests. There have been implications that the decisions might be influenced by matters other than the technical and financial merits of the case. We resent this. The American Ambassador replied no way. I'm here to advocate on behalf of American business interests, that's my job. That's why I'm here. I'm sorry you feel that we have gone overboard, but in fact, we're doing everything properly and we are not, in fact, making any accusations of improper business practices; we want only a transparent decision-making process on the merits of the bids, and we will continue to do this as vigorously as we can.

Holzman was right in that we were careful never to make any accusations of foul play. We had kept our message strictly on target; that is, we wanted decisions made so that the best company got the contract, and we thought that would come down in our favor.

We thought a decision was imminent on block nine in the fall of 1997. It wasn't. I left in the summer of '98 and no decision had been made. A positive decision came through a couple of years later, and Chevron got the rights to explore.

In the spring of 1998, Bill Richardson, then Ambassador at the UN, came out again to Bangladesh. Although I was his control officer and spent a fair amount of time with him and attended most of his meetings, I do not remember the purpose of his visit. It may have been a goodwill stop, as he liked Bangladesh, and they liked him. With good reason:  he was about their only high-level advocate in Washington. He was also one of the most laid back, friendly American officials I had ever come in contact with. As you know, he later went on to become Secretary of Energy in the Clinton Administration, and he's now governor of New Mexico. I mention his visit because while he was there, he handed out a Group Superior Honor Award to the Embassy for its work advocating on behalf of American business interests, specifically in the natural gas area.

In that time of busy commercial matters in the fall of 1997, we put together a group of senior Bangladesh business leaders to go to Singapore to meet with American businessmen resident there. The purpose was to encourage American trade with Bangladesh, and in organizing this endeavor, we got excellent help and cooperation from the American Chambers of Commerce in Dhaka and in Singapore, as well as from the American Embassy in Singapore, which allowed us to use their conference facilities. I asked an old friend from the 1970s, Anwar "Manju" Hossain, Minister of Communications, to head the group as the Bangladesh Government representative. It was a useful and enjoyable trip to Singapore, and I know that at least two American businessmen returned later to Dhaka to explore leads developed in the visit. Ironically, it was Manju who perhaps benefited most, as he was able to develop a lead to buy 50 buses for the streets of Dhaka. In appreciation, he took Lorraine and me for an elegant dinner at the Raffles Hotel.

Who could have predicted in the 1970s when I first met Manju that his then-unborn daughter, Anushay, would become best friends with my then-unborn daughter, Annie, as a result of my second posting in Dhaka? In her adjustment to life in Dhaka and her appreciation of the culture of Bangladesh, Annie gives Anushay and her family great credit for opening their home to her and for being so gracious to her, even in the years since we have been away from Bangladesh.

Q: That is a very nice comment, illustrating the value of follow-on assignments to a country. Well, were there any political developments in this period, or was your work mostly economic?

EISENBRAUN: In February, the annual human rights reports were published in Washington, and the Ambassador Holzman decided it would be worthwhile to make a big deal of the Bangladesh report locally. It was not a flattering report, as there were many serious abuses going on, such as the mistreatment of prisoners, threats on the lives of journals, and the trafficking of women and children. When Holzman suggested to me an embassy press conference, I thought that was a bit forward and said so, but then I allowed that if we used the USIS facility, it might be acceptable. No, he said, I want to do it at the Dhaka press club, on their turf. I said that that might be a rather unpleasant occasion for him, considering the negative report. He said, no, I want you to lead the press conference.

So, quite reluctantly, I went to the Dhaka press club, accompanied by the PAO, John Kincannon, and Henry Jardine, the first-tour political officer who had done all the research for the report. I thought it best not to embarrass the government with any detail about the human rights conditions in Bangladesh. Instead, we planned to keep the topic on the process of how the reports were prepared. Surprisingly, the assembled journalists cooperated in this stance, and the press conference wasn't so unpleasant, and nothing critical was said about Bangladesh specifically. However, excerpts from the report were published in the newspapers the next day. Then a public howl went up about the audacity of the Americans to say such critical things about their country, and I think even the prime minister said some unflattering things about us.

I day or two later, the foreign secretary called the Ambassador in, and I accompanied. Without any opening pleasantries, he read from a prepared text, criticizing the US for such a critical report and castigating us for our ungraciousness in announcing it at the press club. As he went along, I had a sinking feeling that he was leading up to saying that I was no longer welcome in the country. He did not do that, however. In closing out this episode, I think the foreign secretary was right that we should not have used their press club for such an occasion. That's why we have USIS facilities.

About this time, the Ambasador asked that I take the lead with the foreign ministry in negotiating a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) agreement, working with the embassy's Defense Attachï¿½, who would do the same at the Defense Ministry. There were a lot of exercises that our military did with the Bangladesh army, training exercises generally, and disaster preparedness exercises specifically, because typhoons would roar in off the Bay of Bengal and swamp the southern part of the country, leaving thousands homeless on an almost annual basis. The Bangladeshi military became pretty darned good in disaster relief, by the way.

A status of forces agreement lays out what the legalities of how American soldiers and sailors would be handled in the local courts should they be accused of wrongdoing, such as rape of local citizens, robbery or whatever. How were the accused soldiers going to be taken care of while in custody, and would their cases be handled in American courts back home, or would they be handled in Bangladeshi courts. Such a treaty is standard procedure with most countries that we conduct joint military exercises with. In fact, without such a treaty, our military has to reach ad hoc agreements, using pretty much the same language as in the proposed treaty, for each and every joint exercise, and this had been going on with Bangladesh for years. That was an unsatisfactory and inefficient way of doing business, and the Defense Department in Washington thought is was past time to have a permanent treaty in place.

The Bangladesh army was in favor of this, but not the political leaders. They decided that this was a good topic to use to stand up to the Americans, so they deliberately distorted the issue, making public remarks that the Americans wanted to station troops in the country. My efforts at the foreign ministry got nowhere, although we had numerous frustrating meetings. I guess the Ambassador concluded that this was one fight he couldn't win, because I do not remember his taking it to a higher level, and it died.

Q: Well then, in '98, you left.

EISENBRAUN: Yes. I came back to the Board of Examiners. I didn't bid on anything else practical, and I had had it worked out for almost a year that I would return there. Despite the interesting things I was doing in Bangladesh, I was growing weary of the bureaucratic games we play in the Foreign Service in getting assignments. I was tired also of the gamesmanship, the backstabbing, the rank pulling, and the general strutting around that is so common in the Department. Some of my growing uneasiness was due to interactions with a few posturing senior staff in Dhaka, but I think it was a cumulative effect of the two tours I had had previously, the ops center and the special assistant job. Those two assignments soured me on wanting to pursue headlong the greater attainment of rank and status in the Foreign Service.

I should add that an immediate reason for my wanting to return to Washington had to do with seeing my kids into and through their college years. I wanted to take Annie down to Charleston, South Carolina, to enter the College of Charleston, and I wanted to be around to go to parent's weekend later in the fall, and in general be a part of her college days. I had missed parent's weekend at the Naval Academy the previous year when I took son John to Annapolis to join the Naval Academy, and I didn't want to go through that loss again. Also, I wanted to see him frequently as he progressed through the Academy from plebe to officer. I got to do that, and my career was secondary.

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I sent an e-mail back to the director of the Board of Examiners and said I'd like to return there. It seemed a sanctuary from all the bureaucratic games, and it turned out that way, mostly. The director, with whom I had worked in the earlier assignment in BEX, replied that this is great, why don't you bid to be the next BEX director, because the job is coming open. I said no, I don't even want to be director. I just want to come back to the Board of Examiners and spend my time interviewing candidates for the Foreign Service. So it was arranged.

Q: And you did that from when to when?

EISENBRAUN: '98 to 2002. And in 2002, I retired from the Foreign Service. So I was four years on the Board of Examiners. It turned out to be a very interesting experience, and a place where I made lasting friendships with other examiners.

On a personal note, it was during this assignment, actually in 2001, that Lorraine and I went to Russia and adopted an infant daughter, Emily. We had a tremendously enjoyable time in St. Petersburg, where Emily was in an orphanage, and later in Moscow where we had to get her visa for the U.S. I had been warned that it would be hard to deal with an uncooperative Russian bureaucracy, but, fortunately, any difficulties were absorbed by our excellent adoption agency and their Russian staff. What we saw as we went to various government offices to get permission to visit the orphanage, to obtain her passport, to sign various bureaucratic papers, and finally at the court for the adoption hearing, was that Russian officials were very friendly and helpful. Once we had her in our arms, little Emily smiled at everyone and smoothed the way for us as we spent three days as tourists in Moscow awaiting our flight home.

Q: Oh, that's very nice indeed. Let's talk now about the Board of Examiners. What how did you find it?

EISENBRAUN: There was a new group of people on the Board of Examiners (BEX) from those I had said good-bye to in 1996. They were hard at work improving the existing testing materials. Then we began the testing process.

Mark Grossman came in around 2000 as the new Director General, about the time a lady named Rosie Hanson became the director of the combined office of the Board of Examiners and the larger recruitment office. Grossman responded to pressure that was building simultaneously from the academic world and from within the bureaucracy to revamp the oral exam and make it more effective, so it was argued, for the current needs of the Service. Grossman had little idea about the existing exam, but he was new to the job and wanted to look forthcoming and a man who gets things done, so he adopted the ideas of the reformers from outside the building, who themselves had only the vaguest concept of what was actually being tested by the existing exam. He also changed the bureau name from personnel to human resources.

The basic argument was that State should hire on the basis of existing credentials, rather than trying to determine, as had been the practice, the potential of candidates. The oral exam in place had a concept, virtually unique, of putting candidates through a day-long series of exercises similar to the work they would encounter on the job. They were assessed on how well they did, according to a comprehensive series of benchmarks. By definition, someone who did well in the exercises would likely do well in the Foreign Service, regardless of academic background or foreign experience, or language skills. The assumption on foreign language ability was that the Department could give bonus credit for those with such skills after they had passed the oral; the point was that the Service needed resourceful and thoughtful people of composure and integrity more than it needed linguists.

The reformers thought differently; they believed that foreign experience, academic credentials and grade point, and foreign language skills indicated a person's worth to the Service. In the end, the Board of Examiners put all existing proposals on the table, and ended up with a compromise; henceforth, the assessors would know about the backgrounds of the candidates, but they would get no credit for their experiences until they told us, in a structured interview, what they had learned from their experience. In other words, being in the Peace Corps or having studied abroad on a Fulbright did not count until the candidate could tell us with examples how that experience had made him or her more culturally sensitive, more resourceful and so forth. Also, several existing exercises from the oral were retained.

After we had revised the exam and gotten used to using it, it worked pretty well. I would say we hired good candidates, but not necessarily better than we had hired previously, but not worse either. Interestingly, some of the groups, such as Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, who had put the most pressure on to change the exam, did not make an effort to find out how it finally was changed, once they had heard from Grossman that changes were made. It makes one wonder how serious they were in the first place.

I should add that no critic bothered to learn about current issues in hiring practices either, particularly the legal challenges that can be brought to any process that is not transparent and demonstrably job related. Further, exams must show statistically that they do not have adverse impact, meaning that test groups would try the questions, and an analysis could show that there were no appreciable differences among genders and ethnic groups in the answers to the questions. Clearly hiring on the basis of credentials and resumes could not pass that legal hurdle, especially when the Foreign Service was hiring on a national level and could expect tens of thousands of resumes.

If I sound a bit passionate on these matters, it may have something to do with the fact that I assumed the duties of organizer of the annual week-long training process for both new and experienced assessors. This is something that must be done just to satisfy any legal challenge to the credentials of the assessors, but of course it was desirable to turn Foreign Service Officers into knowledgeable assessors. In the process of organizing, and in some cases conducting training classes, I got to know well several of the nation's top-rated industrial psychologists, who served as consultants to the Department.

I must add that Grossman did one major service to the Board of Examiners and the larger office of recruitment:  He hired a special assistant to review the entire hiring process, a senior officer named David Dlouhy. He was a real asset to the Department, and over time, he brought order and accountability to the larger recruitment process, and he helped the production of the new oral exam. He was controversial because he was questioning old assumptions and practices, but he backed up his viewpoint with good research. .

Q: Legal concerns are important in the hiring process.

EISENBRAUN: In light of recent class action suits on behalf of African-Americans and women, it became obvious that the Department had been biased in its hiring and promotion practices. Eventually, the Department did everything conceivable to correct its mistakes, both in hiring and in promoting the very groups that it had demonstrated bias against earlier.

Q: I served my year on the Board of Examiners back in '75-'76, which was three people sitting down talking to a person for the oral exam. It probably came out just the same place as other types of tests, but it was not as legally defensible.

EISENBRAUN: That's right.

Q: The Board of Examiners used to be a parking place for officers. I'm told one of the reasons for its popularity now as a place to be assigned is that, frankly, there are a lot of officers fed up with fighting the battles overseas and who don't want to get into the bureaucratic battles in Washington.

EISENBRAUN: That's true. Was for me. I noticed that many of my colleagues in BEX did fit that mold. To me, that made them all the more attractive.

Q: I mean, we have an unpopular foreign policy, more or less. It may be changing, but for a period throughout the early Bush years, we simply did not have foreign policies popular with the world.

EISENBRAUN: I really am far enough removed now; I retired in 2002, that I can't say much about the current reasons for people seeking out the Board of Examiners and whether it has to do with unpopular foreign policy. I did discover, as you were saying, between '98 and 2002 when I was there, that almost everybody who came to the Board of Examiners was there because they saw it as a refuge from something in the bureaucracy they could no longer take, whether it was the impossibly long hours, year after year, or the late-afternoon sudden taskers with impossible deadlines, or the tension of daily press guidance designed not to answer questions but to obscure policy, or fighting with political appointees who did not know much about the business, or simply the stress on a family of moving around the world every few years.

I need to add that my wife, Lorraine, gave up her promising career in the sales of laboratory products to accompany me around the world. There are great family sacrifices required by the Foreign Service. One of the questions we asked candidates after we revised the oral exam was what they saw as some of the positive and negative aspects of a Foreign Service career. Even the best answers made candidates look as though they were signing up for a cruise on the love boat, with calls at various exotic ports. Few younger candidates could anticipate fully how hard the Foreign Service would be on families, especially on spouses. In the case of my wife, she moved on, went to graduate school, and is now on the adjunct faculty of Northern Virginia Community College.

Maybe it's less hard on children in the long run, but when they face constant moves, they suffer a lot at the time. My two older children didn't have to endure long periods overseas, as I ended up more in Washington than abroad in their formative years. My daughter Annie will say, however, that going to Bangladesh for her junior and senior years was the best thing that ever happened to her. By the way, she personally received her high school diploma from me, because I was president of the school board when she graduated from the American International School in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and I gave out all the diplomas on graduation night. As for my son John, he didn't get pulled out of high school the way Annie did, but he, like Annie, developed a love of foreign cultures and travel. In him, it manifested itself in his becoming a Japanese minor in college at the Naval Academy and spending a summer attending a Japanese University.

It's too bad that my youngest son David, only a toddler when we were in Dhaka, has no memory of his good times there. My wife had lots of time to spend with him, there were a ton of little kids to play with at home and the American Club, and he had two very nice and gracious ladies, Dipa and Lena, on our household staff to help play with and take care of him. Little kids probably have it the easiest in the Foreign Service, especially at the hardship posts, where everyone sticks together and close friendships are developed. The downside for kids, however, is that they have to move every few years.

Q: Yes. These officers who worked in the higher positions in the State Department, they have ungodly hours, often unjustified, but the system is such that it puts the premium on staying in the office a long time. They had families that got the short end of the stick.

But that isn't to say that BEXers were completely disillusioned with the Foreign Service. I found very dedicated and loyal people who were fighting hard for integrity in the entrance process and to find the best people so that the Foreign Service would be better than ever. At the same time, many also wanted to end their careers in a more peaceful manner, far from the daily tension of the Department.

It also became known that BEX did some good work, and that it was inherently interesting to be exposed, day after day, to some of the brightest candidates in the country, all of whom could probably do the work of the Foreign Service, but who had to be evaluated to find their strengths and weaknesses. I thought that made every day enjoyable and worthwhile, although it was never pleasant to have to tell any candidate at the end of the day that he or she was not successful. Most assessors thought, there but for the grace of God go I. Most assessors, senior officers who had come through a generally less rigorous entry process, doubted they could successfully get through the new testing process. I think they were wrong. But it was humbling to work in BEX and see how much talent there is out there in young America-and not so young. After all, fortunately, the Service's upper age limit for entrance is an age of 59 and one-half years.

I am proud of the Foreign Service because we ask only that aspirants pass a series of rigorous exams. It does not matter what degrees a candidate has, or what family connections there may be, or even what age a candidate is if he or she is below 59. In contrast, when I was telling these requirements 30 years ago to friends at Delhi University, they were incredulous. They pointed out that one could not sit for the Indian Foreign Service Exam unless he or she had a first class on the nationwide annual university exams given for graduation. The Indian Foreign Service is a polished and extremely professional service made up of the best and brightest in India, but it is not an open competition to get in, because one has to have family resources in additional to one's personal ambition and intellect to get the right type of education just to sit for the exams. Only in America is that the case, and that is our strength and our pride.

All that said, to serve in BEX for more than a year is bureaucratic suicide. No one ever gets promoted for working in BEX. After all, the Department is in the business of foreign policy, not personnel policy. I knew I was ending my career prematurely by staying in BEX so long, but somehow, I didn't care. I haven't quite figured that one out yet.

But at any rate I finished my career. I had to do a little plotting and scheming to stay on the Board of Examiners for four years, because the director general's office didn't want to keep people around a long time on the board. They feared this rather out of date image of the Board of Examiners as being filled with dead weight, people who couldn't make a go of it in the real work of the Department. But I made myself pretty useful in a whole variety of ways. I did a huge amount of recruitment and did the staff training, and so I convinced the front office that I was useful to keep around. They bent the rules, essentially, and I was allowed to stay on. I retired from the Service in the fall of 2002, after 27 and one half years of service.

Q: Well, Steve, it's probably a good place to stop. I want to thank you very much. It's been quite a journey.

EISENBRAUN: Stu, it certainly has been an enjoyable one for me.

Q: I've enjoyed this too.

EISENBRAUN: I wanted to say one thing about the nature of my Foreign Service career. It was an honor to be in the Foreign Service. Throughout my career, or most of it, I never had reason to doubt that my country stood on the right side of issues, and was uniquely responsible in foreign policy. I hope nothing fundamental happens to change the nature of the Foreign Service. Based on my years on the Board of Examiners, there are people coming in that are better than ever, and I hope they make the Foreign Service a career.

The Service gave me the unique chance to meet interesting and different people, to learn about foreign cultures that were attractive and decent, to observe polices being made, and to associate with fine people in the Service. I found a home, and I don't regret a minute of the time I spent in the Foreign Service. In my career, there was a bit of danger, a dash of intrigue, some romance and a lot of excitement.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to tell my story. It was a bit long-winded, but I'm grateful to have been given the opportunity to tell of some things that I hope will be of use to those in the future. It also served as a bit of closure for me personally.

If there's anyone who will ever read this personal history, they'll wonder, where was all the danger and drama and romance, because what's been recounted has been basically a bureaucratic story. The answer is, it was there, it's just that that story is still to be told. Maybe I'll tell the rest of the story some other time.

Q: Great. Thank you, Steve, very much.

End of interview