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

WALTER B. DEERING

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Deering]

Q: What does the "B" stand for?

DEERING: Barnes.

Q: Barnes. To begin with, tell me where and when you were born.

DEERING: I was born in Ossining, New York, which is a small Hudson River village about 20 miles, 25 miles north of New York City on February 11, 1947.

Q: Can you tell me, let's start on your father's side. Where did the Deerings come from?

DEERING: On my father's side, my father's father was German. Actually I believe he was second or third generation German. My father's mother, whom I don't know much about, because she died at a young age, she was of Polish ancestry. Long time residents of Westchester County in New York. My father's side of the family were all railroad workers. His father, his uncle, all worked for the old New York Central Railroad.

Q: Was Ossining a railroad town more or less?

DEERING: It was part of the original Hudson River line, the Fulton line I believe it was, birthplace of the New York Central Railroad. As I said, my dad worked for the railroad, with the exception of when he was in the service during World War II, worked for the railroad for almost forty years.

Q: And you don't have much information on your mother's side of the family.

DEERING: On my mother's side of the family? I have a lot of information on my mother's side.

Q: Okay, then, talk about your mother's side.

DEERING: My mother's side of the family, the Barnes side, my grandmother's maiden name was Porter. My grandfather's a Barnes. The Barnes and the Porters go back to the original settlers that broke off from the Massachusetts Bay colony and settled in Connecticut. My uncle's name was Thomas Hooker Barnes, direct descendent of Thomas Hooker, who along with Roger Williams, as you know, split off from the Massachusetts Bay colony and settled in the Connecticut River valley. Roger Williams went to Rhode Island. Little anecdotal story on the Hooker family. General Joe Hooker, I guess he was in command of the Army of the Potomac on the northern side of the Potomac during the Civil War and his responsibility was security of Washington, D.C.

Q: My grandfather was a second lieutenant at the Battle of Chancellorsville. He was on the right wing just when Stonewall Jackson came out of the woods.

DEERING: And, of course, General Hooker. This is the story. I've not heard it told on the river cruise, the dinner cruise, but General Joe Hooker had a problem with morale of the troops because there wasn't much going on the northern side of the Potomac. So on Saturday afternoons he would send his adjutants out into the Maryland countryside and round up the local women, bring them in to entertain the troops and they became known as "hookers" and that is the basis for the term "hooker."

Q: Well, from this illustrious background, what about your mother's parents and all?

DEERING: My grandfather was an attorney in Ossining, New York, attended Yale University Law School. He was president of the Board of Education in Ossining when they built the high school in the 1930's and in fact designed the tower at the high school after the tower at Yale University. My mother's family was a large family. There were four girls and two boys, most of whom became attorneys. My uncle, Thomas Hooker Barnes, was also the village manager in Ossining in the Fifties. Also president of the Board of Education. My grandfather ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1930, in the 25th Congressional District of New York as a Democrat, two years too early. No, actually, it was 1928, when Hoover was still president. About two years too early. So, again, both my father's and mother's side of the family were longtime residents of Westchester County, New York.

Q: Well, had your father gone to college?

DEERING: My father did not go to college. He graduated from high school in 1940, went right to work for the railroad. World War II came along and he enlisted in the army, served in the Pacific. I guess he went in in '43 and got out in early to mid-'46, I guess it was. Followed MacArthur around with the Army Corps of Engineers, served in the Philippines, New Guinea, up to the Japanese islands.

Q: Interesting experience. How about your mother? Where'd she go?

DEERING: My mother graduated from Ossining High School as the class valedictorian and graduated from the University of Rochester, in upstate New York, in, I think, 1938. She was high school class of '34 so she graduated in 1938. At that time of course not a lot of women were going to college. She really never pursued a professional career. She worked in my uncle's and my grandfather's law offices for a while. She also worked, I remember she worked at the Reader's Digest for a while in Pleasantville, New York. Again, very close knit family at the time. Now we're spread all over the place.

Q: Did you have brothers, sisters?

DEERING: I had one brother who was killed in an automobile accident when he was 17, between his junior and senior year of high school. He actually that day was going to pick up my cousin, his cousin, take her to the airport to fly out to California. It was in the summer of 1969. That was tough. I was working at a camp up in the Pennsylvania mountains that summer. My mother had passed away in the summer of 1967. So it was kind of a tough time for my dad.

Q: Very much so. Let's talk a little about your upbringing. Were you more or less, up through early years, living in Ossining?

DEERING: I lived in Ossining until the time I went off to college at age 18. Hadn't seen much of the world at all.

Q: Let's talk about Ossining. What was Ossining like when you were a kid?

DEERING: It was a town that was settled by a lot of Italian and Irish immigrants who came to build and work on the New York Aqueduct system. Also, the Hudson River, there were a lot of old families in the area. At the time that I was raised, it was pretty much the classic Hudson River town. Not a lot going on. Not a lot of renovation. It was an old village and really today even downtown area hasn't changed much from what I remember it. A lot of people lived there, commuted into the city to work but by the same token, as I said, there were a lot of families that had been there for years and years.

Q: As a young lad, what were your interests?

DEERING: Oh, I think, I was interested in sports. I was always interested in current events. Probably developed that interest in high school. Had a couple high school teachers who were keen on current events as part of their curriculum. I remember a couple of courses, American History in my senior year, our teacher got subscriptions to the New York Times and required that we read the first and the eighth column each day in the New York Times. So I think that's where I developed an interest. Otherwise, we had a summer place that we went to every summer about 25 miles north up in North Salem, New York, on a small lake and we spent our summers up there, boating, fishing, golf, swimming. It was kind of an idyllic summertime where we left behind any cares and concerns of school and everything else. And our whole family, and it was an extended family, cousins, aunts and uncles, we all had cottages on the lake so we just kind of moved 25 miles each summer. Of course back then that was a long trip.

Q: Did you get into New York much?

DEERING: Not a lot. New York was a thousand miles away, a thousand miles away. Yeah, I went to New York occasionally, my mother would take us in to see a show. Occasionally, at Christmastime, the Radio City Music Hall but really it was a different world, a totally different world just 25 miles away, when I think back on it now.

Q: You remember anything about elementary school? Any interests or teachers or things?

DEERING: Sure, I remember, I had a teacher, discipline was important in elementary school. But this particular teacher had what was called the one, two, three system. The first time you were given a warning, the second time you were in your seat for the entire class and the third time you were out in the hall and you didn't want to go out in the hall. I remember spending one class period out in the hall and the principal who also, as I said, the people who had been in the town knew each other, the principal comes walking along. Here I am, standing outside the classroom and the principal said, "Mr. Deering, you don't have to stand out here. Just walk in." I said, "No problem, I'll just wait 'til the teacher opens the door." Childhood there was football games after school, movie theaters. You could actually walk into movie theaters. I was in the high school band, played at halftime at all the high school football games. I guess pretty typical.

Q: What about, at your school, what about the ethnic mix? Was there much?

DEERING: When I was there, Ossining had a black population, probably about 10 to 15 per cent of the population. I can honestly say that the population, in the schools anyhow, they were mixed. There was no indication of any segregation even though back in the Forties, back in the Fifties and early Sixties, that still existed de facto in a lot of the social side of things. But in the schools it was complete integration. I didn't sense any difference in ethnicity. There was not much other ethnic groups in Ossining in the Fifties and early Sixties. However, as time has gone on, it is a very Hispanic village now. There are major problems that go along with ethnic groups that have grown and have not been provided for. There is now a social stratosphere. English is almost a second language in a lot of places. The places that were the Italian neighborhoods are now Hispanic or Portuguese neighborhoods. The old section of the village is pretty rundown. I guess there is an urban renewal project that's going on but the homes that were the old, classic homes built in the early 1900's, 1920's are rundown. It's really a shame.

Q: What about, was there any divide between, say, the Italians and the Irish and all that?

DEERING: Other than the old ethnic pounding that they gave each other. I worked, when I was in, actually started about, I think, about the eighth grade part time and all through high school and into college I worked at an ethnic neighborhood grocery store that was run by an Italian family. There was an Italian and an Irishman who ran the business and I mean it was bantering back and forth all the time. Things that were said back and forth are now seen as politically incorrect and not, insensitive, etc, etc. Oh, yeah, there was the pounding back and forth between the Italians and the Irish that was still prevalent in New York.

Q: How about, was there a Protestant-Catholic divide there or not?

DEERING: I would say there was a large Catholic population, also a large Protestant population and there was a Jewish population. But again, there was no defining line that you were Catholic, you were Protestant, you're Jewish. I didn't sense that at all. I didn't get that feeling at all. But there was the ethnic divide that was more, like I say, jabbing at each other. There was not Irish gangs and Italian gangs, like what was that movie that was out two years ago, Gangs of New York, which gave the background on how that whole thing developed. There was nothing like that. One of the big social institutions at the working class level in Ossining was the volunteer fire department. There was a large volunteer fire department, nine companies in a village of 20,000. That is where there was some, again de facto, discrimination. There were very few, if any, black members of the volunteer fire department. It was a white organization. But it was not broken down ethnically, other than, one of the volunteer fire stations was in the Italian section of town, mostly Italians were members of that. But overall it was a real social organization and very good volunteer fire department, I might add.

Q: By the time you got to high school, what about dating? Was this an era that guys dated girls, went steady or did you sort of go in groups or how did it work?

DEERING: I remember the high school dances, junior high school and high school dances, on this side of the room were the girls and on that side of the room were the boys. Things started out and kind of mixed. I think we all had our girl friends and boy friends during high school. It was extremely important at the time, of course it was, it was a relationship, but I do remember the girls on this side and boys. And I do remember also the issues, even back then, rumors of guys dropping aspirins in the girls' Cokes because it was supposed to do something to them. I'm never quite sure what that was.

Q: I can remember sitting with my best friend and drinking Coke and aspirin and waiting for something to happen.

DEERING: That was the thing back then. Now it's this other stuff that's a lot more dangerous, I guess. Yeah, the guys would stand on one side of the room. Course, you couldn't bring Coke bottles into the gymnasium, because the dance floor was the gymnasium. You'd have to drink Coke out in the foyer there. And then going for pizza after dances. We hung out, I had a group of three or four friends. I think everybody kind of operated that way, three or four close friends in high school. Unfortunately, as you go through life you kind of lose touch with a lot of the people that you spent a lot of years with.

Q: Well, were you much of a reader or not?

DEERING: I read a lot. My mother was the influence on that. Books were important. I remember reading in elementary school a lot of biographies, substantial biographies. There was a series at the library. I don't remember what it was called. But you could get a biography on every president. I don't remember the name of that series. But, yeah, reading was important. I learned to read fairly early, early on. Although one of my memories is I had cousins who were older and I had cousins who were younger. And I remember, I think it was second grade, where we really got into the starting to read. And I remember my cousins telling me, oh, this is when it starts to get tough because now you have to make sense of all this. Am I going to be able to do this or not? And I remember on the board my second grade classroom had the alphabet in big letters and little letters and then you had phrases, that sticks in my mind.

Q: What about in high school? Were there subjects that you liked, that you didn't like?

DEERING: I hated math and science. I avoided it like the plague. And New York State had a New York State Regents' Program and if you went in the New York State Regents' Program you had to pass a series of State Regents' exams which were standardized state tests. Unfortunately, a lot of states have gotten away from that but it was a very good program at the time. So you had to achieve certain goals in order to graduate with a New York State Regents' diploma as opposed to just a high school diploma. So you had to take certain courses and that included some basic math and some basic chemistry. I remember, my senior year I'm not sure why I did it, but I took advanced algebra. It was a one semester course, Advanced Algebra I and Advanced Algebra II, if you wanted to take the second course. Or you could go into calculus. I remember that advanced algebra course, 65 was passing and I had a 65 going into the final exam. It wasn't a Regents' exam because it was only a one semester course but there were two of us. The teacher decided, I could never understand why the teacher did this but myself and another, I remember his name, John, his name was John. She calls John and me in a couple of days after the exam and she says, "One of you got a 65 and one of you got a 64. Care to guess which one?" And I said, "I probably got the 64." She said, "No, you got the 65, John, you failed." Now, why the teacher ever did that. And what did that do for somebody? But that sticks in my mind as a way a teacher shouldn't, educating students. I could never understand why. If it had been the other way around, that would have been devastating for me. And I know it was just not fair. You don't talk about how a kid's performed in front of other people. That's a lifelong lesson there.

Q: You mentioned that you had teachers, you remember the teacher's name who had you read the New York Times?

DEERING: Yeah, his name was Wheeler.

Q: Did the outside world intrude much by the time you were in high school? Outside world being beyond the bounds of Ossining.

DEERING: Yeah, I remember, probably my first real interest was what was going on in Vietnam, prior to 1964. I remember reading and thinking about the frequent change of leadership in South Vietnam. The days of Ngo Diem, the coups there and the fact that I believe he was a Catholic in a Buddhist population, kind of similar to a lot of things going on today, isn't it? That piqued my interest there. Of course, then the Gulf of Tonkin incident in the summer of 1964. And then I remember also in my senior year, fall '64-'65, we had our study halls in the auditorium, a lot of our study halls, we went to the auditorium for study halls. And I remember reading about the increasing casualties, American casualties, in Vietnam in the late fall of '64 and winter of '65 and thinking, now's a good time to go into college because at that time you were still deferred through college. We all had to register for the draft. I had no qualms about doing military service, if I had to do it. But I wanted to be able to go to college because that's what I had intended to do. And I do remember, this is interesting, the guy that I worked for, in a little Italian grocery story, I don't even think he finished high school. Again, his father came off the boat from Italy and his mother didn't even speak English. But I remember his telling me, in the mid-Sixties when I was still in high school, he said, "You know, you'll be working for the government, you'll work for the State Department." I said, "How do you know that?" "Because I know."

Q: Where did you family, your father when you grew up and the rest, where did they fall politically? What camp? Or was there a camp?

DEERING: That's an interesting question because, as I said, my grandfather ran for Congress in 1928 and lost, as a Democrat. On my mother's side of the family they were very strong Democrats, old, moderate Democrats. I remember the campaigns between Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson. My mother was very adamant about supporting Adlai Stevenson. My father also voted Democrat back then and when my relatives ran for the local village offices that they, then they ran as Democrats. Eventually, as things kind of switched around, the support kind of went the other way although like I said my mother passed away in 1967. My father ended up voting Republican. My uncles voted Republican until the recent Bush regime. I'm sorry, Bush I, they didn't like Bush I. Now, the only ones left are cousins, four cousins left. All of our parents are deceased in the last five or six years. I have never registered other than independent.

Q: Do you recall, because it seemed to engage a lot of people, the Kennedy-Nixon campaign of 1960? You would have been about 13 then.

DEERING: Yeah, I do recall that and one of the things I recall, my family being raised as Methodists, there was a lot of concern over a Catholic president. By the same token, there was a lot of concern over Nixon. I believe, as I recall but again this is 1960, now, my interest wasn't really piqued, then but as I recall my parents I think did ultimately vote for Kennedy. There were some problems there. The old religious concerns over would the Pope be president. There was concern over that.

Q: Well, you were, what, '65.

DEERING: I graduated in '65 from high school.

Q: The war in Vietnam was on but you were headed to college. Where did you, were you pointed towards anyplace, or what?

DEERING: Well, I was pointed towards probably a college in New York because New York had a very generous Regents Scholarship program. And very good schools. My mother, as a graduate of the University of Rochester, of course wanted me to go to the University of Rochester. I think I was accepted to the University of Rochester. I looked at the University of New Hampshire, which I was accepted at. I think St. Lawrence University, which I was accepted at. There were four altogether. I applied to and ultimately attended Hobart College.

Q: Now, Hobart

DEERING: Hobart and William Smith. At the time, they were coordinated colleges. Hobart College was a men's college, William Smith was a women's college. Now it's Hobart and William Smith Colleges. That was a real pivotal time, 1965. Life changed in 1965. There was that movie, The Class of '65. The book, followed by a movie, The Class of '65. That was a pivotal year. Things were different after '65. I remember coming back to my high school a year or two after being in college, coming back home to a basketball game, it just was a different feeling in the air about what life was all about. Things changed rapidly. Dress codes changed rapidly. We had a very strict dress code when I was in high school. Within couple years of when I graduated there almost was no dress code anymore. Vietnam changed our lives.

Q: This was known as the Sixties. Well, how about at Hobart? When you got there, how did Hobart seem to you? Can you describe what sort of a college it was?

DEERING: It was a small liberal arts, upstate New York, very rural area, between Rochester and Syracuse. What I found when I got there, was that about 25 to 30 per cent of the student body were from private schools on the East Coast. Different lifestyle from what I was used to, different mentality, different approach, different outlook. There was also a significant Jewish population in the colleges, more so than I had seen in high school. It was very competitive but also as we got more involved in Vietnam it became a very liberal campus and I'm not a liberal person. I was fully supportive of free speech and do what you want and say what you want. But one of the things my mother taught me was do what you want, say what you want and be what you want as long as you don't hurt anyone else in the process. What I saw on the campuses certainly opened my eyes as to what protest was all about. I'd never seen it before. I don't think any of us had really experienced it before. But it became almost a bandwagon, in a lot of ways. People jumped on that bandwagon just because it was a bandwagon. I never did.

Q: Now, let me, I think this is a time of, well, for one thing it was an awful lot of fun. Speaking as an older generation, an awful lot of fun to protest and all. Not a lot of work and a lot of fun and sticking it to your elders in a way.

DEERING: You see, I guess it was a way, it wasn't a way just to protest Vietnam, it was a way to protest everything. What was the expression, "something, drop in, drop out." What was that expression? I don't remember. The free love movement. The big issue on campus became the in loco parentis. What role did the administration have in establishing rules and regulations on the campus. That became a big issue. There was an air force ROTC contingent at Hobart and that was, they had a lot of problems. Ultimately they disbanded it. But by the same token there was never any pressure to participate in antiwar protests or any other kind of thing. I just kind of steered clear of the whole thing. I didn't participate, I didn't protest the existence of what was going on. Again, for me, it was all very eye opening for me, because I really hadn't been away from home.

Q: I might have thought that going to a school like Hobart, where as you say you had prep school students who had the advantage of much smaller classes and they were preparatory for college, much more so than high schools which had to prepare for everyone and also a significant Jewish population who, particularly in a sort of the New York area were, who had the parents' push and all, that a kid coming from a small town high school at the beginning would feel under pressure.

DEERING: Oh, there was a lot of pressure in my first semester. Of course my mother at that point in time had been diagnosed with cancer. She passed away at the end of my sophomore year but she was sick through my freshman and sophomore years. I was 350 miles away from home, might as well have been three thousand miles away from home. So there were a lot of pressures the first couple of years. But then you adapt. I had no problems. Fraternities were a big part of campus life. I was not a frat person. So, yeah, there were a lot of pressures but I enjoyed those four years.

Q: I'm told that somebody did a study one time at Harvard where kids coming from high school, kids coming from prep school. And the first two years, the kids from prep school always did better than the kids from high schools but by the senior year the kids did better than the kids from prep school.

DEERING: Well, if you look at my grade point average, that study bears that out because my junior and senior year I was getting almost straight A's. Of course, I got rid of all the courses I had to take in my freshman and sophomore years.

Q: Didn't we all! What courses interested you or did you find

DEERING: Political science. When I went I knew I was going to major in political science. That's what I wanted to do. I didn't really know what I wanted to do as far as career was concerned. I kind of thought I would end up going to work for the government somewhere, some point in time but I had a couple of professors at Hobart who developed my interest in international relations. Latin America, actually, was what I kind of honed in on my junior and senior years as far as area studies were concerned. Once I got through this Scopes and Methods of Political Science which involved statistics and all this other crap and some of the other more esoteric courses that were required as part of the major, then you get into the meat of doing your independent studies and seminars in small groups. That's where I thrived.

Q: Well, I take also, you were still in the period where political science hadn't gone crazy, before they tried to turn it into a science, a predictive tool and doing models. You were learning how things work, weren't you, more than trying to dissect it.

DEERING: Right and I think it was, a lot was done on looking at events and studying events and taking the past, as you said, it's not a science, taking the past and trying to be predictive about the future. Again, it was a small college, anyhow but by my junior and senior year I was in classes in my major with six, seven, eight people, some seminars with three or four people. Which meant you had a lot of one on one work with professors, particularly Professor Tom Millington who was a Latin American specialist, international law also and I took several courses with him, did independent studies, seminars.

Q: Did you run across anything about the Foreign Service, State Department or anything else?

DEERING: Not really in undergraduate school. Again, by that time, hot on everybody's tail was what's going to happen when you graduate. Are you going to go to, are you going to have to go into the army, are you going to run off to Canada, are you going to hope that the war is over? I think that was all part of the culture that was developing in the mid-Sixties and late Sixties was how do you avoid, if you don't want to go into the army, have do you avoid it? Or if you don't want to go into the military, how are you going to avoid it? Or if you don't want to go to Vietnam, how are you going to avoid it even if you have to go into the military? While I was not, I had mixed feelings about what we were doing and how we were doing it in Vietnam, I also at the time believed that it was there and we have to support the troops that are there. That was lost, that was lost on my generation in the Sixties. And I recall the GI's coming home and getting stuff thrown at them. It wasn't their fault that they were there. And I never understood that. Happy to see that even now with the dissent over our being in Iraq with the GI's not the target of scorn.

Q: It was a difficult time. Talk about, you were there during the drop in, drop out, free love and all that, this big thing and all, here you are, stuck in the middle of New York state in an all-male school.

DEERING: There was a women's college, William Smith. We did road trips to Elmira College, I had a girlfriend in Elmira College. We were doing road trips back then. Elmira College was a women's college, then. Cayuga College was a women's college. Syracuse University was close by. So I mean there was no lack of social, it was just cold, getting' there. I didn't have a car. I had a car, I guess, I had a car in my junior year for the first time that I ever had a car. So you got around. It was safe to hitchhike in upstate New York then. I got back and forth to college on the train because my dad worked for the railroad, so I got railroad passes. That's how I went back and forth to college and then on a bus from Syracuse or Rochester to Geneva. So it was a journey. It was a real journey at vacation time.

Q: Well, what about the drug culture?

DEERING: I have been adamantly opposed to the use of illegal drugs. I never tried, never used them, experimented with them. People find that hard to believe because of the generation that I was in and they tell me I'm full of you know what for even suggesting that I never experimented. I didn't. I was opposed to it. I remember my brother in the mid-Sixties, he was five years younger than me, when he was in high school it became a real problem, marijuana and he got involved. Not to the point of run-ins with the law but to the point where when I found out I had some heavy, hard discussions on that and that only made it more of an anathema to me. I didn't understand the drug culture. I never found that I needed anything to get high on. Even when you were down in the dumps, whatever reasons or rationales are used, I don't understand it. I've avoided it. I think it's an educational issue but, yeah, the drug culture was something I didn't want to. I had friends, oh, absolutely, friends, sure, many friends who were using drugs. There was one, how life turns around. One of the individuals who I know was involved in the sale of drugs on campus in fact became a prosecuting attorney in a major city in the United States. Not just a prosecutor but the district attorney. It was a phase. One of my college roommates for a while was involved with that group.

Q: When you were there, was Woodstock the big thing?

DEERING: I worked at a summer camp 15 miles from Woodstock the summer of 1969. Woodstock was '69, in upstate New York there on a farm. And the camp I worked at was in Pennsylvania, just on the other side of the Delaware River, near Honesdale, Pennsylvania. I remember, this was a very rural area but the spillover from Woodstock, even into the countryside there. And I was working, I couldn't get off to go. A lot of the camp counselors went to Woodstock. I had to work that day or that night. But I remember, my day off was a couple of days later but I remember driving through that little town there, where Woodstock was. The garbage was piled up on the sides of the street, of the main street that went through this town, Route 17. It looked like snowbanks in the wintertime only you couldn't see over the top. They just piled the garbage up on the sides of the street. And I remember stories from the counselors who went and came back. Again, that was an event that was so typical of the time.

Q: Sort of seminal for many people. You graduated in '69? And then what happened?

DEERING: Well, while I was in my senior year of course it came time then to decide what I was going to do. My family assumed I would go on to law school and then just fit right into that family practice in Ossining. I guess that's probably the only thing I ever rebelled against. Although I applied to several law schools and was accepted at a couple of them, the draft was hot on my tail. I wasn't sure I wanted to go to law school. So I got a letter in the mail from the University of Virginia, saying, hey, you're a senior, we can offer you some financial assistance if you want to go to graduate school here. So I went to graduate school at the University of Virginia, in the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs.

Q: So you were there from ... ?

DEERING: '69 to '71. I was there when the staid, conservative University of Virginia campus went crazy after a Janis Joplin concert. The state police came and occupied the campus. The students occupied the president's residence. They captured a pizza guy delivering pizzas to the president's residence. It was just unbelievable. It was after Kent State. Janis Joplin came to give a concert on campus and just everybody stood up. That was such a shock I think to the people of Virginia and not being a Virginian some of it was lost on me but here the old, conservative UVA, right in the middle of it was the antiwar movement, post Kent State. That was the spring of 1970, I believe. And University of Virginia, I think '69, that was the first year that it went, the first coed class in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Q: How'd you find, I realize you were in the graduate school, but still, the University of Virginia is a world unto itself. It's both Southern and all, how did you find it there?

DEERING: Actually, of course you know, with four years under your belt, it was different from going from high school to college. I had no problems at all. I was in a master's program, took two years to get my master's degree. Did all my courses the first year and then audited some courses, wrote my thesis, took my orals my second year. Again, established a small group of friends and we did things together. Lived actually in a graduate dorm the first year and then lived in a little apartment with a law student the second year. Probably much more relaxed than undergraduate school, simply because now you're gearing totally towards a specific area of study with a goal in mind. You're driven by that. It's not you've got to take this. There were a few courses I had to take. I worked for a couple of professors as a graduate assistant and Virginia gave me some money for that.

But it was kind of a relaxed two years, only disturbed by the only lottery that I ever won, or lost, and that was the original, the first draft. Remember when they decided? Well, my number was 156, which put me in a spot where you were going to get drafted. And I did, I got my draft notice, in September of 1970. So, I had a choice. Had to go cut a deal. Either ignore it, which was not part of me. I had already gone before my draft board, actually in New York. My father was a veteran. My brother had been killed in a car accident. I went to the draft board and said, "Do I qualify as a sole surviving son of a veteran?" Didn't, no qualification. I didn't have any strings to pull so I just went, "Whatever happens." So I went to a local army recruiter there in Charlottesville and said, "Got my draft notice here. What kind of deal can you cut for me here?" So, they cut a deal. "We'll let you finish graduate school. Too late to get into the officers candidate program in graduate school. So we'll let you do whatever you want in the army. You come and join the army, we'll let you pick your own skill, pretty much do what you want." So that's why after graduate school I ended up going into the army.

Graduate school: again, I developed an interest in what's going on in Latin America. So my program of studies was heavily Latin American politics, international relations courses, American foreign policy courses. And Foreign Service was a possibility. But I took the Foreign Service exam at the University of Virginia, at the end of my first year in graduate school there and I think then, as I recall, they broke it down into points, half points, even. And I think you needed a 65 and I got 64 or 64 and a half. So I didn't pass the first time. I found the exam to be extremely tilted towards the fine arts, which I really didn't have any background in. It was an elitist exam at the time, it really was. So I said, "Well, I'll come back and try it again later on." But like I say, military service came on instead. But that's where I decided, pretty much, I'm going to be doing something for the government. You took, at the end of the yeathe admissions office and the career office, what there was of a career officthey started giving you these standardized tests to take to see where your skills are. The skills and not the Minnesota, I guess it was the Minnesota test, I think, I don't remember. It came out "you'd be good in sales," whatever. I said, "No, I wouldn't be good in sales because I don't like to sell people things." So I was a member of the International Students Association at the University of Virginia and I got involved in community activities. I coached some youth basketball teams. I worked one summer down there as a lifeguard. So it was a good experience. I liked the University of Virginia. When I went there they still had a dress code, made you wear coat and tie. That was done away with while I was there. And the honor code was a very important part of the University of Virginia.

Q: I had an honor code at my school. It works quite well, I thought.

DEERING: Yeah, it did, it worked well but again, Virginia was just a couple years behind the schools in New York as far as change was concerned. And when it hit, it hit fast. They didn't know how to deal with the issues that came after Kent State, there.

Q: Was segregation or diversity or whatever you want to call it a problem when you were there? Were they dealing with it?

DEERING: Well, as I said, it was the first year that the campus had become coed. I think the University of Virginia in the Sixties was still a white man's school. And I think was part of their effort, even back then, when they went out and started. Like I say, I got a letter. I never contacted the University of Virginia. I got this letter from the University of Virginia at Hobart College saying you're on the Deans List, dah da dah, dah da dah. So obviously there was an effort to reach out, to diversify their population, at least to bring people in from other parts of the country. But yeah, I don't remember a lot of diversity on campus, other than the International Students Association.

Q: I remember, I applied to two schools when I graduated from high school. One was the University of Virginia. I lived in Annapolis, Maryland and I was turned down because I was not from Virginia. And the other was Williams College, which accepted me. How'd you find the courses there? Wilson School has quite good faculty.

DEERING: Well, at that time of course Enos Blood was one of the professors there. I didn't get to take any courses from him. Interestingly enough, one of the professors I had was Bill Bacchus, who worked at the State Department for a while. He was my first reader on my thesis.

Q: I did an oral history with him a long time ago. Very much an expert on personnel policies.

DEERING: And he was one of my professors. He was first reader on my thesis. And then Dave Jordan, Ambassador Jordan, was the chairman of the department. Also a University of Virginia Law School graduate. He was second reader on my thesis and he defended my thesis before the committee that I had to go and do my orals with. And of course then, in the mid-Eighties, he was our ambassador, appointed by Reagan as ambassador to Peru. His wife was Argentine. Yeah, I had a good relationship there with the professors. They interested me in Latin America. One of the other things I didn't mention. I found most of professors that I studied Latin America with at Hobart College, we arranged a seminar in fall of my senior year, which was the fall of 1968, we did a seminar on the military coup in Peru in '68. We brought the deposed president, Fernando Belaunde Terry, to Hobart College on the guest speaker program. Interestingly enough, we ended up bringing him to the University of Virginia two years later as a guest speaker with Dr. Jordan. So I did pursue what I wanted to do.

Q: Were you taking Spanish?

DEERING: I took, let's see, four years of Latin in high school, two years of Spanish. Then I took two semesters of Spanish in college. But I didn't have any other Spanish until I came to the State Department. There was another character that I had there. Vladimir , he was one of my professors at the University of Virginia. He was a, can't remember what it was. He was Czech, I think. From the old royal family, used to be a royal family in Czechoslovakia? One of the Slovakian areas. He was old royalty. He acted like he was royal. He was a character. He was absolutely an absent minded professor. And I worked for him for a semester and he was absent minded. He couldn't remember what was going on from day to day. He also was the professor in the department that was responsible for ensuring that your language requirement was met. So working for him had some advantage. And he waived my language requirement, based on the Spanish that I took in college. There were advantages, even back then.

Q: Well, then in '71 you got your master's. And the army was waiting for you. What'd you do?

DEERING: I went to intelligence school out at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, after basic training. Hated basic training but by then, I went in October of '71. It was apparent the Vietnam War was winding down and basic training was not the hard headed thing. The biggest problem was , I remember fall of '71 was when they gave the military its first big raise at the boot level because it was apparent that they were going away from the draft and going to become a volunteer army again. I remember the drill sergeant who was a staff sergeant, a black staff sergeant, Vietnam veteran multiple times, the day that they announced this big pay raise, in '71, three o'clock in the morning, he came through the barracks drunk as a skunk. Pounding, yelling and screaming, "You guys don't deserve this, dah da dah." The Old Army, that was the Old Army at its finest. Had another drill sergeant there who was, he was much more down to earth. I remember he, went off with him on a couple excursions on weekends, do some errands with him and he was an old Southern boy. But he had his stuff together, he knew what was going on in the real world. Kind of an interesting character. I went from there out to Fort Campbell, Kentucky for basic training. That was a pretty demeaning experience but I knew it was going to be. That's what it's supposed to be, to create a level playing field for everybody there. And I had everybody in my company from high school dropouts to jail or the army, college graduates, graduate students to lawyers all thrown together in that group there.

I went to intelligence school out at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, army counterintelligence. Got to point where it was time for assignment and one of the faculty at the army intelligence school was a marine captain who was on the faculty. And then there was a female lieutenant colonel who was like the director of the studies, counterintelligence studies, whatever. And it came time for assignments. And I get a call from this lieutenant colonel. She said, "You're, we're keeping you here on the staff, to teach." "I don't want to stay out in Arizona." Fort Huachuca, Arizona, Sierra Vista.

Q: I've been there. You can go to Dodge City and that's about it.

DEERING: So I really didn't want to do that. Meanwhile, this Marine captain had already contacted me, said, "We've got a job for you. I got somebody in Washington wants you. It's called the Counterintelligence Analysis Detachment, part of the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence in Washington. Civilian clothes, you'll be doing analytical work." I said, "Sounds good, that's what I want! However, I got this lieutenant colonel telling me I've got to stay here." "Don't worry about her. I'll take care of that." And he did. Signed me up, back here in Washington, spring of '72, May of '72, in this outfit which was very unique outfit. It was comprised of enlisted, officers and civilians, all doing the same thing, analytical counterintelligence work. Of course since my background was Latin America, I ended up being the desk officer first of all for South Korea. That made all the sense in the world. Then I ended up being an expert on Nepal. The colonel, the commanding officer of the unit, full colonel, it happened that he'd been defense attachï¿½ in Nepal. So he would be in at my desk every day. "What's going on with the king's family? You have to keep me informed of what's going on there! I served there for three years." Then I ended up finally on the Middle East desk, tracking Yasser Arafat for the army, keeping track of Yasser's whereabouts when Yasser was a bad guy the first time around. That's where I ended up, doing some studies on intelligence and security services in Morocco and Tunisia and tracking Mr. Arafat for the army. Also worked on the army's prisoner of war program, back here in Arlington Hall Station. Tracking sightings of our prisoners and Operation Homecoming.

Q: You say Operation Homecoming. What was this?

DEERING: Operation Homecoming was the army's effort

Q: Oh, speaking of prisoners of war, you're speaking about our people.

DEERING: Tracking our people in the early Seventies. It was apparent that things were winding down. There was a huge effort to collate all the sighting information and put it into a data base. This was, remember, some 31 years ago. It was so when the release did come about, we would be able to determine whether or not everyone was released, comparing sightings. They even go on today. We played an integral role in that period building up to the release. They took people from all units in Washington. It was right here. I remember working, I don't know what building it was in, I think it was where the gym is, working out there on this project for six weeks in the winter of '73, before the release.

Q: We're talking right now in the interview, for the record, that is taking place on the campus of National Foreign Affairs Training Center, which was Arlington Hall, which was the big intelligence, essentially army decoding, Defense Intelligence Agency here, was a top secret place in those days.

DEERING: So, again, three years in Washington in the military in a job that was quite interesting. That was contact for me. I in fact applied for and received a commission in the reserves while I was on active duty as an enlisted. Stayed in the reserves for a number of years after I got out of the army.

Q: Well, had you established a significant other at this point or not?

DEERING: Let me see, this was when, 1972 to '74. No, no significant other. Just a crazy scene in Washington. No, I had established no significant other at this point in time. One of the reasons being, I think, was that I didn't know. I had no intention of staying on active duty past my three year commitment. I did intend to stay in the reserves but I that come October of 1974 I was going to be looking for a real job. I worked part time for a friend of mine who had gotten out of the army, an army captain. He opened a couple of retail stores in the Washington area. I worked for him on weekends and after my army duty the whole time I was here. Of course, I remember back then my income as an E-4 when I came to Washington I was a corporal and my income was less than $5000 a year. They gave you $120 a month for rent and food and then required basically that you live with three other guys in the army so they knew who you were staying with for clearances and everything else until you got settled in. Back then Washington was an expensive city, as it is now. Everything's relative, but I remember my total income was less than $500 a month. As I said, Washington was a good city for things to do and there was never a lack of something to do in spare time here.

Q: Where were we getting information on Arafat?

DEERING: I don't recall, intelligence reports.

Q: I was just wondering whether the Israelis were giving us this.

DEERING: Without getting into any details, it was from looking at all source intelligence reporting. Just kind of keeping an eye what he was doing, where he was going, what he was up to. Black September had evolved as a result of the events of September 1970 when he had to move out of Jordan, up into Lebanon and his Black September organization was, '72 Munich Olympics. So he was a bad guy. Kick rather than a handshake on the White House lawn. History repeats itself, right?

Q: So, '73 you're out?

DEERING: '74 I'm out.

Q: '74. And what was in the offing then?

DEERING: In the offing then was one of the army civilians who was one of the supervisors in the office I worked in in the army, he had been in the army intelligence program for years and years, he said, "I got somebody I want you to talk to." I said, "Okay." He said, "It might be something you're interested in when you leave here." In the meantime also one of the branch chiefs in the office was trying to convince me to stay in another year as an officer, as an army reserve officer. I'm not going there. There's no future with that because they were RIFing, major Reductions in Force. The military screwed a lot of guys with 16, 17 years' service. They RIFed them out and didn't have to pay them retirement as a result. It's just not, the way they treated a lot of these good officers was just not fair. So anyhow I didn't want any part of extending on active duty in the military at that point in time. I was willing to stay in the reserves like I say which I did. He says, "It's an organization that you might be interested in working for. It's part of the naval intelligence community but not really." So I went through this, I went through a process of interviewing for a position. I had also had an interest with the CIA and went through the entire process for their career training program but ultimately my timing was off a little. I started a little bit too soon and they wanted me for a very particular thing at a particular time, and what it boiled down to having to have me out of the military early, which ultimately the CIA did not want to do because it would create a paper trail for what I would be doing. So that went by the wayside.

But this other organization recruited me and I went to work for them. The organization is, or was, Task Force 157 which was a naval intelligence operation that came into existence in the 1960's and it was a program that was developed to give the navy a human intelligence capability. I went to work for this organization, which didn't exist on paper. It was a proprietary setup with a bunch of cutout companies. I ended up in Panama, working for them, in 1975, I got there in the spring of '75. In the summer of 1976 Admiral Bobby Inman, who was at the time the director of naval intelligence, abolished the organization. It was result of a number of concerns. If you remember the mid-1970's the entire U.S. intelligence community was under fire: Vietnam War failures, the Pentagon Papers, lot of things going on. The hatchet was out and this organization was axed. Bobby Inman believed that the navy did not have a need for a human intelligence program, that the machines could do the job. So this small organization, that had about 75 civilian employees at the time of its demise, was abolished. The mission was abolished.

Q: How long were you in Panama?

DEERING: I was in Panama May of '75 through December of '76.

Q: What was the situation like in Panama at that time?

DEERING: Well, talk about the experiment in socialism. The ultimate socialistic society was the Panama Canal Zone, where everything was provided by the government. Fifty thousand Americans at the time there, working, getting paid and housing and getting everything done by the government with six weeks every other year in the States on leave, if you worked for the Panama Canal Company. I met my first wife in Panama. She was a Panama Canal brat. Her dad worked for the Panama Canal Company and I met her, job that I had there. Life was good in Panama, I have to say. I had a very interesting job. I was out doing things on the Canal. Twenty four hours a day I was on call to do these things, which gave me a lot of time, when I wasn't working, to get involved in activities in the Zone. I coached youth football, baseball. I'd participate in a lot of navy sports teams there. As I say I met my wife there, her family and it was a good two years, it was a good two year tour. Unfortunately I remember I'd gotten sick of July '76. I mean I was sick, I'd got one of the tropical bugs and I'm lying in bed and my wife, Jackie, says, "John's here." John was a marine officer who worked with me down there on this project and he comes in and he's got a bundle of documents with him. "Got something to read here. Top Secret." It was the announcement of the demise of the organization. I said, "Thanks, John. That's what I need right now!" During the time I was there then, this was announced in the summer of '76 that the organization would be abolished. They tried to take care of people, the civilians who were affiliated with the organization. They gave us a trip back to the States to get things in order, helped out with job hunts and things like that and generally then they gave us some money when we left. Hush money, I guess you could call it. Just like anybody else, you didn't get a parachute when you leave because on paper you didn't work for the navy.

Q: Well did you get any feel, while you were there, for the Panamanians versus the Zonians or were you pretty well in the Zonian

DEERING: No, a lot of the workers were Panamanians that were working for the Panama Canal Company. Interestingly enough, like I said, I helped coach youth football down there, which was huge, huge. They played really good football there and Panama had a couple of teams that were in the youth football league. There were some, you had the Panamanians playing the Canal Zone teams, yeah, there was some competition there. Of course it was the wealthy Panamanian kids who were playing American football. There were six or seven teams in the league, including teams from Panama and from the military bases also. So it was healthy competition. It was a discriminatory situation. The Panamanian workers were perceived much like our foreign service national employees are or have been in the past. The perception is among themselves that they are a lower class of employees. They got paid at local labor rates versus the U.S. labor rates. And then of course there was the dissention that was developing because it was clear that Jimmy Carter was going to negotiate a new Panama Canal Treaty and that was not popular in the Panama Canal Zone, as you can well imagine and still isn't among those who remain, former employees. There are still some down there. Yeah, I was not one to confine myself to the military bases or to the community because my job was to get out and find out what was going on. So I never perceived things along the same lines as. There were class distinctions, no doubt about it but I tried to avoid the class distinctions because if you're working and you're dealing with people and you need people's help to accomplish what it is that you're set out to do you have to treat them as people, first. Yeah, there were class distinctions but I had friends in the community there that were not part of the hierarchy. Of course people didn't know who I really was.

Q: Did you have a job, a cover of some sort?

DEERING: Yeah, I was working for the navy oceanographic office. The navy oceanographic office, well, it does oceanographic studies, report on weather conditions and stuff like that. But the Panama Canal Company employees that I had to work with, they knew who I was and they knew what I did. The whole organization, Task Force 157, was very a secretive organization. There were several articles written. Bob Woodward wrote a series of articles on Task Force 157 in 1977 on how it was a very successful, low cost operation that probably should not have been abolished but because of the times it was. Plus the fact that a couple of gentlemen had had a loose affiliation with the organization as contractors that their affiliation was built up to be much more than what it was, one of whom is a fugitive now in Libya, Frank Terpil and the other one, who served time in the federal system, Ed Wilson. Wilson and Terpil. Ed Wilson tried to convince Bobby Inman as a contractor that he needed to establish a dirty tricks organization that would parallel Task Force 157 in the black area. Bobby Inman said, "Who the hell is this guy? I'm getting' rid of this organization."

Q: So, we're talking about '76 or so and you're back in Washington. What are you up to?

DEERING: No, I wasn't back in Washington. My wife and I moved back up to New York where my parents were. My father had remarried. They were down in Florida for the winter, part of the winter and we stayed in their house for a while. I ultimately, through contacts, got a job at Aberdeen Proving Grounds at the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command, working as a foreign intelligence officer which was part of the Test and Evaluation Command hierarchy, looking at foreign weapons systems. It was horrible. It was boring. I was stuck behind a desk with the exception of going to the Proving Grounds and riding around on Russian equipment occasionally.

Q: Where were they getting their Russian equipment?

DEERING: Oh, this was stuff that had been acquired over the years from various locations with the help of various countries and it was the exploitation program where you reverse engineer. The Russians were excellent at it. They were excellent at reverse engineering our products, especially in the Thirties and Forties. They stole General Motors patents and built their own equipment based on existing patents. But they were good at it and they're smart at it. They evolve their military equipment. They don't drop a weapon system and go on to something completely new. Of course, they weren't as smart as they thought they were.

Q: Okay, you were bored in Aberdeen. And then what happened?

DEERING: While I was still in Panama working for the navy and after the fact that I found that I would not be working for the navy much longer I had seen an advertisement, I don't remember where, for State Department, for the Office of Security. Sounded interesting, overseas work still, security, intelligence type related work. I didn't know much about it. So I put an application in and I had gotten an interview in, I think it was January or February of '77 I got a call. No, actually, it was in late '76 still, it was October '76 when they sent me back up to Washington on one of these trips to look around. I think I got called then. I don't remember, I think it was October or December of '76 or early '77, I went for an interview in New York at the New York Field Office and I was paneled for an SY, Office of Security position. I passed the panel and they initiated the background investigation. Never heard anything else, never heard. Then it was a week or two weeks before Memorial Day in 1978 I got a phone call from SY, from Admin. "Hi, this is Claire Alexander and we're prepared to make you an offer of employment." I said, "When?" "Two weeks." "Two weeks, with Memorial Day weekend in between, right?" "Yeah, two weeks." "Well, I'm in Aberdeen Proving Grounds, I assume you'll find me a Washington job." "No. The offer is for the Los Angeles Field Office." I went back and talked to my wife about it. She had no objections to this new plan here because she was pretty bored in Aberdeen, Maryland, also, Havre de Grace, Maryland. "All right, let's do it!" So in the meantime, we became pregnant and so then I handed in my two weeks', basically two weeks, notice, with the blessing of the guy I was working for. I said, "It's just time to move on here." Took a pay cut and went to Los Angeles. Went through the training course here and you know where our physical training course was? The gymnasium, Arlington Hall Station. That's where we came for physical training. Our training was conducted in one of the old buildings where SY used to be, had some offices down in Rosslyn. SA, what was it, SA, can't remember now. But we came out to Arlington Hall Station to do our physical training and our defensive tactics training. So Arlington Hall is a linchpin here through everything!

Q: Let's talk a bit about your training when you came in in 1978.

DEERING: I started right after Memorial Day in 1978. I had about a week to get myself in order and report down to Washington. Our training basically at that time was done right in Rosslyn there. I don't remember what the building number was. We had an Education and Training Staff. We had training in Rosslyn. We spent I think a couple of weeks, I don't remember how long, down at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia for some basic driver training and some other training down there. Then we came back and continued our training up in Washington. The training lasted about 12 weeks all together I think at that time, finished up the end of August and headed out to Los Angeles. The training program was interesting. There was 17 in our class at that time. It was a very diverse class. We had four women out of 17 and like I say that was the old SY in 1978. It was a good training program. Varied backgrounds of the folks there, everything from former law enforcement, former military, we had a couple of schoolteachers I think, some from the private sector. So it interesting. Again, what goes around comes around, part of our training, our physical training, was conducted right here at Arlington Hall Station in the old gymnasium over there.

Q: Interviewing right here on Arlington Hall Station.

DEERING: We finished up the training. I think I graduated number one in the class and my reward was assignment to Los Angeles, which I already knew ahead of time.

Q: Did you pick up any feeling for the relationship of the SY function in the State Department because they are, so many of the Foreign Service people are oriented to political reporting, economic reporting and all that. SY, the security function, is off to, is on a different side, you're looking at different aspects and they don't always blend well together. How did you, I want to say essentially, were you picking up prejudices or outlooks or anything while you were going through this training?

DEERING: I don't think I was picking up any prejudices during the training. We were concentrating on getting through the training and then moving on. It wasn't the bias, it's the Foreign Service and its SY that I felt later on as time went on initially, in my initial assignments. No, I didn't feel it at all. Part of the pitch that I got was you're part of the Foreign Service. You're a foreign service reserve officer. You're part of the Foreign Service. You're in the foreign service retirement program. You're going to go overseas. So that was all part of the plan. The training, there was some familiarization training with the Foreign Service, as I recall. I remember someone from AFSA coming over and talking to us. I joined AFSA, was a member of AFSA from day one. American Foreign Service Association and I was a member from day one. So, no, I was looking forward, having served overseas with another agency, to continuing the overseas thing. So, no, I didn't feel the prejudices there. It wasn't, there was nothing, it was too soon to understand the relationships between SY, the old SY and the Foreign Service. No, I didn't get that sense at all during the training.

Q: Was there, did you feel there was a divide between those in SY who basically stayed in the States and those who went abroad? Was there a division or was it pretty much a stateside assignment that was part of a normal routine?

DEERING: Back then, in 1978, I think there were only between 300 and 350 SY officers. When I reported out to Los Angeles the agent in charge and the assistant agent in charge of the field office, they had both been Foreign Service but went GS and had gone back and forth a couple of times. At that point in time there was something that allowed people to do that. So our bosses out there were out of the Foreign Service system and they were actually GS employees. So they were not going overseas again.

Q: You were in Los Angeles from when to when?

DEERING: I was in Los Angeles from late August, early September, I don't remember exactly when we got there, right around Labor Day, of 1978. I left in May of 1981.

Q: Okay, what were you doing in Los Angeles?

DEERING: Our job in Los Angeles, there was three things we were doing. Two things primarily, background investigations and dignitary protection, either visiting dignitaries or supporting the Secretary of State travel. We also did some criminal investigations. At that time in SY the criminal investigative program was just starting to build. We had no authority to carry weapons. We had, when I first got out there, we had no vehicles to conduct our investigations in. I was driving around Los Angeles in my own vehicle, claiming mileage, doing both background investigations and criminal investigations. While I was out there we finally got some vehicles assigned to us, which made life a little bit better but we still had limited authority. The only authority we had to carry a weapon was when we were conducting protective security operations. I remember being in some really nasty neighborhoods in Los Angeles, doing investigations by myself and I think back and say, "What was I doing? What was I thinking?" At that time our authority was very limited.

Q: Let's talk about, first we'll talk about investigations, background investigations. First place, I've often wondered, you find yourself tripping over, because in my time, so many of us, I had been in the Air Force Security Service, had top secret stuff and then I had a year in college but I got another whole investigation. I've often kind of wondered, there must be an awful lot of duplication there of different.

DEERING: Of course our, the only people we do investigations on, background investigations, were updates on current State Department employees and full field investigations on new employees coming in. So no, I didn't get that sense. I always felt that there was a certain amount of redundancy built into the system. When I came into SY I had a top secret clearance from previous employment yet they had to go and do the investigation, update it. The process is a lot cleaner now. But that was across the board. You had every agency doing their own background investigations and the agents were out doing the majority of the work and it was a slow process, no doubt about that.

Q: Well tell me about, first, the initial background investigation. What were you finding and what were sort of the disqualifiers that you would find?

DEERING: Well, I, personally, found no disqualifiers. I just reported what I found and then that went back to Washington where evaluations...

Q: You must have been picking up things which...

DEERING: Back then, drug use was still, experimentation with narcotics still was not allowed, basically.

Q: But what would you do?

DEERING: If a person, when we did the personal interview part of an interview on a new employee you told him, look, don't lie because if you lie when you come to these questions it's going to catch you in the end. There was a question that I always asked them, "Are there any incidents in your life that public disclosure of which would cause you or your family or your government any harm or embarrassment?" Kind of a catch-all but it covered a lot of area. And then, "Did you ever use, experiment or traffic in illegal narcotics, other than those prescribed by a doctor?" Kind of covers it. And then whatever they answered that's what I reported. I didn't make any promises. I didn't tell them this is good or bad. It's just, "Thank you very much."

Q: Particularly college kids, in that era, were puffing on marijuana. Did you get any feedback? Was this a big deal or not?

DEERING: It was a big deal still in the early and mid-Seventies. I think as time went on it became, experimentation once or twice was not a negative thing. What became the linchpin was trafficking for other than personal use or constant use or being in an intoxicated state half the time. But I think you're right. Most people in the Sixties experimented with mind enhancing drugs. I never did and no one believed me.

Q: I belonged to a different era but it may have been offered.

DEERING: Oh, God, it was so available in college and graduate school but I just never. So it was, I think as time went on it became, explain, and that's what was reported then. Same thing with alcohol. If a person said he'd never been intoxicated in public and you go and do a records check and he's got three convictions for driving under the influence, well you got a little problem there. And what would happen then, often, we'd report the results back, we'd get something back from Evaluations and say, "Hey, this person has three convictions in another jurisdiction for driving under the influence and he told you in a personal interview he doesn't drink alcohol." You go back to him and give him a another chance to explain what's going on here. We were generally told to go back because there's derogatory information. When derogatory information is developed you generally have to go to the person and say, "Okay." Or unless if the person says he doesn't drink and he's got three or four DUIs (driving under the influence), hey, time out here, is it worth pursuing this guy? There are other, better candidates, better qualified applicants. A lot of our time was spent doing background investigations because it wasn't a contractor program yet. And a good percentage of our time was spent doing protective security operations.

Q: Well, on the background investigations, why would you be down in a rough neighborhood?

DEERING: Neighborhood check.

Q: I would think, most of the people would come out of moderately middle class or so there.

DEERING: Yeah, but neighborhoods, number one if they lived there you had to do a neighborhood check or if they listed a reference that lived in an area that wasn't so nice you had to go there and do it.

Q: How forthcoming did you find people who you'd contact for an interview?

DEERING: Generally, you show a badge and people, the reaction would either be oh, come in or I don't know the guy. I remember out in Los Angeles, I went to a house, I was doing a neighborhood check or actually it was not a neighborhood check, it was a, I think it was a listed reference. I went to the door of the house at the address I was given and I knocked on the door. There was a door and then a screen door or whatever. And this lady peers out, looks at me, so I hold up my badge to show her who I am. She looks at the badge, looks at me and she says, "I never seen the guy before." There are some funny stories to tell, but generally people, they're forthcoming. They want to help. Of course, within two minutes the person who's under, he gets a phone call. "The FBI was here!" It was the FBI. No matter who you were, it was the FBI. "The FBI was here asking questions about you." I remember when I was being updated. "The FBI was there asking questions about you for employment." I didn't have an application with the FBI. It wasn't the FBI. It's automatically, still, to some extent, everything's the FBI.

Q: Were you ever finding people who had questionable contacts, other than sort of personal ones, but with subversive elements?

DEERING: Very rarely. I can't recall any instances of individuals that I had for doing background investigations. Remember, the only time I ever did background investigations was that tour in Los Angeles. But, no, I don't recall anything related to counterintelligence or terrorism. At that time terrorism was still bubbling. But, no, I really didn't have anything along those lines.

Q: I was wondering, you still must have been picking up some people who were involved in, well, time is moving on, getting away from the Vietnam thing and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and all that who were often the campus agitators and all that. Were you getting, were you picking

DEERING: No, not really, no.

Q: That group had probably passed beyond. When I was giving the oral examination in the mid-Seventies and we were still getting guys who said, "Yes, I was with the SDS."

DEERING: SDS and the Weathermen.

Q: It wasn't Weathermen. This is in the more benevolent side of the thing.

DEERING: No, I really didn't come across much of that. What I did come across fairly often, which to me was unsettling, is in several cases where you have to go and review financial records, a lot of people, not a lot but some people, in order to get out from under their college loans, if they didn't get a job for a while after they got out of college, they would declare personal bankruptcy. Because at that time you declared personal bankruptcy, all of your debts were wiped out, including college loans. I had a problem with that and I still have a problem with that. But that was something that came up more than once, in my review of credit recordand we do a credit check. If there's negative information, you get told to go. The credit checks were done by record checks and then you get a lead back from Washington, "Go look at the bankruptcy records in such and such a place." And, inevitably it was large student loans, large at that time, to get out from under student loans. And then when you interview them, "Well, yeah, okay, I did that." It's an issue as far as I'm concerned but it really wasn't.

Q: You run across many people with criminal records or not?

DEERING: No.

Q: It just wouldn't strike me as somebody, probably self-selection

DEERING: A couple of DUIs, speeding violations, no, nothing. One or two shoplifting when a kid or something like that, doing stupid things. But nothing really, I don't think we hired any criminals on my watch, any hardcore criminals.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the protection side. What did this involve and any incidents?

DEERING: Sure, I remember my first. I came to LA in September. Spent about the first three weeks out doing background investigations. Then we had every year the UN General Assembly convenes in New York. And we consistently have had a large protective security presence for that. So that was my first, my first detail was, I had to go to Minneapolis to meet the detail on, the Japanese foreign minister was coming in to Minneapolis for something. So my first detail actually, flew to Minneapolis, joined up with the detail there, then to New York for the UN, as I recall. And I was gone like from four to six weeks and my wife at the time was pregnant. Didn't know anybody in LA, just gotten out there, very difficult time. There wasn't much sympathy for such things. But I was gone four to six weeks that first time. Which was not good, but what do you do. I said, "Look, my wife's pregnant, we just got out there." "We'll try and get you back soon." Well, soon was like a date, four to six weeks. Went from New York with the detail to somewhere else after the UN was over. The hours were extremely long. I remember working in a 40 hour work week working 90 hours sometimes, just because we were running portal to portal details. We'd have to be at work at seven or eight in the morning. The guy would stay out until three in the morning and there wasn't a midnight shift. It was just eight agents assigned to this guy in his waking hours. It was difficult. It was a difficult time.

We had some very difficult times in Los Angeles also. I was assigned on a long term basis, we rotated, we had four agents, starting in 1978, probably early '78, before I got to Los Angeles, assigned protective responsibilities for the sister and the mother of the Shah of Iran, who were living in Beverly Hills. So we rotated agents from Los Angeles and San Francisco on this detail where we just basically babysat them at the house. Went out with them when they went out. And in late 1978 of course things were going downhill real, well '77, mid-Seventies things were going downhill rapidly in Iran. There was a large, as you may recall, a large Iranian student presence. They were students but they were also working in the restaurants, a lot of taxi drivers. And they had very vocal anti-Shah demonstrations across the country. In late '78, December of '78, the Iranian Student Association had their annual convention at Cal State Northridge, about 20-25 miles up the road from Beverly Hills, not even that.

And we had some information, I was assigned to the detail at the time at the residence and we had some information they were up to no good. There was some plotting going on. They wanted to demonstrate. There had been violent demonstrations in Los Angeles and Beverly Hills because of the presence of the family there. A lot of confrontations with the police, not only there but in Washington and New York, across the country. But we had some information that they were up to no good, they may want to demonstrate outside the residence. Well, they did. They got two thousand demonstrators together and marched from downtown Beverly Hills to the street where the Shah's residence was, sat on a hill. We had our four agents there along with some Los Angeles Police Department intelligence officers, Sheriff's Department intelligence officers, who were getting this information because they infiltrated the Students Association. And this was on January 2, 1979. The Shah's residence was in Beverly Hills, California. The back line of the property, the hill behind the residence, was the borderline between the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles. So you three jurisdictions here that had some responsibilities. You had the LA Sheriff's Office, you had the Beverly Hills Police Department, you had the Los Angeles Police Department and ultimately the California Highway Patrol and we were there with four agents.

The demonstration, peaceful march, turned violent quickly. Ultimately it was determined that the night before they had sent people there and then had hidden Molotov cocktails in the bushes around the residence. They decided to try and breach the compound. They broke through a gate. They set two of our vehicles on fire. They threw Molotov cocktails at us. The fire department had to come with the hoses. They broke into an adjacent residence, they thought it was part of the compound, trashed it, people were on vacation in Hawaii at the time. We had a perimeter drawn where if anybody crossed the final line between the driveway and the residence we were going to shoot them because we were outnumbered, we were surrounded and because of the jurisdictional problems it was very difficult for decisions to be made. They had destroyed 13 Beverly Hills police cruisers in the process of marching up the street. It was something out of, if you look, it was like you were in Teheran. It was in the newspapers, it was all over the media at the time. It was the only time that I've drawn my weapon. There's a picture of me on the front page of all the newspapers. But the problem was the locals just weren't ready for this and we didn't have the manpower or the resources to do this by ourselves. The fire department saved the day. There were fifty arrests. I think no prosecutions. A year later I had to testify and the guy was let loose for some reason. There were people hurt badly. Like I said there was property destroyed. There were Molotov cocktails thrown at us. I thought I was going to...

Q: Where was the Shah's family? Had they gotten out?

DEERING: No. They never left. We couldn't get them out. They were inside the compound. They had a couple of their old, the old SAVAK, Iranian intelligence people with them and we told them they were not to leave the house. They didn't leave the house. They were there, in the interior. Windows were broken by rocks. It was just something that was and apparently they went through the neighborhood, through the yards, wrecking stuff. Apparently Jimmy Carter got a phone call from one of his big supporters right down the hill and said, "What the hell is going on out here? This is Beverly Hills, California and we've got two thousand Iranians trashing. What's going on?" It was not a good situation at all. We ultimately had to evacuate the family to Palm Springs, California for a while. So that was a, it was, we were lucky. Ironically, a lot of these student leaders, we believe, are now the people that are running the Iranian government. There were after actions from local police intelligence and all. We found that the leaders' pictures were taken. We compared pictures from demonstrations in New York and Los Angeles. They were all the same people, the leadership.

Q: I can remember, maybe you've got some of this, when the hostages were taken in November of '79, a lot of Iranian students started demonstrating again, in the United States. This did not go over at all. There was absolutely no sympathy. I mean it was a stupid move on their part. I can remember, I was a consular officer, I was consul general in Naples at the time and I got a call from Washington, from our Visa Office, saying, "We'd like to use you as a center to give Iranian students, consider them for student visas or give them special thing." And I said, "Go screw yourself, we're not going to touch those guys after what we've been hearing."

DEERING: It was a mess. Again, the irony to me was, you had the regime in Iran, the Shah's regime that turned hardcore against demonstrations there and here we had these demonstrators in the United States literally getting away with stuff they couldn't possibly get away with back in Iran. And the end result was the rather rapid demise of the Shah of Iran. But I'll never forget that day.

Q: Did you get at all involved, there was another movement going on, regarding the Turks, the Armenian nationalists. A Turkish consular official was killed.

DEERING: I was the liaison officer for our office with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Office, the Los Angeles Police Department, for these kinds of things. They had, they had their sources and they kept us well informed of what was going on out there. We had responsibility for keeping the Turks informed and if there were any problems we always went out and talked to them. Right before I left LA in '81 I was directed by Washington to go to the Turkish Consul General because we got some information, he had some bodyguards with him from Turkey but he was going out on his own and leaving the bodyguards back at his residence. So I had to go out and talk to him about this and again, this was in early '81, not long before I left, it may have been March or April, I don't remember exactly. I went out and sat down with the consul general and I talked to him. I said, "We got a problem here. The Armenians don't like you, bottom line, Armenians don't like you. For whatever reason, it doesn't matter, they don't like you and there's fifty thousand Armenians in Los Angeles. And there's an element that really don't like you. You have two bodyguards assigned to you and I understand you're not using them." He goes, "Yeah, well, sometimes, they have families. I'm concerned that they get hurt." I said, "That's bogus. They're there to protect you. You can't be going out without these people. They're a deterrent. If nothing else, they're a deterrent." "Well, okay, okay." I left Los Angeles and within a month or two he was killed. So, yeah, some people are their own worst enemies.

We had other problems out there. In fall of '79 Princess Margaret, she loved to come to Los Angeles. She hobnobbed with the celebrities.

Q: Princess Margaret, the sister of the queen.

DEERING: She came out to Los Angeles shortly after the assassination of Lord Mountbatten by the IRA after which time she called, whether she really did or not, didn't matter, she said all Irish are pigs. She came to Los Angeles to open a new, renovated Rolls Royce dealership and to hobnob with the rich and famous out there, which she loved to do. I was advance agent for that detail and right before she came we got some information that there possibly was some IRA operative in the Los Angeles area. There were some strange things going on. There'd been some people visiting and asking a lot of questions about the upcoming visit. The guy was a scam artist. It appeared that there might be something going on there. So the Los Angeles Police Department, we had a detail again, six agents to mind Princess Margaret in Los Angeles. Two agents from Washington, mostly Los Angeles agents. The Los Angeles Police Department, since her visit was within the city, residence was within the city, the Beverly Hilton I think it was hotel and most of her visits were within the city limits, the Los Angeles Police Department assumed responsibility for her motorcade and gave her a full presidential motorcade, driving all over town. Well, the Irish came out. They marched around the hotel where she was with pigs on leashes. There were bomb threats galore, to all the places that she was going to attend. Nothing happened and as it turned out we did conduct a major protective intelligence investigation with the FBI and others into whether or not there was an Irish Republican Army threat. It's still, in my mind, it still is not clear what exactly what was going on there. We did locate these two scam artists and they were scam artists. But that was an interesting time. There were a lot of interesting times in Los Angeles. It was a good learning experience.

Q: I imagine one of the things you were picking up was all the strains within the foreign community. The Croats, the Serbs, the Armenians

DEERING: Oh, yeah. I learned a lot about the ethnic makeup of Los Angeles because I also did have some criminal investigations that were ongoing. Several of them involved visa fraud in Los Angeles with the Asian community. I had sources in the Philippine and Thai community. So I got a pretty good perspective of how closed an ethnic society Asians are in Los Angeles.

Q: Well, were you picking up, at the time you were there, at least part of the time, I was the consul general in Seoul, issuing visas and the Korean community was big on fraud. Were you picking up any...

DEERING: Koreans? No. Filipinos and Thais seemed to be the biggest problem at that time. Koreans weren't a problem. The Chinese weren't a problem at that time, at least not on our scope.

Q: Did you run across the Taiwanese/mainland Chinese problem, running intelligence operations against each other at all?

DEERING: No, that was more the FBI's bailiwick.

Q: When the Filipino and Thai, what were you doing?

DEERING: Well, we had a couple of sources who said that they were aware of some Americans selling visas in the embassy in Bangkok and in Manila which was not uncommon, not uncommon. However, one was a really good source and he was getting good information and worked him as an informant, a Thai. And I had a Filipino that was providing information on an American who was running guns and stuff and other scams. So like I say I got to know the Filipino community on one hand and the Thai community on the other hand fairly well, how they operate. Also I found out basically in the law enforcement community in Southern California at the time was, if it's not broken don't fix it. If the ethnic communities are not involved in criminal activities outside of their own ethnic groups, let's let the sleeping dog lie. So it was very difficult to penetrate. The locals did not have a lot of good sources inside these communities. It was not easy to vet information that was coming from our informants with other informants because they just weren't there. The LAPD had ethnic police officers who they would assign to the ethnic communities but it was more a liaison thing. Okay guys, as long as you're playing in your own backyard, we're going to keep an eye on you but don't go crossing over. And the gangs weren't, at that time, yet, the gangs weren't operating yet. A large Hispanic, Latin American population in Southern California, Mexicans especially, but they weren't, the gang issues were not, they were just in the incipient stages then, coming out of Central America. But I was dealing primarily with the Asians in what criminal investigative work I did, some passport fraud, also.

Q: Were you able to uncover anything in passport fraud, visa fraud?

DEERING: Yeah, there was some fire behind that smoke.

Q: Having run consular sections, I know there are always allegations that somebody in the embassy is selling visas or passports, usually visas and I always took these extremely seriously but the problem was there's an awful lot of smoke there but there also is very much the potential for something happening.

DEERING: Well, when we get on to my time in Madrid I'll tell you another story. There was a very unfortunate series of events.

Q: Well, in '81, where did you go?

DEERING: I remember my grandmother was still alive and she lived in Arizona. So Labor Day weekend of 1980 my wife and I and my daughter and my son had just been born in February of 1980. My daughter was born in '78, in California. We went, for a long weekend we drove to Arizona. While I was in Arizona, Labor Day weekend, I get a call from my career development officer or as we call them still, our career destruction officer. "You've been there, it'll be three years, you've got your extension, you've got to come to the Secretary's Detail." I said, "I didn't bid on the Secretary's Detail." "It doesn't matter. We need agents for the Secretary's Detail. You've got to come to the Secretary's Detail. So put a bid in." Being a good soldier, I put my bid in. So in May of '81 I picked up and went to the Secretary's Detail. Now one of the problems with SY, it was still small, really. My class and there was one class after mine in '79, early '79, in January and then we didn't hire anybody until late '80. So there weren't a lot of people. People were getting moved all over the place. One of the problems for our investigative program, background investigations are different. You do a background investigation and you're done. Criminal investigations can go on and on and on. And so when I left there wasn't necessarily anybody there to pick up the pieces from whatever work I was doing. When somebody gets to it, they get to it. It was before our field offices were staffed to do these investigations. So a lot of the work I did, I never saw the end result.

So off I went in May, went back to Washington and from May of '81 to November, at that time it was an 18 month assignment on the Secretary's Detail. I don't know why they came up with 18 months but it was 18 months and it was approved by the Foreign Service that we had 18 month assignments to the Secretary's Detail. So I was there and I worked both Secretary Haig and Secretary Shultz, from May of '81 to November, right after Thanksgiving of '82. My last assignment, I think, was when I accompanied, I was on the detail when Shultz went to Brezhnev's funeral in Moscow. That was my last overseas trip. I think I got off the detail right after he came back. That was late November. I remember Shultz almost didn't make it because he was in his office eating lunch on Saturday afternoon, got a fishbone stuck in his throat, had to go to the hospital. We were scheduled to fly out that afternoon to Moscow but he made it. So a year and a half, what we called, that was our blood money.

Q: One question I want to go back to, while you were in Los Angeles. Did you run across any problems with the Soviets? Did they have a consulate?

DEERING; Up in San Francisco. My only experience with them was, we had other things that we did. We were the catchall for everything. Our protective liaison responsibilities involved when the Bolshoi Ballet came to Los Angeles or the Cuban Ballet, you had to go and be there. Not to do anything but be there and see what was going on. Again, I was assigned to be at the LA, old Shriners Auditorium and the Bolshoi was performing. So I was assigned as liaison with Los Angeles, again the Los Angeles Police Department. They had a section for this kind of thing. During the performance one afternoon I was sitting in my office, I got a call from one of the police officers who was working the thing, spoke Russian, he says, "I need to meet with you." I said, "Why? What's going on?" The two of them defected or they left and went to his house. So now we had an international incident. Two missing Bolshoi Ballet performers, a man and woman, they were married. So, of course, on the phone with INS, on the phone with the FBI. The two dancers were turned over to us. We put them up in somebody's house up in the hills of Hollywood who volunteered to provide a house while this thing was resolved. We sat in, I conducted, with the FBI, the mandatory debriefing of the two before we went to the Russians, to make sure that they did this on their own, there was no, nobody pressuring them to do this, blah blah blah, blah blah blah. They were allowed to stay, ultimately. I don't remember the names of the two performers. Now it wasn't any major performers. They told some funny stories about their previous. They got married, they met while touring in a previous tour in the United States, up in San Francisco and they told some stories which I won't go into because the classification of some of them. How they were required to do things while they were touring the United States but it was fascinating.

I remember also I had responsibility for the visit of the Cuban Ballet and I can't remember the Cuban ballerina, I can't remember her name. Blind, almost. We had responsibility for her and at that time Omega Seven was very active and Alpha 66, I think it was, Cuban leftovers from the Bay of Pigs. They were very, very active still, all over the United States and they didn't like it when the Cuban Ballet came to Los Angeles. They caused some problems out there. So we had responsibility. I remember I had to go and sit down with the ballerina. She ran the show. She ran the company. Had to give her a little security briefing, had a couple of agents there with me. We had, the three of us, we were wearing our earpieces. Well, I sat and I talked to her and finished and I remember one of her assistants or someone from her liaison staff, whoever was sponsoring, came up to me and said, "She was very concerned about your health." "She was very concerned about my health? How does she know anything about my health?" "Well, she thought you were deaf because she saw a hearing aid." They threw some stones at where they performed. Again, I think it was at the old Shriners Auditorium there, down by the University of Southern California. Like I said, there were very few dull moments in Los Angeles while I was there.

Q: Well, let's talk about the Secretary's Detail. First place, I would think the Secretary's Detail would be hell on your family life.

DEERING: Not good at all. I was probably traveling forty to fifty per cent of the time, working midnight shifts and a swing shift and a day shift, doing advance work. The only interesting part of the job as far as I was concerned. You could train intelligent animals to stand in front of a door and do something if something went wrong, something that has to be done, obviously but boring. Most of the time, boring. Except when you were out doing advance work, either in Washington or out. Everybody wanted to go overseas and be on the advance team overseas because that was the best thing other than getting to ride on the plane team, which traveled with the Secretary on Air Force Two. Yeah, it was 19 months of very difficult time for the family. Two young kids at home and coming and going.

I remember one trip, it was in January of 1982, I did the advance with two other agents for a trip, it wasn't the December NATO in Brussels, it was a special trip that the Secretary was doing in January. Went over there and the day we left we got up in the morning there was an ice fog in Brussels. We had to get back, we had another advance to go to in the States. So the embassy driver assigned to us said the airport's closed, they don't know when anything's going to fly out but Paris is okay. So we got permission from the embassy for the embassy driver to drive us to Paris to get out. We got out, no problem, landed in Boston. We got a flight from Paris to Boston to Washington. We landed in Boston and there's a winter storm advisory or warning for snow, heavy snow. And as we got on our flight to fly from Boston to Washington it was late in the afternoon, we made our connection, we got out on the runway and we sat there for about a half hour and snow was coming down now and the pilot says we're going back to the gate, there's a problem in Washington. Well, the problem in Washington was Air Florida going into the 14th Street Bridge. Washington's shut down, we don't know when, blah blah blah. So from the airport we put our heads together, over to the train station. It's now about eight o'clock. There's not a train until one o'clock in the morning. So what are we going to do for five hours? I remember sitting in a Chinese restaurant somewhere. Get on the train, the train stalled several times because of the snow. We get into Washington about nine o'clock, ten o'clock. Washington's absolutely shut down. Get back to the parking lot where our cars were, they were snowed in. We were traveling for 36 hours, just to get home and that was not an uncommon occurrence. It wasn't, okay, we'll take a couple days off now and recover. No, no, no, you've got to work the next shift or off to your next stop.

Like I say, this is June of '82. I was due off the Detail in November of '82. So I was assigned as agent in charge of Haig's detail for thirty days after he resigned. We had I think eight or nine other agents assigned and we just kind of traveled around with him. We went down to Houston. He liked to go to the Greenbrier, buddies out there. I remember a trip out there, funny story. He had had, he and his wife had had dinner with this old friend of his from West Point and they were going back to the residence where his buddy had a place there. Very laid back, Secretary Haig, very laid back, after he resigned. And we're driving, it was dark and he was, "Young man, let's stop. I want to stop. Let's go down to the sulfur springs and drink some of that water." We walked down to one of the springs there and it was God-awful smell. Horrible, horrible! And I remember the two of them there, giggling like two kids, let's drink some of this good stuff here, says, "Young man, why don't you come over here. Drink some of this. It does wonders for your sex life!" I said to him, "Sir, since I've been assigned to the Detail, I don't have a sex life." I always got along fine with Secretary Haig. I had a military background. He was a general. As long as you understood that, there wasn't a problem. There were agents on the Detail who didn't care for him because of the military approach and no-nonsense approach to everything but I never, that wasn't an issue to me, that wasn't an issue. I respected him, I thought he did a good job. I think he was never an insider in the Reagan kitchen cabinet and that was one of the problems. And of course the issue in March of '81, after the attempted assassination on President Reagan, the whole thing about "I'm in charge here now." That killed him. Didn't matter what was really said, you'd see it replayed and talked about many times after. That was basically the beginning of the end, as far as I could see. He didn't have the connections to the president that Meese and company had. So I think it was just a matter of time before. Then when Shultz came of course I was in that transition so I didn't get back assigned to the Schulz detail 'til July or August. I was only there for a few months' overlap with Shultz.

Q: What about, on your overseas trips, how did your Detail mesh with, going to Israel, mesh with Israeli security service or going to Germany or wherever it is? I would think there, I know in presidential visits there's a terrible problem with Secret Service and its connection with other places because we do it our way and ...

DEERING: Our way or the highway. Fortunately, SY/DS has a different approach, much more flexible than the Secret Service. We don't demand, we ask. Makes all the difference in the world as to how your relationships are, whether it's local police in the United States. I learned early on you don't go marching into somebody else's jurisdiction and say, "Hi. I'm here now. The Secretary's coming here. I'm in charge." It doesn't work that way because, that's how the Secret Service used to do it: we're in charge here, you're going to help us, dah dah dah dah dah, although I think that's changed a lot, over the years, too. We were always very flexible and as a result our working relationships with the locals always seemed to go smoothly. Overseas, in doing advance work, did advance work a couple times in Belgium with the Belgian police, never a problem. I was in Israel. I was in Luxembourg. I never had any problems getting along with my counterparts because basically my approach was with numbers of people that we have to do the job we have to do, if the locals are not going to support us, we're not going to get the job done. So it's a mission thing. How do you complete the mission successfully? And if you don't have the support of the locals, whether it be local police in the United States or the security services and police overseas. And one of the things I found interesting was, dealing, throughout my career, with the overseas police, national police and security services, they have a very, very difficult time understanding our law enforcement structure. There are very few countries that have local, county, city, state, federal, a variety of law enforcement agencies all with their own jurisdictions, all with their own missions. It's mind-boggling. Sit down with a member of the national police of a country, where they're basically the police, they have some traffic police or municipal police but try and explain to them what your authority and jurisdiction are, they just say, "Wait a minute, what, the FBI, I thought the FBI was the national police." I'd say, "No, we don't have a national police. Our founding fathers didn't want a national police." It's very mind-boggling. But again, spirit of cooperation, it goes a long way in establishing right up front how that trip is going to go. If it's not good then the trip's not going to go good. And if the trip doesn't go good, believe me, the Secretary notices.

I remember riding in a follow car with Secretary Haig up in New York at one of the UN things. And there was some confusion with the local police, with the lead car, local police as to, we're going to the, I think we're going to the Russian Consulate up in upper Manhattan, in the 50's or 60's, I don't remember which one. But you had to go up and turn either the street before or the street after to come back and go the other way. When we get up there, we got a lead car, we got a police lead, we have our lead car, we had the limo, we have a follow car and we have a police tail. We got to the street where we're supposed to turn, cars went in all different directions. The limo turns and Haig looks around and says, "What the hell? What am I, in a tuna trolley here?" These guys, you think they're sitting back there, they know what's going on.

Q: There'd been an assassination attempt on Haig when he was NATO commander, when he was in a convoy like that.

DEERING: Sure, absolutely. These guys, our protectees, they don't miss a lot and you can't pull the wool over their eyes. These guys know what's going on, so you better know what you're doing. So again, when you're in another city, if you don't have that loop closed, things can go bad, real quickly and you don't want that to happen.

Q: Well, tell me, during the time that you were doing this, what was it, from '81

DEERING: May of '81 'til November of '82, yeah.

Q: What, from your point of view, was the potential threat to our Secretaries of State, both in the United States and abroad?

DEERING: Again, we were coming out of the period of, remember, the day Reagan was inaugurated was the day the hostages were released. We still had, we were going through a phase where terrorism had changed from hijackings to attacks on our embassies, to kidnappings. It was a new ballgame. Libya was one of the problems. We tried to get Qadhafi, you'll recall. So the threat was a possible Libyan threat on the Secretary of State, that was high up on the thing. I'm trying to remember when it was the Israelis took out the Iraqi nuclear plant, a little bit later. Was that '81, '82, though, wasn't it?

Q: I just don't remember.

DEERING: The threat was the Middle East threat. We'd have heightened periods where information was coming in that something was going to happen. So with Haig and with Shultz both very high profile and the previous attempts on Haig, I guess that was the Bader-Meinhof Group though, or was it the Red Army Faction?

Q: Probably more likely Bader-Meinhof but I don't remember. Could be the Red Army.

DEERING: Yeah, there was a lot going on in the early Eighties there but it was mainly directed from the Middle East. I was always concerned that we try and get as current intelligence as possible from our threat analysis people on what was going on because that was important. Remember now, by '82 we weren't hiring anybody. We were in a hiring freeze. We had about 350 agents and worldwide the threat level was coming up. We didn't have the resources to do the job we were supposed to be doing and long hours, we were getting' beaten up pretty well, as far as work was concerned.

Q: How about with the Soviets. I would imagine that in your line of work there would be rather close liaison. The Soviets didn't want trouble, we didn't want trouble.

DEERING: When I went on the Detail, I worked the plane team to the Brezhnev funeral. Only I think the agent in charge and one other person were allowed into the funeral. So they took us, the KGB folks that were with us, took us over to the Kremlin. They all spoke fluent English, without accents. They said, "Want to show you something." They took us into the Kremlin and they showed us the room, solid gold. "We're showing you something here that most Soviet people don't know it exists." Very friendly, very cordial. You got a sense, even then, that there was a, something was going on here, as far as relationships were concerned. Of course the threat from the Soviet Union at that time was, coming across the Fulda Gap with all their resources and the nuclear threat. It wasn't, the spy game was a gentleman's game. They weren't going to, their interest was to protect the Secretary of State when he was there, when they were here.

Q: You were on the same side.

DEERING: We were on the same side. It was still a gentleman's game, the spy game, unless you got caught, of course. That was an eye opener, that short visit to Moscow. It was the only time I've been there and I was only there for like 24 hours. Again, we flew all night, we worked, got five hours sleep, worked the next day, onto the plane and back and then back to work. But, again, that was my last trip, anyhow. That wasn't too bad.

Q: Well, in '82, what?

DEERING: While I was on the Detail we had to bid again, bidding cycle came up and I had to bid on something. We were not getting into more criminal work. We were developing a headquarters unit for coordinating our criminal investigative effort. So they were assigning three agents to a new passport fraud branch in our criminal investigation division. So I bid on one of these positions. I got that position and I went into our headquarters and served from '82 to the spring of 1986 in a variety of headquarters investigative assignments and worked in building what really was the incipient phases of our criminal investigative program, with the Inman panel's recommendations and the establishment of a DS Bureau with criminal investigative authority. The work that we did built a good foundation for what was to follow. Clark Dittmer was the director of investigations at the time and he was a firm believer in our criminal investigations program, did a lot of work, running things up to the Hill for them, doing some work up there with some Congressmen and Congressmen's staffs, on getting us our criminal authority, our criminal investigative authority, which we ultimately did get. Again, it was an interesting time to be there because of all that was going on. While I was there, like I say I was assigned to the passport fraud branch for about two years. We also, Clark Dittmer put together emergency response teams. After the bombing in '83 in Beirut and the bombing in Kuwait, there was no U.S. response. There was still no response. How did the U.S. government respond to these incidents, from the investigative perspective? So Clark Dittmer took it upon himself to put together a team comprised of headquarters agents, there were three or four of us, that would be a response team. This occurred after the Kuwait bombing. There were four of us, I think.

Q: The Kuwait bombing, you might explain what that was.

DEERING: That was the bombing of our embassy in Kuwait. It was a truck bomb. Fortunately the enhancement that was built up on the gas canisters didn't go. Otherwise it would have been a lot worse. It followed the '83 bombing of our embassy in Beirut, which was devastating. So Clark Dittmer took it on himself to put together a headquarters element, response team, to investigate these bombings on behalf of the State Department, protective intelligence. Of course the FBI, as a result of the Inman thing, they got jurisdiction to conduct investigations worldwide, any active terror threat against U.S. interests. So we put together a team and we went down to the FBI Academy and we trained down there for about three weeks on conducting investigations involving improvised explosive devices, from crime scene forensics to looking at the improvised explosive devices themselves. Worked with the FBI, there were other agencies involved in the effort. This was in the end of August, beginning of September, three or four weeks, I don't remember but we were down there for three or four weeks, this group of us. We left on a Friday, the last day of training. In three months we were going to conduct a major training exercise. Well that was, I think it was September 18th or 19th. Whatever it was, on the 20th of September the car bomb blew up the embassy in East Beirut. So our training exercise was moved up to a real life exercise. We went off to Beirut, myself and three other agents, some other folks from other agencies and the FBI, with some of our physical security people from the State Department and we did an investigation of the bombing, a complete investigation. At that time, as complete as could be done, reenactment of the event and there was a three month investigation, classified report, very high level. Real eye opener on what was going on in the world of terrorism. I cannot discuss the end results of the investigation.

Q: Not the end results and maybe in general terms but I would think that when you go to this, first place, you're doing an investigation. You're in completely strange territory. You've got, supposedly we have intelligence people.

DEERING: They put us in a hotel in East Beirut, because they thought it was safe, when we got there, the whole team. There was 17 of us, 17 or 13, I don't remember what it was. We had to go and sit in Cyprus for a day, waiting for transportation across the Mediterranean there, from Cyprus to Beirut. They flew us in in a French helicopter, into the Lebanese forces military camp there then motorcaded us over to where the embassy had been, the annex that was bombed. Lot of people were hurt in that, two Americans killed, DOD folks. They put us up initially in a hotel in East Beirut they felt was safe. Then they realized afterwards there was a threat on it. They ended up putting us up in apartments of people that had been hurt and evacuated and stayed in apartments there. While we were there went back over to Cyprus, interviewed the ambassador, Ambassador Bartholomew, in Cyprus, couple of times I think, as I recall. We interviewed everybody that was on the compound that day. We used the expertise of our forensics people from the FBI and our own people who had experience with explosives to recreate the blast. Went out, the navy flew in 50 Seabees from the aircraft carrier to do a complete. What we did was, we went to the epicenter of the blast, circled it with these Seabees and went out and they picked up anything that looked like a piece of debris and put a little flag there. So we were able to determine from the radius of the blast and the physics involved what it was, etc., etc. We found out very quickly, from we found a piece of the vehicle with the registration number on it, it was a vehicle that probably had been owned by the embassy at one time and that's why it was able to do what it did and get where it got. We also were able to determine that our local guard force, probably one of the local guards shot the driver before he could turn the corner down underneath the embassy which saved the building from going up. The British ambassador was visiting the American ambassador at the time and his bodyguards, they claimed that they were the ones that shot the driver. Forensics determined that there was no shell casings where they claimed to be. There were a lot of things that could have been done differently there. We had to depend on, again, the locals for assistance. One of the problems was that the Lebanese authorities already scooped up the debris from around where the blast was, the epicenter of the blast. We were still able to put together enough to determine what had happened, who it was and. We found pieces of the bomber himself, were able, again to get forensics done on that to determine a lot of things that even back then DNA could do a lot. But it was a real eye opener because this was the first time that there was a joint response, an American government response, to a bombing where an attempt was made to conduct an inclusive investigation. And we did and we came out with our findings. Of course nothing ever happened to anybody because it never does.

Q: Talking about these joint investigations, I interviewed a man named Mike Metrinko, who had actually been one of the Iranian hostages. He retired but was sent on a team to look at the investigation of the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole off Aden and said that it turned out to be a real can of worms because they sent State investigators, FBI, Navy investigators. I think they had another, probably CIA or something. Anyway, all these investigators were there, looking at this and he found out, he got very nervous because they all had different rules of engagement and they felt they were in an area where they might be attacked and everybody was armed and it was, I think the ambassador finally kicked them all out.

DEERING: The problem there was, it was a Navy ship, so the Navy had an interest. American, so the FBI has jurisdictional authority to conduct the investigation. And DS had to go because they set up a consulate down there in Aden to stay there while this was all going on. Ultimately we assumed protective responsibility for all the people there. I was in charge of our protective intelligence division at the time, I'd just gotten back from overseas. One of my senior agents, actually we worked together on the Beirut bombing, he'd done this almost exclusively and he went over there to head up the DS contingent and, yeah, it was a mess for a while, because it was, again, it was different, it was something new, an attack on a warship.

Q: It just points out that there is the problem. When you said getting these joint things, it can work but then there are sort of different instructions.

DEERING: Well, yeah and I think, lessons learned from that and 9/11 has resulted in a complete turnover, a complete change in the leadership of the FBI, in counterterrorism. A complete leadership change in the CIA. A complete leadership change in DS, for that matter. Again, a lot of it's related not just to what happened in 9/11 and precursor events but the fact that all of us who were hired in the seventies are now reaching mandatory retirement age. And while the entire law enforcement community knew this was coming, this being we're losing all the section chiefs, there was not a lot done to ensure the next cadre was up to snuff on what was going on. So you see a large turnover in leadership. I've seen it. I've seen it with the people I work with. People I worked with at the agent level are now running organizations or had been until they recently retired. Again, it, as recently as 15 or 20 years ago, until the Omnibus Terrorism Act, there was no plan. There was no unified response. So we're still learning.

Q: Well, to go back to the criminal investigation, could you explain, from the Department of State perspective, what was meant by moving into criminal investigations?

DEERING: Well, the U.S. Department of State issues passports and visas. So therefore it makes sense to or it made sense that we expand our efforts into the investigation of violations of these laws because the issuance is the responsibility of the State Department. The purpose of our criminal program was twofold. It's one, to ensure the integrity of these documents. They are the gold standard. If you have a U.S. passport you're for all intents and purposes a U.S. citizen. If you have a visa to come into the United States, you're for all intents and purposes in the United States and do what you want. So therefore they're highly marketable items. Therefore incidence of fraud is important to combat. So this is what our criminal investigative program was built on, the authority given us by the Omnibus Terrorist Act to investigate violations of U.S. passport and visa laws. Very narrow jurisdiction that we have, but it's also extremely important because people don't fraudulently obtain passports and visas just for the sake of obtaining these documents. A lot of it is done to attempt to become de facto U.S. citizens. But then there are those who are doing it to conduct other criminal, illicit activities and our investigations of passport and visa fraud have uncovered everything from simple vanity fraud, meaning someone wanting to be five or ten years younger than they are, they've got a passport to prove it, to those who obtain passports to conduct criminal activities. It is huge. Gun running, terrorism, organized crime. We became involved over the years in many incidents where homicides were committed and passports were obtained to hide identity. The drug trafficking in South Florida, major criminals down there were involved in passport fraud.

So it was a burgeoning industry that nobody was really concentrating on. The FBI, FBI can conduct investigations into any violation of U.S. statutes. Immigration can conduct investigations of passport and visa fraud. But generally nobody wanted to deal with these. They didn't have the time to do it.

So as I said Clark Dittmer took it upon himself to expand the State Department's jurisdiction and thereby expand and enhance the authority of the Diplomatic Security Service to conduct these types of investigations. We were initially set up as a headquarters element that would monitor and direct or manage the investigation of passport fraud being conducted in the field offices as we expanded in the mid-Eighties. I also moved from there to our special investigations branch at the time which did the internal, what was called internal affairs investigations for the State Department. And I also, before I went overseas, I was the acting branch chief for our new consular malfeasance section or visa fraud section which we split. It used to be everything was kind of lumped together, then we split into passport fraud, visa fraud, special investigations, counterintelligence and really became much more specialized in the mid-Eighties as to how we conducted investigations on behalf of the State Department. But it was driven by the need for someone to start looking at the fraud issues involved with U.S. passports and visas. The other interesting thing is that the fraud statutes also give us the authority to investigate violations of visa laws, passport and visa laws, involving foreign passports and visas. So if someone commits an act of fraud, say with a French passport or a British passport, that person is in the jurisdiction, is also liable under those statutes for criminal fraud.

Q: Well I would think that the ability to do this, you'd be crossing all sorts of jurisdictions. Somebody would take a fraudulent passport to commit a crime in Athens, Georgia but I would think the sheriff of Athens would look cross-eyed at you if you came down

DEERING: No, no, not at all. In fact, as I said, our approach is rather flexible. I go to the sheriff or the deputy in Athens, in Georgia and say, "Hey, you know what, we've got a couple of guys up here. We think they're involved in some shenanigans. They've got bad documents. How about looking into these folks for us, telling us what you can come up with? In fact, if you can tell us where they live, we'd like to go talk to them and we'd like you to come along with us because they're probably doing something here they shouldn't be doing." That's how we do it. As I said, once we initiate, we don't do these investigations on our own. Once it comes time to determine that there has been fraud committed, either in the application or use or whatever, the agent investigating that case has to go to the U.S. attorney and present that case to the U.S. attorney. The U.S. attorney's got to take that case and an assistant U.S. attorney is assigned that case and that assistant U.S. attorney is directing the investigation, not the DS agent running the case. A lot of people in the Foreign Service don't understand that. When our cases took us overseas, a lot of ambassadors said, "Well, you can't." I said, "Time out, Mr. Ambassador. There's criminal activity here. This investigation is under the direction of the U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Florida." "Well, he can't." I said, "Yes he can. You don't really want to get into this because you don't want to spend time sitting as a witness somewhere in a court proceeding because you didn't want to cooperate, I don't think or because you got involved in this when you really don't need to get involved in this. The RSO will keep you informed of what's going on with this investigation but you don't really want to get involved with this thing." The U.S. courts do have jurisdiction beyond the boundaries of the United States when U.S. laws are violated. It's just a matter of getting that person back to the United States to stand trial. But we've become very active in conducting these investigations overseas over the years now.

Q: What, I'd like to stick to this '82 to '86 period, what, I mean this is sort of an initial period. What sort of things were you working on?

DEERING: Well primarily, like I say, in my first two years in the passport fraud branch we were setting up a data base to track investigations, to make sure that the field offices were crossing their t's and dotting their i's. There were three of us involved. We each had field offices assigned to us. We were the clearing house for the investigations and we tracked them. We didn't get involved in the investigations unless it was visa fraud, because visa fraud generally, one visa fraud case can be all over the place. A passport fraud case, generally, if you got passport fraud in Los Angeles, that's where it is.

Q: I talk as a professional consular officer. You never came after me but my understanding was that one of the ways to do a passport was to go a large cemetery, look for somebody who died young but was born about the time you were born and write down their name, go apply for their birth certificate, then go to the local post office and things started moving from there.

DEERING: Well, I can tell you a case where, of a case exactly like that happened in 1992. We got a case when I was special agent in charge of the Miami Field Office. One of my agents had a fraud case. It was a guy who had applied for a passport up in Northern Florida. The application came down to Miami and fraud indicators were there. This guy had applied but they can't find anything on his background. So the flags were out. So he starts doing his homework, the agent. He goes over, the birth certificate says the guy was born in Sarasota, Florida. He goes over to Sarasota, Florida, the agent. He goes right to the library, into to the archives, local newspaper, runs this guy's name and finds out that, yes, this person was born in Sarasota, Florida in 1952 as said. But in 1955, while visiting the circus at its winter headquarters in Sarasota, Ringling Brothers Circus, with his father, he fell over, an elephant stepped on him and killed him, at age three. Now we knew something was going on, for sure. This guy, criminals aren't the smartest. So now we know we got somebody, we want to find out who this person is. So we had the Passport Agency issue a passport and tell them that it would be sent to the post office in Sarasota, Florida, which is where he claimed he lived. We had a controlled delivery of the passport through the postal inspectors to a post office box, that's all this guy had in Sarasota. We went and we sat on the post office box. The guy came in, opened the box and we arrested him. He had been serving a life term for narcotics trafficking at a facility up in Northern Florida and was on a work gang and walked away from the work gang. This was the last step in establishing a completely new identity for him. He intended to go and work with the fishing fleet out of the west coast of Florida, shrimping out in the Gulf of Mexico. This guy was serving a life sentence for narcotics trafficking. So, yeah, that's one way to do it but there's lots of ways, anyway.

Q: Did you find, were we becoming more aggressive in going after both American consular officers and locals as far as visa malfeasance and ...

DEERING: I think we became more assertive in conducting investigations where we had information that there was. We had more resources to do it. So that stones that weren't previously being turned over, when allegations came there wasn't the resources to follow up on it properly. So, yeah, in that sense we became much more assertive in conducting investigations, across the board, in passport and visa fraud. The numbers just increased significantly. The Bureau of Consular Affairs used to refer a lot of the cases to Immigration or the FBI for investigation, especially identity cases, which is what I talked about, because that's why, didn't have the resources to do it. Well, we got the authority, we had to get the resources and by law now we had the authority to conduct investigations. And over the years a good relationship at the headquarters level developed between Consular Affairs and ...

Q: Yeah, because this has always been a major concern and I think one that has bothered a lot of people. I go way back. Particularly consular officers who may have been involved in this thing were essentially just allowed to leave quietly.

DEERING: Not any more.

Q: This is of concern but this was sort of, hands were shrugged

DEERING: No doubt about it. When I was working in visa fraud, in '85, late '85, early '86, I had couple of cases involving some fairly senior consular officials that we were looking at. There's no doubt in my mind that there were shenanigans going on. In one case the very senior consular official in an Asian, one of our embassies in Asia, before anything could be done, died. In another case, the individual is still employed. I think it's too bad, but he is. And those were cases I was involved in as a headquarters person. As I said, when we get on to my assignment in Madrid, I'll relate another unfortunate story. But '82 to '86 was the time when we were really getting the organization set up to, the headquarters elements, for coordinating these investigations throughout our field offices and with our RSOs overseas.

Q: You referred to it but I just would like to sort of nail it down, did you find that you were getting good cooperation with I think you said the Bureau of Consular Affairs? Sometimes organizationally, our people and that sort of thing. How did you find your relationship?

DEERING: I met frequently with senior people in the Bureau of Consular Affairs because at that point in time, in the mid-Eighties, in order to get operational money to conduct our investigations, to develop sources and to pay we had to get the money from the Bureau of Consular Affairs, because they funded these kinds of operations. So I would attend meetings to ensure that relationship was there to do this. Again, I always believed that the carrot's better than the stick. Need help. And unless somebody just got in my waand that happened from time to timyou don't go in there saying, "I'm in charge here. Do what I want or there's going to be problems." I didn't have problems. Other people had problems.

Q: I'm just saying that my impression was that the Bureau of Consular Affairs really wanted to get in and get rid of the bad apples.

DEERING: I think so. I never found anybody in the bureau standing in the way of an investigation where we had established probable cause that there was criminal activity going on. There's a fine line between misfeasance and malfeasance, not doing your job and breaking the law. One can lead to the other and that's a tricky area. If it's misfeasance, it's an administrative issue. That's a whole other issue, because then you've got the Director General of the Foreign Service involved. The dividing line between administrative proceedings and criminal proceedings, it's a fine line. Which side you're on is important.

Q: Let's see, we're in 1986 and you're off to where?

DEERING: Off to Madrid by way of ten weeks of Spanish language training.

Q: So, you got to Madrid when?

DEERING: I guess it was in December of 1985, January of '86 when I was assigned and had language training for ten weeks, I think it was April to June and I reported there at the end of June of 1986.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

DEERING: I was there from June of 1986 until July, I believe it was, of 1988, late July.

Q: What was your job?

DEERING: I was the assistant regional security officer at the embassy and it was my first overseas tour with the Foreign Service.

Q: Now, what was the sort of political situation in Spain when you got there?

DEERING: Well, the political situation in Spain, it was kind of interesting. There were several things going on that had direct impact on the embassy security program. You had the Basque separatists active all over Spain. They were targeting members of the Guardia Civil and industrialists. They were blowing up cars. They were doing kidnappings and they were very active. Of course any time there's a threat of terrorism where there are Americans there's the possibility of involvement, being at the wrong place at the wrong time. ETA, the Basques, never had a history of targeting American interests but the acts of terrorism directed against the Spanish government were in close proximity to the embassy, often, so there was always the possibility of people being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And then we're in the scenario of the continuing fallout from our attack against Libya in, I guess that was 1984, '84 or '85. And there was an active network in Spain of, well throughout Europe and actually in other places, where there was an interest in retribution because of that act. Whether the ties were directly to Libya, I don't think was ever known. But it was a very, very busy environment in Spain. In the two years I was there, there were at least a half dozen incidents where U.S. diplomatic, military facilities were targeted by terrorist groups.

Q: Now, before we get into that, your regional responsibilities covered what?

DEERING: Well, there was the RSO and myself at the embassy and our responsibilities were the embassy in Madrid, the consulate general in Barcelona. There was a small consulate up in the Basque country, Bilbao, it was a small consulate. Then there were five or six consular agencies in various places. Now the consulate in Seville, which was an absolutely gorgeous facility, had been closed down and when I was there the facility still belonged to us and they would send people down there from time to time to do some business but there was no formal representation at the time in Seville. So we traveled quite a bit around the countryside and so being a new assistant RSO, my first assignment overseas, of course within a week of being there, Fourth of July weekend, I get duty officer responsibilities which was a joy on the Fourth of July weekend.

Crime was a huge problem in certain areas of Madrid and Americans were getting ripped off all the time, the old snatch and grab purses. They'd come into the embassy, their faces were cut up, their passports were stolen, their purses were stolen and it was a continuing problem. In fact, it got so bad while I was there the U.S. government used the old heavy handed approach to the Spanish authorities that if they didn't start looking at the crime situation targeting tourists Madrid would be put on the list of places that you shouldn't perhaps visit for a while. There was a big controversy over that. But there were a lot of incidents involving American tourists, snatch and grab and things like that. Not only in Madrid but also in Seville and Barcelona. In fact, I remember when we had visitors come see us from the States they flew into Barcelona and were at the train station to take the train to Madrid and they got involved in one of the scams where someone sitting in the balcony above them poured something down on top of them. The other one comes and brushes them off and walks off with their handbags. So there were a lot of things going on in Spain. It was an excellent assignment but I kept busy the whole two years I was there. And we changed RSOs so there was a gap where there was no RSO there also.

Q: Who was ambassador when you were there?

DEERING: The ambassador arrived shortly after I arrived. That was Ambassador Bartholomew. I had worked with him on the investigation of the bombing. Worked with him, I actually, I had to interview him several times concerning what happened in Beirut in 1984.

Q: Did you feel that or did we all feel, the security apparatus feel, the ambassador was at threat at that time?

DEERING: Yes, absolutely. There were several incidents where homemade rockets were shot or attempted to be shot at the ambassador's residence. Unfortunately, the ambassador didn't always feel he was at threat. Ambassador Bartholomew didn't feel he was at threat in East Beirut, either. Perhaps if he had, that wouldn't have happened.

Q: How did one go about protecting the ambassador?

DEERING: We had local guards at the embassy. We had a contingent made up of locally hired folks and some Spanish national police, as I recall, that had a protective detail on the ambassador, that traveled with him when he left the compound, if he wanted. There were times when he would kind of disappear without his bodyguards and we'd find out about it later on but that's not unusual. It's unfortunate but it wasn't unusual in those times. There was also what we believed an active threat from elements of, from other terrorist groups planning some action in Spain that we worked very closely with a couple of other countries and ultimately was resolved favorably. But there was a lot going on, there was a lot going on. There was an attack, a bombing, at the consulate general in Barcelona, on the stairs, a package bomb. There was an attack on the USO facility in Madrid. There were two incidents of rockets being aimed at the ambassador's residence. There was an incident of a homemade mortar device being launched from a hotel across the street from the embassy, at the embassy, that exploded outside the window. There was an attack on an air force communications facility with a, they blew up a fence and then planted another device so that when the investigators would go to see what happened they'd step on it but they fixed the explosive the wrong way. The pressure device was facing the wrong way and didn't blow up when they stepped on it. That would have been nasty. There was a, I mentioned the attack in the USO facility, a hand grenade attack, the day after Christmas 1987, during which a sailor was killed, a U.S. sailor.

Q: Well, let's talk about, sort of, these individually. What, the Barcelona, the bomb, the package bomb there, do we know who was responsible?

DEERING: No, I don't think we ever, as I recall, we ever, there was a group called the Terra Lliure, and there was some belief, it was an internal separatist group for the Catalonians, I believe that was Terra Lliure, I'm a little fuzzy here, we thought perhaps they'd been involved in that. The others we believed were part of what was called at the time, it was associated with, they were kind of terrorists for hire. Called themselves the International Brigade and they were associated with the Red Army Faction. We believe they were funded probably by Libya and others at the time and they were just a nuisance. You recall there was the incident on the New Jersey Turnpike where a state trooper stopped an individual, searched his car and found a fire extinguisher that actually had explosives in it. The guy was driving up to New York City for something, probably. We believe these groups were all interrelated. There was a series of incidents against our facilities in Indonesia at the time and other areas of Southeast Asia. So it was very active, hostile environment.

Q: First place, was the ETA

DEERING: ETA was the threat to the Spaniards but there was never any indication, there was never any specific information that ETA was ever interested in targeting American interests.

Q: Well, was there at all the type of relationship in the United States that the IRA had in the United States? In other words, were there Basques in the United States who were supporting ETA?

DEERING: Hard to tell. We believed there was possibly a developing relationship between the IRA and ETA, in terms of arms shipments and things.

Q: How good was the relationship with the Spanish security forces? Were you kept, I mean were you all working pretty closely together?

DEERING: I think, again, there are a group of individuals that we often overlook as far as their value to the embassy. That's our local employees. There was a very good group of local investigators at the embassy. A lot of times, as always when we're dealing with these folks, a lot of the things they did were self-serving. They liked to maintain the Spanish community were an important part of the embassy, which they were. A lot of times we would go overboard. I had a staff there that was very good, that had very good contacts with the local Spanish police, both the Guardia Civil and the Spanish national police, who were also, by the way, the Guardia Civil were the border police, the Spanish national police were national police and they sometimes had their differences, competitiveness. But we had good working relationships with both sides. I met very frequently with contacts in the Spanish National Police and the Guardia Civil over issues involving embassy security. Especially on the issue of embassy employees being the targets of criminal acts. If you were assigned to the embassy in Madrid for three years, there was pretty much, it was a given that you or a member of your family was going to be the victim of a criminal act. My own family, it happened to. We were out at a party at the DCM's one night. We had a high school girl at the American School who happened to be Spanish also, she babysat for us all the time. And while we were gone, someone broke into the house with the babysitter there, with the kids there. The police came immediately. We went right home. The next day, met with the police and said this is unacceptable. The DATT, in fact, the defense attachï¿½, he was having a dinner party downstairs in his house and while he was downstairs one of these guys had crawled up on to the roof of his villa and into the upstairs and robbed him. So this was a major problem. But they had this guy in custody within 24 hours who had broken into their house. He was a heroin addict. That was a big problem there at the time, heroin addicts.

Q: That was more or less the source of the...

DEERING: Yeah. And he had no weapons. He picked up a baseball bat out in the front. He admitted it to us. And the disturbing thing was while we had good relationships with the police when it got turned over to the judicial side, the feeling was, this guy had a record a mile long, they put him back on the street and their idea was, well we'll find him dead in a gutter one day because he's a heroin addict. Didn't resolve the problem of his going back into other people's houses. But crime was a big problem. Like I mentioned earlier, crime was a big problem for the tourists but it was also a big problem for embassy. We had our guard force for the high profile individuals in the embassy. We had set up a checkpoint to see if anyone was being followed. We had a protection program set up using our local resources.

I think a keystone to the success we had with the national police was that in 1987 we, through the antiterrorism assistance program which was kind of in its beginning stages then, we arranged for a contingent of Spanish national police, about 15 or 20, to go to the United States for two weeks' training with a local sheriff's department in Florida in use of helicopters in tactical police work, unheard of concept in Europe. Helicopters were not used like we use helicopters here. They were for military uses or for commercial uses but they weren't being used at all for traffic control, for emergency evacuation, for police tactical situations. So we sat down with the Spanish and right up to the level, up to the director of the Spanish national police and said, "This is an important program. Why don't you take us up on this?" And they did. In fact, I was the escort and the liaison for the team with the local police and we also gave them a tour of Florida, did the Florida thing. So it was a very good liaison program and probably started the Spanish off in the direction of how they could utilize other resources, hopefully in the war on terrorism, also.

As I said, it was a very active environment. At the same time, we had other, more routine things that we do at the embassies, including investigations and security checks and working, liaison with our other folks in the embassies, trying to keep up with what was going on. You're the sheriff of the embassy, the RSO, the RSO's the sheriff of the embassy. So it was a busy time. One of the things that I, like I say, I think what I learned early on in my career was the importance of good liaison and reaching out and establishing relationships with the various folks in the embassy. By that time, as you're well aware, State Department employees were the minority in the embassy. We were the caretakers almost. So you had to have good relationships. In Spain there was a large military contingent. There was a JUSMAAG was there. There was a military assistance group there. There was a naval group there and a large commercial section, a large agricultural section. No AID. A large USIA operation. So it was important to reach out and get these people on board as allies, not opposing, not make life difficult so they wouldn't cooperate. Although if you're doing your job in security it makes life difficult. So it was a busy time.

I also enjoyed it. We got involved in a lot of the activities in the embassy. Played on the embassy softball team, played on the embassy basketball team. We played the Chinese. We had an active softball league. My wife at the time got involved in Spanish theater. So it was a very active time and almost constantly on the move.

Q: At that time I guess there were two major forces internationally in terrorism. One was Libya and the other was the ones connected with the Palestine, PLO, Abu Nidal and other ones. Were those, and Spain being Spain, I would think they would be, have ties in that.

DEERING: Iranians, also. I don't think Spain, Spain was totally consumed by problems with ETA. Hard to convince, I think, at times, hard to convince them that they had these other elements there but it was an environment ripe for a culture that had ties, whether they wanted to admit or not, back to the Moors. The senior local investigator, who I thought highly of, sometimes he'd drive me nuts, I think it was a love-hate relationship but he had very good contacts with everybody. I remember we went to, went with the ambassador, the ambassador's first trip to Barcelona and there was some local Catalonian mayor was doing the address and the mayor started spouting off in a direction of the Catalonians are separatists, we're our own. I remember Joe, sitting next to me, the local investigator, just mumbling and grumbling because he was from Madrid. Actually he was from up north. The part of Spain that he was from where the Moors never got that far north. I finally got a way to get at Joe. I said, "Joe, your name is Jose M. Oreste. I've done some research, Joe. Done some research on your family tree." Spoke English very well, in fact he had worked in England a number of years. He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I went back and I spent some time working on this, Joe and I found out that you've been told throughout your life that your middle name is Miguel, Jose Miguel Oreste. I found out, Joe, you'll be really disappointed. Your middle name is Mahmood, Jose Mahmood Oreste." The typical Spanish response but Joe, he's a good guy. As I said, the Spanish, very proud people, could be very standoffish. We were lucky. We got housing in a, it was a standalone, there were five apartments and there was like four levels, the bottom, the first, the second and the third. Person who built this lived in one of the units. Two of the other people were high school buddies and they were all professionals. And the fourth person was a German engineer and his Spanish wife, or German wife and Spanish engineer. So we lived in this building with these folks and they kind of took us in, under their wings and we became very good friends with most of them and socialized with them, which was not usual for getting close in a short period of time with the Spanish people. But it made for a more enjoyable time there, no question about that, also. If something happened, if something went wrong, that night the robber broke into our thing and that was through outside security and inside security and he just came in and they were there, as soon as the babysitter woke up and went running for help. So, again, making sure that you have friends wherever you are is important.

Q: Were you there and my dates are a little confused but when that whole area was sort of in a turmoil over that Achille Lauro business?

DEERING: Yeah that actually happened, it think it happened, Achille Lauro happened, was it '85 or '86?

Q: I'm not sure. It was in that time...

DEERING: It was in that time frame because as we go on to my local guard contractor in Damascus, my next assignment, he was the one that went with the RSO in Damascus, the RSO sent him up to one of the port cities in Syria where they had recovered the remains of the American. Klinghoffer. And he had to bring these remains back to the embassy. But it was in that time frame, around '86.

Q: I was wondering whether there were any repercussions there. Things were happening in, well obviously, Egypt and then in Italy with Sigonella, the plane being forced down and all. I was just wondering.

DEERING: There were anti-American demonstrations from time to time outside the embassy but, again, I think the Spanish were more consumed and ETA was extremely active. Right after I got there, a week after I got there, not even a mile from the embassy a car bomb blew up one of the vehicles that was carrying senior Guardia Civil officers. And then there was the incident where one of the big generals, his car was, they had planned for years and had burrowed under the street. So when his car parked there, blew the car up over top of the building. I don't know whether you remember that incident or not. So they were very, very consumed. We had to keep reminding them, hey, there are other people here that want to do you harm.

Q: Did we pick up any stuff about ETA that we passed on, that you know of?

DEERING: Yeah, we were working very closely with the Spanish authorities on providing any kind of assistance. I know the FBI legal attachï¿½, located up in Paris and the assistant legal attachï¿½ would come down, covered. They were working with the Spanish authorities on trying to resolve the kidnapping of a senior, that's not the right term, a well-known Spanish industrialist who had been kidnapped and was being held for ransom. The Spanish government was working very closely with the FBI on some logistical support for trying to locate and recover this person. So, yeah, there were on-going discussions.

Q: Did we have any contacts regarding Spain with, say, the Moroccan authorities or anything that you know of?

DEERING: We didn't have any contacts along those lines. Our contacts were strictly with the Spanish national police, the Guardia Civil and the security related environment for the embassy. Now that included investigations. Again, investigations, there were also, we had some major investigations. Every time there was one of these incidents it had to be investigated and there was no FBI in Madrid. In fact, they had pulled out of Madrid and said there wasn't enough work there, back in the late Seventies. Of course, they wanted to get back in again and there was some question and I still question, they have limited authority to do anything anyhow. The legal attachï¿½s are there for liaison, they're not supposed to be conducting investigations in the foreign country. They were trying to get back in, I know they're back in now, at the embassy but anytime anything happened, under our protective intelligence responsibilities, DS has a role in investigating these incidents. Now, from the criminal side, under the Omnibus Terrorist Act, it's the FBI's responsibility. Well, the FBI, as I said there were many incidents in the two years that I was there. Of course, myself, with my local investigator, we were there 24 hours before the FBI. The FBI didn't like that. My comment to them was, hey, folks you're in Paris. "Well, you're supposed to call us." My responsibility is to the embassy first. If I'm directed to do something, that's what I will go and do. I will get in touch with you, eventually. The incident involving the navy enlisted man that was killed in the grenade attack on the day after Christmas and we were down there within 12 hours, the next morning interviewing, working with the Naval Investigative Service on shifts. The FBI guy was not happy about that, because they couldn't get anybody down there because all their people were on leave.

Q: Well now, who did the grenade at the USO?

DEERING: That one was another one that was never solved and you know what, it's an incident that has been forgotten. It's been forgotten. I would venture to guess that , other than the guy's family, probably nobody even remembers that incident. What happened was, somebody came by, rolled a grenade into this bar that the USO sponsored. It was not in a good area of town. I remember, when I went there, we went there to look at the place, there was still blood on the floor and there was a park right outside where there were needles. It could have been anything, could have been anything. The guy could have been somebody who didn't like the GI's going there. Who knows? That was never resolved. I believe it was part of this infrastructure of this, Red Brigades, International Brigade, Red Army Faction, yeah. Japanese Red Army was the other one that was very active. But there again, remember, they were kind of terrorists for lease. And we believe they were active, also. Mikimoro, we believe that, not this guy who was caught, believe there were three or four of those that were operating in Europe. A lot of that was never resolved as to who it was. And again, you have to remember that there still was only a fledgling response in the U.S. government to these incidents.

Q: Well, of course, there was a measure of response to the bombing of the nightclub in Berlin. That was the bombing of Libya, which led to

DEERING: We believe there were some other ties into that one, too. The Syrians probably had some influence over that one. That was a time where I think it was an easy operating environment for these groups because the Spanish were more concerned with ETA and these other separatist groups in Spain. So literally they went down at a main intersection in the middle of the night where it was set uthis homemade rocket launcher that had like tubes and these things at night. That kind of duded, out but I mean this is a major thoroughfare in Spain. And, again, launched successful attacks against our facilities there which today would draw a whole lot of attention and a whole lot of response. But there just wasn't the response at that time. It was, "Go find out what you can find out." I did a lot of reporting on that stuff.

Q: How about our consulate in Bilbao, sort of the heart of Basque country?

DEERING: It was but there were no, I do not recall any major problems up at Bilbao. I think I visited there only once. A small consulate, I think three people, that's all. No, as I said, the Basques did not target American interests directly.

One other thing I didn't dwell on. I mentioned earlier, I think, while I was there investigating the very unfortunate incident. As I mentioned, there was a great concern over all these activities and their attempts to get at us where we were. We got a call one day from, I guess it was from Washington that Immigration in Florida had called DS headquarters and said, "Hey, we got a situation here. We got this Iranian we grabbed because we looked at his passport and he got a visa, a legitimate visa, in Madrid, Spain. But when we questioned him he said he'd never been to Madrid, Spain and there was no stamp on his passport, on his Iranian passport, that showed that he had entered, that he had ever entered Spain. He couldn't answer any questions about how did he get this visa." "Well, I just got it." And then another one popped up, somewhere along the east coast of Florida.

So we determined early on that these were, in fact, legitimate visas issued in Madrid. I mean legitimate, they weren't counterfeit. So we had a real problem, then, on our hands, major problem. What's going on here? Well, again, this is the fall of 1989. I'd gotten there in the summer. And, with everything else going on, we then had to launch a major internal investigation in conjunction with the consul general and bring him into our confidence and of course the ambassador, DCM. Something is wrong here. This has got major ramifications. There are visas being issued here in Madrid to at least we know two Iranians, we don't know how many more. It turned out there were quite a few more. What happened was, there was a very aggressive assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Florida, in Miami, who said, "I'm going after this. This is my case now, it popped up first, first entry in Miami." He took over the investigation under the direction of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida and once that happens then you can't just let these things go. We worked very closely with the consul general, who was very upset. This can't be happening on my watch, kind of thing, what's going on here.

Well we started the investigation in a couple different directions. One looking at how these passports were getting into the embassy, who might be involved. Who's involved in the embassy? We determined that it had to be an American. We also determined that there was another individual involved. We did some phone checks. We did some other checks. And we found out that there was a consular officer who happened to be the chief of the antifraud section who had some classic bones to pick with the system. He had been, I think it was the consulate in Belfast and the IRA had blown up a car across the street. He had gotten hurt in the explosion. His household goods had been lost at sea and he'd been passed over for promotion a few times. We found out that he had, on home leave, had been seeing an Iranian doctor or some connection to an Iranian doctor out on the West Coast of California. We then determined that this was a person that was bringing these passports in. And we also were able to, through basic police work with the Spanish authorities, we found the guy had been at a hotel at the time that phone calls were being made in and visas were being brought in. We put the whole package together.

The consular officer was a very popular member of the embassy community and as a result myself and the RSO, when word gets out, word something is going on here and then the ambassador basically had to call in the consular officer and say, "You've got two choices here. You can curtail, go back to an overcomplement thing while we resolve this thing or I will declare no confidence." He left, went back to Washington. Investigation continued, of course. Our reputation became sullied that we were on a witch hunt. This was people that didn't know what was going on. It was a difficult time and it went on for about three or four months. Also, the consular officer in question had a major accident right before Christmas outside his house where he fell down off a ladder and had shears go into his throat. Unfortunately the doctor who did the surgery and the person who found him and everything else, I believe it was a suicide attempt. It was a very, very unfortunate chain of events. Ultimately, the officer in question was arrested back in Washington and he spent three years in prison for visa fraud. We still don't really know, the amount of what he was getting in return was not significant. It was just a very, it was the worst of the Foreign Service. It also showed that the system worked.

Q: For somebody listening, to put in context, when you say Iranian visas, one today thinks in terms of terrorists, particularly in those days. Well for years, Iranians have been trying to get into the United States, getting the hell out of their country. These were often families of relatively well to do people. As a consular officer, as soon as an Iranian would show up, anywhere, you'd say, "Oh, my God" because they were basically shopping for visas. We had Iranians coming in from American Samoa.

DEERING: But what was wrong here was that none of the Iranians ever came to Spain. They were never there. The visas were being brought in and the problem there is you don't really know what you have until you can find all the people, as you're well aware. Were there ever any indications that terrorists were using it? No, I don't think we ever determined that but I'm not sure that we ever found out how many there were.

Q: The problem of people buying illegal visas is a tremendous concern. I've been a consul general four times and this is something, I wiped out an entire section of locals, of foreign service nationals, in Seoul, Korea.

DEERING: Quite frankly, that's what we were looking for. We were looking for the local connection here.

Q: But you're always worried about the Americans. It unfortunately is one of the few places where Foreign Service Officers can be tempted. Most of the rest of the time, I mean outside of a little finagling and contracting and all that, I mean this is a commodity.

DEERING: As we say, it's the gold standard. U.S. passport and visa are the gold standards for all other documents. It was a major problem. These cases become public knowledge. When an arrest is made, I'm trying to remember, I don't know if there was even a trial, I think there was a plea agreement on that one. Still, it's out there. It's part of the Foreign Service training but yet greed, greed has no social...

Q: Sometimes it's even, I'm not condoning it at all but sometimes it's compassion. Sometimes there isn't even money involved. Sometimes there's sex, too.

DEERING: Oh, yeah. Believe me, I've seen them all. I've been involved with many of them. You're right, there is, with the visa, if you have a weakness, a character weakness and you're in that position, that certainly is one of the positions in the Foreign Service, other than on the espionage side, where you can be exploited. People think exploitation's only for intelligence matters. Not true.

Q: No. Tell me, this of course puts you in a very difficult position when you, you've got information that you can't share with the rest of the community. Did you find that the rest of the community, of the sort of Foreign Service community in Madrid, sort of came around to realize what had happened?

DEERING: I think ultimately, yes. It stretched out for a long time. I think it was actually after I, it was at the time I was leaving that things were finally, totally resolved. But I can remember people who were close to him, nobody ever was nasty, it was just little snide remarks. "Don't you have something better to do?" When you're conducting an investigation you do not divulge what you're doing. It's not a matter of discussion for the community. Unfortunately it becomes discussion.

Q: And erroneous data

DEERING: And erroneous data and people don't want to believe that the guy that they went to dinner with, the guy that they socialize with, the guy they worked with, my God, no, no, not him. What are you guys doing? I had one political officer basically said that to me. Pulled me aside in his office, "Let's talk about this thing." It was his wife who found him lying on the ground that day when he fell off the ladder and they were very close. They lived in the same neighborhood. "Come on, come on, what are you doing, what are you doing? This is crazy. You can't be focusing in here." I said, "Look, it will go where it goes and I'm not going to discuss it with you." Oh yeah, myself and the RSO, Gary Schatz, we took some shots on that but in the end

Q: Well, it's what you've got to do.

DEERING: You gotta do what you gotta do.

Q: I have to say as a consular officer we used to get a lot of shots. "What do you mean by refusing this?"

DEERING: Sure. It's a lot easier to give than refuse, isn't it? But again, that was a major, that consumed a major part of our time there, along with all this other stuff going on.

Q: I sympathize with you. Well now, in 1988 you're off to where?

DEERING: Off to Damascus.

Q: Into the belly of the beast as far as terrorism

DEERING: It's interesting. I go to Madrid for my first assignment, obviously it's not a hardship post. However, when you get there, the workload and everything else, what might not be a hardship post certainly can create some hardship. I remember it was bidding time in the fall of 1987 and I said, "I took Spanish, doing all right with my Spanish, wrote my thesis on Latin America." Bid on, I think I bid on Ecuador, bid on Peru, I bid on something else, I don't know. Three or four assignments in Latin America and I didn't get any. So I remember getting a call from one of my, it was the surrogate call from the director, saying, "Well, Damascus has not been bid on yet. We strongly suggest that you consider Damascus." I said, "I've got Spanish, I want to go to Latin America." "None of the posts you want are available. We think you should consider Damascus. The alternatives are several African posts."

The time I got there, complete turnover in post management. A new ambassador...

Q: Who was the ambassador?

DEERING: Ed Djerejian. A new DCM, John Craig. New admin officer, at that time we were still reporting to the admin officer in the chain of command, Charlie Algeron. New political officer, David Litt. Charlie's wife, Kathy, was the number two political officer. New econ officer, there was a whole new team. Everybody's going in there at the same level of knowledge of what's going on in Damascus. Damascus had a history and there was a lot going on there. Again, to me, my biggest challenge was, number one, I had no assistant. One RSO. Had a shared secretary that didn't even come until like six months after we were there, shared with the admin officer. Had a local guard force that was locally contracted and paid by the embassy and the one guy that was hired to set up and run the guard force, he became my... Actually, he was a Syrian but he had U.S. citizenship because he married an American gal and went to the States for awhile and he spoke good English. But again, he had his own agenda, a lot of these people do and he had to, he was closely watched by the Syrian security apparatus because of his close ties. So he had to play both sides of the fence and I understood that but he could get me in to see the people I needed to see in the Syrian security apparatus. So that was the first thing I decided I had to do, I had to establish a relationship with the people that provided support for the embassy in case something went wrong, even though it's a country where, do they really care if anything goes wrong? Well, I found out, shortly after being there and I had excellent support from the admin, DCM and ambassador on setting up a security program. Guard orders had to be completely rewritten. The Emergency Action Plan was old and outdated. The first thing the ambassador said, "I want it up to date." Ed Djerejian was a very strong supporter of the security program at post. So it was a busy time, again and, unlike Spain there's not a lot of cultural things to do in Damascus, the oldest city in the Middle Easand basically it looked like it.

Probably the biggest regret I had was no opportunity for language training. So I had to depend on translation for dealing with my counterparts and there's always something lost there. You're never sure that the person that's representing you is translating things the way you wanted and you're not sure he's not watering down whatever's coming back.

But I worked to get and establish a relationship with the political security director, which was responsible for security issues and I did that early on. There was a General Gharib, who was the number two guy in the political security directorate. General Gharib was also a high school classmate of President Assad. So General Gharib pretty much did what General Gharib wanted to do. General Gharib had a wife who spoke French fluently and spoke some English. General Gharib probably spoke a little bit of English but not much. But I could go to him and we developed a good working relationship over the time I was there, and I could to depend on him to come across with assistance when I needed it. Of course, one of the first things that happened after I got there was Pan Am 103.

Q: That's the one that fell down on Lockerbie.

DEERING: Fell down on Lockerbie. Of course, we received, when that happened, all the embassies, "Go, talk to your locals. Make sure security is up." You know, the old alert thing. I went and talked to him and of course then he wanted to speculate on who did this. Of course his theory was the Israelis did it. Which I expected his theory would be, all an Israeli plot. Why not, they have the capabilities to do it, blah blah blah, blah blah blah. But that was part of the game, it was part of the game. But, as I said, I developed a good working relationship with General Gharib and whenever I had the opportunity to go see him, I would. We'd sit and have coffee and it worked very well. He actually came to my house for some social events, which was unheard of among the Syrian security services, and through contacts in our embassy we determined that there was a great deal of discussion in other security elements as to what General Gharib was doing going to an American's house for a social event. Well, as I said, General Gharib didn't really care because he was a high school classmate of President Assad and he basically could do no wrong. And again, let's face it, if he's going and socializing with Americans, he's picking up information on what's going on, also. So it was all a gentleman's game there, it was. The Syrians by this time, this was 1988, it was apparent to Assad, I mean there's no doubt in my mind, that his mentor was in trouble, the Soviet Union. He had his neighbor there in Baghdad, who he couldn't stand, Saddam Hussein. It was apparent that with the demise of the Soviet Union, Assad probably figured that out more quickly than a lot of other people in the region, that mentor was going to be gone and he was going to have to deal with the Americans. And basically the way it worked was, from the security point of view, word was out, literally and figuratively, that leave the Americans alone. They're here in our country, do not, do not, bother the Americans. So as long as we maintained our p's and q's there weren't any problems. There were a couple of incidents with an overzealous defense attachï¿½'s office where they were brought home with their tails between their feet.

Q: In other words, getting out rather aggressively?

DEERING: Rather aggressively going to some areas they shouldn't have gone into and being brought home and with a smirking foreign minister saying, "Here are your people. Now, tell them they shouldn't do things like that. They're lucky they didn't get into more trouble." But as we came, with the invasion of Kuwait and the relationship that then was developing with the Syrians and the necessity for the Syrians to be on board in 1991.

Q: They sent troops.

DEERING: They did and the ambassador did an outstanding job working with the Syrians, working to maintain that, maintain their presence in the alliance. Of course, Secretary of State Baker made many trips to Syria in the time between the invasion of Kuwait and the actual end of the war. He was there I believe a half a dozen times.

Q: So you were there from '88

DEERING: '88 to '91, I extended a year.

Q: So you covered the...

DEERING: It was an interesting time also because if you recall there were Americans who believed that because of their contacts in Lebanon back in the early and mid-Eighties that they were immune from the terrorists groups in Lebanon, all the ones who were captured. There were five or six, seven maybe American hostages from what's his name, Terry Anderson down to the poor guy who was selling bibles on the street. There was a move afoot to use the Syrians to get these people their freedom and they did. That started while I was there. Had several hostage releases where we went and picked them up at the foreign ministry and brought them out, back to the ambassador's residence. So that was an interesting time. But the lead up to the Gulf War, it was an experience I hadn't gone through before.

As I said, one of the things the ambassador wanted me to do right away was get our Emergency Action plan updated and the Emergency Action Plan is probably, now it's much easier to do because it's all, everything's computerized. But at that time, that was, I don't know how old it was but it was totally out of date. And you can't do one of those by yourself. You have to depend on everybody in the embassy who has any part of that thing to stop doing what they're doing or put some time aside to do that. And nobody likes to do that because it's just a pain in the neck, it really is. Of course the RSO is the one that gets stuck with putting the whole thing together. I remember, it was shortly after I got back from R&R, I was in the States when the invasion occurred. Actually, it was right before I left, a week before I left, because the ambassador had said in a country team meeting, "Walter, how's the EAP coming?" I said, "Sir, I've done everything I can. There's a couple of sections I'm still waiting on." Well, Ambassador Djerejian, much to my liking, he just sat there and he said, "Okay, I don't know who hasn't done their sections but I will ask Walter after this meeting who hasn't done their sections and if they're not done within the next week I don't care who you are or what your job is or who is supposed to be doing it for you, but if it's not done, you are going home." Now, it was done, it got done and it was done in a timely manner because it had a lot of evacuation stuff. We had teams coming in to look at our evacuation routes and everything else. And it was done prior to the outbreak of the Gulf War. We were the first one to have an updated plan in the Middle East.

Again, having the support of the people that you're working for in the security job is extremely important because it is, it's a tough job and if you're doing your job it makes life difficult sometimes for some other people. We had the same kind of things there. Security violations, problems with the marines and problems with other things and everyday life. However, there was no crime.

Q: Tell me, when you arrived there, I think at that point our embassy in Beirut had been blown up twice, I guess and barracks had been blown up.

DEERING: It was closed. The embassy was closed.

Q: Yeah, but I'm saying, was there any concern that somehow or another our embassy in Damascus might be a target?

DEERING: Oh, sure. Number one, there was no stand back from the street. The embassy came right up to the street. We did the best we could to upgrade the security. There had been a couple instances where the students had climbed up on the roof of the embassy. There were a couple demonstrations before I'd gotten there. That was how the Syrian security services let their people vent their anger at our support of the Israelis. It was orchestrated and in fact, as you may recall, not too many years ago, the ambassador's wife was trapped in the safe haven of the embassy residence there when the embassy residence was trashed. No, there was always that concern, what if? But what if in Damascus was not what if the embassy had blown up. Everything was predicated on what if Hafez Assad had died. What if we wake up in the morning and the previous night Hafez Assad passed away? That was the big What If, because like so many of the dictatorships in the region, much like Iraq, certainly, the leadership was a minority. The Alawites, 15 per cent of the population in Syria, ruled by terror. In 1982, when Hama, the Potemkin village that's there now. What happened there, I learned a lot of this actually from my contact there, General Gharib. He gave me a lot of history lessons on what happened in Syria. But interestingly enough one of the things when I first got there, Spain was just full of mopeds, motorbikes, little motorcycles. When I left Spain, one of the things, when I got to Syria, I noticed, what's missing? Old cars, like the 1950's and Sixties but I said something's missing here. There were no motorcycles, no motorbikes, no mopeds. What I found out, what I learned subsequently was that as a result of the Muslim Brotherhood's activities in the early Eighties, in their attempt to get rid of Assad, which resulted in the army destroying Hama, the mode of delivery for a lot of the attacks were satchel charges thrown at government buildings from motorcycles, motorbikes. So, how do you resolve that problem? You just outlaw motorbikes and that's what he did. So when I was there you'd see all the rich kids driving around in Mercedes, fancy cars from the States, Porsches and stuff, they'd parade up and down the main drag there. No motorcycles, no motorbikes. At the very end, a couple of them. But what happened was there was a government meeting that outlawed motorbikes because they were only used to, they were a threat to the regime. So, again, the fear was, not will the American Embassy be attacked by terrorists but what will happen if President Assad dies suddenly. And he was rumored to be sick for years and years and years before he finally died, with all kinds of diseases. So our Emergency Action Plan was more predicated on the scenario of tanks rolling in the streets, of an uprising of the Muslim Brotherhood if Assad were to die and there would be confusion. The fact is that the ruling minority occupied all the major positions of influence, but the masses were the Sunnis. So that was our scenario. Everything was based on, how we going to shut down, what are we going to do if that happens. It never happened and it was probably overplayed because when in did happen...

Q: But that's not your job. Your job is to figure out a worst case scenario.

DEERING: And that was the worst case scenario. That's what we always talked about, what happens if? Because, as I said, as we all, the new team, got there, most of these folks were Arabists, anyhow, so they understood a lot more than I did at the time, what the politics of the Middle East were. The point being it became readily apparent that the Syrians were interested in our wellbeing. They were not interested in our becoming targets of opportunity for any group in Syria. And I mentioned earlier, I think, at some point in time, crime was not a problem. You could leave your doors unlocked.

In fact, I lived on al-Malki, which was the main drag that came up to where the president's residence was and the embassy down another side street there. President Assad would go out every month or so to early, he'd go to the mosque early in the morning for various things but only for special occasions. And if that happened, again, they didn't have the resources to check cars and everything else. So what they did was, what the Syrians did was, any street where the motorcade was going to go by, the cars had to be gone. Now they might announce at ten o'clock in the evening that three or five o'clock in the morning the streets had to be cleared, but I'm not going to know that. I would get, sometimes eleven o'clock at night, I'd get a very polite knock on the door and it would be Syrian security saying, "Your car has to be off the street. Go park it around the side." If something happened and I wasn't notified, I'd know that there'd been a presidential motorcade because I'd find my car pulled around the street. That happened once or twice. They were very polite about it.

Of course, the point also was that the Soviet Union was their mentor and the East German embassy was right next to my house. It was kind of interesting to see the changes there as the Soviet Union fell. They became friendly. They would say hello to me.

It became apparent that the scenario we had to work on was who's going to get revenge on us after Assad goes? Are we going to become the targets of these groups who are just going to go striking out at people? How the Syrians did their security was quite simple. Everyone was an informant. Sixty per cent of the taxi drivers were informants. If you walked home from the embassy, which I did often, it was only a five or ten minute walk, on every street corner was Syrian security in their jeans and leather jackets and they would just report on your movements as you walked by. And you know what? I didn't have to worry about anything. So that was what was going on.

Now we had other concerns. We had an American school there, which was right across the street from the air force headquarters, the Syrian air force, which was one of the more hard-handed intelligence units there. If you remember old what's his name, Colonel North, at one point in time suggested to the president that they take out the Syrian air headquarters, some time back I believe that was and the American school was right next to that. But I became involved on the school board and activities with the kids at school, was president of the school board the last year I was there, which also was enlightening, because the majority of the population at the school were Syrians and they had to have permission from the foreign ministry for their sons or daughters to attend the school there. So you had all kinds there.

The other interesting thing was the Sheraton Hotel, the restaurant and the British pub, we used to go there for entertainment and of course you could see anybody there. It was like the old, I like to thing of it as, remember the bar scene in Star Wars, where you had all these different things sitting around the table?

Q: From alien worlds.

DEERING: Right, right. That was it. Different people were terrorists, known terrorists. People were there, you rubbed shoulders with them. You'd sit there but, again, it was hands off the Americans.

Q: Were you tasked, or were the other agencies, with keeping an eye out for terrorist organizations that were reputed, purportedly kept in Syria?

DEERING: Oh, sure, I always kept my ears open. I had a very, what I considered to be an aggressive, counterintelligence awareness program at post. You had to understand, of course, that blood is thicker than water and the Syrians who worked at the embassy they were all subjected to being called in, frequently, depending on what position they had at the embassy, to report on who they were working for and what was going on. So my intent was, let's work the positive side of this. And I would have meetings with the local staff. Security awareness meetings, I would call them, but would cover the whole gamut. And I would be upfront with them. And I said, "Look, I understand. You have a problem here. The society you work in requires that you cooperate with your friendly local security service. Quite frankly, I don't have a problem with that, because you have to do what you have to do. The problem I have is, if I find out through my other, my own sources that you may be crossing the line a little bit and jeopardizing the welfare of our people and the security of our facilities to include your own, then we're going to have a little talk." Well then I get the people who would come in and start telling me meetings they got called into. Then I get those who never came in at all. And you know who I was concerned about? The ones that came in and talked to me, more than the ones who didn't. So that was my little game there but of course that had its downside, too, because then I became known to the services as being aggressive myself. I remember towards the end of my tour the ambassador called me into his office. "Walter, we got a little problem." Kind of a smile on his face. The DCM was there also. I said, "What's going on?" "I just got back from the foreign ministry and the foreign ministry tells me that one of the services wants you out of the country. So keep up the good work." So, little anecdotes like that made up for, hey, you're doing your job, you're doing your job.

Q: Well, what happened immediately when Kuwait was invaded and the aftermath?

DEERING: I was out of the country. I was on R&R. I called up and said, "You want me right now?" They said, "No, finish your R&R. Then be prepared to go to work when you get back." I went back and we had to prepare for, we had to go through the phases, the meetings. Do we shut down the embassy, do we shut down certain things? How do we deal with the teachers, the American teachers? How do we deal with the few American businesses that are here? That was all part of the planning process but we kept well ahead of the game and ultimately we didn't, we never went to a mandatory evacuation. We had a voluntary, where all family members left. No family members stayed behind. Shortly after the end of the ground war the option was reopened fairly quickly for the family members to come back in. It did effect the school. My kids, my wife and I were separated at the time, the kids were with me and they had to leave and go back to the States, with their mom. Fortunately she had established a residence there so actually it worked out better than it could have from that perspective. But we did, I think, within three days, two days, of the commencement of hostilities we evacuated the last of the people who had held out until then. Right up until the end I think we all knew what was coming but maybe at the last minute old Saddam would change his mind. He didn't. We were never put in the position, it was never an evacuation under duress. It was with the full cooperation of the Syrian authorities.

Q: Was there any concern about Scuds? Syria sent the equivalent to a division, didn't they or something there?

DEERING: No, we didn't, we never felt, I remember we went through this exercise early on of where, what are we going to do for our people? Are we going to get these specialized gas masks and suits and everything else? I believe, as I recall, there was some stuff that was sent over and put in warehouse. So my argument was if it makes everybody feel better, fine. But I said, "Let's fact it, unless you got this thing with you all the time, it's not going to do you much good." And then it was also this thing just like here, go out and buy duct tape and seal your windows and I'm going, what is wrong with you? Let's get a grasp here. I did get called to come meet with them, the Germans and the French. The Brits weren't back yet. The Germans, the French, the Italians, the Australians, the Canadians. "What are you doing, what are you doing for your people? We've got all this stuff here but we don't know how. Can you train?" "No, I'm not a trainer on this stuff. My advice is tell the people it's there and we can get it if we need it." That was kind of, to me, not a realistic approach to the problem. I don't think we had the fear of the Scuds like they did in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and others because, why would he waste the Scuds on Damascus? Ultimately he's going to have to make nice with Damascus again. Are you going to waste your weaponry, which was limited already, on a neighboring Arab capital? That was never really a thought. Now, a wayward Scud perhaps that went over or something like that?

Q: Could be, because they weren't very accurate.

DEERING: No, but again, remember, there was no love lost between Hafez Assad and Saddam Hussein and I think ultimately Hafez Assad had given the green light for a lot more to happen than we ever knew about, in terms of how things were to be done.

Q: Did you get requests or attempts to find out about terrorists who were located in Syria? Was Syria the host to terrorist groups?

DEERING: Syria was the R&R location for Middle East terrorists. Training, R&R. There were several that were residing in Damascus, including our friend, Carlos. Also the Bhutto family. Mir Murtaza Bhutto, who was the brother of the prime minister, educated in the United States, had a daughter born in the United States. However, he was the architect of the revenge plot against those who killed his father and he was responsible for the hijacking of some aircraft, so he was on our list. His daughter attended the American school, Damascus Community School, played with the ambassador's daughter. Very well spoken, articulate person, educated in the Ivy League. Sat next to him at dinner several times, met with him. His wife, who he finally married, was Lebanese. When he lived in the States, his wife, there was some conspiracy thing, they tried to have him kill his wife. He ultimately married this Lebanese lady who had been taking care of his children by the previous wife and they lived in Damascus. I remember, again, this was 1989 because my wife was still there, she went out to lunch with a group of ladies including some from the embassy and Mir Bhutto's wife, and Mrs. Bhutto invited them all home for tea after they all went to I think a Turkish bath or something in Damascus, I don't remember exactly what it was. But my wife came back and said, "It's very strange. We went to her house, completely surrounded by Syrian security who let us in to the compound area there and we went up, very nice apartment, big Damascene apartment, fireplace. I'm leaning on the mantelpiece of the fireplace and I look and there is a picture of Muammar Qadhafi, signed, 'To Mir with fondness, Muammar'." Also in that compound were rumored to be Carlos the Jackal and the head of the PFLP-GC, the General Command, the Syrian captain, I can't think of his name, his son was just killed by somebody in Lebanon, an assassination but the well-known leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, back in the Eighties and Nineties. So it was a hodge podge. These people there, they were there under the watchful eyes of the Syrians.

But again, the thing that the Syrians most feared was the Muslim Brotherhood, still and there were still cells of Muslim Brotherhood operating throughout Damascus. I remember one of my first nights there with the kids we were in the kitchen and again I looked down over my balcony. We were eating dinner and all a sudden there were gunshots, right outside the window. I said, "Down!" Everyone went down. It passed by. The explanation was that the Syrian security services were chasing some smugglers, smugglers down Malki Avenue, shooting at them. Explanation from other sources was that this was Muslim Brotherhood, they had gotten involved in something that went bad and they were being chased. There were certain individuals who I had some faith in that were members of the local staff in Damascus that lived up in the hills around Damascus in areas where there was a heavy security presence but there was also rumored to be operating cells of the Muslim Brotherhood. And they told me, you'd hear about an incident somewhere or something happening and the government would say it was just another problem with smugglers, where there were shootouts in neighborhoods between Muslim Brotherhood folks and the Syrian security services. And I would get eyewitness reports from the locals on these incidents and then I would report those back through my channels and through other channels when I got this information.

Q: Did you get any, were you at all concerned or got involved at all in the fact that the Syrians had a sizeable number of troops in Lebanon? Did that spill over into your area?

DEERING: What happened was, we had an office set up in the embassy in Damascus, a political officer, the Lebanese desk officer who was actually working in Syria part of the time, Dave Satterfield, who's now, who was my ambassador when I was in Beirut and he's now, I guess he's in Jordan as the ambassador. But he was the, he was the political officer reporting. He was in Damascus for about a year.

Q: We didn't have, our embassy...

DEERING: We opened up while we were there. Went in several times, had the RSO come in through Damascus to go and set up in Lebanon. I'm trying to remember exactly when we reopened in Lebanon. Was it '89 or '90? The biggest problem was the Lebanese would have to come to Damascus to get visas, so that opened up all kinds of accusations of corruption, everything else. The biggest problem for us with the Lebanese was that we were accused of selling out to the Syrians, getting them to be on our side in the Gulf War and in return letting them go and clean up Lebanon. They bombed the presidential palace and moved the troops in and occupied Lebanon, where they are, to some extent, today. So anyhow Lebanon was just opening up again I guess and I don't remember what, '89 or '90 or '91 when we finally reopened. We closed down Lebanon, started to open up and closed down again when the Gulf War started, I believe. A lot of concern for reopening, I don't recall but again the biggest problem for us in Syria was the fact that the Lebanese had no place to go but Damascus for visas and that created some problems.

Q: What kind of problems?

DEERING: Well, in the visa lines. There was a line for Syrians and a line for Lebanese. We would get, favors were done for people and as a result word got out on the grapevine that there was corruption in Embassy Damascus and these people for whom favors were done would go back and say, "I've got a contact here for you at the embassy." They in fact did have a contact at the embassy but it created a situation where I spent, again, a fair amount of time sorting through this stuff. There was several occasions where I had to have people come over. I was by myself, during this whole time, I had teams come from Washington to look into some of these allegations.

Q: Well, were you able to take care of the problem?

DEERING: Yeah, we took care of the problem. There was no visa fraud per se within the consulate. It was, again, the way business was done. That had to be changed.

Q: Yeah. Did the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that, did you pick up any, this was not expected, really, but once this happened obviously, Gorbachev, things were changing, as you mentioned, you first got there but did that itself, all of a sudden, the change there and Eastern Europe, did you feel any reflections of that where you were?

DEERING: There was certainly a good open working relationship between the embassy, the Russian embassy in Damascus and the American embassy in Damascus. The ambassadors met frequently back and forth between the two embassies. In fact I remember the Russian ambassador liked to play basketball, came over and he'd play basketball, because we had a basketball court at the American school. There was a lot of consultations as I recall in the period leading up to the Gulf War because even then the Russians were supportive of what was going on, in particular. But I didn't, I got the sense that there was more of an openness. Like I said, here were the East German consulate or embassy right next door to where I lived, never knew what was going on there. Then all of a sudden, these people come out and start saying hello to me like I was a long lost friend. And then they shut it down, just shut down. The Germans came in and they went through it with a fine tooth comb.

Q: Well, of course, the East Germans were renowned throughout, certainly Libya and I suppose Syria, of being the best police type, I mean, we're talking about ...

DEERING: Best intelligence services. Of course the Soviets were their mentors.

Q: Yeah but they did the Soviets one up.

DEERING: There was that rumor and I always wondered what was going on in that building next door to me and what are they shooting at the wall of my building. It was an atmosphere, I never felt, I never felt threatened in Damascus. I never felt that Americans were going to be bothered by anyone there, unless we were way out of line in some of those things we were doing. I felt that, as I said it was early on that the Syrians had decided that they were going to take care of us as resident diplomats in their country. There was always a fear of another incident where, if the Syrian population was thinking that the Syrians were selling out to Americans over the whole Israeli thing, then they'd let them vent, there'd be demonstrations and there was a fear of intent to occupy the embassy again like they did previously. So we upgraded some of the security so they couldn't climb over the walls like they did once before, although they succeeded in doing it again. But again, I never got the sense of hostility. The Syrian people, of course I didn't get out into the camps that were around, the Palestinian camps that were, Yarmouk I think was outside of Damascus, and I didn't get down into the grassroots of the Syrian population, the very poor people. However, in going through the old markets, through the restaurants, through the shops, at various places, I never found any hostility, I did not experience any hostility. I never had anybody hissing or spitting. They were generally interested in talking to Americans. What was amazing was after the Gulf War was over, when Secretary Baker came over, he took a tour of the Old City and he was applauded as he walked through the Old City, he was applauded by the Syrian people, en masse. So what the indication was that, again, the regime represented 15 per cent of the population. The hostility that existed at the regime level, I still believe the differences are what our governments believe, not among the people. Again, the way I tried to work was, give everybody a fair shot, give everybody a fair chance and a lot easier to deal with people if you were working at an honest level.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Syrian-American population? Say in Boston. There's a sizeable Syrian-American population in the United States.

DEERING: No, I really didn't. I haven't, unlike, as we get on, I have been maintaining contact with Lebanese people. No, I really didn't have much contact with Syrians in the United States nor have I since I left.

Q: I was wondering whether they ...

DEERING: Oh, a lot of them had relatives in the States. There were also travel restrictions on the Syrians still. You had to get permission to travel to the United States. So those who had contacts with the regime, they could come and go pretty much as they pleased. Again, I say the so-called elite Syrian population. The ones who could afford to pay to send their kids to the American School. They were the businessmen, they were the wheelers and dealers in society. The ones who knew how to play both sides. Was that really the true, that's not the real ...

Q: It's a different ...

DEERING: It's a different world. And I remember, there were a couple incidents. Word gets out as to who you are and what you are. Twice I found notes slid under my door on my way to work in the morning at my apartment. It was all in Arabic. I couldn't read Arabic. I'd take them in and have them translated at the embassy and they were women, trying to get me to take their children. I had a, couple of times there'd be knocks on the door and there would be the Bedouins, Bedouin women with the tattoos. Open my door and they would try literally to hand me their babies. I'd have to push them away. So, like I say, what America represents to different people is different things but criticism of our government, criticism of some of the things we do, it's all fine and good and that's part of the game. Boy, I tell you, there isn't a place yet where I've been where the people don't want to come and see America and what America is.

Q: In '91, where did you go?

DEERING: I went to Miami.

Q: Okay, out from a place with no crime at all to a ...

DEERING: Miami Vice.

Q: You were in Miami from when to when?

DEERING: I arrived in Miami in September of 1991 and I left Miami in August of 1999.

Q: Well, let's set the stage. First, what was your job and then when you arrived there, because these things always change somewhat but when you arrived there what did it consist of?

DEERING: I arrived in Miami as the special agent in charge of the field office. My predecessor had been transferred that summer and I arrived at an office that was comprised of, the Miami Field Office with 16 agents and a support staff and then resident offices in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Atlanta and New Orleans, all under Miami with agents working in those resident offices. Miami traditionally had had a reputation as being probably the most active office in Diplomatic Security as far as criminal investigations program was concerned, primarily because of its location in the southeastern United States, port of entry for all of Latin America and Miami being Miami. A lot of passport and visa cases in Florida. So my job was to take a look at the criminal program and see where any changes needed to be made, any reinvigoration of the program, because when I arrived up in Washington for consultations that was my dictum. You've got a program there that has traditionally been the strongest program in the criminal investigations arena for DS and we want you to build the program. Obviously, it's not the only thing that we do or did down there. We still had responsibility for our protective security operations supporting Washington's program, supporting any details that came up and of course, again, being in Florida, with Disney World and all of the tourist areas there, we had a lot of visitors up into Miami and into Central Florida who often required protective services.

We also had a large resident consular community in South Florida. I think when I arrived there there were about 30, 35 consulates and consulates general and when I left it was about 40. We had the responsibility of ensuring that their security needs were taken care of. We had a very active liaison program with the consular community.

Also, by that time, I should mention, we had gone to a strictly contractor program for our background investigation program and so we had a large contingent of special investigators who were all retired federal law enforcement officers who ran our background investigations.

Q: I must say that sounds like, to me, sounds like prior to it must have been a terrible waste of time to have specialized Department of State security officers running these things. Might be good for the first tour, sort of get your feet on the ground and understand, but after that

DEERING: Well, what happened was, as I mentioned previously, when I came into DS or SY that was one of our main functions, conducting background investigations. With events of the late Seventies and early Eighties in the world of terrorism, it became apparent that we could not do well all of the tasks that were being placed upon us. With the recommendations of the Inman panel and the Omnibus Terrorist Act, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security was created with a specific mission to conduct criminal investigations involving passport and visa fraud, with authority vested by Congress. So when you have X number of agents and you have X number of things to do, some decisions have to be made. So, starting in the early and mid-Eighties, a decision was made to start going to a contract program for background investigations. Remember, at the same time, all the federal agencies were doing their own. The State Department actually was at the forefront in this program of developing a contractor program. The FBI actually copied what we were doing. So we kind of were out there at the tip of the spear back in the mid-Eighties when this whole program was contracted out. Now, there's some pitfalls, too. You're not, I had an agent in Miami who was assigned fulltime to manage the background investigation program because the cases had to be followed, there had to be management responsibility. Ultimately myself or the assistant special agent in charge was signing off on each case that was done but it was the program manager who was a supervisor that was responsible for the day to day monitoring, dealing with the contractors and they were all over the southeastern United States. But to me, a much more effective way, because that's all these guys did.

Q: Yeah, I remember I came into the State Department in '55 and I just had a year of graduate school. I came out of the Air Force Security Service where I had a top secret plus clearance and that was started all over again, I think. Okay but it doesn't seem like a rational system.

DEERING: It wasn't and I think it's a much, we're doing much better now, actually.

Q: Tell me a bit, before we get into some of the details, what was the atmosphere that you came into, both with your office and Miami seems like a world apart.

DEERING: Well, I think, my assistant special agent in charge was someone I had known for a number of years so there were no problems as far as establishing a rapport with the number two guy in the office. I came in there with the reputation as having a, if you look at, everybody's got strengths and weaknesses. My strengths were on the investigative side. So I came in there with the reputation of, we're going to have a good criminal investigative program here. Most of the agents who were in the Miami Field Office were there because they wanted to be involved in a good criminal investigative program. They wanted to be where the action was. So I had good people there. I had good people who knew how to do criminal investigations. A lot of them were former police officers, had background in the military and so they brought a lot of expertise to the office and I had a good group of people when I got there. And then, of course, as time goes on, I was there for eight years, you can kind of mold the office into what you think it should be and try and attract the kind of people that you want to do the job there. So when I got there, as I mentioned, we had a good criminal investigative program but we still had a lot of problems in getting the U.S. Attorneys to take our cases because they weren't very sexy cases.

Q: I was told this by the Immigration Service when I was in, say, in Korea. Okay, you can report all this but nobody in the right mind is. We had a lot of problems in Hawaii. They said, "We're not going to just stir up the Korean community and its politically not very good."

DEERING: So what we had to do is, we had to find allies among the assistant U.S. attorneys. Most of our cases, if we got a case that we began to work, we would have to present that case to an assistant U.S. attorney for consideration. Ultimately the U.S. Attorney would then have to say yea or nay, this is a good case to follow up on, blah blah blah, blah blah blah. Early on in my time there, in the fall of 1991, I got there right around Labor Day, actually, right after Labor Day, we had a case that was dumped into our lap. We had an ARSO in Guatemala. The assistant regional security officer in Guatemala had been standing in a line, I think it was in a movie theater, with a, there was some of the marines from the embassy who were in the line also. And a couple of the locals started getting a little vocal with the marines and before long there was a fight, a significant fight. The assistant regional security officer went to help the marines and he got whacked in the head with a two by four and had to be medevaced to the United States for medical treatment, was pretty messed up. Clark Dittmer, the Director of Diplomatic Security at the time, was very angered by this chain of events and he called down to Miami and said, "I want, it's Guatemala City. I want Miami working with the RSO's office there and we want to find out what happened and open an investigation and see if you can find a U.S. Attorney in Miami who'd be interested in pursuing this." Well, we had an agent who had been working on another case with the U.S. Attorney's office and had developed a rapport with one of the assistants. We went to the assistant U.S. attorney, sat down with him and said, "Here's what we got." In the interim, we had found out through a source at the embassy that this group of people who had done this were the sons of the wealthy elite in Guatemala City and they thought they were having a good time. We also found out that the person who we believed to be the perpetrator had recently entered the United States and he was involved in the purchase of vehicles from auction lots in Florida and he would return and go down through Mexico to Guatemala with the vehicles. Nothing illegal, just business.

We went to the U.S. Attorney and the U.S. Attorney started looking at various statutes where there might be an opportunity to prosecute in this case, if we could locate the perpetrators. And what he prosecuted on was a statute or what he decided to try and prosecute on was a statute that generally is applied for foreign dignitaries who are in the United States under diplomatic status and that is the protection of foreign dignitaries. I believe that's Title XVIII of the U.S. Code, Section 1112 or 1113. Anyhow, if a dignitary who has diplomatic status is attacked, it's a violation of federal law, in the United States. The U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of Florida, this assistant U.S. attorney, decided that this statute was not only applicable to those in the States with status but a U.S. diplomat overseas who had diplomatic status. He read the law that this person could then come under the protection of that statute. He opened a case under that statute. We did some real, the agents in the field office, we spent about two weeks almost just on this case. Obviously other things that came up but we had the majority of the agents working this case, working leads in the community in South Florida. And we did find out through customs records that this individual of interest had entered Miami. We tracked him to a house in Miami and found out through sources there that he'd gone up to the Orlando area to a car auction. The U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida issued an arrest warrant under this statute, indicted him for violation of this statute.

We went up to the Orlando area and again through some good police work found out that he was in a motel just outside of the Disney area. We contacted the local sheriff's office and determined that he was with another individual and they had rented a room in a motel in Kissimmee, Florida. At ten o'clock at night we had a team there. We went to the owner of the motel and we said, "We want to get this guy out of his room. Do you have." I think the ruse we used was, we picked up the phone, called his room and said, "There's a gas leak. You're going to have to get out of the rooms." Well, there wasn't even any gas in the motel, but they didn't know that. The ruse worked. The guy came out and we arrested him. The process went on for some time but he stayed in the federal lockup in South Florida, he'd been moved down to South Florida for trial. It was going to go to trial. It would have been a precedent setting trial. About a week before the trial was to start, he pleaded guilty to the charge. So there was never a trial so there couldn't be a precedent set but he spent three years in federal prison. This established a new precedent for prosecuting people under this statute but what it did for us was establish with the U.S. Attorney in Miami credibility in that, hey, when we want to do something, what we say we're going to do, we're going to go out and do, we're going to get it done. We established a very strong ally with this assistant U.S. attorney and as a result from that point on we had a much easier time getting our cases accepted for prosecution.

Q: When you're talking about criminal cases and investigations and all, particularly in Miami, say, what are we talking about?

DEERING: Well, we're talking about, first of all, 80 per cent, 85 per cent of our criminal cases involve passport fraud. Maybe five or ten per cent visa fraud or doing visa fraud, investigative leads for other offices. But 80 to 85 per cent, or more even, passport fraud. Of that, probably 80 per cent or 85 per cent were alien cases, simple alien cases where the individual was in the United States illegally, tried to get a U.S. passport. For whatever reason, he or she had to go back to his or her country for something and knowing that once they left they weren't going to get back in unless they came back in illegally because they had been overstays, if they were here legally to begin with. If they weren't here legally, they would have to come back in. Those cases, they didn't have a lot of what we call prosecutorial merit, in and of themselves. But what we also convinced the U.S. Attorneys offices, you cannot, you don't know what's in a book just by what's on the cover of the book. You've got to do a little reading, do a little work, on what's there. So what we did was we over time developed a process in DS of establishing levels of merit for prosecution, so we didn't waste a whole lot of time on what we call our Cat Four cases, which were simple alien cases. We developed a process where we had a number system: one, two, three, four. One being death identity cases, cases where we know that other crimes were committed as part of the application for use of an illegally, fraudulently obtained passport. Category two, aliens with criminal records. Category three, I don't remember category three, were aliens which we were unable to determine what the background was and category four, simple alien cases where we just turned them over to INS or the Border Patrol. The problem, of course, for those cases was that Immigration and Border Patrol were so overwhelmed that we'd arrest these people as they applied for the passport and we'd call up Border Patrol and Immigration and say, "We've got an illegal here, just tried to get a U.S. passport, we arrested him out on the line. Come and pick him up." "No, we don't have the resources. If you can't take him out to us, put him on the street and tell him to report on the next day to Immigration." That's what we had to do. This was ridiculous, this was ridiculous. So the great majority of the time was spent on the category one and category two cases, where we developed other criminal activities or there were known criminal activities.

Q: Did you go at the other side, that produces a new passport?

DEERING: Oh, that was the other thing. We were always looking for the vendor. Vendor cases were up at the number one category, also and in South Florida there were all kind of vendors operating. And I'll say quite frankly, early on, in the Cuban community, we knew there was a lot of shenanigans going on in the Cuban community. But try and get a Cuban prosecuted in South Florida. Very, very difficult, especially when the U.S. Attorney at the time was a Cuban-American and his wife was a Cuban-American member of the U.S. Congress. Very difficult and I will say I saw the prejudice there. I probably can't prove it. I don't have the statistics. But I saw the prejudice. Trying to get a Cuban-American or Cuban national who was there illegally, unless he was a real bad guy, prosecuted in South Florida in 1991 and 1992, it was very, very difficult. So there were a lot of obstacles to overcome in my first couple years there. Not the least of which was getting people interested in our program and showing why we need to follow up and need to investigate these cases. This was the early Nineties. We had a very strong program in South Florida, in the Southeastern United States, in New Orleans, Atlanta and San Juan, Puerto Rico. The use of fraudulently obtained Puerto Rican birth certificates was a haven.

Q: I wondered why you'd have an agent in Puerto Rico.

DEERING: Well, in the late Eighties, as a result of an investigation down there into corruption in the Passport Agency, the Passport Agency in Puerto Rico was not allowed any longer by the Bureau of Consular Affairs to issue U.S. passports. The issuances were all done in Miami. There was a senior passport official that went to prison. If you are Hispanic and are able to get to Puerto Rico. You don't even have to get to Puerto Rico, obtain a Puerto Rican birth certificate fraudulently, you've got direct access into the United States because Puerto Ricans can come and go from the United States. So even to this day there is a huge problem with fraudulent Puerto Rican birth documents. So that's why we had people in Puerto Rico, to work with the authorities down there. There is a District Court, actually, in Puerto Rico and, again, trying to prosecute Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico is not always an easy thing to do. But what we determined was, we started looking at trends and doing trend analysis and determined that there was a large underground railroad, so to speak, for Dominicans into Puerto Rico and then up into New York and a lot of drug trafficking and things like that going on. So, again, through some hard work from our agents down there we were able to establish a fairly good investigative program.

Q: How were your relations with INS because much of what you're talking about falls within the INS purview as well.

DEERING: INS relations were not a problem because they didn't have the resources to do the INS mission as it was. Obviously INS, at the time, could prosecute passport fraud. But what was a bigger problem, also, in the early Nineties was establishing good working relationship with the Passport Agency in Miami because in the past, while we had talked a good game, results were not always there and then we would have to pull agents off investigations and send them out on protective details. So I had a job to establish our office's credibility with the Passport Agency in Miami and New Orleans, to ensure that we would have the resources to continue to investigate the cases that they would refer to us, because at that time they were referring some cases to the FBI and some cases to the Immigration Service. The FBI, they were referring the theft identity cases to the FBI but the FBI wasn't working them. One of the things that we did to work with the FBI on this was, before I got there, Miami had assigned on a part time basis an agent to the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force in Miami. Actually, Miami was one of the first FBI offices to have a Joint Terrorism Task Force. It was established in 1989 I think, '88 or '89. Miami and New York were the first two. So we assigned an agent on a part time basis to work cases of mutual interest with the FBI, the primary ones being death identity cases, passport fraud cases.

Q: What is death identity?

DEERING: An individual, for example, you want to get a passport in somebody else's identity, for whatever reason. You go, do a little research and find someone who would be about your age.

Q: This is the graveyard walkers.

DEERING: The graveyard walkers. The obituary walkers. And you would go out and assume the identity of that deceased person because there is no record of anything. This person may have died at birth or died shortly after birth, shortly after a birth certificate was issued. So there's no credit history, there's no IRS history, there's nothing. And in some cases, back, I don't know, I'm not sure what year it started that you had to get at birth, have a social security number assigned. I didn't get a social security number 'til I was 16 years old. So those are the death identity cases. Now, someone is going to go to the problem or to the extremes necessary to be successful, you know there's a reason for it and it's not because the person probably wants to look five years younger or whatever, or be five years younger. It's because that person is involved in some illicit activity.

The FBI determined early on, as terrorism became an issue, that terrorists would be prime candidates to be doing this, putting this effort into trying to obtain a U.S. passport under this method. So the FBI decided that, hey, these cases probably are, of all passport fraud cases, these would be the ones we'd be interested in. So that's how they sold that to the Bureau of Consular Affairs. Ultimately, as we worked through the Nineties, agreement was made that Consular Affairs basically said that DS would be referred all death identity cases. Of course we'd still work with the FBI. If it became a terrorism issue the FBI would become involved. But the FBI was very happy to have someone from our office working with them because what it meant was they had the contacts with the State Department. It meant they didn't have to worry about these death identity cases because if something with a terrorism nexus developed, they're right there. I worked very hard on establishing good rapport with the FBI in Miami. Large office, I think their third or fourth largest office in the United States. I had good working relationships with them. Knew the people the whole time I was there. Good working relations. So that was how we worked with the FBI.

Immigration, the agents go out and visit their counterparts. Some of the agents in the office were former Immigration investigators or inspectors themselves, so they knew how the system worked. They had contacts. And also there was a SAC's, what they called the Special Agents in Charge association. Kind of an informal thing, have luncheons from time to time. There was the Miami-Dade chief's association, where you had all the senior law enforcement officials in South Florida who would meet on a monthly basis. So there was all these opportunities to go out and sell your program. We were small, probably the smallest agency at the time when I got there, in South Florida. Not many people had heard of DS because they had just become a bureau a few years earlier, and if they had it was for our protective mission. But we established good relationships with the Secret Service, the ATF, with INS, with the FBI.

Now, that's not to say there wasn't turf battles because there were. When a good case develops, everybody wants a piece of the action and we had a lot of good cases that we got involved in that we were peripheral and we had a lot of good cases that other cases became involved in peripherally and everybody wants to get credit for what we do. Also at this time, though, there was what I would say was a somewhat insidious plan going on. I guess I have to be careful how I discuss this. Tony Quainton became the assistant secretary, I think it was 1992, for Diplomatic Security. Very, very, bright man, I'm sure you're well aware.

Q: I know Tony, yeah, interviewed him.

DEERING: He came into DS. Among the agents and the agents are always, how they look at these things, he'd been the ambassador in Peru and some of our agents here had some real problems in what his attitude was towards security. There was a lot of feelings that, while he had the connections in the Department he was not perhaps the best person to be representing DS interests. I remember he came to South Florida on a first visit shortly after Hurricane Andrew. The State Department had a facility down there that was destroyed in the hurricane, down near Homestead. He wanted to see the area and of course when the assistant secretary comes to town you take care of him.

Well, DS agents, the field offices had a fleet of government vehicles that were used for investigation purposes. Then they had a fleet of cars that were used for protective operations. The agents did not drive their own vehicles and we've had a long battle to get the cars, as any new agency does. You can't drive your own vehicle and make arrests in it and throw somebody in the back seat of an ill-equipped vehicle. You can't take your own car out and do undercover work and then have your license plate there for the bad guys to see. We had vehicles with undercover plates that were issued by the State of Florida to companies. It was a professional operation. I remember picking him up at the airport and I picked him up in the vehicle that was our protective liaison, it's called our PL car. SAC had that car. It's a fairly nice vehicle. It was to be used for protective security operations, for protective liaison operations and it was a car that the SACs drove in each field office. As SAC of a field office you're, if something goes down, you got to be able to get there at any time of the day, if you have an agent who's got a problem, or whatever. You may never do it. You may never have to use a vehicle for that. But you've got to have access to a vehicle that's properly equipped. I remember Tony Quainton's comment, after getting him through the airport, picking him up and everything else, "Why are you driving this car? Do all the SACs have these cars? What's the deal here?" I said, "Sir, yes, like our gun, like our radio, it's a tool. A tool that we've" "I don't know about this. I don't know about this." Shortly thereafter, there was an audit, conducted by the IG on the use of government vehicles by DS field offices where it was apparent it was a witch hunt, looking for misuse of the vehicles, unauthorized use of vehicles, which came up empty handed. We were able to justify to the IG that this was a legitimate program.

Also, at the same time, this is, again, 1993, now probably, 1994, there was an attempt made to destroy our investigative program, to give it away, to give it to the FBI. Tony Quainton didn't think that we needed to do this, quite frankly. There was a concerted effort to destroy the program. Also, there were other things going on. As I recall, Jock Covey was brought in by Tony Quainton to do a study of DS, based on what its mission, function, everything else. It was, again, part of this effort to undermine DS, what we were doing. I also should point out during this time frame, from '91 to '94, '91 to '97, we hired a total of 25 agents, that's all.

Q: This was the time that they were trying to so-called reinvent government, but basically, there was quite a drawing down of governmental resources.

DEERING: And the security program was under attack. It was a very difficult time because it was a time when our workload was increasing and we weren't getting any more bodies. We weren't getting any support at all from senior leadership in the Department, quite frankly. Clark Dittmer was put out to pasture as the director. He spent his last two years sitting out at some desk at CIA before he retired. He retired in '95 or '96, I think it was. The study that Jock Covey did came out to strongly support the mission and the organization, much to, everyone believed, the consternation of Tony Quainton. Personally, I got along fine with Ambassador Quainton. I traveled with him to Puerto Rico to visit the office down there. I did some other traveling. But just the first, there's an old saying if it's not broken don't fix it. So then, I think, what happened then was, we had events of 1998 with the East African bombings and everybody was finger pointing again. How could this happen? How it could happen was that DS, instead of growing during these years, was shrinking. Again, again, these cycles of we hire, then we don't hire. We hire, then we go X number of years and we don't hire. Well, you can't run an organization. And to some extent the State Department was under the same, was having the same problems, the Foreign Service.

Q: Oh, it was one of the big things when Colin Powell came in. He really had to reinvigorate ...

DEERING: Absolutely, no doubt about that. So anyhow, here we were in the early Nineties, things were good and the terrorism thing was kind of at an ebb but there was, from the perception of the DS agents in the field there was some kind of an attempt to diminish the organization, putting it back to what those of us who were cynics said, being the knuckle draggers and lock changers, which was not what we were, anymore. And you can't go back. I point out that as DS evolved from the time I came on the job in 1978 to the time I left, requirements for employment included having a college degree. The education level, the experience level, of the people we were hiring was going up, up and up. We were not knuckle draggers and lock changers anymore. We were not just technical people. We had, as a result of world events, DS, the mission of DS changed dramatically in the 1980's and not least of which driven by the findings of the Inman panel and the requirement that DS be established as a separate bureau. And of course that ran into some problems in our overseas program as to who the RSOs would report to. There was some conflicts still with a lot of ambassadors and DCMs and admin officers. The admin officers didn't want to lose control of the RSO and yet it was mandated, basically, that the RSO be reporting to a management person in the front office. So there were some problems there, too and I think some of those problems still exist to this day.

Q: There's a fundamental problem, too, that the mission of an embassy or a consulate is essentially to get out and meet people and find out and the mission of Diplomatic Security is to keep, I'm being facetious but, to keep people, foreigners out of the equation because they're a problem. You put this terrible clash. How do you do your job and yet at the same time how do you make it secure?

DEERING: I agree, hundred per cent and that certainly was and to a certain extent still is but that goes back then to policy and policy decisions. We've learned, unfortunately, the hard way, that diplomats are not exempt, as they used to be considered, from, because you're a diplomat, you're on a pedestal and it's, one country's diplomats are treated. But then you have the equation of, we're not dealing with nation states anymore when we're dealing with terrorists. We're dealing with organizations who don't give a damn.

Q: We go from pedestal to target.

DEERING: That's right. What happened is, you've got to protect and you have a new mission, a much more difficult mission, in protecting your people and facilities because it's not, you go from the open castle to the moated castle. You're absolutely right. How do you define how this new relationship will affect what you're supposed to be doing, which is conducting U.S. foreign policy? So it raises the bigger issue of which point in time does it become self-defeating to try and conduct U.S. foreign policy and continue to put your people at high risk, and you see that in Baghdad. So there's risk in everything you do but I often felt that people in the embassy, when I was in Madrid, when I was in Damascus and when I was in Beirut, people in the embassy, a lot of people often felt that you're doing this just to make life difficult. And I would come back, my retort would be, "I'm doing it to protect your life. I've got parameters for what I have to do. You've got parameters for what you have to do. Somewhere there's got to be a happy mix but, guess what? It's not going to be on my watch that you are off in a souk somewhere meeting with somebody and you get kidnapped. It's not going to happen." "Well, we're here." I said, "Look, you're in Beirut, Lebanon. When you applied for the position in Beirut, Lebanon you know what the parameters are, what the rules are. I don't set the rules. It's a higher authority that sets the rules. I'm doing a job." And of course then with ultimately the ambassador being the one responsible for everything that happens at post, when these incidents became more and more frequent, most ambassadors got the message: hey, wait a minute here, I better start listening to what the RSO says because I'm the one that's going to be ultimately responsible for anything that happens here. I've got to take some tough decisions and da ta da ta da. But generally I think I saw from the time I was in Damascus from 1991 to the time I was in Beirut in 1999 a major sea change in the working relationships generally in DS and specifically in Beirut. The ambassador and DCM were always, it was an open door.

Q: Also, I think, too, what was happening, you referred to it before, you're talking about a cultural change. The people recruited for DS were no longer people without college degrees and so on. Because no matter what happens, I was a consular officer and I saw this. Our consular officers used to be divided between FSOs who came in through the exam and rather fancy things and then people who'd sort of come in through the back door as staff officers or secretaries and kind of moved up and there was a tremendous cultural, class divide. And this was true, when I came in in '55, with the security officers for the most part. They just, in a way, I don't want to but enough's been made of this issue, suffice to say we didn't go to the same cocktail parties. This has changed. We're all out of the same barrel now, with different specialties. We can carry on the same conversations.

DEERING: A Foreign Service is coming in to the State Department through a different channel than the Foreign Service Officer who has the BEX (Board of Examiners) exam process. So, coming in two different ways. Also, part of this, I don't think it's as great as it was but with establishment in 1997 of law enforcement availability pay for DS agents, all of a sudden the DS agent at the entry level and the econ officer at the entry level, DS agent's making 25 per cent more money. And that created. I remember when that first started, that created some real problems. Wait a minute, I'm working fifty hours a week in embassy X as an econ officer and the assistant RSO's the same grade as I am, he's working fifty hours but he's getting 25 per cent or she's getting 25 per cent more at this level. That's not fair! My response to that was, "Join DS. Become an agent. Then it'll be fair." But again, people have tunnel vision and they say, "What's going on here?" The same thing, DS agents often felt, well, the snooty Foreign Service Officers didn't want to talk to us. Well, that's nonsense, too. You're both working for the same people. You're both doing a job that's essential to the success of the mission, wherever it is. You have to get over this stuff. It's the same in every agency. Every agency has differences.

Q: Yeah, I've talked to people who've served in Moscow, just after the Sergeant Lonetree case and all this and it seems that the security side, particularly the contact with the Russians or Soviets, which is what you have to have if you're going to do it, got completely, it went out of control. Everything has to be American. The people who go to Moscow go in order to try to talk to Russians. There are lots of problems and all that but you still do it. You know the security thing but it seemed that the security thing, I think it was just a case of panic. It was an attempt to almost seal off the embassy and a very unhappy thing. It just sounded like what they really needed was to put some people in there using common sense, on both sides, again, how are we going to work this out?

DEERING: The Lonetree thing, I remember, the Lonetree case, what a mess that was.

Q: Just the way we overreacted. I served in a communist country, for five years in Yugoslavia. We knew who was reporting but what the hell. Nine tenths of what you do has nothing to do with security, anyway.

DEERING: Well, again, it was the times.

Q: Speaking of the times, by this time, in the 1990's, how, in looking back on it, how were women security officers fitting in to the thing, because this is a time when must have been having a bigger impact than previously. When I came in, there was no such thing as a

DEERING: Well, I think, there certainly as part of the overall U.S. government and State Department effort to hire more women and minorities. So our recruitment was aimed at those groups. While I was in Miami, through the time that we did hire, when we started hiring again, I was involved in a lot of the efforts, the prescreening, the interviews and then our own BEX panels and there's no doubt that there was an effort dedicated to hiring more women and minorities, I think more so in an organization like Diplomatic Security. I'm speaking only now, I'm not going to deal from the engineer or the SEO (Security Engineering Officer) perspective or the communicator's perspective or the non-agent perspective. I'm looking at agent recruitment, where there was an effort and it was made clear that we would go out and attempt to recruit more women and minorities. And we targeted these groups. I remember sitting in the late Nineties, going out to the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, a new program where it would be soup to nuts, identify through a job fair, bring them in, let them fill out the application. The whole thing in the week while we were there, aimed at minorities. In any law enforcement job and more so I think in DS, one of the problems, more so in DS, because we're not just law enforcement. We have the overseas mission, where we're required by law to serve not only overseas but every so often in a hardship post overseas. What I found and what I still believe is you can recruit and recruit and recruit, aiming at specific groups, women, minorities, whatever. I strongly believe that in law enforcement and more specifically in Diplomatic Security, you've got a couple of things, and they're very cultural.

You can recruit women and I think you can be successful to some extent to attracting them at the entry levels and bringing them on the job but then it comes time to go overseas and it comes time to make family and career decisions. You've got the law enforcement thing, which is one issue. Then you've got the overseas thing, which is another issue and how attractive is this to, and I don't mean to be sexist or anything else but I'm looking at it from the perspective of a woman who might desire to get married and have a family. She still has to have the baby, we haven't figured out how for the men to do that yet. If she has been on the job for three or four years, out of college or from another job and now it's time to, you're going overseas and you're going to go to some God-forsaken place on your first assignment. Well, I know with the guys, the thinking is, do I want to pull up roots here and go over there, I'm not married yet, dah dah dah, dah dah dah. Same thing for the females. If I start this process, I'm going to be moving all over the place. What are my chances for getting married, having a family, my spouse following me around. There's some cultural things here, still. And until these cultural barriers are completely broken down, I think it's going to be a very difficult time still to have percentage of women and to some extent minorities, in this kind of business.

What we get criticized for is because the numbers aren't necessarilbut by the way our numbers in DS are not that much different from other federal law enforcement agencies in recruitment of women and minorities, women especially. The problem is that retention, once you get in, and retaining. Many of the women that have worked for me, the choices they have to make when they're approaching 30 or 35 years old. "I want to get married but my husband, my fiancï¿½." Female that worked for me as my special assistant, her fiancï¿½ is in the restaurant business. He came with her to Washington, worked in one restaurant, worked in another restaurant, well now in another year she's going to be going overseas. They're engaged but they haven't made any plans yet. She's thinking, how is this going to affect me in the long term and you know how difficult it can be for a tandem couple. And in DS even more difficult because if you're on the security side of the embassy there, you're in the chain of command and that's illegal.

So I saw and I may have mentioned this earlier on when I sat in this panel out in New Mexico we had a very, very highly desirable Hispanic female who had come to the job fair. "Oh, this looks really interesting, I want to go for it." She went, she passed the written, she did the oral exam and by the end of the week she was a candidate for an agent position. She came in to sit down and do her background investigation form and she said, "Oh by the way, I'm assuming that after I go through agent training I'll be able to come back to Albuquerque because my family's here and I just bought a house here." I said, "You know, you're not going to be able to come back to Albuquerque because we don't have an office in Albuquerque and we have no plans to open an office in Albuquerque. It's just not there." She said, "You mean I'll probably never be able to come back and live in Albuquerque?" I said, "Not working for the Diplomatic Security Service." "Then I can't do this because my family's here and I want to start a family." And I don't think this is an isolated case and I think a lot of times in the recruiting process we're not always honest with these people and we're not telling them what to expect. So you might get the influx. Oh, we've got a new agent class. There's 25 agents in this class and six of them are women, 25 per cent. My question is, two years from now, what's that percentage going to be because, I've seen it with the men, too, don't get me wrong. "Well I was told that, when I was recruited, I was told that I could do this and I could do this." "Well, you were told wrong." "Well, I didn't know that, my wife's birthday is coming up and I've got to take her out to dinner on her birthday." I said, "No, you're going to be on a detail in Vancouver on your wife's birthday." "Well nobody ever told me that." I believe sometimes that's true, that we're not honest but I also believe that people only hear what they want to hear.

But I think in law enforcement and in the Foreign Service, I think it's going to be an on-going problem because it's a different kind of existence. There's not a lot for spouses to do overseas.

Q: Well we, in the Foreign Service, really are, no matter how you slice it, quite a different breed of cat than many other organizations, rightly, wrongly or whatever it is, the ones that stick it out. I think in a way it's fair enough that there is a weeding out process because otherwise, because you have to get the right people.

DEERING: I think retention is a major issue. I think it's going to continue to be a major issue for these reasons. And it's only more so in the last twenty years because it's become so necessary almost to have, as professionals, both spouses having the possibilities for employment and quite frankly spouses are unwilling to give up employment to go off overseas somewhere for two or three years to do what? And careers have become very important. I think it's significant on both sides, men and women but I think it still is more significant for women because of the whole issue of marriage and families. How do we mix this? I don't know what the answer is.

Q: Moving back to some other things, what about visa cases? Often, did you get involved, because I've done a lot of reading about, particularly in the Caribbean area and around there, of consular officers getting caught up, performing criminal activities. Did this come up? Did you get involved in that?

DEERING: There were many, many cases where we became involved with these types of cases. The Dominican Republic, Antigua, other areas in South America. A visa fraud case is a much more difficult case to investigate than a passport fraud case. In a passport fraud case, you basically, the documentary evidence of the commission of the crime is the passport application. Right at the bottom it says, "If you provide any false information here, then you're going to jail." So there it is. It's a very easy case to prove. Visa fraud is nebulous. There's no, if a consular officer or consular employee, American or otherwise, is involved in visa fraud, that person is going to try in all kinds of ways to create the dead zones, I like to call them, how do you connect point A to point B. So it becomes much more dependent upon developing good sources of information, witnesses, of the acts or other proof of the acts. You don't have it as much when you're looking, I call them the vendor cases, the vendor being the American employee or the Foreign Service National employee. Now, there other cases where the proof is in the issuance of a visa under fraudulent conditions and you were able to put your hands on that person and bring that person in and track it back that way. That's primarily the way you have to go about doing it but that could take you all over the world, whereas the passport fraud cases in the Passport Office in South Florida, somewhere in South Florida you're going to find the person who's involved there or someplace close by. The visa fraud case takes an extremely long process for an investigation.

Q: There's a lot of smoke about visa fraud. Did you find the Foreign Service system, did it get protective about its people or was it pointing, saying "We've got a problem here" or how did you find?

DEERING: I think maybe 15 years ago or 20 years ago that might have been the case but as the environment changed and the ability for DS to conduct a really thorough investigation and the recognition, quite frankly, by the State Department that, hey, we're not immune from having bad people in our employ, no, I don't think it. At one point in time I would have said yes. What ambassador or DCM or consul general wants to find out that his or her employees, under their nose, has been involved in some scheme that's ripped off the U.S. government or made money for the person or whatever. It certainly doesn't reflect good on your watch. So if you can, under the table, go spend your time doing something else. I think in the past probably when the RSO was at the post doing stuff that had to be done for the security program, it would be easy for the ambassador or whoever saying, "You really don't have the time to be spending on this." And without a strong investigative headquarters element in Washington to push you in that direction, yeah. Remember when I went into our criminal investigation division back in 1982 we were just starting to develop that headquarters element that would direct these types of investigations. So once you get that mechanism in place it's a lot easier to push and you can send support out to the RSO to help with these investigations. You've got the field office agents to work the cases in the United States. So obviously it became more difficult then. I think it was probably fairly easy if you were so inclined to rip off the system.

Q: I had the reverse. I thought I had a problem in the late Seventies in Seoul. I was consul general there and I told, at a consular conference, I told the head of Consular Affairs, Barbara Watson, "Something's going on here, I don't know what it is." Our security officer there hadn't paid much attention.

DEERING: Probably didn't know how to do the investigation, either, at that point in time.

Q: She pushed some buttons and we had a security officer, Ed Lee, who came out and Ed uncovered, it was done, luckily, I wasn't sure, officers seemed to be involved but certainly the consular section.

DEERING: Ed was very good. I worked with Ed some.

Q: The system could respond, but it needed

DEERING: It needed a push.

Q: It really needed a push, particularly it was assistant secretary for consular affairs, Barbara Watson, who got something happening, because it wasn't going to happen otherwise.

DEERING: The other thing you've got now is congressional interest in the whole process and that's driving it. It's forced, it's forced the Department to bring all our resources together, not only to ensure integrity but to protect our mission and that's issuance of passports and visas. And you know there are those out there in Homeland Security who strongly believe that State Department should not be in the visa business at all.

Q: This is, well, anathema to me but

DEERING: So we better have and I saw it more in my last assignmenta very good working relationship between Consular Affairs and DS in making sure that we were following up on all these things because, all of us have been up on the Hill.

Q: Going back to this, did you find that you were able to deal with the Cuban community. I don't know if the Elian case was part of your

DEERING: No, it was after I left. I'll give you another example of how we were, our success, back in 1996, I guess it was, we had been working a case, actually the Metro Dade Police Department in Miami had an on-going case on elements in the Cuban community who were involved in a lot of different illicit activities, not the least of which was cock fighting, which is still a major sport down there.

Q: Let's talk about roosters.

DEERING: Roosters, right, and there was interest in a guy who was involved in this. He also had a history of involvement in other activities and they were trying for years and years, the feds and the locals, to nail this guy. He was known as the godfather of the Cuban community in Miami. He'd been involved in, he was a Bay of Pigs veteran, been involved in some activities up in Jersey where people had met their demise and he moved his operation into South Florida. We started working with the economic crimes section of Metro Dade, because they believed this guy was involved in shenanigans with documents and things. We found out that he had spent some time in Peru, married a young Peruvian woman down there, brought her in. There were some illegal documents involved in that. We also found that he had some illegal travel documents, I think they were Venezuelan or from another country, to get from Peru back into the United States and things like that. So we were able to go after him on passport fraud, for use of other countries' passports, under 1542. The feds had been after him for years, from the time he was in New Jersey. The locals down there had been after him and his network. We got the arrest warrant on passport fraud and in 1996, he was also involved in gambling casinos in Peru, we went into his estate in South Florida, literally two Miami Dade SWAT teams, two elements of their SWAT team. We went through the front gate on an armored vehicle, rounded up everybody, put them down, arrested him when he came back from dialysis, seized a hundred thousand dollars in cash from behind his bed, other things. The case is still going on. He's been convicted of document fraud. Now he's looking at all kinds of IRS violations and everything else. Again, what this did was prove that the Cuban community was not immune, the old Bay of Pigs folks were not, they could not operate outside the law. Again, it showed that we were able to go in and get the goods on somebody when nobody else could but yet then develop the time for the other things to be developed from that. So that was a big case and actually that thing is still going on.

Q: What about the consular community?

DEERING: The consular community, very, very active community in South Florida, mostly involved with a lot of trade issues and immigration issues but they had, which I attended the whole time I was there, they had the monthly consular luncheons. I attended all of them, as a representative of DS and the Department. Developed a good working relationship with the consular corps. They knew who to call. There were certain consulates that always needed more help than the others. The Israelis, for example, were always looking for things.

We had an incident back when there was another rash of boat people from Cuba. I'm trying to remember what year it was, 1996, I think, '95 or '96, when Castro opened up the gates again and they all started coming. I remember I was in, I was on vacation, up in North Carolina. I get a phone call from Miami Police Department Intelligence and they said, "Our sources say that the boats are coming. Could you find out if there's anything to this?" Well, I called up to the Cuban desk and nobody knew. And yet they were on the way. So the community in Miami had very good intelligence sources that we didn't have, we, the government. There was a lot of criticism over how that was handled. Again, they were turned around if they didn't get to the shore. There was an incident in Mexico of a couple of the boat people that went off that way. One boat washed up on shore and I think it was one or two raft people were dead. Well, the Mexican government unceremoniously dug a shallow grave on the beach and buried the bodies and this got back to the Cuban community in Miami. They decided to have a mass demonstration to support their vocal opposition, both to the U.S. policy in dealing with the boat people and this incident that the Mexican government had become involved in. How much was fact, how much was fiction, still remains to be seen. But the point is they held a major demonstration on Calle Ocho in Miami, which is in the heart of Little Havana and there were thousands and thousands of people. We observed and monitored, with the police, these events because of the threat to the consular community. And it just so happened that the Mexican Consulate at that time was right off of Calle Ocho. There was an attempt to seize the consulate and kidnap the Mexican consul general. We got a call while the demonstration was going on. We literally, with the Miami Police, four or five agents from the field office, went in the back door of the consulate, grabbed the guy, the consul general, pulled him out, before they occupied the consulate, got him back, put a detail on him for a week. The interesting thing about this was that the city fathers of Miami were right out there with the bullhorns on Calle Ocho, urging on the Cubans to demonstrate, dah dah dah dah dah dah and then they were given a permit to do this demonstration for X number of hours. Well, tensions were high, this incident happened and I stood right there next to the city manager of Miami. He picks up the bullhorn and says, "I am authorizing another six hours for this demonstration." That was the city manager. He's in jail now for corruption. But it was an ongoing battle. Whatever pleased the Cuban community at a given time was what pleased the city fathers in Miami and Dade County, unfortunately.

Q: Did you have any problem, because I assume that you had Cuban-Americans on your staff.

DEERING: No, I never had a Cuban-American, that I can recall.

Q: I was just wondering because this has always been considered a problem.

DEERING: No, I don't think so.

Q: We've been talking, now, about the situation there and one term that hasn't come up is drugs. I'm not sure whether, for some reason this had an impact on what you were doing.

DEERING: Sure. We had a lot of cases, passport fraud, that involved narcotics traffickers. Worked with DEA very closely on those. We had a case on an individual in North Miami, it was a passport fraud case. During the investigation we determined that the reason he was interested in getting a passport in another identity was that he was running a crack house, probably a significant crack house, up in North Miami. Police had been looking at him for some time. We raided that house, took a significant stash of money out of his house, weapons, with the North Miami Police Department, I think it was or Metro Dade Police Department, I don't remember which. And we put this guy in jail on the passport fraud charges and we also seized crack cocaine, weapons and money, so he went down for a long time. This was a major case at the time, because it was at the time these crack houses were in the news in Miami and anytime one got taken down, it made big news. That was up in North Miami, 1995, 1996, that case.

Oh, we had other cases. I remember one simple case. It looked to be just a, just a simple illegal alien case and we brought the guy in, down from the Passport Agency for an interview and he sat there and there was no question he had applied fraudulently for a U.S. passport. He was Nicaraguan, I think. We sat him down and we took everything off him and we found, in his wallet, stuck to the bottom of his wallet, a little microfiche. We got our microfiche reader out and looked and it was plates for counterfeit fifty dollar bills. Well, turns out, he was a mule for a counterfeiting ring that the Secret Service had been interested in. So we called the Secret Service over to give him a good twist on his arm for the passport fraud charges. So that case was an interesting one.

Then we had the case of the reverend bishop, I don't remember his name, up in Central Florida that had committed passport fraud. This, again, appeared to be, we couldn't figure the case out for the longest time. We couldn't locate the guy but we had the application and it looked like it was a Canadian document. Couldn't figure it out, couldn't figure it out. Finally after some investigative work we found the guy, we located him up in Central Florida, where he established a niche for himself, establishing a religious order that was helping the community, working with the chief of police and everything else. It turns out the guy was a sociopath. That one was a very dangerous case. We got an arrest warrant and went with the, don't remember which county it was up in Central Florida, went with one of their SWAT teams. We arrested the guy as he came back to his apartment, or his house, and we stopped the car before he could get into his garage, one of these drive in the garage, shut the door behind him. As we stopped the car, he started to go for the glove compartment and one of our agents, with one of the SWAT members, put an automatic weapon in his face. Went through, there was a nine millimeter in the glove compartment. Went into the house with a search warrant. He had the garage entrance booby trapped with fish hooks and stuff. We found all kinds of tapes on weird stuff he was doing. He went down for three years in the federal system. What's his name, who's the news reporter with the toupee? Sam Donaldson, did a special on document fraud, interviewed him in prison. I guess it was about a year before I left Miami, I get a call from Broward County Sheriff's Office that they got this guy in custody. He had tried to get a weapon through a check point at the airport. Found a note, he was going to try and hijack this plane and they ran the guy's name, it came up that we had had a case on him. So I went out there, brought him in. After he got out of prison in New Mexico, he served time out in federal facility in New Mexico, he hooked up with this gal out there, and she disappeared. They found her body in Mississippi, on the roadside, and ultimately he was convicted of murdering her. He had been torturing this woman during the case that we had developed. Yet he had sold himself off to a chief of police and another city official up in Central Florida as this religious order that was providing help. The guy was a sociopath. Again, our U.S. Attorney just couldn't say enough good about us when they were able to tie the murder charge into this guy, the woman's body that they found in Mississippi. So these were the kind of cases that, again, this case was, at the time, it was almost four or five years old. He had been to prison on the document fraud charges, interviewed on the show Sam Donaldson used to do, a whole portion was on this guy telling Sam Donaldson how he had basically fooled the system and everything else, and then he's out of prison a year later, kills this other woman and dumped her body. And again, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida couldn't say enough good things about us after that case.

Q: Did you find Miami is practically a, what I mean, more than almost any other place, is such a center for tourism both from Latin America and from Europe. Did that have any impact on what you were doing?

DEERING: Not really because, unless somebody's, we went through the period there of the carjackings and the strong-arms on tourists in South Florida. That was really more, these people would come into the airport and wander off in their rental cars into the wrong areas of town because the roads to the beaches weren't well marked. The locals handled that, pretty much. We did get some, we did get some play off of that because we're helping out with some of these cases, the foreign connections. The Versace murder, we'd gotten involved in that because of the guy had holed himself up and had, the guy committed suicide ultimately, we had indications that he had had some fraudulent identities to move around the country. His killing himself kind of did that in.

Q: You never had to bust Mickey Mouse or anything.

DEERING: No, no.

Q: They have a peculiar group there, that duck and all that.

DEERING: No, the duck was all right. We had some major cases up in that area. I don't know if you've traveled along the main roads up in the Disney area and you see all of these souvenir stores, you know. Well, it turns out that the Pakistani population had kind of had a corner on, they were the owners of a lot of these tourist shops and all and they were doing some stuff, laundering money and document fraud, bringing people in illegally. We got involved in a couple of cases with those folks, up in the Orlando area, put a couple people away.

We had the cocaine cowboy case in the mid-Eighties, I'm trying to think of the guy's name, there was the two of them, they were running their fast boats from the mother ships and bringing cocaine into South Florida. He was, they made hundreds of millions of dollars and the government tried and tried to prosecute these guys. Witnesses would turn up missing, dead. Ultimately they were, in the early Nineties, they were acquitted. After the acquittal process, the U.S. Attorney, assistant U.S. attorney that handled the case was sorting through documents to be returned to these folks and came up with a Venezuelan passport that had his picture on it. So they called us right over and said what can we do. What can we do, we can handle it just like a U.S. passport violation. We have a picture of him on an issued Venezuelan passport. We know he's not a Venezuelan citizen, we went to the RSO and proved that. Magluta, Sal Magluta. Mr. Magluta had just been acquitted, thought he was scot-free. Within 24 hours of our determining that Magluta was not in fact a Venezuelan national, the U.S. Attorney issued an arrest warrant. We went to his mother's house, where he was staying, his parents' house in South Florida, after he'd just been released, brought him in, arrested him, six o'clock in the morning, brought him in to the office. I remember sitting with Sal Magluta. He sits there at a table, just like this, this guy was the, Miami Vice was based on this guy's trade. Sitting there with Sal and Sal looks at me, he's got his hair cut short. I think he was Cuban-American. He goes, "I'm a new man. My time in awaiting trial and all, I'm reformed. I'm a new man." "Okay, Sal, whatever. Today you're going to jail." Over to lockup, comes up time for trial, his attorney says, "I'm bringing him in, he's going to plead." Pleaded guilty to one count of passport fraud. He was released on bond, passport taken from him and everything else and he is to appear for sentencing. His attorney comes in with him, they sit down in the courtroom. Sal says, "Oh, left something in the car. I'll be right back." Walks out of the courtroom, gone, disappeared. 'Bout six months later he was arrested by U.S. Marshals on 95 in the Palm Beach area, wearing a disguise, still involved in narcotics. But again, we brought him in when nobody else could get anything on him. So there were a lot of these major cases that we spent a lot of time on.

One of the things that I tried to do was, what had been lacking in our work, was any recognition for what we were doing. That's because one of DS's weaknesses over the years has been the lack of a good public awareness program. We worked on that in Washington and they gave me a lot of rope down there to deal with the media. So I did get a lot of media coverage for a lot of our major cases and getting the media coverage helps with getting yourselves known in the community and I think DS has a ways to go on that. I think we're doing a better job now. But, yeah, I was allowed to go, as long as it wasn't national, (for example CBS national or NBC national), I had to get special permission to deal. But to deal with all the local, the regional media network, I had a free rein, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's office, in discussing any of his cases.

I would say there were maybe half a dozen cases that we prosecuted where the underlying motive for the passport fraud or the document fraud was individuals involved in pedophilia crossing

Q: Were they individuals or were they importing?

DEERING: I'll give you a good example, probably as good an example of a case. It was in the early Nineties. One of my agents, one of my unit supervisors, had been an Arlington County vice officer. He had a certain knack, I don't know what it was but he worked vice, pedophilia and I don't know whether you develop a knack for this. As the result, he was a police officer for several years, as detective in their vice squad. He would look at passport applications and in cases where we're looking at the pictures and unable to determine through investigation, on more than one occasion he would look at this guy and say, "This guy's a pedophile." "Come on, Mark, how can you look at someone and say he's a pedophile?" "Trust me." In one particular case, this guy had come in to the Passport Agency to get a passport for his "son" who's 11 years old. He needed a passport for him, I don't know where he was from, where he said he was from but the documents were all fraudulent. He was out of the country and he was bringing him into the country, he wanted to send him to a camp in Pennsylvania for the summer. Well, it was obvious that the documents he was using were fraudulent. His son wasn't there. So the red flags were all over the place. So we bring this guy in, sit him down we talk to him, we talk to him. We finally broke him, and his "son" was a 12 year old from Latin America who he was sexually abusing. It turns out, this guy was wanted up in Pennsylvania. He had a record in New Mexico. He had absconded after he was convicted in Pennsylvania and never showed up for his sentencing and he was a hardcore pedophile. He went, I'm not sure what he got. I think he got sentenced to two or three years since he had a criminal history. That's what he was doing.

Another case, same agent, again, a pedophile. I said, "Mark!" This guy was living with his mother, he was in his forties, living with his mother in South Miami. He applied for a passport in a fraudulent identity and as it turns out he was trying to get away, trying to get out of the country. He had been convicted and served time in a notorious case in California of pedophilia where he had kidnapped a girl. She lived but he had kidnapped her. In Florida, three or four years earlier than we arrested him, he had joined this Parents Without Partners group that met on weekly basis and they would have activities with the kids. Well, the Parents Without Partners would gather and the kids would be off on their own and the parents would be but he was never with the parents, he was with the kids. One day they were at an outing at a pool in the Ft. Lauderdale area, I believe it was and the parents were all around the bar and one of the kids came running up and said, "Such and such and such and such touched me." Well of course the parents all ran. Here's this guy in the pool with all the kids and they confronted him. He got up and ran. They literally chased the guy, beat him up, he was arrested, charged and convicted of pedophilia again. What he was doing with his mother was as we got the arrest warrant for him, we were conducting the investigation and he found out. He faked having a heart attack so he could get put in a medical facility, a hospital in South Miami, which he did. We went on with the case, we got a search warrant for the house and he had a big travel, one of these things you travel around the country in, a big six wheeler, whatever you call them. So that was on the property so we were able to search that also. What we found out was he had set up a photography studio inside this van, inside this RV, recreation vehicle. He had pornography on the walls and he had pictures of a little girl and we believe he was about to grab this little girl. We got the arrest warrant. He found out that we had the arrest warrant for him and we were going to serve the arrest warrant at eight o'clock in the morning, got out of the hospital bed with the things still attached to him. He was running across the field. The local police had their dogs out and the dogs got him in the middle of a field outside the hospital and he went down on the passport fraud charges and probably we prevented his kidnapping another girl and bringing her in into the van and making her do whatever.

There were several other. The one, the university professor, Florida Atlantic University, who was bringing kids in from Honduras. He had a Honduran paramour. That was a big case. That was in the national media. That was more a customs case because it was an internet type thing but he had fraudulent documentation. He went down, that was a big case, that was the same year Princess Di was killed, the same time that was going on. So, again, just another facet of why people get fraudulent documents. I did a story with Time magazine on that case, on the Honduran case and the connection with Central America for, these little villages where they'd go down, the pedophiles would go down and basically give the family money to take the kids away.

Q: Things have changed so much, I'd like you to comment on the internet and email, fax communications and all this. Did this have any affect on your business?

DEERING: It made a huge difference and I have to laugh because back in, I guess it was 1984, '85, when I was in our criminal investigations division in headquarters at the time, one of the projects I was assigned was to prepare and put together for purchase, a basic investigative package for each of our field offices, meaning equipment that would advance the ability to conduct investigations. Such things as recording devices, body recording devices, cameras, photography equipment, fingerprinting equipment, basic investigative stuff. And one of the items I suggested that was needed was fax machines in each of the field offices. Well this, again, was 1984. I was questioned up and down. A fax machine, why would our field offices ever need a fax machine? Fax machines were not, in 1984, '85, they weren't prevalent in any offices in the State Department. At that time, whenever we did our investigations in the field offices, they had to be typed and sent back or sent over the Treasury Enforcement Communications System and it was a very, very slow process. And so the issues of course that came up: well how do we protect information that we are going to send over the fax wires, where we lose control of it from the time it's transmitted until the time it's received on the other end. And my response to that was, "Well, I think that's just an issue for technology to deal with. We conduct telephone conversations and we discuss material on open lines that's not classified material." The faxes would not be used for transmitting classified material because, of course, at that time a classified fax was even. So it just sped up immensely the ability to transmit information between offices by getting these faxes in headquarters and in the field offices. It took a while to do it.

And then of course with the arrival of the internet and the old, I guess the State Department's first contractor, was the word processors from Wang. It basically was a word processor. It took the place of a typewriter but really it wasn't until later on that our abilities to use internet for exchanging information and passing information, and where we've gone in the last five years is just amazing on that. But certainly, yeah, the internet has become a major tool. The other thing, as technology advanced, law enforcement systems advanced so that access to law enforcement databases by the computer became much more easy. In fact, you've heard of some of these programs in the news recently, Choice Point being one of them, which is a database of public information, all the information is public. When I was in Miami we had access to what was called Autotrack at the time, it's been bought by other companies, which allowed us basically to do some basic leads on the internet or in this system, utilizing computers, that we didn't have to go out on the street and do it. So, yeah, a lot of time saved then that could be used to actually going out and completing the investigation on the street as necessary, allowing us to do more undercover operations and use operational techniques other than basic investigative techniques that now could be done, more and more, on the computer. Safeguarding the information, of course, was important. Guarantees from these companies that provide this information that our screens and our windows aren't going to be open to anyone else that's involved in this process also. So there were a lot of privacy concerns. But, yeah, as an investigative tool it became as important as the telephone, as our vehicles to conduct our investigations. So, yes, technology certainly has assisted.

The problem is, there still is a lot to be done in providing a true internet capability among law enforcement agencies for the sharing of information, which, obviously, became apparent with 9/11. But, yeah, technology and the internet are very important for our operations, both protective operations and investigations.

Q: I mentioned this before, women on the scene, as agents.

DEERING: We had, while I was in Miami, I had several female agents that were assigned to the field office that came in and out. Generally there was not, they fit right in. They were trained, they were trained agents, they had a job to do just like everyone else and I think that the understanding was that, hey, you're an agent, whether you're a male or a female, you've got to carry your load and there's a job that has to be done. And generally that's the way it happened.

Q: Were there resistance, you think, at the beginning or do you know this?

DEERING: No, I don't think there was resistance. I think what may been, initially, among some of the men was am I going to have to carry her load on the street? Am I going to have to do things that a woman is incapable of doing? But I think we soon learned that that was not an issue. The women that worked for me over the years always pulled their fair share of the load and I didn't see the bias or the prejudice against women as law enforcement officers or as State Department, Diplomatic Security Service, agents. I never saw that. Now, if it were deemed that someone was not carrying his or her fair share, well that's another issue. That though, there is always a danger there. If it is a female or a minority that's not doing the job, that the first claim is going to be well, you know, if I go after that person as a supervisor am I going to get a discrimination suit filed against me, an EEO complaint. And that's a real issue and I believe it's still a real issue because performance, to me, is the most important part of the job. You do your job then everything else will fall into place. When you don't do your job, then these other issues can come into play.

Q: Okay, you went to Beirut when?

DEERING: I went to Beirut in the summer of 1999, but there's a couple of things I failed to mention, thinking about Miami. One of them was some of the major roles that our field office played. I discussed a lot about investigations and what we were involved in. We also had a lot of protective, a couple of major protective service operations while I was there, other than the routine protective details on individuals. We were heavily involved in 1994 in the Summit of the Americas in Miami, where Miami hosted the Summit of the Americas, I guess thirty heads of state from the Caribbean and all of Latin America, along with foreign ministers. We had a lot of details on foreign ministers and in fact we had the highest threat detail for that and that was on the OAS Secretary General, Gaviria at the time, who had been the president of Colombia and the drug warlords were out to get him. So it was a high threat and there were incidents while we protected him in Miami.

And of course the other major undertaking while I was there and that was an on-going event from the time I arrived in late 1991 was the preparation for the Olympics in Atlanta. The 1996 Olympics, generally our Atlanta resident office from about 1993-1994 on, the majority of the time spent by the agents assigned in our Atlanta office, which came under Miami Field Office, was plans and preparations and involvement with the Olympics. Again, we had responsibility for a number of visiting dignitaries and we also, for the first time, had responsibility for protecting a team and that was the Israeli Olympic team. We actually had agents marching with the Israeli team in the opening and closing events and assigned in the midst of the Israeli team throughout the Olympics, as a result of the fears of terrorism in 1996.

So we did have a lot of interesting things that went on. One thing, one particular detail we had, I guess it was, I don't know if it was 1997 or 1998, I don't remember now. We had a protective detail in Jacksonville, Florida on Shimon Perez. And it all went well while he was there but after the fact, he had spoken at a Jewish community center. The night that he was to speak, a kid playing in the Jewish center, found an explosive device in the center. It turned out the device could not have gone off because it did not have a charging mechanism, a detonator. But the pucker factor went up considerably. The Israelis had their own people do the screening for explosives like they always do when they get involved in these things. We had EOD people there. We depended on the sheriff's office in Jacksonville and we were working very closely. As a result, the big question was, what happened here? How did everybody miss this thing, with dogs, with explosive detection equipment? Unfortunately, it kind of degenerated after the fact into a finger pointing, everybody pointing the fingers. And what finally happened there was I went up to Jacksonville and the head of our dignitary protection division came down from Washington and asked for a meeting with the sheriff of Jacksonville. The chief of police, actually the sheriff and the police are one in Jacksonville, it's the largest county in the United States. And we sat down and hashed it out and I mean we hashed it out and at the end we announced a press conference, came out and said hindsight's 20/20, and yes there were mistakes made but let's move forward with this thing. And we did and that was the best way to do it. Put it all out in the open because the newspapers were running wild with this thing, again, what happened here, law enforcement failure, blah blah blah. As it turned out it was an inert device but it could have, if there were a detonatoand I might add, we worked very closely with the FBI, sent agents up from the Miami Field Office. We had a guy in custody within a short period of time and he got ten years in prison for it. He was a right wing Israeli who was opposed to the "moderate" approach and he was an American and he just was protesting. We got a search warrant for his house, found the bomb making equipment there and it worked out very well in the end. Unfortunately, when there's a mistake, instead of pointing fingers, everybody's really got to sit down and own up to it and move on. So while we had a lot of investigative work in Miami we had a lot of protective responsibilities over the years.

Q: How did the fact that Miami would seem to be the R&R spot for Colombian drug lords and others, did that pose problems for you?

DEERING: No, it didn't cause problems for us because, the old expression, it's kind of like what I learned in the Middle East. In Syria, when I was there, there were 13 or more terrorist groups that had their headquarters in various places in Syria, training facilities, support facilities, offices, etc, etc. People say, "Gee, weren't you scared to death?" And I say, well, there's an expression, you don't mess in your own litter box. I think probably the same was true in Miami. The drug traffickers who were in and out, they certainly don't want to draw attention to themselves. So with the very active law enforcement campaign to round up these folks whenever they did come into Florida, it wasn't an issue. Remember, we're talking, in drug trafficking the big boys are not necessarily in the United States. That's what makes it so difficult.

Q: Well then, so we're off to Beirut

DEERING: But I have one more story to tell. We had, in April, right before I went to Beirut, we got notified that the Dalai Lama was coming to South Florida to receive an honorary degree at Florida International University. This was an era where, it was following the 1998 East African bombings, DS was in a state of flux because we had to respond to requests worldwide for TDY support as a result of the bombings. Our field offices were pretty much milked out, we had a lot of people on TDY assignments. Our programs were kind of almost at a standstill because of the fact that there hadn't been any new hiring in years. So all of a sudden, another crisis, like the crises in the mid-Eighties, with the bombings of our embassies, now we've got another major crisis and we're going through a, I mentioned the previously, we'd gone through a period where we hired very few new agents. So all of a sudden now, our demands are up and supply is down. So when dignitaries came into field office regions and they were only going there, it was pretty much left up to the field office, with guidance from our diplomatic protection division, to handle the short term details. So we, with the resources we had in Miami, we felt we could deal with it. He was there for about 36 hours. I ran the detail and my other supervisors were the shift leaders and the assistant agent in charge and the agents, the detail was staffed by I think 12 to 15 Miami agents. We, DS, has traditionally had protective responsibility for the Dalai Lama and when he comes to the United States there's generally a detail on him. He does a lot of travel in the United States. So he came and he was staying on one of these little islands off in Biscayne Bay there. Somebody had given him a condominium to stay in, a high rise and that's where he stayed with his entourage. The Dalai Lama's a fascinating person, very outgoing, very friendly, almost child-like in his humor. Speaks, I guess, seven or eight different languages, all self-taught and he just likes to socialize with everybody who's near him. I remember when we came out of the car to go up the high rise, in the elevator, I'm standing next to him and one of his assistants are standing on the other side, from the office in New York, he grabbed hold of our hands when the elevator starts to do up. We get upstairs and he's just kind of smiling, almost giggling and we get upstairs and he goes off into his room and I call the aide over and say, "Excuse me but His Holiness, is he afraid of elevators?" He says, "Oh, no, no, he just likes people." I said, "Okay." So then we went off, I think it was the next morning, he had the ceremony at Florida International University. Well, as a detail leader you stay with thso it was arranged that I would march in the procession. So we're all in a room getting our caps and gowns for the procession. Well, the Dalai Lama's already got his cap and he's got his gown and he just needed a sash and his robes. And I'm over there, trying to get ready, I'm in there by myself, the other guys were outside and Governor Bush is in there. Well, I'm struggling to get my cap and gown on over my equipment. So Governor Bush comes over, "Oh, let me help you, let me help you." And I look over and the Dalai Lama's standing on the other side of the room, he's got his hand over his mouth and he's pointing at me and laughing. Just thought that was the funniest thing in the world, but that's the way he was. Then we left there and went back and we had a full motorcade, support from the locals and we had a lead car from I believe it was Metro Dade. I don't know if it was Metro Dade PD or Miami PD. It was Miami PD because he was residing in the city. We came off an on-ramp onto one of the major thoroughfares in Florida and our lead car, I was in the limo, one of my supervisors driving the limo and the Dalai Lama's in the right rear seat, sitting right behind me. And he's just kind of sitting there, I could see him in the rear view mirror, just looking at what's going on. We come out and our lead car gets too far ahead of us as we merge onto the freeway and a big tanker truck gets in between the lead car and us and we're in a heavy old mid-1980's or 1990 armored Cadillac. It's not real easy to slow this baby down when you get going. Well, we pull out and as we pull out as I say this big tanker truck pulls in front of us down the right lane of the freeway and so Bob is, we're coming up now, we're moving fast enough that we're almost in the rear end of this tanker truck. I'm looking at Bob. I say, "Bob, you need to stop this thing." Bob says, "Don't worry, don't worry." Well, by the time we slow things down we were literally that far, a foot or a couple of feet, we were all still moving but this tanker truck had gotten in the procession. The Dalai Lama pats me on the shoulder. I turn around, he goes, "That was close!" Just that was the sense of humor he had and when he left we had to sit with him on the plane, he was flying on a Lufthansa flight, he was going up to Berlin or Frankfurt, I don't remember where it was, somewhere in Europe. We always were there until they closed the doors. So I'm standing there and he calls me over. And he goes, "Thank you very much" and he takes my hand and he's got something in his hand. He takes my hand, opens my hand and he puts it in my hand and puts my hand down at my side. And the doors close and I left. And I get outside and it's a little peppermint he'd given me. I heard a lot of stories about the aura almost of the Dalai Lama and it was really true. He was quite a memorable person, probably more so than any other of these dignitaries I've dealt with over my career. Just a little anecdote that I wanted to say. But, again, it's important when you have to deal with these folks, you've got to be able to deal with them at their level in the protective service operation. Just a little story, a little anecdote. That was kind of the last, one of the last things I did there, in Miami.

In your last couple of months, you're kind of getting ready for your on-going assignment and then I left in, I went on leave in July, early August and I finally went over, I guess it was mid-August and then I arrived in Beirut I think the first or second week, right after Labor Day of 1999.

Q: You were there until when?

DEERING: I was there until September of 2002. I arrived, I flew into Athens, hopped over to Cyprus and awaited the helicopter into Beirut. At that point in time, all personnel, both going to and departing Beirut, from the embassy had to fly on the charter helicopter. It was no longer the military that was providing the helicopter service, it was a charter service that had been in existence for some time. But that was the only way that you were allowed to travel in and out of Beirut at that time, in 1999.

Q: What was the situation when you got there?

DEERING: The situation was that conditions had improved in Beirut in the late Nineties. The war kind of behind everyone. There were still the various religious factions that played major roles in how business was done in Beirut. The Israeli, the South Lebanese Army, was still occupying Southern Lebanon. Hezbollah and it were involved in almost daily skirmishes to see who was running the show.

Beirut was still a dangerous place. All of our personnel on the compound were required to travel with bodyguards off the compound and in armored vehicles, embassy vehicles. There was no travel off the compound other than under those circumstances. Before I had gotten there there had been a downsizing of the motorcade support for our Americans and the ambassador especially when he traveled off the compound. The days were gone of the follow car with the fifty caliber machine gun mounted on a mount on top of one of the vehicles. While there was a downsizing there was still a heavy presence of bodyguards, very well trained bodyguard force, Lebanese nationals. And a move was afoot to lessen restrictions on travel in Lebanon, allow for more travel off the compound, allow for more travel for both business and social purposes off the compound. There was still a curfew. You could not spend a night off the compound unless there were exigent circumstances that the ambassador would have to make a decision on. While I was there, this policy, very restrictive policy, was under constant review and there were those elements who were very strongly opposed to continuing such a high level of security on our operations in Lebanon. There hadn't been any incidents against Americans since the mid-1980's, the kidnappings. There were a couple of incidents where explosive rockets were found, devices were found in proximity to the compound that had been aimed at the compound but didn't work, but there were no major incidents. There were no incidents involving Americans, so the move afoot was to open up Lebanon, open up the embassy in Beirut to allow for less restrictive travel, more travel off the compound and eventually look at downsizing the bodyguard size, the size of the bodyguard details, downsizing the size of the motorcades and also looking at the use of Beirut International Airport for our comings and goings.

Shortly after I got there a decision was made that there would be some attempts at utilizing Beirut, the airport, for travel in and out of Lebanon. One of my tasks was to establish a relationship with the Lebanese authorities to ensure that if we were to use the Beirut International Airport we would get the necessary level of support there to ensure our safety. Not an easy task but it was something that the embassy wanted and also that the Lebanese wanted, too, because if they could say that Americans were now traveling in and out of Beirut International Airport that things were better and what the Americans do. A lot of people laughed, still, in Lebanon about the high levels of security that the American Embassy still maintained and I had many Lebanese ask me, "Why do you still travel around with all these armed bodyguards? It's safe here. Nobody's going to bother you."

Well, it's safe to a certain extent and it's safe as long as the bad guys don't want to do anything, but Syria was calling the shots in Lebanon and the Lebanese were at the beck and call of Syria and so what happened in Damascus still had an effect on what happened in Beirut. Having served in Damascus, I thought I had a pretty good understanding of how the politics of the region worked and I wasn't about to go gung ho to reducing the security levels in Beirut because there was an element in the embassy that thought that this would be a good idea and let's do it and get it done. Because at the end of the day, as I told the ambassador in my first day there, when I had my first sit down with hiand I had known Ambassador Satterfield, Ambassador Dave Satterfield and I had worked with him in Damascus earlier, when he was political officer for Beirut but serving in Damascus because Beirut was closeand I told him, my job here is to make sure everybody's safe. And your job here is to make sure everybody's safe. And at the end of the day there are two people responsible for the safety of our people and mission and that is me and you, and ultimately, it's you. So whatever you do, the ramifications will certainly affect me but it will more affect you. So let's not drive this train down the tracks at breakneck speed. "Okay, okay, okay." And generally, there was a lot of pressure to reduce the people. The ambassador would get calls from Lebanese saying one of your details drove by and stuck a rifle out the window at me and so I'd have to deal with those kinds of complaints.

But in reality, it was a time of change. I had as my deputy RSO, who arrived a month after I did, one of my supervisors from Miami. We'd established a very close working relationship and we thought along the same lines. So we were alter egos for each other. If I wasn't there, he was there and vice versa. There were a lot of bad actors still in Lebanon. We were fairly effective in establishing relationships with the Lebanese authorities and especially those from the different directorates that were responsible for protecting the embassy, and we developed some very good sources of information while we were there, early on. A lot of these folks, Muslims as well as Christians, in the services, told us that things were not as peaceful as they might appear to be and that there was an element still in Lebanon, several elements that were troublemakers and who would like to see Lebanon return to the days of the civil war, where the factions were killing each other left and right, and that the Muslim Brotherhood was still an issue there. We even had people telling us that al Qaeda, this was remember, 1999, that al Qaeda was present in Lebanon. We had a couple people that kept banging this to us, if they had more tools and techniques, they could do a better job of tracking these people. So things were not peachy keen but things were not bad. We did get out a lot. We got out to dinner, restaurants were open again. We were able to socialize, which I think is important because at your social functions and in the homes of the Lebanese you can hear things that you wouldn't hear on the street. So there was a lot going on and it was a busy time.

Shortly after our arrival there, there were some major incidents, up in the northern part of Lebanon, where an army patrol was attacked. Ultimately the Russian Embassy was attacked, with casualties. So there was, what's going on, what's going on in Beirut. We did a lot of reporting back on what we were picking up through our DS channels and I was constantly reminding the ambassador and the DCM that, "Hey, this is still Beirut, Lebanon and yes, no one's bothering us now but if we weren't driving around town in our armored vehicles with our bodyguards, would that still be the case? And if Syria says Americans are free targets again, then what? Hezbollah doesn't like us. There are other elements in Lebanon that don't like us and there are elements in Syria that don't like us. So the whole political situation in Lebanon and in Syria as far as I was concerned had a major role in what was going on. Not only that but at the same time Hezbollah was getting more and more active in the south.

The Israelis, in my opinion, had realized by then that this, maintaining their presence in South Lebanon through the SLA, was a lost cause and it was only a matter of time before they withdrew. But in the interim, there were several incidents involving Israeli retribution against the Lebanese infrastructure because of the fact that they warned Lebanon, if you can't control Hezbollah, we're going to hold you responsible, we're going to hold Syria responsible. So there were a lot of incidents, one of which involved the Israelis attacking the electrical plant just outside Beirut, in the middle of the night, which then led to anti-American demonstrations because we were in bed with the Israelis, etc, etc.

So there were always dynamics going on but through it all we did in fact manage to open up the Beirut International Airport, which was a major accomplishment, with the guarantees of special treatment for American diplomats to ensure our safety, with the guarantees from the Lebanese that we would not be bothered. So ultimately in July of 2000 the last flight of the helicopter took place from Cyprus to Beirut and Beirut to Cyprus and the air bridge no longer existed. I assume we are still using Beirut International Airport.

We had several demonstrations against the embassy while I was there. Some got fairly close but the Lebanese authorities always were able to maintain crowd control. They used tear gas, they used water hoses for the first time which, again, created some problems but the year there was an extremely active year.

Q: Did you have, or could you have, contact with Hezbollah?

DEERING: No, we were not allowed to have direct contact with Hezbollah. If we were talking to someone who was Hezbollah, we wouldn't necessarily know about it. There had been a couple of incidents prior to my arrival and the years before, where members of the local guard force had been kidnapped and threatened and released by Hezbollah, saying, you're straying into territory you better not stray into. We had constant reports that we had to follow up on of plots against the embassy. Where the embassy sat in East Beirut we were, if you look up on hillsides, there were places that looked right down onto the compound and there was always that there would be rocket propelled grenade attacks from the high ground or something along those lines. We were constantly working with the Lebanese forces, the Lebanese armed forces, who maintained the perimeter around the embassy. We had a very active surveillance protection program that we established while I was there from existing members of the guard force into a surveillance protection detachment that was also made up of Lebanese internal security forces. This was the first time that a joint working relationship between the internal security forces and the local guard force at the American Embassy had taken place since the civil war days. There was a distinct distrust of the ISF, that they, the Internal Security Forces, were not capable, competent folks. But we worked with them, we developed a very good relationship with them and in fact they did participate actively, hand chosen people to work in our surveillance protection program which had become one of the most effective surveillance protection programs among all our embassies.

Q: How about the members of staff of the embassy? Political officers have to get out and talk to people or economic ones do, consular officers have to have investigations. How did this work?

DEERING: It worked, when they went out, they went out with the bodyguards. As I said, there was a system in place. You had to request a motorcade to do something 24 hours in advance. Now obviously if something of an emergency came up, an emergency came up, that could be waived but the motorcade request had to be approved by the RSO and by the DCM or the ambassador. Now obviously the ambassador and the DCM, they could travel, they had their own details assigned to them on a full time basis so they could travel whenever they wanted wherever they wanted.

The people who had money flaunted it. The people who had wealth flaunted it. It was not uncommon on the weekends to see the Lebanese out dressed to the nine, at the restaurants, at the clubs but it was the same people you saw all the time. The Daily Star, the English language newspaper there, had a social page that was just dedicated to the beautiful people in Lebanon and all of their charitable and social events. Of course then there was the other Lebanon, the Palestinian camps, where we had little contact, if any and the other various sectors of Lebanese society. It was a very class oriented society and further broken down by the various political and religious groups. The government is set up so that the Muslims and the Christians and the various factions of the Muslims share equally in the government. The prime minister is Muslim, the president is Christian, the head of the internal security forces was Christian, the head of the Lebanese Army was Christian, the head of the customs, immigration equivalent was Muslim and then within each of the organizations there was a breakdown, so that each group got its representation, whether they were qualified or not. It was a society where there was obviously a friendship towards the American people. More Lebanese live in the United States than live in Lebanon now and in other parts of the world also. So almost everybody you met, that I met, whether Muslim or Christian, had relatives in the United States. So there wasn't a feeling of anti-Americanism, because people had ties, whether they were Muslim or not, or Christian. So it was kind of a, it was very interesting society, very friendly. If you were invited into the home of Lebanese, you were treated like royalty. Just the Middle East way, of course but. The gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have nots, was significant.

Q: You get over to your old stamping grounds of Damascus?

DEERING: Yes I went over once, one trip, I guess it was April of 2000, I went over with the ambassador. He had some business over there so I went over with him, just to see what was going on. I did get to travel all over Lebanon. I was on R&R in May of 2000 when the Israelis packed up and literally left overnight. When I came back one of the things that we were involved with was taking trips down into South Lebanon, where we hadn't been able to go before and see what was going on down there. So I did get to take a trip through South Lebanon, which was kind of an exploration of the area, see some of the areas that the Israelis had occupied and I mean literally, they packed up and left and were gone. So that was an interesting journey but you always had to be careful because there were people watching you all the time, there's no doubt about that. When we were out and about, there were people keeping an eye on what we were doing.

Q: Was there a Marine detachment?

DEERING: No, no Marines. The security office was comprised of an RSO, deputy RSO and I think we had, I can't remember if it was six or seven assistant RSOs, the largest post, as far as Americans, at the time assigned to the Regional Security Office. We had a multitude of functions. We had protective security responsibility, where we had to run the local bodyguard force. We had the external security force, which was the perimeter force for the compound. The were, I guess, about 150 to 200 fulltime guards and then the bodyguard force was comprised of 55 extremely well trained, dedicated bodyguards.

Q: Where would one train bodyguards? These would be Lebanese.

DEERING: A lot of them had received training in the United States. We'd bring them back for training, driver training, defensive training and on the job training and constant training on the compound.

Q: On this subject, had sort of protective techniques changed much over the years you served or was there a fairly standard way of dealing with that? Talking about the protection.

DEERING: Well, there are a variety of different protective services techniques. There is the Secret Service way, which is you throw numbers and you have your circles of protection. SY and DS, we trained at a lower level, much more flexibility, because we don't have the numbers to use and we were working with other law enforcement agencies to support our operations. In Beirut it was pretty heavy handed, because of the nature of the beast. I had not experienced before constant traveling around with bodyguards all over the place but there were always bodyguards in proximity to us. The rules were very strict and they followed the rules. For example, an American never touched a door handle. When you got in a car, the door was opened by a bodyguard. That was part of his responsibility that that's his vehicle, you're a passenger, that's all you are. He's responsible for putting you in the car, getting you out of the car and making sure you get back in the car safely and with you, etc, etc, etc. So, very stringent operating procedures. Trained in using the cars, for blocking vehicles. Sometimes a little bit overzealous in that and trained in use of a variety of weapons. The difference being that this is what these guys did for a living. There were 55 of them, that was their job, protecting the Americans as bodyguards. They weren't doing anything else. That was their job. Whereas we as agents, we'd do a protection detail, then go off and do an investigation, something else, or we'd be assigned to the Secretary's Detail for two years, or whatever, moving on. These guys were trained, they believed in what they were doing, so it was protective services at a fairly high level. We'd do what we sometimes call escort details, where the threat level isn't there on a person but it's a political thing. So we're putting three or four agents, we'd stay with them during the day, put them to bed at night and come back in the morning. It's for political expedience, it's not protection but they're agents. In Beirut it was, here's the way it is, here's the package, here's how we operate. We had, an assistant RSO I had, traditionally in charge of the protective program, generally traveled with the detail on the ambassador, although towards the end we kind of pulled away from that, also but the bodyguards were responsible to an American at all times. Like I say, these guys were loyal employees that liked their job and, quite frankly, having a job at the American Embassy was a good thing. Jobs were scarce.

Q: Well then, after a year, 2000, where'd you go?

DEERING: I left Beirut in September of 2000 and I was assigned as our division chief at our protective intelligence investigation division, which is part of our Office of Criminal Investigations in Washington. So it was on the plane, back to Florida, sell my house, come up and establish myself in Washington. Now that's another key thing. I want to zero in on this here. Over the years, a lot changed in the State Department as far as administrative support of its employees, especially SY and DS. Domestically, if you weren't part of SY and then DS, you could be 90 per cent, 95 per cent sure that when you're assigned in the United States, you're going to be assigned in Washington, D.C. You had your passport agencies but very few passport agencies had Foreign Service Officers. You had the center in Miami that had some Foreign Service Officers, now there's some more down there that and I don't know if there are any in Charleston now or not. So when I first came on in SY, travel benefits, transfer benefits were foreign to the State Department when it involved domestic moves, because they really didn't have to deal with it. Again, as ST grew and became DS and DS grew, you have more and more domestic transfers. So things really, really did change. When I left Miami, it had been approved some years before, I don't remember what the exact date was, that if you were employed when you went overseas and you came back to a third location, then if you didn't sell your house before you left the Department would pay all the closing costs. So it almost became a game where if I had gone to Beirut, sold my house before I left and then went back to Washington I was on my own, as far as selling that house in Florida. But by waiting 'til I came back, selling the house, I'd returned from my tour, the State Department picked up all the closing costs. And it was a fight to get the Departmenand really I think it really happened when more other Foreign Service Officers started being assigned in other places around the United States. But again, I think my point here is that the State Department has not always been forward looking in taking care of its employees and the benefits that are allegedly derived by being able to serve overseas and your cost of living allowances and your danger pay, your hazardous duty pay and all that, for some reason I always got that the mentality of the State Department bureaucracy was, that's reward enough. I remember when it was sometimes almost impossible to get the home leave that was coming to you. "No, you've got to be here, we can't give you any time off." What's that all about? I think we've come a long way in the Department in the past ten years as far as those kinds of issues are concerned. An unhappy employee is not a good employee. So, again, just kind of a little aside there, because we do move so much.

Q: Well you were in Washington from when to when?

DEERING: I was in Washington, I arrived, started my job actually, October, I think it was October 11th or October 12th, 2000, about eight days before the Cole incident. And this was an eye opener because I came into a job that requiretraditionally the division chief of Protective Intelligence Investigations (PII) was one of the primary briefers for the rest of DS and other people in the Department as far as terrorism was concerned. So I was in the office, 6:30 every morning, over to a briefing in the assistant secretary's office at seven o'clock or 7:15, don't remember what it was, and possibly in for other briefings at other levels and working closely with our threat analysis people. It was an eye opener because you were really in the mix of what was going on in the world of terrorism and counterterrorism. We had a loany time there was an incident involving a terrorist threat or terrorist attack against U.S. facilities anywhere in the world, it was protective intelligence people that were supposed to respond. We also had responsibility, the office or the division, for managing our assets in the various joint terrorism task forces around the countryside. We had been active members of the FBI's joint terrorism task forces in those cities where we had field offices and resident offices and while I was in PII we expanded that somewhat further even to include putting terrorism task force representatives in FBI offices where we didn't have a resident office or field office presence. The Cole incident was an ...

Q: You might explain what the Cole incident was.

DEERING: The Cole incident was the attack in Yemen on our U.S.S. Cole, in October of 2000 where the little boat full of explosives was able to crash into the side of the Cole, blowing a hole. I don't know, there was 17 killed, 41 injured or whatever it was, I don't remember but, again, showing the vulnerability that we had to the threat of terrorism worldwide, it wasn't just embassies, buildings, it was now our naval vessels. Again, everybody, I remember it was just a time when everybody was scratching their heads, what do we do? The aftermath, the knee jerk reaction was, well let's send everybody we can think of to Yemen to investigate this incident. It was a really bad time.

Q: I had an interview with Mike Metrinko, I don't know if you know Mike. He had been a hostage and spoke Farsi. Anyway, he ended up there and he said it was scary because he found himself surrounded by Department of State, FBI, Navy Intelligence and some others, all of whom had different rules of engagement. There was real concern about, anything could trigger and they'd all start shooting each other, practically.

DEERING: Well, again, it was, sometimes we learn a lot yet we don't learn anything. Here was again, it was an incident, a major incident. There supposedly was a plan. You send a U.S. government investigating team over there and you investigate the incident but you had the navy involved, you had our ambassador involved. It happened in a place where there were no U.S. diplomatic facilities. We essentially had to send teams into, I guess it was Aden and establish a de facto consulate because our embassy was up in Sanaa and there was a lot of confusion. I had a senior guy in my office, who I had worked with many times over the years, a very good investigator, a former explosives expert with the Hartford Police Department years and years ago, he went over there as a lead DS person on the ground. The stories he told, it was a nightmare. He had the mission to set up and secure this consular facility, whatever you wanted to call it. The FBI was a problem. Who's doing what to whom was a problem. There were two stars, three stars, Director of the FBI and here's Steve, under the senior executive level, trying to hold his head above the water and my trying to get people in DS to understand if you're going to send a guy out there to be a player he's either going to be representing us for operational interests but we need a senior person out there for policy. Somebody who the ambassador can depend on for policy and noSteve is wearing two hats. He said it was driving him nuts. And he said, he had all these two stars, three stars, GS-17s, -18s, Senior Foreign Service, everybody running around and it was just kind of hectic. You had the FBI, I guess Ambassador Bodine at the time, run-ins with the FBI every day.

Q: She and the FBI, a real clash there, I understand.

DEERING: Huge. John O'Neal, John O'Neal, bless his soul, was ultimately, had retired from the FBI after that and was in charge of security at the World Trade Center. He went back in to help people. But anyhow, it was a classic example of what I see is unfortunately our knee jerk reaction to major incidents. We still haven't learned as a government how to respond in an orderly manner to such incidents. I think back to first responses in the mid-Eighties. We sent teams out and actually there was a lot less hoopla surrounding some of those. So even with the Oklahoma City bombing, which was an FBI show, yet that was a knee jerk reaction. Everybody was quick to say well this mirrored the attacks on our embassies, look at the building. And I was as guilty as anyone else, the building collapsed just like our embassies collapsed. Big car bomb, had the Middle East markings all over it. Just a knee jerk reaction.

Q: Bunch of people who looked Middle Eastern or were Middle Eastern got picked up and

DEERING: Right, oh, jerked around, jerked around, big time. So, here we go with the Cole. Also working, unfortunately, with a government that was not particularly friendly, if not hostile. It had been the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, years ago. And again, we still do not understand that there are different mentalities from ours in the way we deal with things. And I'm not saying that the way we want to do business is wrong because the thing is we are much more orderly than any other government I've seen, once we decide what we're going to do and go about it, we're more orderly, how we do it. But you can't go charging in. You can't land an aircraft in Yemen and have fifty FBI agents jump off the aircraft and set up a perimeter, armed perimeter, around the aircraft as allegedly was done in Yemen without pissing off a bunch of people. So we still are not quite there. I guess our ultimate response was, a year later, after 9/11, when we decided we needed a Department of Homeland Security to ensure that 9/11 doesn't happen again. I'm not quite sure where that's taken us.

Q: I don't either. In all of these things you run into turf. It's not just turf but it's also credit or something like this. If something happens, everybody wants to get in on the act. It's only natural. In many places you also have a bunch of chiefs appearing from all over and say, "Well, I'm the fire marshal" and everybody's got their and they want to be. Much is well meaning and all this, others, it's just plain career enhancement but whatever it is, it louses up the crime scene.

DEERING: And again, what we have to remember is, it's very nice and I think very good that the Omnibus Terrorist Act of 1984 established a law that basically said that if you attack American interests anywhere in the world you're fair game for prosecution under the U.S. law. And I think that's fine because I think we had to do something like that. Otherwise I don't know how we're going to deal with this thing because we can't, we can't depend on other countries to do these investigations because it's not in their interest. An attack on an American embassy somewhere, it may not be in the interests of that host country to find out what really happened. I think we're seeing that in Lebanon now. I just kind of chuckle. What's happening in Lebanon now? What I was fearful of happening when I was there. A breakdown, the loss of Syrian influence, yet the powers that be still there in Syria who would prefer to see things revert to where they were. And so the assassination of Rafic Hariri, those who did it don't ever want anybody to know what happened. Nor does the Lebanese government, because they were there. Likewise, in 1984, when we got to the scene of the bombing of our embassy, embassy annex that was set up, after the bombing of our embassy in '83, by the time we got there, where the explosion, the crater was there but as soon as that explosion occurred the Lebanese government sent in Rafic Hariri's company, at the time, to excavate the crater. Now, why did they do that? Because it removes evidentiary material but, unfortunately with an explosion matter is neither created nor destroyed it just changes form and we were able to determine who the bad guys were on that one. But the point being is that while we have to have a response and a response ready to go wherever we have to go, we don't often carry it out very effectively.

Q: Well now, first place, timing. You were in this office, the office name was

DEERING: The Office, it's called Protective Intelligence Investigative Division.

Q: And you were there 'til when?

DEERING: I was there from October of 2000 until February of 2003 and it was an extremely busy period of time, long hours, long days.

Q: Well, can you almost divide it between 9/11 and

DEERING: No, I can divide it between

Q: The Cole

DEERING: Yeah, the eight days until the Cole, when I still didn't know what the hell was going on in my office. And then, of course, with 9/11 and the finger pointing that occurred after that, just constant things going on, constant. Anytime there was a threat somewhere, anytime there was an incident, we had to dispatch agents.

Q: What were you doing and what use was made of what you were doing?

DEERING: Well, I ran an office with agents. We were divided into geographic areas of coverage. The Officer of Protective Intelligence, Investigations Division, also was responsible for managing on behalf of the State Department and on behalf of DS the Rewards for Justice program.

Q: That was what?

DEERING: The Rewards for Justice program is a program that is congressionally mandated and funded by Congress which provides the availability of funding for rewards to individuals providing information that prevents an international terrorist attack. The attack must have involved an American target or provides information that leads to the successful prosecution of those individuals involved in actual incidents that occurred. At the time that I arrived there, the biggest, the poster child for the Rewards for Justice program, was the Ramzi Yousef case. Ramzi Yousef being the mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, who also was involveand this is what's remarkable, how short our memories arRamzi Yousef not only was the mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing and got out but he also was involved in the plot to kill the Pope in Manila, that's ultimately what brought him to everybody's attention, and also involved in a series of plots or in planning a series of plots that involved destroying U.S. charter aircraft, meaning U.S. international carriers as they flew over the Pacific and other areas, to occur simultaneously. That plot was broken up. Ramzi Yousef was on the run for almost three years and was ultimately captured in Pakistan in 1996 and he was captured because someone went to the RSO who knew Ramzi Yousef and said, "I understand that there's a reward and I know where this guy is and are you interested?" "Yeah, we're interested. Where is he?" "Across the street." So there happened to have been a DS team in Pakistan, training team. So with some resources from the RSO's office and this training team, working with the FBI office in Pakistan and the Pakistani authorities, a raid was quickly put together and Ramzi Yousef was captured. The first person to put his hands on Ramzi Yousef was a DS agent and I've heard the story from the agent that Ramzi Yousef, when they busted into the hotel room and captured him, he was very surly. He said to the Pakistanis that were there, "You can't touch me in this country. I have connections." And the DS agent who was with the raiding team said, "Well, Ramzi, we can." And he said he peed in his pants and Ramzi of course was sent back to the United States and tried and now serving his life sentence.

A significant reward was paid to this person. He was offered other things: protection, relocation to another country, blah blah blah, blah blah blah. That was the showcase for the Rewards for Justice program, two million dollars was paid out in that case.

With the 9/11 incident, but before that I remember getting involved in the Rewards for Justice program, probably, got there in 2000, spring of 2001 I became more "hands on" involved. I saw the value of this and I had a Presidential Intern working on the program and we had put together very interesting concepts for how to sell this program out in the Third World, where money doesn't necessarily mean a lot but other promises can be made. And we worked very closely with S/CT, who was the policy side of the Rewards for Justice program and there was a committee

Q: S/CT?

DEERING: The Office to Combat Terrorism in the State Department. And for all decisions involving payment of rewards or recommendations for the payment of rewards, there was a committee that met that had to approve it. It had to go to the Attorney General and the Secretary of State for final approval and then Congress had to be apprised on a yearly basis on what reward moneys were allocated. So a very vibrant program that became much more vibrant after 9/11.

Q: Well, when you got there, at one point you had none of these home grown outfits, the Red Brigade, the Prima Liga in Italy, Bader-Meinhof, the Japanese Red Army

DEERING: They had all basically disappeared.

Q: Basically it turned into a Muslim fundamentalist

DEERING: A Muslim fundamentalist movement. Not that it wasn't always. Yeah, the Japanese Red Army, the International Brigade, they kind of sold their services and usually it was to people with Middle Eastern connections. But, no, it was primarily, by the time I arrived in this job, it was the, Muslim fundamentalism was growing. I'm not sure even in 2000 or 1999 a lot of people, well, certainly before 1999, nobody knew who Osama bin Laden was, very few people knew who Osama bin Laden was. Nobody was aware that Ramzi Yousef also said that, "I could have taken those towers down if that vehicle had been placed a little bit differently in the garage there." He said, "I failed" but they came back and finished the job, they came back and finished the job and that's one of the trademarks of al Qaeda, that if they say they're going to do something, generally, if they do it, they're going to finish the job at some point in time. Yeah, it became more and more an issue of Muslim fundamentalism. The terrorist groups were, it became a, a lot of it based on our support of the Israeli government or Israeli policy, our presence in the Middle East and the Muslim fundamentalists were certainly able to build on this being, here we are, it's the Crusades. I always thought it's the Crusades all over again, we're back in the 12th, 11th and 12th Century. And of course the problems for the Arabs is they're as disjointed now as they were then.

Q: Did you, in getting intelligence, I assume, and I don't want to tread on the wrong toes here, this is unclassified, but I would assume if you're looking at intelligence that came in, one of the prime producers would be the Israeli intelligence. At the same time the Israeli intelligence would be open to suspicion because they have their own agenda. Was this a difficulty?

DEERING: Yeah, let me go back a little bit further. Up until 1997, '96 or '97, the protective intelligence division was called the counterterrorism division. We were a counterterrorism investigative division for the State Department, operationally. A certain assistant secretary of state in the mid-Nineties decided that that was inappropriate for there to be in DS a counterterrorism office so therefore we would change the name to protective intelligence. Protective intelligence meaning we were not intelligence gatherers but we analyzed, we looked at, intelligence in terms of how we use it to protect, provide security for our operations, for our missions, for our people. So it's not such a harsh word as counterterrorism. I found that ridiculous. There was a lot of unhappiness with that decision. Let's call it what it is and what we really do and that is we perform a counterterrorism function operationally for the State Department in terms of the investigations we conduct. Yes, we conduct them for protective security purposes because the FBI has the jurisdiction to conduct criminal investigations involving acts of terrorism but it became part of the crisis that DS faced in the mid-Nineties when I believe as I said before there were elements in the State Department that looked to lessen the influence of DS as an organization, as a bureau in the State Department, and I think it was misguided.

Q: How did you find, by the time you, there, doing this, it was a very critical time, I would think, particularly after 9/11 money would be thrown at it but money is not necessarily the way to go. Everybody wants to make sure that they're on board. How did you treat this?

DEERING: If we had to go somewhere to do something, there was always money from the security supplemental to ensure that we would be able to perform our mission. Yeah, money was not, it wasn't being thrown around.

Q: But it was available.

DEERING: But it was available. Again, I think a lot of the problems were that there were still a lot of different pieces of pie that people were interested in. We were looking at an attack on an embassy as part of the overall problems of providing security to our, our meaning State Department, functions. The FBI is looking at the same attack as "We have to find the person responsible for this." And then you have the intelligence gatherers who don't want to provide all of the information for fear of compromising sources and methods. So you've got a distinct break between intelligence and investigations that has been traditional in the law enforcement and intelligence community in the United States. It goes all the way back to the, what was it, 1947, 1949, when the national security structure was formalized in the United States. The CIA can't operate inside the United States, the FBI can't operate outside the United States, intelligence is for intelligence purposes, investigations are for investigation purposes and never the twain shall meet, which is one of the reasons why 9/11 occurred. But as an organization in the federal law enforcement community, DS is small, probably the smallest. Well, I won't say that. It's not the smallest, because some of these other cabinet level agencies are smaller in numbers but in terms of competing with the FBI, DEA and ATF and the larger agencies, in numbers, numbers-wise, we can't compete. But we can compete because we have something to offer. That is ready access to sources of information around the world without the bureaucracy. The FBI, and I don't know how it is now, but they just beat themselves to death with their own bureaucracy. We would have so many, I remember when I was in Miami and when I was in Washington, too, I'd get calls all the time from local and other federal law enforcement agencies that need information from another country. They go through the bureaucracy of the FBI with the legal attaches system it would take forever to get an answer, whereas we could pick up the phone, call the RSO, I open up a case, tell the RSO, "Give me back the information" we'd turn the thing around in 48 hours. So we did have a significant role to play and we do have a significant role to play in those terms. But I think there is stiland I'm not sure Homeland Security did anything to break down this maelstrom.

Q: I'm very dubious how this thing's going to work out but anyway.

DEERING: I don't know, either. Probably today it's not nearly as bad as it was at the time of 9/11 but everybody knew that agencies kept their own secrets, didn't like to share information for the reasons that we discussed earlier: protect your mission, protect your own resources, protect your assets and protect the information because you don't want somebody else taking credit for it. Unfortunately, that's how things are driven.

Q: Well did you, did you at all get involved in the, immediately after 9/11 it became a, turned into a mindset, if not a political issue of Iraq is behind this and all that. Did that come up at all while you were

DEERING: What I remember, there's before 9/11 and there's after 9/11, really. I hope we don't ever forget that as a people because, yes, 9/11 was a shock, but it really wasn't a surprise to a lot of us who believed that something was going to happen. The magnitude and the success certainly was. I was surprised, quite frankly, that there weren't more immediate, follow up actions that I think could have been extremely effective for the terrorists and very detrimental to uand that would have been attacks on railway stations, shopping centers. It showed that their planning was very, there was a tunnel vision to their planning. Their planning was, take an aircraft and crash them into buildings. That was the extent of the planning, I believe. I don't think there was any backup plan. I believe, from what I've read and seen, that there very possibly were other airliners that were targeted and they were not successful in getting on the planes or whatever. I can't rule that out but I think we were lucky that they didn't have the foresight to plan these other actions that could have been more or just as effective in planting fear in the general population. What they hit was the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center, international business, the Pentagon, the military. They didn't hit the shopping centers. They didn't hit the train stations, the subway stations, because they didn't plan it. They didn't have the resources to do it and we're fortunate for that because they really could have done a lot more damage.

Q: A couple of bombs going off in a shopping center in Des Moines or Seattle or something

DEERING: Well, the fear generated by the DC sniper case. Unknown, who were these people, what was going on there? But to get back to the 9/11 aftermath, I don't think, I certainly and I don't think the people that worked for me at the time pointed their fingers at Iraq, no. Nor was it ever suggested to me, in my little piece of the pie that we were involved in in my office in PII, the follow ups and everything else, was it ever suggested to me that we better start, go looking for Iraq and Iraqi connection, not at all.

We had our work cut out for us because in fact we had had a request on August 23rd for name checks on three of the hijackers to see if they had been issued visas by our consulate or our embassy in Saudi Arabia. Unfortunately, the folks who had made the request, I think I might have mentioned this earlier in our discussion, just put them across as routine requests in trying to find out if these people had visas, so we could find out what's going on here. There was no urgency. There was no, actually it was one agency requesting on behalf of another agency, with a law enforcement request, so it was all done legitimately. And we had provided the information prior to 9/11. We got it very quickly. I contend that if law enforcement had been provided information that there was a keen interest in these peoplmaybe there wasn't. If we'd even been told, "We're looking to see if these people are in this country for this reason." We were never told that. We were just asked to conduct, through our channels, with the embassy in Saudi Arabia, name checks on these three people. I believe that we could have, we collectively and quite frankly DS specifically, could have located these people in the United States prior to 9/11 happening.

And the reason I say this is based on a case that we had in the following June, June of 2002, June-July of 2002, where, it goes back to visa cases discussed earlier, where visas were issued fraudulently in a Middle Eastern country. We found out that there had been I believe 75 actual issuances. Within a period of ten days we were able to locate 46 of the 75 people, arrest several of them and determine basically the status of each of those 75 applications in a period of two to three weeks. And that was going just with the same information that we would have had on the three hijackers. That was: they got a visa, here's where they said they were going on their visa applications. They all come and the first thing they do is go and get a drivers license. You find out that. We could have found out that all these people had drivers' licenses. And it doesn't take long anymore with computers, as we've discussed earlier and with some good leg work with agents out in the field, to find these people. This case I talked about in 2002, the summer, U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia gave us the lead in that visa fraud case, even though it had terrorist implications, that we couldn't get working with the FBI, Immigration, countrywide. We rounded these people up, like I say, in 10 to 14 days.

Q: Well, what happened after 9/11? Just longer hours, did things change, or

DEERING: Well, unfortunately or fortunately, when 9/11 happened I had, ironically, set up, a week or so before, a meeting with the special agent in charge of the Chicago Field Office. Part of my function as chief of the division was to go out and visit the FBI offices where we had people on the joint terrorism task forces. So I had set up my appointment with the FBI in Chicago for September 11 and I left Washington National Airport on an eight o'clock flight and arrived in Chicago at nine o'clock, which was ten o'clock in the morning. I think our plane was the last one that was allowed to land. It was a big 757, flew out of National. Had no idea what was going on until the agent, the Chicago Field Office agent picked me up as I came out of the plane and he was just white. "What's going on, I don't know what you're talking about." He filled me in right there. So I spent about four days in Chicago trying to get out of Chicago. But there was a new urgency now to find these people. We set up a 24 hour operation. We established a database just for doing name checks and at all hours. We were deluged by the FBI and CIA with name checks on people, to run through our embassies, to run through the consular files, consolidate consular files. And we had a task force, I don't know how many months that went on, just dedicated to participating in this operation to try and identify other people or these people. And we had, in a very short period of time, we had provided, all the pictures you saw, in newspapers, from law enforcement, they were all from us. We got the visa pictures. So that was where everybody was able to ...

Q: I would think, at one point I ran a small consular establishment, a one person thing, in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, back in the late Fifties. And trying to sort out applicants, they were almost all Yemenis and everybody's name was Mohammed, there were three or four names. It was very hard to figure out who was who.

DEERING: I think it's probably now, everything's automated now and you can go into the files and pull up that whole application and pictures and everything else. So we've come a long way, I think, but it was a hectic time and then we had on top of it the Richard Reid case, Richard Reid being the shoe bomber.

Q: He just sounded like a nut case.

DEERING: Well, a nut case or, yeah, but guess what? That's who, these are the kinds of people that the Muslim fundamentalist terrorist elements are recruiting. Why are they recruiting? Because they're hopeless, they're hopeless and they offer them something that no one else could offer them and that is, you'll get your forty dancing girls and whatever and we'll take care of your family dah dah dah dah dah dah. So Richard Reid gets on this plane and he's got this, in his shoe here and he got help doing that, there's no question about that and he would have brought that plane down and nobody would have known what the hell happened, probably. But, he screwed up. And I remember that day very clearly. I was down in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on Saturday. And I turned the radio on and I heard this that F-15s or F-16s were escorting an American Airlines flight into Boston, there'd been an incident on board and the plane would be landing in two hours in Boston. So I picked up the phone, I called my branch chief and I said, "Hey, Mike, what's our JTF guy doing up in Boston? There's going to be foreign connections here. This is going to be of interest to us, not directly but we're going to get involved in this somehow or other, I guarantee. Give him a call and tell him to get his butt out to the airport." So he called him and he said, "Well, the FBI, my supervisor hasn't told me to do anything yet." He said, "You call your supervisor and tell him you're going out to the airport." So he calls his supervisor and he says, "Okay! You go out, there'll be another agent out there. You two are going to run the case." Well, the DS agent became the lead case in the Richard Reid case because he went to the airport! He was the one that did the initial interviews, with an FBI agent, testified and ultimately left DS and went to the FBI. I told the FBI SAC in Boston, "Don't ever do that to me again!" Just by being proactive somehow these things, but again, what was the plan for something like this? There was no plan! Whoever got there first was going to handle it!

Q: Did you get nervous, not nervous but, there was a period of time when the Attorney General, Ashcroft, was getting up and making announcements of capturing people that seemed to be far, it seemed like sort of publicity hounds and this didn't, trying to raise the awareness of the FBI being on rather dubious cases. Was this a problem for you?

DEERING: One of our agents assigned to the JTF in Detroit, Michigan was heavily involved in the cases right after 9/11, in the Arab community in the Detroit area. Some of them were not well done, some of them were quite well done. Of course the Dearborn, Michigan area has the highest Arab concentration of Arab Muslim population in the United States. I think Dearborn-Detroit area is number one, Los Angeles is up there and New York, I think, Newark

Q: Lackawanna or someplace.

DEERING: Yeah, Lackawanna.

Q: I sent a bunch of Arabs

DEERING: I think a lot of these things werand again, I pretty much had pretty good access to what was going on in a lot of these investigations but I felt that there had to be attempts made to break up any possible operational planning in these cells and the only way to do it is bust up some of these cells, to bust some of these people. Most of them were never charged with terrorism, they were charged with document fraud, with other white collar crimes. A lot of money laundering. A lot of them were crooks. But there was the one case that went bad in, up in Detroit, that's been in the news recently. They just acquitted, I think, the last person charged in that. There were some overzealous prosecutions in the U.S. Attorney's office there. Ed Sykes told me that some of this stuff was kind oEd Sykes was the agent in Detroit, he'd get called in on a lot of this stuff and he didn't quite understand what they were doing but, hey, they asked for information. And Ed of course was killed in Baghdad in October. Overzealous, I think immediately after 9/11, and probably it is right, the American public had to be given some kind of assurances that something was being done. Were people wrongfully put under surveillance, hassled? Yeah, no doubt about it, I think.

I have a friend who's a Lebanese- American doctor and he works at a hospital in Washington, DC. Christian, trained as a doctor in the United States, became naturalized while he was here, went back to Lebanon, came back. He told me one time in the fall of 2001 when I sat down with him one morning for coffee that he had been followed by somebody who he assumed was a law enforcement officer while he was shopping in a grocery store and he said this guy just kept following him. He didn't confront him or anything but he said he looked like he, like a law enforcement officer. "He looked like he had a particular interest in me" and said he made him feel very uncomfortable. So I think there was a lot of that.

Q: Stirring up the thing probably prevented some other things.

DEERING: Absolutely. I believe that there were, that there were, we were successful in preventing other incidents from occurring but I wonder if they were planned or copycats or on-going second, we all expected the second, the second phase which never happened. I'm not convinced that there ever was a second phase.

Q: I find it really, basically, when you think about it, remarkable that something didn't happen somewhere that could be tied to either a copycat or a low level attempt. It still can happen.

DEERING: It still can happen and I think we'd be foolish to say it can't or that it won't. Unfortunately, my experience over the years has been that the American public has a short memory and, yes, 9/11 was horrible but I don't think that 9/11 will go down in the annals as Pearl Harbor did. I don't believe that because at Pearl Harbor, we were attacked as a nation, there was an enemy, there were two enemies, we knew who they were, we knew what we had to do to fight them. We don't know how to fight this war.

Q: I was just a teenager when Pearl Harbor happened. I lived in Annapolis and my brother, he was on a battleship at Pearl Harbor. The point being that Pearl Harbor, it really affected my life and everybody around because, one, we went into wartime mode, two, all the males of my age, they didn't catch me until the Korean War but I just missed World War II but I expected to go in. Now we have people running around with stickers saying "Fight Terrorism." What the hell are they fighting terrorism about, they're putting stickers up. And they put a lot of flags on their cars. This event, kind of disturbing to me. They used to say in World War One, "Kill the Kaiser with your mouth." This is a little bit of, well

DEERING: I remember when we, after 9/11, we had to come up with a new rewards campaign for the Rewards for Justice program that focused on the 9/11 events. I'm trying to remember now, Karen Hughes, the new assistant secretary for public diplomacy, from the ad company. She got involved in this, hands on, because this now had the interest of the Department, our Rewards for Justice program. I went up to New York with the supervisor in my unit who was responsible for the rewards program. We went up to New York to her former company up there on, just off Madison Avenue and sat down with these "geniuses" and worked through these things to come up with rewards campaigns, these posters. At the end of the day, the posters that the slogan and the campaign that came out of it, I thought to myself, "well, this is great if you're an American who reads the New York Times, who is in tune with the culturally elite in this country, but it's not going to go down to the grass roots." It never did, it wasn't successful, at all. It wasn't successful. There were these highfalutin things. "Have you seen a terrorist?" I remember hearing that radio ad. The campaign in the newspapers with a picture of Mohammed Atta, "This is what a terrorist looks like. What you can do." I'm thinking to myself, "Who's going to read this stuff?"

But, by the same token, there were a couple of individuals in the private sector who came up with an idea to establish a 501(c)3 fund where the American people could actually donate tax deductible money to the War on Terrorism and this money to be used to supplement reward money offered by the United States government. One of the individuals was one of the founders of Priceline dot com who got out of the business before it died. But he and another individual, they came up with this thing and they came in to the State Department and said, "Can we set up a working relationship with the Rewards for Justice program?" Well it went right up to the top in L and into Public Affairs and all that and it's established and it is in existence to this day. So we went out with them and these guys were good, because they had connections. They had connections in the media all over. And we went out and did radio, TV, newspaper interviews, ads, for a period of about two months, starting in December. Secretary Powell rolled the program out, "Here's how you can help."

It was a unique idea but still I wasn't convinced that the campaign itself really, we didn't need Americans to understand what they could do to prevent a terrorist attack, because there's nothing they could do. Other than, if they see something suspicious, report it to your local law enforcement authorities. What we really needed to target was the overseas audience because that's where the terrorists were. So that was what we then geared towards languages, how meanings change and things like that. It became much more a discreet program aiming at the populations where the terrorists reside. Now of course what we got, those who were of that bent, we were accused of profiling. I said, "Now wait a minute, profiling. There's 19 Arabs who brought down these planes. What are we profiling? We're profiling Arabs who are Muslims who are fundamentalists. They may not be just in the Arab countries. They were in Pakistan, they were in Afghanistan, they're in Indonesia, they're in Malaysia, they're in Europe. No, it's not profiling. We're not making this up. We don't think that Muslim fundamentalists who are Arabs brought down four airplanes, we know. We know and we know the other one's sitting in prison who may have been involved in one of the squads that never made it out. We know he's a Muslim fundamentalist. So how you think we're profiling Arabs." It was an interesting time, the year after 9/11, as far as this rewards program was concerned.

Q: Did you continue in this job until you retired?

DEERING: No, I stayed in the job until 2003 when, after I got promoted into the Senior (Foreign) Service, the job was not a senior service job, it was an FP-1 job. The person who was running our field office operations, he announced his retirement to take this job in the private sector, so there was no one there. For once DS used some good common sense. I'd expressed an interest in the job, anyhow, because I'd been back in field offices for a number of years, I knew how field offices operated and I said, "Wouldn't it be a good idea to put me in that job? No learning curve, I'm not going to miss anything when the guy left, I can step right in." So that's where I ended up in February of 2003.

Q: You did that 'til what?

DEERING: I did that until I left in September of 2004 but at the end of that time I also assumed responsibilities as acting assistant director for all of our domestic programs when that person got reassigned to Brussels as the head of security for NATO.

Q: Would you talk about what you were doing?

DEERING: In February 2003 I assumed the position as director of field office operations which was responsible basically for both the operations and management of our field offices in the United States. There are eight field offices, 13 resident offices and the field offices. These offices contain the agents who do the everyday DS job, which is investigations and dignitary protection. They also serve as a pool for filling TDY positions overseas in the RSO shops or bulking up Secretary of State's Detail when he travels overseas or domestically or even any other dignitaries that you might have responsibility for, in travels overseas or in the United States, of course.

I think one of the interesting thing that developed in DS after 2001 was, really for the first time, the globalization of the organization. As I came up through the ranks of DS, SY and then DS, there was always a sense that we had, while it was one organization, it had a domestic mission and it had an overseas mission. The old expression "and the twain shall never meet." There was always pulling on each side. It's a domestic program, it's an overseas program, it's a protection program, it's an investigative program, it's an RSO program. What are we? There was always an identity crisis with diplomatic security. Were we the old knuckle draggers and lock changers or are we the sophisticated forensic investigators and people who now provide security for the president of Afghanistan, for the president of Haiti and a detail as large on the Secretary of State, almost, as on the Vice President of the United States now? What happened after 9/11, I think the leadership in DS and within the Department, more importantly, realized that, hey, there is a role for an international organization in the State Department that is responsible for a wide variety of different missions that are really interrelated.

And then I think with the arrival of Frank Taylor as the assistant secretary, when he came over from the Office to Combat Terrorism where he was the ambassador for counterterrorism, although his management style, as far as dealing with people were concerned oftentimes, he was tough, he was a tough boss. But he came over with some good ideas and one of the ideas was he wanted to see DS globalized. He wanted to see an organization where if you were a DS agent you were, if you were in Moscow or if you were in California or in the Caribbean, your mission, "I want to see, if someone needs our assistance," he would say, "We're an enterprise, we're a worldwide enterprise." It's like if you go to a K-Mart or a WalMart in Montana or you go to a WalMart in Westchester County, New York, you walk in, everything's going to be basically the same. You're going to expect a certain level of service, you're going to know where to go to get it and it's there. That's what he wanted to build with DS. A worldwide organization where our clients, which is the rest of the Department, can expect a level of service at an enterprise level where the whole idea was to provide that service required and requested by the clientele, whether it was the background investigation program, which has always been a troubled program, by the nature of the beast, or whether it was the investigative program. His idea was, if you're an investigator in the Los Angeles Field Office or you're an RSO in Moscow, you're still, the mission is the same, the function's the same, an investigation is an investigation, as to who, what, where, why and when. It doesn't matter where it is. The same thing, conducting a protective security operation overseas or conducting a protective security operation in the United States, you're conducting a protective security operation. But he wanted to impress upon the Department and the rest of the community that DS was by size and budget would qualify in the private sector and he always used this and some people kind of, yeah, well. But we would be a Fortune 500 company, in terms of the number of employees we had and our budget. And that was based not just on the American contingent in the Foreign Service and special agents but also the local guards overseas, etc, etc, etc. Lump everybody together, 28,000 people working for Diplomatic Security.

Now that's, to me that's a little bit of a stretch as far as what that enterprise is but by the same token the point was well taken that we had become a global organization. There was not longer, there was no longer, room for the bickering that had existed in the past. Whose programs were more important? Our investigative, domestic program? Our RSO program overseas? We are, and remain to be, as the State Department, it's an overseas organization. Yes, we have a domestic mission but the purpose of the U.S. State Department is to conduct U.S. foreign policy. So therefore anything within the State Department, that is the responsibility and mission of whatever the organization is, to conduct U.S. foreign policy. And whether that involves investigating passport fraud, protecting the Secretary of State, protecting our foreign missions overseas, life and property, it is still a support function for the overall mission of the U.S. Department of State, which is the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. I think for the first time Taylor brought to the organization this world view, somewhat, I think, exaggerated at times but by the same token he made it quite clear that this was the way that we was going as the assistant secretary, the globalization of the Diplomatic Security Service, of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

Again, in the late Nineties and through the first four years of the new decade, hiring increased significantly, based on the results of the East African bombings in 1998. It took a while to get geared up but hiring from late 1998 through 2004, there were oh, at times, three or four classes at times of 25 to 45 agents being brought in and that remains true, up to today.

Q: What was your impression, you're back now, in the post 9/11 period, what was your impression of the agents coming in? One, were they a different breed of cat and two, were they bringing in any skills with them?

DEERING: Well I guess the way to look at that is, a lot of us believed that if we had to go back and meet the same standards and the same competitive level of the agents who were competing for the existing positions we all might have a difficult time. I think you can say that for every generation. For example, I had just, basically, in my early career, I was pretty good on the old IBM Selectric and then all of a sudden the IBM Selectric is gone. We got our Wang word processors, learned how to use that and then we're into the computer era and kind of left in the dust. Whereas the kids coming on now, kids, young adults coming on now, that's all second nature to them. Computers, they learned in school how to use computers. They learned like we learned how to type. But also I think as benefits increased we were able to compete more successfully with the rest of the federal law enforcement community, with our receiving the law enforcement availability pay. It meant that we broke down that barrier of competition. We were competing for the same pool of people as special agents with the Secret Service or the FBI without being able to offer the law enforcement availability pay. So that broke down that barrier. One of the nice things is that we still were able pretty much to have significant influence on the type of person that was coming in to the organization by virtue of the fact that we in the management positions staffed almost all the time as the subject matter experts on the final panels, the oral panels, the written panels, for the DS candidates.

One of the things I did notice, though, which was, I find it problematical even now, was that, yes, the computer made it a lot easier to put down and write and use spell check and everything else. What I did find out and almost universally, across the board, was the panels I sat in and I sat in quite a few panels in the time I was a SAC in Miami and when I left, the writing skills of the folks coming on board now can't compare to my generation's writing skills. If they can use a computer they can do all right but where they have to sit down and write a 45 minute essay on a topic, where you're not looking necessarily for knowledgeability of the topic they're writing on but rather the writing skills, okay, pathetic, pathetic. Writing is not being taught in our educational system now and writing skills are still an extremely important part of our job. Writing investigative reports, you can only depend so much on a computer but it was easy to see, the candidates that were coming forth, they might have been the best looking candidates, they know the technical stuff, they know how to react in a given situation but they can't express themselves. I would say 60 to 70 per cent were failing at that initial sit down, 45 minute essay. They couldn't meet the standards required for the job. Otherwise, people with master's degrees.

Q: I think one of the problems is, this is generational but the computer, the word processor makes things look better than they are.

DEERING: Right and what was even scary, though, they'd have all the T's crossed and the I's dotted in their applications forms. They'd have these skills, this skill, that skill, educational background, military background, work experience. But they also had, when you put your application in you're also doing some one paragraph responses to some life questions and things like that. And when I sat down and reviewed the initial basic application package I could tell, right then and there, if they don't get it right, there, when they've had time to work this over and get your buddy to help you, take a look at this for me. If they can't get it right there, they weren't going to have a chance doing that 45 minute written essay and that was invariably true. And it was a shame because otherwise there were some very, very good candidates that were put out to pasture because they could not write. And I would not, I would not, bend on that because I was so tired, as a supervisor, a manager, of having to deal with some of the scribble and spending time on changing a report, it looked like a Christmas tree when I was done. So that, for me, that still remained one of the most important qualifications necessary for becoming a DS agent, that was your ability to write.

Q: We may have covered this somewhat before but by the time you're looking at the field offices, were we thinking of rationalizing sort of what various security agencies are doing? I'm thinking of background things, background investigations or is that sort of something to keep the agents busy until a high official comes to town?

DEERING: No, the background investigation program, we began contracting that out in the late 1980's, I believe. By the time I got to Miami as SAC in 1991 we were basically out of the background investigation business domestically. Now, the RSO still had that mission overseas, to get updates or whatever. It was his job to be responsible for doing the overseas investigative leads and also for doing them for other agencies overseas that didn't have a presence. Even now, I know they're looking now at getting contractors to do some of that work. But that's part of a bigger morass in the federal bureaucracy as to who has responsibility for this function and quite frankly they've been contracted out and I'm not convinced fully that, in a lot of agencies, they're any better off than they were. The system can be milked fairly easily. These people who were hired, I think we were better off under personal services contracts with the individual persons rather than through some of these companies that are doing it now, more control. But in DS the program has come a long way and in fact the turnaround time is quite good now in the Department, especially in the last year or two.

Q: This has always been, I was with the Board of Examiners and you've done the same work and this was always a real problem, that if you had a really good candidate, you couldn't say, "Now wait for 18 months or something for a security clearance." We'd lose them. We were losing our really competitive people.

DEERING: That has been overcome. As it works now, when a person is put on the hiring list, that background investigation is initiated right then and there when he passes the oral exam. It's the same for the Foreign Service now. If you make the list, we're going to start the background investigation and the medical and all that stuff. The turnaround time has significantly gone down for the State Department. I can't say that's true for all other agencies but it has with the new superstructure security office in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security that concentrates now on that. We broke out, in the past two years, the background investigation program from the overall investigation and counterintelligence, Office of Investigations and Counterintelligence. DII used to be part of that, that's been broken out and that's been put in the infrastructure security office which is responsible for background investigation program and for the infrastructure security program, leaks and things like that, violations and things like that, makes a lot of sense. That was one of the things that Taylor did. So now it's much easier to track the process and it really has, in the last year, come a long way. I know that there has been some toying with contracting out to companies rather than to individuals as we did but I know one of the programs, test programs, was a dismal failure.

Q: Well unfortunately, so many of these companies that get into it, as you say, they milk the system. Another thing, just looking at the effectiveness. All of us have been through this many, many times but somebody that's been in, say, the Foreign Service for ten, fifteen years or so and all of a sudden there's an update and they ask about things. Does much happen? I think you have to do it but I just wonder do these updates really turn up much? Is there a number of people who get kicked out or something?

DEERING: I don't think so. I think there are some people, it happens. You know you're supposed to, I think what will happen is, what they're looking for there is suitability things. For example, if a person has been arrested five times for driving under the influence and none of that has been reported, what's going on with this person? Then you've got to look at other suitability issues. Does it affect the job? I can give you a good example. I had an individual who was a contract employee, worked for one of these companies that provides contract employees and he had been in the Marine Corps for 16 years. The company had granted him, based on their DISCO (Defense Industrial Security Clearance Office) clearance, granted him a secret clearance. So he came over to work for me and he was good and I was able to get a position created for him, a GS (General Services) position but that now meant that he would have to fill out a complete packet of, have the investigation update done, because he was now going to have a TS (top secret) clearance. Well what we found out immediately was that the company that had hired him, he had worked for other offices in the State Department under this contract, they'd given him his interim clearance, through DISCO, based on his interim clearance in 1983 in the Marine Corps. Nothing had been done since then. When it came time for his investigation, he was very honest. He filled out all the paperwork then it was determined in the application he had had a problem. He had some financial problems, where he'd declared bankruptcy. He also had a problem where he'd been arrested and accused of beating on his kids but it was not, he was railroaded, as it turned out. But all this came out because of an update. So, yeah, there is reason to do these things.

I think it's now getting updated every five years. It's not that difficult and time consuming to go back five years if your record is clean. But I think nowadays it probably is not a bad idea to do that but it's a pretty quick process. At least in the Department it is.

Q: Did you see any overtones of, there's been an accusation quite recently, about the CIA, I've heard this, I wonder how it's reflected in what we were doing, that they tend to turn, the easiest people to get cleared and there are an awful lot, are essentially Mormon Midwesterners. This is one group that probably is the least likely to have trouble anywhere and all that but also, by its very nature, probably the group that's probably the most difficult to understand other cultures. In other words, were we hiring, were we finding an aversion to hiring people with Arabic backgrounds or with Chinese or with

DEERING: No, I don't think so. Actually, we were trying to recruit people in DS, we were trying to recruit people with those diverse backgrounds. We didn't have language capabilities in those areas. The Mormon thing is interesting. There's always been the rumor and speculation of the Mormon Mafia in the FBI. But if you recall the individual who was arrested for spying out on the West Coast, the FBI was a Mormon. Both of them, I think, both those cases. So, I don't know how much credence you could put on that.

Q: I don't either. I've heard this basically

DEERING: Does it make the background investigation more difficult to do? No, I don't think that has anything to do with it. In fact, quite the opposite. One of the things that was a determining factor in final ranking and assigning points to your previous experience and all that when you're adding up the points for getting on the register, one of the key things that we were looking for and which was advantageous to the candidate was any overseas experience, if they'd had any. Whether it was living overseas, studying for a semester overseas, working overseas, that was all positive for our people when it came up. If my daughter, for example, were to apply, she's worked overseas, she's lived overseas, she went to college overseas for a semester. If she came up against a candidate who was out of college with two years work experience, she's going to get three or four extra points in that decision, in that final ranking on when she gets her score. So I didn't see that at all, because like I said we were tickled to death if we got a candidate who had some language capabilities, was a good candidate. By the same token, though, I will say, we had, I can recall an incident where we had somehow got through the whole final process a Chinese, he'd become a U.S. citizen in the last year. I think I have discussed this before but you're dealing with a wide variety of cultural issues on individuals who are interested in the State Department and more specifically interested in a law enforcement career within the State Department. We'd found that a lot of these good candidates, the family ties and the cultural differences often were determining factors for these people when it came right down to it. "Well, I really can't do this because I don't want to leave Albuquerque, New Mexico and are you telling me that I'll never be able to work in Albuquerque, New Mexico if I come with the Department of State in Diplomatic Security Service?" And I said, "Yeah, I'm telling you that you most likely will never be able to work in Albuquerque, New Mexico with the Diplomatic Security Service because we don't have an office there and we have no plans to put one there. So if I told you otherwise I'd be lying."

Unfortunately, some people in the recruitment process don't put everything on the table and then that's when you run into problems and people come on board, they're unhappy, they're dissatisfied, they say they were lied to, and of course maybe they were but and again when you're applying for a job you hear only what you want to hear. So to me the whole issue that it became widespread in the Department of diversity and hiring minorities, it became a very difficult situation because we wanted to put statistics on the table and we put a good effort into doing that and we continue to put a good effort but the numbers aren't always there. But, again, the most recent studies that we did, based on our hiring versus other federal law enforcement, we're all on basically the same continuum.

Q: I was just watching a TV program, either yesterday or the day before, talking about high school dropouts among Hispanics, which are, it's a continuing problem. Basically more than any other group they drop out early and there seems to be a culture of the family doesn't want the kid to leave home. So, you're talking about Albuquerque and so to get a Hispanic you're up against a certain culture that wants to keep the family together.

DEERING: Well, that's, in my last two years, running the field office program and then running the whole domestic program for the last several months, the issue of, when it came time to bid, that was always a joy. That's when the people would come out of the woodwork and say, "Well, I'm in the New York Field Office now, I've been here for three years and I need to stay for another year because I'm getting married and my wife's family is the old Greek family from Brooklyn and we really can't leave yet." And I would go back to the these people or have the SAC of the field office go back and say, "Look, what do you mean you really can't leave yet? You don't have a choice." "Well, nobody told me, they told me that I have to eventually go overseas but they didn't say that I couldn't stay for six years in a field office." And I'd say, "I don't know who told you what but this is not the way it is" and then you'd have disgruntled employees who would start to go and look for other employment. So there is this problem, as you pointed out, of the ethnic, the cultural ideals that people have and we see it a lot in DS in the first and second assignment. People come on board and they know, they know, they're told, everyone's told, "You're going to go overseas. You have to work overseas. You have to go and work in an embassy. That's part of the job." But when it's time to go, "No one told me that I was going to have to do this. I really can't because my family, my wife has a good job" or "My wife's mother is sick, we have to stay here and help take care of her. I'm really, I'm not ready to go yet. I'm not going to bid out of New York." Well, your position's already been filled so I guess you either bid or you're out on the street.

But it is an issue. One of the decisions that was made was, well maybe it's not a bad idea to take people right out of our agents classes, which are seven or eight months long now, put them into RSO school and send them right out overseas. Well, fine, but then they've got no experience in working investigations, protection before they get sent to an RSO post where everything's brand new to them and the argument was, well, the Foreign Service does this every day. You're going to come out of the 100 class and go to an embassy, most likely. The difference being is that you're going to go there and you're going to be working something probably very specific for your first year anyhow. I know they have the junior program where you move on. But it's generalist versus specialist skills. So it doesn't always work that well. And then you get the people who are, okay, this guy's, he was a U.S. Army officer, he was assigned in Europe, to a defense attachï¿½'s office, he's a great candidate, be able to go right to an RSO office as an ARSO for his first two year assignment. But then he says, "Well wait a minute, I don't know anything about diplomatic security. I've never done a criminal investigation, I've never done protection work and now you're sending me right overseas. I really don't want to do this. I want to get my feet we first." So, working with a specialist skill, it's a little bit more difficult but these are all problems that occur and no one has really come up with a way to resolve this system of requirements for diplomatic security personnel to meet the same requirements for the Foreign Service.

Q: How did you find, I don't know if this is the right term, sort of the politics of the Department when you came there, as you saw it?

DEERING: When I got to understand it and there's a learning curve with everything, in the early years, when I came back to Washington in the Eighties, the idea I got and there was this distrust between SY and the rest of the Department.

Q: Absolutely.

DEERING: And I don't blame one side or the other, that's just the way it was. SY was seen as a necessary nuisance to do the background investigations, to do the locks and the security violations program, that was back in the late Seventies, prior to all that's happened since then. So there was a distrust and there was a dislike, I believe. We were not masters of our own fate. We were an office within a bureau. Often the assistant secretary for the bureau had no knowledge of security. There was the "Who does the RSO report to?" The RSO reports to the admin officer and really had no responsibility back to DS in Washington. And although that's changed somewhat over the years, that still is a problem. Who is your master? Is your master in Washington or is your master over in the embassy? You've got to make the ambassador happy to live successfully but you've got your masters back in Washington who are responsible for the overall RSO program and you're supposed to make them happy, too. And again, that's not always an easy issue. So as time went on and as terrorism became a much more significant factor in how we do business worldwide, I think there was still this distrust but by the same token SY when it became DS became much more successful in its recruitment program of very competent young officers. The good old boy network started to fade away and it did exist and it certainly does exist even today in DS to a certain extent, as it does in every bureau. But I think the resentment and the distrust that existed 25 years ago certainly is not at the same level. And I think the barriers have been broken down by the ability of DS officers to show their counterparts in the Foreign Service, the substantive officers as we call them, that, hey, I've got a function to perform. We can work together on this. We may not see eye to eye on what you think has to be done and what I think has to be done but I'm a professional and you're a professional and let's deal as professionals, rather than as personalities. Now, I think testing would show that most DS officers in the Diplomatic Security Service, I'm not talking about engineers, now, or couriers but the DS agents, probably Type A personalities, law enforcement, military, significant backgrounds, so you got the stubborn, the aggressive, and that doesn't always work well with the management in the State Department.

But I think another issue that caused some problems was there really, the State Department was not a management oriented organization. Up until 15 years ago there really was no internayou had to go outside to get any management training. I remember I went to the, first management course I attended in the State Department was 1994, up at the woods in West Virginia, what was it called, not the Senior Seminar but the, can't remember the name of it now. You had to be an FP-1 or an OC level officer, put everybody together, it was a two week program, it was a good program. That was the first, here I had been on board for 16 years, it was the first real management training and I had to ask for it to get it. That's changed. Colin Powell changed that, I think, along with bringing the State Department into the information technology era for the first time. So I think management has been a major issue in the Department and also in DS, for years and years and years. But I think now, with the changes in the last four years, now you're required to attend management training in order to get promoted to different levels. That's a major step in the right direction. It kind of creates a pool where everybody's more equal because if I'm at the FP-1 level and you, a Foreign Service Officer, are at the FP-1 level, basically, ten years from now, we're all going to have the same level of training if we want to advance into the management ranks. I always felt that perhaps DS should have followed the example, working with HR, that the FBI had and that was you make a choice, early in your career, do you want to become competitive for a management track or do you want to be a GS-13 FBI agent who basically doesn't move around a lot. Do you want to be a manager or do you want to be the worker bee and make your decision.

That's not the way it is, even now, although there's more talk of that kind of thing. Being at the right place, or the wrong place, at the right time often determined who were the managers in DS, without any management ability and that's not a good thing.

Q: How did you feel, what was the impact, of Colin Powell on DS, because he certainly had considerable impact on the Foreign Service. I think you have quite a split in that the Foreign Service thought very highly of him, however, they thought very poorly, essentially, of the foreign policy that he was promulgating. But how about with your group?

DEERING: Well, I think directly as a result of Colin Powell, through the chain of command, down to the assistant secretary for diplomatic security, Frank Taylor, DS did become more organized. In other words, I guess what I'm trying to say here is, the use of information technology, information systems, certainly became more widespread. The creation of data bases, the use of the computer to share information, the idea that, as I mentioned before, we are an organization, not a community of different interests, in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, but DS is an organization, we have a mission to perform and there is a chain of command. Chain of command became much more of an issue, I think, under Colin Powell. He was army chief of staff, he was chairman of the joint chiefs, he was a military general, I think you'll find that at any time where you have an organization that's run by an individual who was a career military officer, there's going to be a certain change in how business is done and I think for DS it was good. It brought some organization to DS that hadn't existed previously. It brought into line the various operational entities that had existed and I think he did bring it a long way towards the globalization that he wanted.

By the same token, though, Frank Taylor was an air force general, the director of OSI and he always had at his beck and call whatever he needed from the enlisted ranks in the air force to do his job. He never quite understood that DS didn't have that pool of resources to get things done when he wanted them done. That was an area of conflict. I really liked his ideas but some of the ways that he tried to bring the ideas across were not good for the organization. He always thought of it as a military organization. Once you're in the military, it's hard to lose all that. But I think that he had, Colin Powell had, faith in him to do the job. I think it brought some organization to DS that had not existed in the past. I think that his ideas were well respected in the Department for what he was doing, especially in straightening out the VI program. By the same token I'm not sure that the way that he implemented was highly praised by the Department. He was a tough, tough boss but, again, if you understand the military mentality it's a lot easier to deal with that, I think.

Q: Well then, you left in 2004?

DEERING: I left in September of 2004. One other thing I thing I need to comment on. Dealing with the bureaucracy, again. And it's this time of year, now, EER.

Q: Efficiency reports.

DEERING: Efficiency reporting. Last year, for the first year, they made the changes where they shortened the form across the board. The individual, in an experiment, at the FP-1 level and above, the individual had to write his own and went from there. I don't know if that was, was that implemented for this rating period?

Q: I don't know.

DEERING: That form is an anachronism, especially for the specialists. That form was designed for the Foreign Service overseas. You can praise accomplishments, but it is too long. The amount of time that management had to spend on that EER function, especially in DS, just outrageous, because of the numbers. I had to write 12 EERs and review another 25 last year. That is unacceptable. Thank God for the shortened form. Really, a lot of time is wasted in what is in reality a form, a process whereby people are afraid to say what they really want to say because there'll be a grievance filed against them. Our evaluation system does not work. It is not an honest system and something needs to be done about the whole evaluation system in the State Department. We are not a Department comprised of independent individual agencies. We have bureaus but the requirements are the same for everybody on that ridiculous EER form, for the Foreign Service side of the house. The GS is a much simpler form. It doesn't take as much time. Everything is laid out for you. Obviously it's not totally applicable to the Foreign Service but there's got to be a better way to evaluate our personnel because it's not a fair evaluation. And what's really not fair is when you reach the senior ranks of the Foreign Service you understand how to write one of these evaluations. So across the board it creates, you've got an ambassador, as an FS-3 security officer and you've got a DCM and an ambassador writing your evaluation and your review statement. How can that FS-3 who's working in a field office where his unit supervisor and an ASAC of a field office are writing his evaluation or her evaluation, they're on two different functions but when it comes time to go before that panel, who's going to shine, even if he or she is not a better officer? It doesn't work. It's broken. And the Department needs to come up with a better way to evaluate its employees and promote its employees. I know every year somebody writes an article about how fair the process is. It's not fair. It's not fair.

Q: Okay, then, you retired in 2004?

DEERING: I retired in 2004, on September 30th.

Q: So, just briefly, what have you been up to?

DEERING: I am doing, I set up a sole proprietorship, as a security consultant and right now I'm working for Coca Cola as an independent contractor, their offices in Atlanta, doing security related work for them, doing a lot of writing on mitigation of risk vulnerabilities. And it's interesting. And what's really great is that when I get up in the morning, I don't have to get dressed and drive down to the State Department. I just throw something on and walk down to my computer. Occasionally a trip down to Atlanta to talk to folks there but it's enough to keep me busy, enough to keep me in the loop. I'm not ready, I have not put in my WAE papers, I have not looked for any position, personal services contract with the Department yet. When I left I had a couple of offers from the Department and I just, I got married in November for the second time and my wife, Karen, works for the U.S. District Court, as a supervisory probation officer in Alexandria and I'm taking care of the dog, the cat, doing a little work here and there, taking care of the yard at our house here and our house down in Locust Grove, play some golf and think about what we're going to do when she retires. And I really have not had any desire to, I did a couple interviews with some companies about full time positions. One was shortly after I'd retired. I had an offer from a company that has contracts with a government agency and I went and talked to the folks down at Coast Guard headquarters down in Buzzards Point and it was mid-October, late October and I had a meeting at ten o'clock. Well, usually rush hour's, so, I said, "I'll head out about nine o'clock." It took me two hours to get down there. Then there was no parking. When I interviewed with the people, the position was interesting. I said, "Well, do you have parking for contractors?" "No, you have to be direct hire with the Coast Guard to work down here." I said, "Okay, so where do you park?" "Well, you have to find parking on the street with the meters or else you take the Metro in to L'Enfant Plaza and we have a shuttle that runs every twenty minutes or something." And I said to myself, "I've been doing this for thirty years. I don't need this." And I said, "Thank you but no thank you." A lot of guys can't give it up right away. What I have really enjoyed was not having a commute and not getting up at five o'clock every morning and not getting home at seven o'clock. Working for the State Department, there was expectations when you got to a certain level that you spend the time you need to get the job done. That's fine but that's what retirement's all about, is you've done your job, you've done your time and now, you work for yourself, now, as they told us in the job search program. You're not retired, you're working for yourself.

Q: Okay, Walt, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview