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

AMBASSADOR JOHNNY YOUNG

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Young]

Q: Today is the 21st of October, 2005. This is an interview with Ambassador Johnny Young. That's J-O-H-N-N-Y and then Y-O-U-N-G. Let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born?

YOUNG: I was born in Savannah, Georgia on February 6th, 1940.

Q: Okay. Let's talk about your parents first. Can you tell me about your father's side first?

YOUNG: Well, on my father's side he was one of 11 children. There were two sisters and 9 boys. One sister figures quite significantly in my life and I'll explain that in a minute or two. On my mother's side she was one of three. There was a sister and a brother in addition to my mother. Both of my parents were poor folks. They had nothing. We lived in an extended family relationship with my grandmother and my mother and father and some other uncles and their children. We lived in one big house, cramped in a couple or several rooms. Now, I had mentioned an aunt who figured significantly in my life. Shortly after my birth my mother became ill and realized later on that she was terminally ill. She had heart problems, being a black woman in the South, 27 years old at that time, she didn't have access to good medical care and good doctors so that was a factor. I mean we realize it now in retrospect. In any case she turned to my sister-in-law, my father's sister, one of the sisters. The oldest sister and she asked her if she would take me upon her death and raise me and that's exactly what happened when I was 11 months old. My mother died and this aunt took me, her name was Lucille, Lucille Pressey.

Q: How do you spell that?

Q: Did you grow up in Savannah?

YOUNG: We stayed in Savannah until I was seven years old. I was baptized as a Catholic. My sister and I were baptized as Catholics in Savannah. There's a story to that as well. This aunt, the one who raised me, found herself at a low point in her life in the '30s when things were pretty bad economically and she was hired as a domestic by the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Savannah, Georgia and she began cleaning the cathedral and the rectory for the priests there. They took a liking to her and they asked her if she could cook and she said yes, so she became their cook and in the process they converted her to Catholicism and she in turn converted a number of her brothers to Catholicism. By the time I came along it was just natural that I would be baptized a Catholic, so that's how I became Catholic.

Q: Yes, because one thinks of in the deep South it certainly was in the African American community you think of Baptists.

YOUNG: Baptists, absolutely. There was no question about that so I became a Catholic. I started Catholic school there as a matter of fact. It turned out to be the same school as Clarence Thomas went to, but I don't want to get into that at all since we are at opposite ends of the spectrum philosophically.

Q: He's a very conservative.

YOUNG: And I'm a knee jerk liberal. So, that's all I'll say to that.

Q: Had your family been a long time Savannah family or not?

YOUNG: No, they originally came from one of the Sea Islands and that will be significant later on. They were from an island called Ladies Island and from Ladies Island the family then migrated. This is all on my father's side now and they then migrated to Beaufort, South Carolina and from Beaufort, South Carolina to Savannah, Georgia. I started school there, my sister and I. We continued school there and then one day in July of 1947 my mother, my Aunt Lucille, came to us and said we're going north. I learned later that the nuns at the cathedral and at Saint Benedict's Church had given her money. It was a nun, the Mother Superior and her name was Mother Blondena. She gave my mother the money and said, take these children North because there's no opportunity for them in the South. That was in 1947 in June, early July. On July 3rd, 1947 we took a train called the Silver Meteor which still runs to this day. We boarded it in Savannah and we carried with us our little shoe boxes of fried chicken and biscuits and I don't know what else we had in there. I thought this was the most exciting thing that I had ever done in my life. I had never been on a train and to think that I was going to go for such a long, long ride. I was just mesmerized by the whole thing, seeing the passing images of buildings and factories and things like that. This was really quite something for a boy who had come out of really nothing. We had nothing. We were as poor as can be.

Then we were on our way North and with it to a new life. I would like to go back for a moment to say that those early years in the South, as poor as we were, were happy years for me. I knew we didn't have any money and there were times when we had absolutely nothing to eat, I mean nothing except a piece of bread and we had water which we would put sugar in. We called it tea so we had bread and tea and that was all that we had, but we were still very happy. We had times during that period when we had difficulty with the Ku Klux Klan and they would come to our street and absolutely terrorize us. I remember my mother would hold us close to her with her hand over our mouths so that we wouldn't make a sound so that they wouldn't hear that there was anyone in a particular house so that they would then target that particular house for more mischief making.

Q: Oh boy.

YOUNG: So, I still remember those things. My overall memory is one of happiness and contentment during that time in the South.

Q: As a small child up to seven, was it a completely black experience, I mean did you see whites in your neighborhood or not?

YOUNG: We were in a totally black neighborhood except for our grocer and his family. There was a grocer there by the name of Mr. O'Brien and Mr. O'Brien had a son my age. I remember him to this day. It's like I can still see him. He had red, red hair and we became just the best friends and never for a moment can I ever think of anytime when he referred to my color or I referred to his color. We played together with the other kids in the neighborhood and that was life. We never gave it a thought. The only time we were aware of our race and being targeted because of our race was when we had these sessions with the Ku Klux Klan when they would burn a cross in the middle of our street.

Q: I'm surprised because I speak for somebody who lived in the North, but I always thought the Klan was out in the countryside.

YOUNG: No, this was in Savannah. Now we lived in a place in Savannah that was not in the heart of the city. It was not country, but it was an old broken down area with ramshackle houses with corrugated tin roofs in a little area on the edge of the city. We lived on a street called Hall Street and the Klan used to come to an area called Bilbo Canal. I remember it to this day.

Q: Was it named for Theodore Bilbo, the racist senator from Mississippi?

YOUNG: I don't know, but that was the name of it. Bilbo Canal. To give you some idea of where it was, it was right on the edge where the carnival would come every year, so it was open and not. They didn't use it for farmland or anything like that, but we were on the edge of the city at that time.

We went from Savannah directly to Philadelphia. We arrived in Philadelphia on the 4th of July, 1947 and we were met by my Aunt Bertha who was the other sister, my father's other sister. She took us into her home. We lived in a project in Philadelphia called the Shipyard Naval Homes. She had five children. Those five children slept in one room and she had her husband slept in another room and they took us in so then that made seven children in one little room and then my aunt, my mother, got a room across the street in the home of another woman in the project. That's where we lived for a short time, a very short period and then we moved to Wilmington, Delaware. We moved in with an aunt in Wilmington with my father's brother and his wife. They didn't have any children, no children the age of my sister and me. We lived with them. My grandmother was there as well and later on we were joined by my father. We continued going to Catholic school.

Q: This was in Wilmington.

YOUNG: Yes. We went to Saint Joseph's Catholic School on French Street, in Wilmington. The school is no longer there, but the church is still there. Some very prosperous banks took over the land that the school was on and there are great big buildings there at the moment. We stayed there for about four years. I was very active in the church, very active in the school as well. I was a good student, but I horsed around quite a bit and I remember the nuns liked me a lot. There was one nun in particular, Sister Mary Joseph who, she says, I don't know what's going to happen to him. He's smart as can be, but he's constantly fooling around. Sometimes she'd get so frustrated with me she would, I can see her now. She was a large lady and she had a sort of like a W.C. Fields face and nose and she had a brown habit and a big rope around the middle with the big cross dangling on the side. When she laughed her I mean she looked like Santa Claus, but she would get so angry with me sometimes she would get her yardstick and she would shake it at me and she would say, "Boy, I'll make powder out of you." I'm glad she didn't. I think if she saw me today she would be quite pleased.

After about four years in Wilmington, my father and the aunt that we lived with had a falling out. We then moved back to the projects in Philadelphia with this aunt. This time my sister went with my aunt and her five children. My aunt, the one I called my mother, and I we took a room in another lady's house, but it was all in the projects.

Q: I'd like to go back to Delaware. You spent some time there. What was Wilmington like, you were a kid, but I mean by this time we're talking about seven to?

YOUNG: Eleven.

Q: Eleven, I mean so you were an observant kid and all that, how did you find Wilmington?

YOUNG: Poor, rundown. We were poor, but we had a little house and I had lots of fun. I didn't think of race. All of my neighbors, everyone was black except the people who owned the stores and shops and that sort of thing. I just didn't think in any racial terms. One thing I think is significant was that while we were there, my sister and I, we did two things. We were very active in the Catholic Church and we were simultaneously very active in the Baptist church because the aunt and uncle we lived with in Wilmington, Delaware were Baptists. So, on Sundays my sister and I would go to mass dutifully at 9:00 and then at 11:00 we would go to the Baptist service and then at night we would return to the evening service as well. For that reason, and I'm not unusual in this regard in terms of blacks who have had the kind of experience that I have having come out of the South and having been converted to Catholicism and what have you, that they have a foothold in both religions. For that reason to this day I go to a mass that features the black gospel tradition which I like and so I'm very comfortable in that kind of setting. That did happen in Wilmington, and it did have an impact on me.

Q: What about school? I mean one thing you're saying you were a bright kid and.

YOUNG: That's what they told me.

Q: Well, I mean, you know, looking at this in our profession, the Foreign Service, mostly bright people end up doing well in the Foreign Service, its just a given. Do you think part of the problem about being an active kid was that you were a little bit bored with class and all that? This often happens.

YOUNG: No, I wasn't bored with the classes. I can't say that was a factor at all. I honestly can't. I never thought of boredom. I didn't even know what the word meant. I was just full of beans and full of energy and it has been that energy that has kept me going and has seen me through to this day.

Q: In school, what subjects did you particularly like and ones you didn't care for as much?

YOUNG: I liked math a lot although later on I learned to detest it, but at that time I liked it a lot. I was very good in math and I was very good in geography and English. Maybe the liking for geography was some indicator of something in the future, I really don't know. At that point I didn't give it a thought frankly, but I liked school a lot. It was fun.

Q: How did you find the nuns, you know, one has all sorts of stories about nuns and their discipline?

YOUNG: They were strict. They were really as rigid as you could expect. They exacted a certain toll on you in what they wanted and they wanted discipline, they wanted excellence and they wanted things done in a proper and correct way. They just had no, they just were not very flexible. They were unyielding in their demands that you perform at least in those areas.

Q: Did you get much of a chance, I mean were you by this time a reader much?

YOUNG: Only to the extent that reading was required for school. My interest in reading came later on and I'll get into that later on, but it didn't happen during those years. No, not at all.

Q: Did you see the Catholic Church at that time, were there black priests?

YOUNG: I never saw a black priest or a black nun from the time I was small until I was a teenager.

Q: Did this send you a message?

YOUNG: No, I didn't think about it. I mean it just wasn't. I lived within my world of black people in Wilmington, and that was it. I didn't think beyond that world. I didn't ask myself, well, why don't I see some here and why don't I see some on TV and why don't I see some in the newspaper and on and on. It didn't occur to me. A young boy, 11 years old, that just was not in my mind.

Q: Well, given what has happened in so many of our cities these days was there crime around you or not? Was there a different world in a way?

YOUNG: It was a very different world. As poor as we were and I'll get into some of this later on when I tell you about what happened when we went to Philadelphia. I think what I saw in Philadelphia was also indicative of what was happening in Wilmington, Delaware also at that time.

Q: Delaware in a way is poor, but comfortable, I mean did you feel, did you get enough to eat?

YOUNG: We did have. Those days were behind me in terms of hunger, but it's something that sticks with you, that has stuck with me forever. To this day if you were to go to my home and open up my closet you would say my God he's prepared for World War III. My wife is constantly after me because, I'm constantly, I love to shop for food. I just get such a thrill out of it and I think it's from those early years when I didn't have and now that I am secure and can buy, I love buying food. I love sharing food with other people. I love cooking and I think that some of that is from those early days.

Q: You very definitely can. I'm a child of the Depression and you know, I belong to the idea that you get a job you hang onto it, you don't mess around. Well, then we'll go to Philadelphia. You were in Philadelphia from?

YOUNG: From about 1951 until, well, until forever.

Q: Philadelphia became your base.

YOUNG: Right. We went to the projects, the three of us, we went back to Philadelphia and moved back into the Naval Shipyard Homes with my aunt and her five children. My sister stayed with my aunt, the aunt that I called my mother, she and I took a room in another house in that project.

Q: When you say a project, what was this?

YOUNG: Subsidized government housing, a housing project. Just like if you talk about maybe the one project you might know about would be the Cabrini-Green in Chicago except these were not high rises. High rises had not come to that part of Philadelphia at that point. These homes were originally built to house naval families during World War II. They were built out of wood and tarpaper literally.

Q: It was essentially temporary housing.

YOUNG: They were temporary quarters and they had a wooden stove in the kitchen and that stove served to not only heat the house in the wintertime, but it was used for cooking also. They had a coal bin to hold a supply of coal for the winter months and there was not a very large kitchen, living room, two bedrooms. That was it. There were 1,000 units. They were located right next to the U.S. Naval Shipyard in Philadelphia. One thousand units. Now when you extrapolate how many were crammed into one unit, we were 1,000 and we were totally surrounded by the white community, totally.

Q: _____ was almost all blacks?

YOUNG: They were. I think we had maybe three or four white families in the projects, but they were all black, all black. So, we moved there. My aunt attempted to enroll us in the Catholic school. We wanted to continue our Catholic school and we were totally rejected by the Catholic school that was right next to our project but on the white side of the line. Saint Richard's Roman Catholic Church. It was one of the most devastating things that I can remember and it was the moment in my life that race entered my mind and that I was touched by it, hurt by it and deeply troubled by what happened. I'll never forget the moment when we went to the rectory, asked the priest and he said, "No, we don't want them here." That's the way he put it. There were no blacks in that school and the time had not come for us to be a part of it. I became very discouraged with the church.

Q: You were at the right age to understand what was going on.

YOUNG: Oh, yes, that was the defining moment for me without question for me and my sister, both of us, but I think I was more dedicated to the church than she was. At that point I stopped going to church and just became very dissatisfied. We couldn't get into the public school system because we didn't have any ties in Philadelphia. We had just come from Wilmington from a Catholic school there. For a year we did not attend school. My aunt, the one we stayed with who had the five children, was a domestic for a schoolteacher in Philadelphia, by the name of Mrs. Grossman. She told Mrs. Grossman our story and Mrs. Grossman said, "Don't worry. I'll get them in." Mrs. Grossman was a librarian at Vare Junior High School in Philadelphia.

Q: Is that V-E-R-E?

YOUNG: V-A-R-E. In Philadelphia, 24th and Snyder Avenue. She did. She got us in. My sister and I entered Vare Junior High School and I did two years there and my sister as well, she did a year and then she went on to the high school. Mrs. Grossman was later called up by the Congress' un-American Activities Committee. She was judged to be unworthy, a communist, and she was drummed out of the Philadelphia school system, both she and her husband and they were never able to work again. It was a dreadful thing. Again this was a defining moment for me in terms of the realization of what could happen in our country. It was a terrible time. I didn't fully appreciate it really until later on, but she got caught up in that unfortunately and yet this good soul had gone out of her way and helped us in our hour of need. We went to Vare Junior High School. I did well there. I remember I was getting ready to graduate and to go to high school. I went to the school counselor and I asked her what should I do because I had no guidance from home. None of my folks were educated. The woman I called my mother, she was a domestic. Her sister was a domestic. I mean that's what they did.

Q: There weren't that many men around were there?

YOUNG: No. My father was there, but he was on and off. The counselor at the junior high school said, "Well, I think you ought to go to a vocational high school and take up carpentry or something like that." No encouragement whatsoever about anything academic, just take a trade, carpentry. She said, "You know, one of your cousins is studying carpentry, you take up carpentry." I said, okay, what did I know? I finished in 1954 and that was a very important time because at that point.

Q: This is junior high?

YOUNG: Finished junior high school in 1954. That was an important point because my mother and I and my sister moved to a small efficiency apartment on Lombard Street in Philadelphia. That was a major move. For me quite significant because it was the first time that I ever slept in a bed by myself. Prior to that I always slept in the same bed with a cousin or with my mother, but never had a bed of my own.

Q: This apartment was still in the project?

YOUNG: No, this was the break from the projects. This was private. We paid for it ourselves. I didn't have a job then, but I'll get to that in a moment. This was 1954 and we moved on Lombard Street. Lombard Street at that time was part of one of the biggest slums in Philadelphia. It was run down, old broken shacks and dilapidated houses and what have you. We were in a relatively decent place. It was okay. There was a plan at the time by the mayor of the city and by a man who was probably one of the greatest city planners in the United States, Edmund Bacon. He died just recently. The plan was to redevelop that portion of Philadelphia because it was the historic section of Philadelphia. The plan was to rehabilitate it to the glories of the 18th Century. One or two people had begun to do this and one of them was the mayor himself who bought an old house. He completely refurbished it to the colonial style and it was very nice. When we moved there it was still a major slum. One day in March of 1954, I was walking down the street around the corner from Lombard Street. There was another street called South Street. It ran parallel to Lombard Street. Lombard was a residential street; South Street was a commercial street. All kinds of shops and stores and what have you. We were one block away. I was walking along 4th Street one Saturday morning and I was just getting ready to cross South Street when this gentleman came out of the store on the corner of 4th and Lombard, the store was 347 South Street, right on the corner and the shop was called My Lady's Specialty Shop. He came out and he said, "Hey boy, would you like a job?" I said, "Sure." I followed him into the store and went down in the basement. Now if you think about that in today's context, these would be alarming things for someone to say, but at that time there was certainly nothing wrong. I went downstairs with him and he said, "I want you to take these boxes out." He had cartons and so I took the boxes out of the carton. I don't know what made me do it, but I looked for patterns on them as I took them out of the boxes and I arranged them according to these numbers that I saw on the boxes. When I was finished I went up and told him I had finished. He came down and he said, "Why did you do this this way?" I said, "Well, I saw a pattern on them, so I thought I'd just arrange them in that." He said, "Pretty good." He seemed pleased. He said, "Would you like a job? Would you like to work here?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Well, you can help out in the shop, you can sweep the floor, do different things like that." I said, "Okay." He said, "You come after school and we'll teach you." I said, "Okay." I began working in My Lady's Specialty Shop when I was 14 years of age. I would work there on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 4:00 to 9:00, Thursday from 4:00 to 6:00 and all day Saturday and all day Sunday. I just worked all the time and then went to school. Then in high school I went to Edward Bach Vocational Technical High School and I did major in carpentry and in academic subjects as well so that I would graduate with a high school diploma and some technical skill.

Anyway, over the years I learned quite a bit about the retail trade. I continued to do well in that store and moved up to basically the position of assistant manager of the shop. That was my de facto responsibility, but the most important thing was this man that I met. The man who offered me the job originally. His name is ThaBerenholtz. His family had come over from France. They were Holocaust survivors. They had brought their money to the States. They had opened up the shop. They had seen what was occurring in Europe before they left. What they did was to arrive in the States and to buy up every single pair of nylon stockings that they could get their hands on when they arrived and they stockpiled them. During the war ladies would line up almost for a block to get into that shop to buy a pair of stockings and that's how they made their money and then were able to open up a bigger shop and on and on. I liked him so much. I thought he was such a wonderful person. To me he was the kind of father that I had hoped for, that I thought at that point, now that's what a father is supposed to be like. I watched him with his kids. I watched him with his wife. I thought he was a wonderful husband, a wonderful father, just a good person. I'd listen to him talk about music and books and about the theater and art and things like that and that's what opened up my interests to these areas as well. He was the one who was responsible for opening my mind in these areas. I held him as a very dear friend and he was a very compassionate and understanding man as well.

The other members of his family were different in their personalities. He was more like his father. His father was a very gentle, compassionate soul. His brother was a cutthroat like his mother, I mean literally, but I thought that I could identify with his qualities more. Whenever I have been sworn in as ambassador I've had him at my side and that's the least I could do in showing him how much I appreciated his influence in my life.

Q: I just wanted to go back. While you were at the junior high, the church had turned you down, did you return to the church?

YOUNG: That happened after we had moved, when we were on Lombard Street, that I began to return.

Q: A different church?

YOUNG: A different church, a different community. We were in a mixed neighborhood. I mean everybody on Lombard Street was poor, but it was mixed. We had Polish, we had Italian, we had Turkish, black, I mean it was a wonderful polyglot neighborhood, but everybody was poor. At the end of our street there was St. Peter Claver Church. It was basically a black Catholic church and it was the mother church of the black Catholic churches in Philadelphia. We met some people in the neighborhood. We learned they were Catholic and they said, "Why don't you try Saint Peter Claver's?" We started going to Saint Peter Claver and that's when I began to go back to the church and reconciled with the church.

Q: Well, now you lived in what you described as run down almost a slum, this was on Lombard Street?

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: What can help compare it to today, the problem of gangs and all this, would you talk about the ambiance?

YOUNG: Sure. I wanted to say earlier that even when we were in the projects, we never saw a gun. We never heard of anyone with a knife or anyone being injured with a knife, there were no problems of drugs and that was true for the high school as well, although I mean Bach High School was not the greatest school in Philadelphia and it was known primarily as the school for underprivileged children. We never had those kinds of problems, it was just a completely different world and it was the same on Lombard Street. As mixed up as the neighborhood, as integrated as the neighborhood was in terms of different groups and what have you, we didn't have those problems. In the projects, we did have racial problems. We used to have race riots because we had to go through the white neighborhood to get to their junior high school and from time to time we would have clashes between the whites and the blacks, but those were all, you know, you'd be fighting with the same kids you'd see in high school.

Q: Well, sometimes, too I would imagine that being poor, that so many times your real problem came when very poor people were coming out of Appalachia into that area. What about while you were going through these early experiences, what about men around you? Was there much drinking? Were they working, you know, were there any male models?

YOUNG: There were male models at that time. As I said, I didn't have them in my family because we were in Philadelphia. My father continued to live in Wilmington, Delaware. He stayed on in Wilmington. There were some, but they were not particularly strong models, the ones that I saw. It was the women who kept us going.

Q: Well, this of course is one of the great traditions in life. What about drinking? In your family were the men going around on Saturday night?

YOUNG: I can only speak for my own experience. I mean my father had a weakness for drink and the ladies, but not a lot of ladies. He would devote his attention to one and would put his earnings into that particular person and he did like to drink. We didn't think about well, we don't have any men in our lives. We didn't think about that. We needed to survive and we survived the best way we could. We got all kinds of odd jobs and we did everything imaginable to make ends meet. I did farm work when I was in Philadelphia. I was a day laborer. They'd pick us up in a truck from the projects, take us out to New Jersey. We would pick tomatoes, strawberries, blueberries, peaches, things like that during the summer months, washed floors, dishwasher, you name it I've done it all.

Q: In high school, how did you find the academic side?

YOUNG: The academic side of it was good. I mean we had to meet the requirements in order to graduate and we had to do our technical side also. ____ fell asleep in his class, but I certainly wasn't one of them. I remember once this one fellow did fall asleep and I recall he tiptoed over to the fellow and he screamed in his ears, "The British are coming, the British are coming." The fellow woke up and didn't know where he was. Of course the class just roared with laughter, but he was just wonderful.

Q: Well, you were ready to graduate about what would it be?

YOUNG: 1957.

Q: '57. By the way Philadelphia was in the North, but, were you aware of Brown versus the Board of Education, the integration?

YOUNG: Heard of it. It didn't affect us because we were already in an integrated school. Their junior high was a fully integrated school, so Philadelphia was not I mean at least from what I saw in '54 it was already integrated and Bach was already an integrated school. That pattern had happened decades before my time. It wasn't the same as the kind of impact it would have in places that were totally segregated.

Q: How about given your future career, did the outside world intrude much by the time you graduated from high school?

YOUNG: Absolutely not. Had no clue of it, none whatsoever, except I remember one thing. In Mr. McMaster's class, he said, "You know, there's a country in Africa that's going to become independent very shortly. Can anyone tell me what country that is?" I remember putting up my hand and saying, "Ghana." He says, "Absolutely right Mr. Young." I felt so proud that I had become aware of that, but part of that was because of where I was working in that shop with Mr. Berenholtz and his interest in world affairs and world events and overhearing him speak about these issues and things like that. That's where I learned a lot.

Q: You graduated from high school, when, what year?

YOUNG: 1957.

Q: 1957. Where were they pointing you, telling you to go out and get a carpenter job?

YOUNG: Oh, very interesting. Before I graduated I went to the high school counselor and I asked her about what I should do next and she said, "Get a job as a carpenter." I said, "What about going to college?" She said, "Are you kidding? No college in its right mind will take a look at you." That's what she told almost all of the black kids in the school, Mrs. Muir. I remember her to this day as well and not with great fondness. Then I graduated and I did attempt to get a job as a carpenter, but then the unions were segregated and you couldn't get into the union. It was a useless exercise. I mean I could have, I guess, sort of been a day laborer or something like that, but I didn't want that. I continued working at the store. I then began to work full time at this store, My Lady's Specialty Shop. I then took the college entrance examination, the SAT and didn't do well at all on them. Didn't get a good score at all. Didn't have good preparation to tell you the truth. In any case, I got from Mr. Berenholtz and his family and what have you a sense of the value of education. I heard them talking to their friends and relatives about this one going to university and that one going to university and how important it is and on and on and they suggested that it's something I should keep in mind. I didn't have money to go to college at all. Didn't have any money at all. I went to Temple University and got a catalog and asked about going to school at night and I found out that I could go to school at night. It wasn't too expensive; I could afford it. It was $18 a credit, can you imagine? It was $18 a credit and I didn't know what to take. I knew I was going to take something in business because I liked working in that shop. I had aspirations of maybe owning a shop of my own, managing a shop for the Berenholtzes because they had spoken to me about that prospect.

I began to go to school at night and I took accounting and found out to my surprise that I had an aptitude for accounting. I had never done anything in accounting in my life, but I just had an ability for it and that was in, I think I started in '58. At the time Temple University had a certificate in accounting program. You had to get I think it was 48 credits. You took a lot of accounting courses. You could get a certificate of proficiency in accounting. So, I began taking a lot of accounting courses. I mean I took other things as well, Spanish and anthropology and a lot of other things, but I was really gunning for those 48 credits in accounting because I wanted this certificate. In 1960 I was laid off from the shop because business was so bad I couldn't continue on there. I was at loose ends, didn't know what to do, tried all kinds of different possibilities, none of them worked out, that's again a time when race came into play. I began to realize that I'd be called in for jobs and the minute I walked in the door I knew that it was because of my color that I wasn't going to get the job.

I then went to the city of Philadelphia and looked at their announcement of openings and saw there was a position for junior accountant. The requirements were a bachelor's degree or a certificate in proficiency in accounting and you could take the exam. I was very close to getting my certificate and I worked and worked and got my certificate in 1960. I sat for the junior accountant exam for the city of Philadelphia and I passed it at the top and was offered a position in 1960. I started working for the city of Philadelphia. I worked as a census enumerator which was interesting. That took me into parts of Philadelphia that I wouldn't think of going into today. When I look back on where I went and those doors I knocked on and the people I encountered and what have you, there's no way in the world that I would do that today. I was fearless. I just didn't think about it. I mean it was literally the worst crime ridden area of Philadelphia at that time. Anyway, I think it was September of 1960 I began working as a junior accountant for the city of Philadelphia and that was a major step in my life because it was the beginning of my entrï¿½e to the middle class.

Q: Did the election of 1960 cross your path at all? This was the Kennedy.

YOUNG: Oh, I couldn't vote at that point because I wasn't 21, but oh, everybody was excited by him, everyone. The hope was palpable. You could just feel it. I mean it was unbelievable.

Q: Was it in your community?

YOUNG: Oh, within the black community I mean he was like God.

Q: We're talking about Kennedy?

YOUNG: Kennedy, yes, absolutely, absolutely. I mean he was adored, loved and everybody I can think of supported him. I worked for the city of Philadelphia and I began to save a little bit of money and I continued to go to school at night.

Q: Temple?

YOUNG: Temple. I got the certificate, then I decided I wanted a degree so I continued to go to school at night and I wasn't a matriculated student, so after I got the certificate I went to the dean and I said, "I'd like to be admitted as a degree student." He said, "Well, you know, according to your SAT scores, you wouldn't get in, but my God I look at the courses you've taken and you have done so well. There's no question in my mind that you can do the work. You're admitted." That's how I got in. I didn't get in on the basis of the test scores; I got in on the basis of demonstrated work. They let me in and I continued to do well in my studies.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about Temple at the time, what kind of a school it was?

YOUNG: Temple was primarily a working person's school. It was an urban university. It was the school where most of the students were first generation college students in many cases. At the time not many black students, a few you could spot them around the campus. The majority of the blacks who were in university were either in historically black universities or they were in Cheney State Teacher's College which was one of the historically black schools or Lincoln University or someplace like that. There were not too many in Temple and even fewer in Penn because I took a couple of courses at Penn as well or Saint Joseph's or La Salle. I mean integration was not bringing minorities into those schools, not just in terms of blacks, but in terms of other minorities as well. The schools had not evolved at that point.

Q: What sort of course were you moving towards?

YOUNG: I majored in business with a minor in Spanish. I found out again that I had a talent for Spanish. I took a lot of Spanish courses, did very well in Spanish, very well in anthropology. The only subject I didn't do well in was statistics. Statistics was a killer for me and I didn't do too well in one of the economic courses that had a lot of numbers involved. General economics I did fairly well. Those were the two drawbacks. Those two areas, but I did well in all my studies, very well.

I continued going to school at night and then I continued to take exams to get promotions.

Q: Within the Philadelphia system?

YOUNG: Right and then I went from junior accountant to accountant I and then eventually I became accountant II and was doing quite well. The next major event that occurred in my life was in 1961. This was a year after I had begun my work with the city of Philadelphia.

I had been working for the city a year, and the Catholic employees of the city were getting ready to host something called the communion breakfast. I bought two tickets for this event that was to take place a couple of months later not having any idea of who would go with me to this event. Anyhow, the week before the event I went to a dance at International House in Philadelphia. During the course of the dance I looked across the room there and just like in the play South Pacific, one enchanted evening, you will find a stranger. There she was. I saw this lovely lady, young lady and I invited her to dance. We started talking. I found out that she was Catholic. She gave me her phone number, her address, name, the works and this is key because there's a dispute between the two of us to this day as to how events transpired, but anyhow she did give me those key bits of data. The next week the event was supposed to take place on a Sunday. That Saturday I had to go to New York. I went to New York. I came back and my mother said when I entered the house, "Some girl called here about some dance tomorrow or some breakfast or something." I said, "Well, did you get the message straight?" She said, "Well, I'm not sure." I said, "Did she say she was going or wasn't she going?" "I don't know." "Oh my God, the thing is tomorrow. I've got to have a better answer that that." It was dark, I mean it was late at night. I didn't have a car, so I got on the bus. I got on the elevated train and I took another bus and I went to her home. The house was black, dark, no lights at all in the house. I knocked on the door and I knocked on the door and finally a light came on at the top of the steps. I think they might have been peeping out of the door or something to see who was down there because she came to the door and I said, "Are you going to tomorrow or not?" This is the second point where we have a dispute as to what was said. I say she said yes and she tells me that she said maybe. Anyhow, the next morning I got dressed and went to her home and I knocked on the door and her mother greeted me and she said, "Step inside young man, I want to talk to you." I thought, oh my God what have I done. I couldn't believe it and her mother was quite a formidable large lady and she said, "Please have a seat" and I sat on the sofa. Angie was not to be seen anywhere. She said, "Sit down. I want to talk to you." I said, "Yes, ma'am?" She said, "I want you to know that I'm a single parent and I'm raising my two daughters to be good decent girls" and they don't do this and they don't do this and I don't allow them to do that and on and on "and I don't allow her to date, after all she's only 15 years old." At that point if there had been a trap door in the floor I would have gone through because I had no idea that she was 15 years old. She looked so mature. She never gave a hint about her age and then she said, "But I'm going to let her go with you this time because your intentions seem good." I said, "Thank you very much, Mrs. Clark." Her name was Virginia Clark and the girl that I had asked out was Angelina Clark. We went out the door and as soon as we got outside I said to her, "Why did you lie to me?" She said, "I never lied to you. You never asked me my age." We went out on that date and we subsequently went on other dates and six years later we were married, so that's how I met my wife in 1961 and that was a key point in my life.

Q: Well, how did you find working for Philadelphia because one thinks of all these places in Philadelphia in the civil service, but being at the center of city politics and all that. How did you feel?

YOUNG: None of the politics bothered me at all and we had an excellent mayor. We had Mayor Richardson Dilworth at the time who was a superb mayor and a man of integrity, honesty, imagination, a lot of drive and energy and a good manager. He was a superb mayor. None of that bothered me and his administration had a good reputation. The office I worked in was the procurement department. I was the accountant for the procurement department and it was not at all affected by any of the politics.

Q: I would think that the procurement department would be ideal.

YOUNG: Ideal.

Q: Ideal, the ideal place for people with connections and you were buying things.

YOUNG: It didn't happen. The head of the procurement department was a political appointee, the one who was there when I was there was a fellow by the name of Otto Winter. Dilworth demanded integrity and honesty and I don't recall any scandals during his administration. That turned out very well. In the early to mid '60s I also became very active in the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and in what they call their Young Leadership Development Program. So, I banded with a lot of other young people of my age and we would go to conferences and seminars and the goal of it all was to sort of develop us as potential leaders for the future in the community and business, etc. A combination of social and sort of career formation as well. It turned out quite nicely. Now, I mention that because that's another significant point in my life story.

Q: By this time I mean here you are, have you, where were you living? I mean what sort of life were you living by this time?

YOUNG: Oh, I was still on Lombard Street, but we had moved into a three room apartment at that point and my sister had moved to Wilmington, Delaware and my aunt and I continued in our three room apartment in Philadelphia. We got that three-room apartment after I had begun to work for the city of Philadelphia. As I say, that was my entrï¿½e to the middle class. The first thing I did was get this larger apartment where I had a room really to myself for the first time. We continued to live in that apartment until 1964. I had saved a little bit of money. I continued to save my money and then in 1964 the transformation of the neighborhood had clearly begun. I. M. Pei the famous American architect designed three apartment towers not too far from where we were and also a complex of townhouses. I remember looking at those townhouses and saying now this is what I want one day. This was 1964. I looked at one of those townhouses and they were $48,000 in 1964. I think my salary at that time was something like $6,500, which was a decent middle class salary at that point. I thought these houses were the most beautiful things I had ever seen, but they were clearly out of my reach and the apartments which were condos were also out of reach, so I thought well, maybe I can buy a shell of a house and have it rehabilitated. I called up the redevelopment authority and asked about one of these shells and they said, well, you can have one of these shells for $400, $500, $600 and I said, oh, that's great. What about how much to rehabilitate it? They said, well, the cheapest we've done has been about $60,000. This is in 1964. I said, you're kidding. They said no, because it's basically building a new house. So, I said no thank you. I forgot about staying in that neighborhood because I loved that neighborhood. I really loved that neighborhood.

Q: Did it continue to be a mixed neighborhood?

YOUNG: No, it didn't. It was transforming to a solidly white middle and upper middle class neighborhood. Who else could buy a $48,000 townhouse or put $60,000 into rehabilitating a home. I can tell you very few blacks could at that point. I began to look into other sections of the city and found a very nice duplex home in what is called West Oak Lane in Philadelphia. The home was on the market for $18,500. It was a two bedroom apartment downstairs, a two bedroom apartment upstairs and I figured we could rent out the one upstairs and that would help pay the mortgage plus my contribution and I bought it. My aunt and I moved. We had a garage. I didn't have a car, but we had a garage and it was a nice place, a very nice place. When we moved into that neighborhood we were the second black family in that neighborhood. It was a neighborhood that had been Jewish and Polish and Italian and as I said we were the second people to move in, so it was a neighborhood. As that neighborhood was transitioning eventually to become all black, the neighborhood we moved out of was transitioning to become all white, the one on Lombard Street. In 1954 I bought that house and my aunt and I moved into it and I kept it until after her death.

Then in 1965 I was asked by the YMCA, to be a U.S. delegate to an international conference to be held jointly by the YMCA and the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) in Beirut, Lebanon at the American University in Beirut (AUB). I was terribly excited by this prospect. I had not been overseas at all except for a trip to Puerto Rico for about a month or so and for a trip to Canada. I'd never been really very far so I was very excited by this trip. It would have taken us to Switzerland, Lebanon, Greece, Jordan, and then back to the States. I agreed. I paid my portion and was signed up for the trip and in August of 1965 we went to the American University in Beirut and we were there for a couple of weeks for this conference and then we made these other trips as I mentioned to Switzerland and Greece and while we were in Lebanon we went to Jordan as well.

That trip was a transforming experience for me. I had never met so many people from so many different cultures and to hear their stories about their countries and their cultures and their traditions and what have you was fascinating to me. I say to this day that was my conversion on the road to Damascus except mine occurred in Beirut at AUB. It was at that moment that I said I have got to do something in the international sphere. I was going to graduate the next year in 1966 and I said I've got to find something that will put me in that kind of arena. I began to apply to a number of American companies. I wanted to work in the international division of an American company and I wanted to do that abroad and I thought in 1965, '66 the United States had changed enough to make that possible. I learned later on that it was not possible, that it wasn't going to happen. I was called for a number of interviews. I remember going to New York and going into Citibank and going into insurance companies in different companies for interviews and they were very charming and very nice and they'd say, oh, Mr. Young, you have a really impressive resume and you have a superb academic record. But the minute they would say let's go to the executive dining room and the minute those doors opened and I looked inside and saw what was there and realized that I was the only spot in the place and I wasn't going to be the spot to change things I knew that it wasn't going to happen. They gave all kinds of excuses and what have you, but the fact is the U.S. had not changed enough for that to happen.

Then I began to look to the federal government and I began taking every exam that I could think of and finally succeeded in 1967 in getting into the Foreign Service.

Q: While you were discovering that the American business world had not changed, there were movements going on of the black power all this. I mean you've got the qualifications and you realize, yes, but this is not for me. You got your nose pressed against the glass looking inside. How did this affect you and the movements that were going on?

YOUNG: Oh, when we had demonstrations in Philadelphia I'd be part of them. I'd do the marches and things like that as well. I didn't travel to the South to participate in any of those. I didn't travel to Washington in '63 to participate in the march on Washington, but I was active in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in the branch office in Philadelphia. So that was my involvement in an effort to try and improve things from whatever kind of contribution I could make to it.

Q: Was there any movement within your circle of friends in Philadelphia, I mean getting together and talking and saying what are we going to do about this? Was this a subject of conversation?

YOUNG: Oh, yes, the majority of my friends in Philadelphia because of my initial connection with the YMCA were white. They were very concerned and very active. We would all demonstrate together and do these various kinds of marches and what have you together. We were very active in an organization called Fellowship House in Philadelphia which was a great meeting point in bringing us all together and bringing this integrated community together. I remember we had planned an outing to Wildwood, New Jersey. This group of friends that I belonged to for a weekend we drove to Wildwood on a Friday evening. We arrived at the hotel and I was the only black in the group. The minute the owner of the hotel saw me he said you all can stay here, but he can't stay here. They said, why not? He just said he can't stay here. They knew of course he wouldn't come out and say it, but they knew why. They said, if he can't stay here, then we're not going to stay here either. We tried a couple of other places and we ran into the same thing in each place so we ended up staying in a couple of black hotels on the black side of town in Wildwood, New Jersey. I subsequently filed a complaint with the New Jersey Civil Rights Commission against this particular hotel. There weren't any claims of monetary benefit or anything like that, but I did win a complaint against him. They slapped their wrists and that sort of thing.

Q: You say you took the Foreign Service exam among others. Did you know what you were taking?

YOUNG: No, because I looked at the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), I looked at the navy, I looked at anything that would sort of get me overseas. I also applied to an organization called Opportunities Industrialization Center which was run by Dr. Leon Sullivan because they were opening offices overseas as well.

Q: Sullivan became later very renowned.

YOUNG: In South Africa, that's right. Exactly. We're back in '66, '67 as I said I succeeded in getting into the Foreign Service and I was offered an initial assignment to Madagascar which I had no idea where it was. It was called the Malagasy Republic at that time and I thought it was somewhere in the Philippines.

Q: When one thinks of it, it had that name.

YOUNG: I just didn't know where it was. This created a dilemma in my relationship with the woman I had fallen in love with, Angelina. I was going to go away in the fall and we began to discuss, I had asked her to marry me, but the question was when and how and I first talked about getting married by proxy. I talked about coming back and marrying her. I talked about her coming out and marrying me. I mean we just discussed all kinds of things. It was on the 16th of September, 1967 that I really asked her to marry me quickly and she said okay. Then I got home about 2:00 in the morning and my aunt would always wait up for me. She couldn't sleep until she heard the door close. I went in and I could tell that she was not sleeping and I said to her, "Lucille, I'd like to talk to you." Her answer was, "If you want to get married go ahead, that's your business." She knew. She could see it coming. One week later on the 23rd of September we had a full fledged wedding at Sacred Heart Catholic Church on 16th Street with all of the usual things and that was the beginning of our married life together as a Foreign Service couple.

Q: How did Mrs. Clark, was it, take this idea of one of her two daughters running off with a guy who was going to be all over the place?

YOUNG: Well, that's a good question. She initially was not very pleased because it meant that her daughter had not fully realized the dreams that she had for her in terms of finishing her studies and things like that. Initially she wasn't pleased, but it didn't take many years when she realized the kind of husband I was and the kind of person I was that she became one of the best supporters I could have had in life. Really, she just became a wonderful mother-in-law.

Q: Let's talk about your entry into the Foreign Service. You took the Foreign Service exam?

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Then you took the oral exam?

YOUNG: Yes, and I remember that to this day.

Q: Could you talk about that, I'm always curious to get the feel for it.

YOUNG: At that time it was just three people. They sat behind the desk and they asked me all kinds of questions and I tried to answer them to the best of my ability and then they said, well, you can take a break. They wanted to deliberate, to decide what the agreement was and I'll never forget the person who was on the board. It was a woman by the name of Georgiana Prince. I don't know if you ever ran into her in the Service and we're friends to this day although I don't see her, but she is still living and she must be in her '80s now. She sends us a card every Christmas and what have you. She said, "Oh, I was looking for you." I said, "Oh, really? What for? What did I do, did I fail?" She said, "No, you passed. We're very pleased." To this day I've been trying to find out who the other members of the board were, but I can't remember them, but I do remember Georgiana.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

YOUNG: I can't. I just really can't. That's out of my mind.

Q: When you came in, it varies, were they looking for a particular field for you to go into or what do you call them cones?

YOUNG: At that time I was asked to go in as an administrative officer and went on an initial assignment as a budget officer to Madagascar.

Q: Did you have an A100 course?

YOUNG: We did have a course.

Q: How did you find the group of people?

YOUNG: They were quite good. Some of them became such good friends that we remained friends throughout their time in the Service. I think they're all, they've all moved on now. I'm the last one to go.

Q: Did you have any feel for what the Foreign Service did?

YOUNG: Well, you have to keep in mind that when I came in in '67, you could count on one hand, not even two the number of black officers in the Service. I mean very few. I went to Madagascar. I was the only one and then later on another African-American officer came and the ambassador could not distinguish between the two of us. This second officer's name was Irving Williamson and the ambassador used to call Irving Johnny and he used to call me Irving. Irving was the Econ officer and Irving was just there for a short time and then he moved to Mauritius where he went to work. I just was quite surprised that there weren't more of us in the Service, but it was very few. The few who made ambassador at that time almost all as I recall back in the late '60s, they almost all came from USIA (United States Information Agency) and not from the State Department. I think maybe the only one that I can recall at that time might have been Terry Todman and there might have been one other or so, but almost all were from USIA.

Q: You were in Madagascar from when to when?

YOUNG: I was in Madagascar from 1967 to 1969, but I was also accredited to Mauritius. I have to tell you about one of the first things that happened to me on that first assignment. It was in 1968, the students in Paris were rioting.

Q: This was May or June of '68?

YOUNG: That's right. They were rioting and they had a major impact on airline service and the students in Madagascar identified with the students in France and they, too, were rioting and sort of stirring up things. Well, one of the problems was we couldn't have usual pouch service between Mauritius and the rest of the world. I had gone to Mauritius to help on the administrative arrangements to get the post set up for its independence in 1968. I went to buy furniture and help set up offices and check the books and all kinds of things like that. My wife went with me and when our work was done which was I guess about a week or two, we prepared to return to Madagascar and I was asked to serve as a non-pro courier. I think this occurred in about April or May, something like that. I was to be the non-pro courier taking these pouches back to Madagascar and then from Madagascar I think they would then be put on Air Madagascar and sent to France. That's how we would get things from Mauritius to the rest of the world. I had five pouches and when I got to the airport I was told to check them in. I checked them in, these are classified pouches. I got the courier letter, the works.

When we arrived in Madagascar we went to claim the pouches and there was one, there was two, there were three, there were four, but there was no five and panic struck. My wife and I, we looked in every corner in the whole of that airplane. We couldn't find that fifth pouch. I was getting frantic. Before we had set out on our first assignment I had been ill and I'd been in the hospital in Washington for internal bleeding. They didn't know what the reason was. I never reported it to the State Department. I just took off on my assignment and my wife was worried that I was going to get sick again. We looked and we looked and we said, well, we have no choice but to call the embassy. I called the embassy and explained what happened. They said come in right away. I went in with the four pouches. They took the four. They contacted Mauritius right away, explained what happened. Mauritius found the fifth pouch, said there was no evidence that it had been compromised in any way, telegrams flew back and forth. The country team was assembled. I thought oh my God, this is the end of my career. It hadn't even gotten off the ground yet. We arrived in late October, so we'd only been at post about five months. I thought that's it, my career hasn't even gotten started, finished. The communicator who took me to the airport said that he accepted responsibility because he never briefed me on how I should handle a pouch as a non-professional courier. Everyone said to me, oh, they certainly took care of that in orientation class. They surely told me. No one ever mentioned anything about how you behave as a non-professional courier. I didn't have a clue. He accepted responsibility for that and I thought that was a very big thing on his part. It really was. It's amazing what goes around, comes around.

Now, we had become friendly with this communicator and he was a very bright fellow and we remained in touch with him. He was not a high school graduate. He was very clever though and we told him, his name was Theodore Boyd, Ted Boyd and we told him, "Ted, you know, you're a very bright man. Why don't you finish your GED (General Educational Development) and why don't you take the Foreign Service exam?" He took the Foreign Service exam and passed it with one of the highest scores recorded at that time. Succeeded in passing the oral as well. He was brought into the Service and he became a U.S. Information Agency officer. USIS (United States Information Service) put him to school. He did his bachelor's degree, did his master's degree and worked toward his Ph.D. Some decades later he ended up as my public affairs officer when I was in Togo. That's jumping ahead a little bit, but. That's what happened on my first assignment. Losing a classified pouch which was quite something.

Q: Now, tell me, let's talk a bit about when you arrived in Madagascar, what was the state of Madagascar like? What was happening there and what sort of government?

YOUNG: It had a very stable government. One that was basically directed from behind the scenes by the French. It was a forgotten little paradise. When I tell people today, when I describe the kind of Madagascar we had then to the Madagascar people talk about today, they can't believe that it's the same place at all. At the time we were there, it was the second most popular place among French colonials. They loved it. They adored it. We all had a great life there. We lived in wonderful houses. We ate the best food. We had the best clothes. It was a good life. We were kind of like a little forgotten place.

I'll tell another little story that I think is a great little story. We lived in a house and the embassy was also next to these very long steps that led up to a market. I think there were like 800 steps up to this market that was up on a plateau. Back in 1968 when the students were rioting in Paris, the students in Madagascar were following in a similar vein and one day the students came descending down these steps screaming and what have you. We had a young political officer who was I think on his third assignment at that point, one of the brightest guys we've ever met, full of beans as well. His name was Fred Rondon and Fred said, "Oh, my God the revolution is here." We said, "Oh, Fred, keep quiet. No revolution is here. We're a forgotten island. Nobody knows we're here. They've forgotten about us" and on and on. He says, "I tell you the revolution is coming. This country is out of step with what's happening in the rest of Africa and its going to come here." We said, "No revolution is going to come here. This is the one place, the island of stability and peace and calm and the good life." He says, "I tell you it is coming here." So, Fred would write these very thoughtful think pieces for what we called at the time airgrams and he'd keep sending these things in about the changes he saw coming to Madagascar. Now, when we were there, only Western countries were there. There were no Russians, no Chinese, no Eastern Bloc countries, strictly the West and it was stable, solid, the French behind the scenes pulling the strings. He left and moved on and we all went to different assignments after that.

A few years later it happened just as Fred had predicted and there was a revolution there and it was a very extreme turn to the left. As a matter of fact we got into trouble with them, and in a fit of anger the government of Madagascar PNG'd (persona non-grata) the ambassador, the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), the admin officer, the political officer and I think one other officer, about five of them. They were all gone in no time at all. Our relations hit rock bottom. They remained that way for many, many years until we came to the understanding that times had changed enough for us to reestablish relations at the full diplomatic level. We decided that we would name an ambassador once again to put things back on track and as it turned out that ambassador was Fred Rondon. It was a wonderful way for Fred to have a first ambassadorship as well.

Q: Who was your ambassador when you got there?

YOUNG: That's an interesting story. Our ambassador when we got there was a fellow by the name of David Space King and I remember him because I was a bit concerned as to how we would get along. He was a Mormon. He had been a member of Congress, did not succeed in his reelection bid and was given this ambassadorship to Madagascar. Well, I thought, my God, I'm going to work for a Mormon ambassador and the Mormons don't believe that we should belong to their church and that we are the descendants of Ham and we are cursed and on and on. Not only am I black, but they're sending this man to a black country also. I wonder how this is going to work out. As it turned out he was wonderful. He was also in the forefront of trying to push for change in the church, which he eventually succeeded in doing and he was a wonderful ambassador. He was a very good ambassador, very effective. He learned how to speak the local language. He wrote a book on the country. He was very good. I liked him a lot. Spoke superb French. It was really pretty good.

Q: How did you find being the B&F (Budget and Fiscal) officer?

YOUNG: Not very much to my liking at all because I found it too confining. I wanted to be with the people more and I wanted more contact with the outside as well. I didn't want to just sit in an office and do numbers and work with just the FSNs (Foreign Service National employees). One of the things that I did, I did two things, number one I began teaching English as a foreign language at USIS. The other thing I did was I began to give international folk dance lessons. During this period when I was active in the YMCA, I did international folk dancing. You know, dances from Romania, Bulgaria and Israel and Hungary and different places like that. I started teaching a class in that and that got me out and that made it possible to do what I was expected to do inside and then have friends on the outside getting to really meet Malagasy.

Q: How did you find them?

YOUNG: Loved them. Wonderful people, absolutely wonderful. Beautiful, gentle, kind. They invited us into their homes. My wife and I had an enormous number of Malagasy friends unlike a lot of other people in the mission. We just reached more and as a result it paid off in friendships on the outside.

Q: Was there a difference between the highlanders and lowlanders?

YOUNG: A big difference. Most of the people in the capital city Antananarivo where we were were mostly highlanders. Most of the people around the coastal area were a mixture of African and Indonesian stock. They had a certain look to them and it wasn't the same look that you would see in the highlands. The people in the highlands, you could put them on the streets of Jakarta and you'd never find them again. Some of the ones from the coast you put them on 125th Street in New York and you'd never find them again.

Q: You were there during a time of turmoil in the United States, particularly with the Vietnam War, but also on racial things, too. Were the Malagasy that tuned in? Were they interested?

YOUNG: Very interested, oh yes. They didn't have riots and demonstrations and that sort of thing. They were very attuned and very keen on things American and particularly things black American, music and culture and plays and you know, we'd get groups out. We'd get dance troupes and musical groups, almost always black groups that were enormously successful in their presentations in Madagascar.

Q: Did you feel at the time okay, I'm a B&F officer, but I'm sure not going to do this again? Did you feel like you were locked into this?

YOUNG: In fact I wasn't sure I was going to stay in the Foreign Service because my wife and I began to discuss what we should do. At one point we decided we would call it quits because she wanted to return to school and I was prepared to go back and do that. Then we discussed it some more and we decided, well, maybe we ought to give it one more shot. By that time it was too late because all of the jobs had gone, so there was nothing left for me. I had a wonderful DCM, a man we became friends with and remained friends with until the time of his death and he was just a great mentor and friend and a real big helper. His name was Peter Walker, Peter C. Walker, a great guy. We are friends with the family to this day. Anyhow, I went to him and I said, "Peter, this is our story. We weren't sure we were going to leave. We waited and we made up our minds now we're going to give it one more shot. Do you think you can help me with a job?" He says, "Well, this is late in the cycle and I don't know what we can do. The executive director of the bureau of African affairs is a friend. Maybe he can help you with something." I think it was Ed Dobbins. He says, "Maybe he can help you. I'll write to him." He wrote to him and told him about me and blah, blah. Then Peter came to me one day and he said, "There's one job that he can offer you." I said, "What's that?" He says, "Its as general services officer (GSO) in Conakry, Guinea, but it would be following some training" and on and on. Now, in the meantime, I had become very ill in Madagascar. I had become ill on three separate occasions and on the third occasion, which was toward the end of the assignment, the decision was I would go back to the States for treatment. Now, Peter had factored all of this into his letter to Dobbins.

Then I returned to the States and I got a tentative assignment of GSO in Conakry, Guinea preceded by a huge chunk of training. This was 1970. I finished the assignment in '69, came to the States, got the medical treatment which entailed a major operation, then I moved into this training program in January of '70 and was in this training program for months until June. This training program was intended to create the next generation of the administrative officers of the next century. I've forgotten the name of it, but it had some fancy title and we were all highly honored that we were selected for this thing and I must say we did quite well when I tell you some of the people who were in it. I entered that management training program and then from that I took a little bit of brush up French because I hadn't reached a 3/3 yet and got the 3/3 and went on to Conakry, Guinea.

Q: Today is the 16th of November, 2005. Johnny, what are we talking about, I mean you took the management course, what year?

YOUNG: This was a course that was developed by the Department and it was supposed to be an effort to develop a cadre of the next generation of management officers. We weren't called management officers at that time although it was called the management course. We were called administrative officers. This was a bold, new initiative. It was a very lengthy course. It went from February to June which was quite extraordinary for that time, you know, we're talking about 1970 and to put administrative officers, GSOs, personnel officers into that kind of broad administrative training, that was quite a jump. We were quite a group. Our class included Brian Atwood. It included Irv Hicks. It included Larry Grahl, it included myself. I'm just mentioning a few people all of whom went on to become chiefs of mission or even higher.

Q: What were sort of some of the emphases that you were getting?

YOUNG: Well, the goal was to try and instill in us the importance of service, the importance of creativity, the importance of risk taking, the importance of innovation, the importance of dealing with change and things like that. That was the thrust of it. We had speakers I can't even remember all of them now, but we had them from the outside and from the Department and all kinds of universities and what have you. It was quite a course. It didn't last very long, mind you. I think it lasted a couple years and that was it.

Q: Then still in 1970 you went to Conakry. Is that right?

YOUNG: Went to Conakry, Guinea as general services officer. At that time it was probably one of the worst places in Africa.

Q: When were you there?

YOUNG: From '70 to '72.

Q: Sort of describe the situation in Guinea at the time.

YOUNG: Well, I went ahead without my wife who remained behind to have our first child. She was pregnant with our first child and we learned very quickly that Guinea had no facilities at all for her to give birth at post, so she stayed behind and I went ahead. I arrived I think in July. It was the height of the rainy season. I was moved into a good size house. Things were kind of run down and shabby and it was raining like I had never seen rain before. I mean it just poured. I've never witnessed that kind of rain before. Our previous post was in Madagascar and we would have rain occasionally, but never anything like this. I mean torrential rains. The houses had corrugated tin roofs so the rain would pound down on this roof. I mean something just unbelievably loud and frightening if you were not used to it. I was not used to it.

Then I moved into this house. I was very lonely. I missed my wife quite a bit and there was another single, there was a single young man there and we became friends. He was new at the post as well, so we used to pal around together. We would go out at night after hours into the beer gardens and drink beer and watch the local folks dance and we'd chat and make friends and what have you. I figured well, this is not a nice place, but we'll make do. It was clear to me as I looked around that everything was shabby and fallen down and broken down and I could see very readily what had happened when the French pulled out in the late '50s and literally ravaged that country. They were going to teach them a lesson because Guinea was the only country of the then Francophone countries that said it didn't want to be a part of the Francophone set up. That it wanted to go it on its own and France was furious. They pulled out all of their people. They ripped out the electrical wires for the street lighting, for the apartment buildings and offices, broke the generators of the local hospital, tore up the streets, I mean everything you can think of, they did. It was horrible. The broke the elevator to the one skyscraper, which was just mean and vicious, and it was ugly and the country had not been able to overcome that. It was readily apparent. I mean holes in the streets, broken down lights. You couldn't get electricity on any kind of continuous basis so it was just a dreadful situation in terms of the infrastructure. They broke things and the cranes ... I mean you just name it, they broke it. I mean they were determined to teach that country a lesson and they did.

Anyhow, there I was lonely, raining, miserable and I'll never forget my early introduction to Guinea. One morning I got up and I felt something crawling at my back and I took off my pajamas and sort of gave myself a good shake and out dropped this huge cockroach. It had been in the bed with me. On another occasion I remember going home after work and reading a Herald Tribune that was two weeks old at that point and being very happy to get it, an International Herald Tribune and I had a scotch in one hand and the newspaper in the other and suddenly I heard this thing fly in from the rain and right towards my head. Boom it bounced off my head. It was a huge flying cockroach. I had never seen one of those in my life and so the newspaper went in one direction and the scotch in another direction and I think I started to take off in another. After several introductions to the bugs and the insects and things like that, I got used to it and went on with life and got on with my job. My job was a tough one because the infrastructure as I mentioned earlier was so broken down. Nothing worked in that country. To get goods from the port was worse than pulling hen's teeth. It was almost impossible, but we had a third country national, a Lebanese fellow who was the miracle worker of the embassy and he could do anything. He got all of our goods in and out of the country. I'll never forget the ambassador told him once, he said, "Don't ever tell me how you do these things because if you do I'll have to fire you." We knew that a lot of it was done through little bribes and what have you to the port officials. It was the only way you could get anything done and he did it and we were grateful for it.

I remember on another occasion the ambassador saying to me, "Johnny, you're the most important person at this mission." I said, "Well, thank you very much Mr. Ambassador, but I find that hard to believe." He says, "No, really, you mean more to morale at this post than I do." Well, I never took him seriously for a minute. I thought he was just being very kind. He was an extraordinary ambassador.

Q: Who was he?

YOUNG: His name was Bud Sherer. I just loved him. I never ever thought that I would ever become an ambassador, but years and years later when I did he was my model. He was an incredible man and I'll get to something else in a minute that will indicate what an extraordinary person he was, both he and his wife, Pam Sherer, just a fantastic couple. Anyhow we struggled in Guinea to get our work done. It was a struggle for the ambassador to meet with Guinean officials. Everything was so leftist at that time. It was unbelievable. You couldn't buy something as simple as an airline ticket and say, I want to leave tomorrow. You had to go through all kinds of government offices to get an airline ticket to leave and we worried particularly in the case of medical evacuation of the delay and in several cases the ambassador had to intervene at the presidential level to get these authorizations to buy tickets to get people out on an emergency basis. Tough for the ambassador, tough for the mission, tough all around to get things done. The government was inward looking. It was leftist leaning and didn't have anything good to say about the United States and the West. If you called a government office the first thing you would hear on the other end was not hello, but it was [inaudible] revolution. Ready for the revolution. That was the mantra all over town. That was how the phones were answered. It was an indication of the kind of indoctrination that the local population was going through.

Q: The president was?

YOUNG: Sekou Toure, an extraordinary leader. At the time we were there he was still at his height in terms of power and influence on the continent. Sekou Toure was the kind of man who could stand up in a stadium and speak for seven hours straight without a single note and have the people enthralled. He also had his country divided in terms of having people express their loyalty to the government. That was the only way that they could get a little bit of food that was available and distributed to the government. Those who expressed the greatest loyalty to the government were the ones who got the little bit of meal, a little bit of rice, a little bit of tomato paste, whatever the case may be, because all of the food was handled through the government. There were no private grocery stores or markets or anything like that. I remember my wife for example couldn't find a single onion in its entirety. She could buy a half an onion and buy several halves because things were so scarce. You could not get anything. We had to bring everything into that country, everything. We hooked up for example with a company in Belgium called Belex Cargo and they brought in everything. Planeloads of goods would come in every Friday and I'd send out my GSO trucks and we'd get everything in and bring it to the embassy, divide it up and distribute it and we all ate like kings and queens. As tough as it was we did put in a great effort and we did eat quite well.

As I mentioned earlier my wife was waiting to have our first child who was due on October 25th, but on October 25th no baby and no baby a week later and a week later and a week later. Finally it was several days after November 18 that I got a telegram from Washington. In fact, I used to call the communicator every morning to see if he had received a telegram, he said, no telegram, no telegram. One morning he called me.

Q: So, you were calling the communicator.

YOUNG: Right, the communicator, everyday. Any word yet from my wife? No. So, one day he called me and he said, "Hello Johnny?" I said, "Yes?" He says, "I have a telegram you'd be interested in." I said, "What does it say?" He says, "Mother-in-law Virginia Clark advises son, David John Young born Wednesday, November 18, 1980, weighing 9 pounds 3 ounces, mother and baby fine. That's the biggest God damn baby I ever heard of." I had a good laugh, we all had a good laugh. I had stopped smoking at that point for several years and I said to someone, "Give me a cigarette" and I started smoking again and I continued smoking for another five years. I got the telegram several days late, so it was about November 20th, 21st. Now, I mention this because I was home in bed on the evening of November 22nd which is a fateful in Guinean history. I was stirred out of my sleep by what sounded like cannon sounds. We had made a huge investment in food that we had shipped to the post and we had it in a storeroom at the end of one of the hallways in the house. I kept saying to myself, who's trying to get into my storeroom. All I could think of was the value of all that food we had in the storeroom. I kept getting up and going to check the storeroom and everything was fine. I kept hearing boom, boom, rat a tat tat, boom. I couldn't figure it out. The next morning I got up to go to mass. I was standing outside of the gate waiting for the person to pick me up to take me to church and it was the admin officer who came by and he says, "Johnny, you can't stay here." I lived in an area that was close to what they called the village ministerial, which was near where a lot of the ministers lived. He said, "Last night there was an attempted coup. There's still trouble in the air. We're all meeting over at the DCM's residence." The DCM at that time was a fellow named Don Norland. So, we all gathered over at Don Norland's house. We gathered all of the Peace Corps volunteers, as many as we could. We all went to Don Norland's house and that's where we stayed for literally several days until we could return to our respective homes. Well, on the night of the 23rd things were still uncertain so we stayed at Don's house. Suddenly I guess as dark descended the fire started again, the cannon fire started again and we could see the tracers through the trees and I remember Don screaming to all of us to get down on the floor and we all got down on the floor and that's where we stayed for the rest of the night, down on the floor as these bullets and cannons and what have you sailed through the trees. The Guinean forces were challenging rebel forces that were attempting to come in from the sea and Don's house was right on the coast. We could see, we knew what was going on. That went on all night long. On the 24th we didn't have that at night and by the 25th we could return to our houses.

Well, things were pretty bad after that. Sekou Toure turned on his own people he suspected in being involved in the plot to overthrow him. He turned on a number of people in the foreign community he thought were involved in the plot as well including a number of Lebanese people. I'll mention one Lebanese person in a minute, someone who was with our embassy. I'll never forget a couple of days after that, going to work one morning and going under an overpass and before coming out of that overpass seeing the hanged bodies of people we knew including the director of the electricity department whom I had dealt with just a few days before in an effort to get electricity to several of our houses. We saw people who were strung up in the public square for everyone to see. It was a very tense time. Now, this witch hunt that Toure had embarked on stretched out over a number of months and a number of people we knew were involved including a number of Guinean officials. It was really pretty grim and many of them were never heard from again. They were killed and murdered and never heard from again. This was a time when we were concerned about human rights, but frankly couldn't do very much about it. Diallo Telli was a famous Guinean for example who had been caught up in events of that time and was tortured terribly and eventually killed.

Some months later the Lebanese fellow who worked for us had gone on vacation with his family when this hunt for coup plotters was still on. He was planning to return to Conakry with his family. He was housed in an apartment along with our other diplomatic personnel. This was at a time when we treated third country nationals basically the same as we would an American diplomat. He lived in an apartment building that we had and we treated him the same as everyone else as I mentioned earlier. But during this time we suspected that if he returned to the country he would be in great difficulty. We tried to get a message to him in Lebanon. We tried also through our embassy in Paris because we thought he was traveling to and from Lebanon through Paris. We did succeed in getting the message to him, but he decided he would send his family back anyhow. He sent his wife and daughter and his brother back to Conakry and we didn't think that was particularly wise, but that's what he opted to do. He stayed out longer. I went together with my wife to the airport to meet his wife, daughter and brother. We met them and we took them to their apartment building. The apartment building we lived in at the time was under surveillance by the government of Guinea police. From time to time they would have one of their policeman sit outside of this building in a chair. I arrived. My wife went home with our baby. I went with his family to the apartment building. We got them settled. We were sitting in the apartment building having a Coke when there was a knock on the door. We opened the door and in marched I think about four Guinean policeman and they wanted to know who let these people in this building. I said, "I let them in this building. Why are you here?" They said, "We are part of the government of Guinea and we are the authority here and we have a right to be in this building." I said, "You have no right to be in this building. This is U.S. government territory and you should leave immediately." Well, they said, "No, you will leave immediately." I said, "I will not." They said, "You have no right to have allowed these people in this building. This building is under surveillance and you have to get out." I said, "I'm not going out." They said, "Yes, you are." So, we got into a little back and forth there. They then took a bayonet, they had a machine gun with a bayonet and they put that in my back and they said, "You will go with us." I said okay and I went with them. They left Mr. _____'s family there and they marched me out of the building and the other Americans in the building all had their doors cracked at that point because they knew there was some commotion going on in the building and something was going on. As I descended the steps I passed the ambassador's secretary, a woman by the name of Marcella Wheeler. She had her door cracked and she was looking out the door. I said, "Marcella, be sure you tell the ambassador what has happened to me." She said, "I will." They marched me out. They put me in the back of a little Jeep and then they took me to jail. I got to jail. They sat me in a cell and they gave me a piece of paper and a pen and they said, "You will now write your deposition which is your confession." I said, "I will not." They said, "Yes, you will." I said, "I will not write any deposition." They said, "You will or you will stay here." I said, "I'll just stay." I remained there in the cell and the policeman who was outside of the cell would occasionally answer the phone when it rang and each time the phone rang I would say, "Is that my ambassador?" He would say to me, "No" in very clear terms. He said, "Are you ready now to do your deposition?" I said no. So, we went back and forth on that for a while. Each time the phone would ring I would say is that my ambassador? No. This went on for several hours.

Finally, at one point, we said to them, you will not receive a single further shipment of food from the United States government. He said, "I sent all that to Washington. It was received in the White House." I learned later from a friend of mine who was in the White House, Fred Rondon, and Fred said, "I was in the situation room and this cable came through that you had been arrested and you were in jail. I thought I couldn't believe Johnny Young had been arrested and was in jail." It was that leverage of no further shipment of food that persuaded President Sekou Toure to act to get me out of jail. I mention all of that to just illustrate what a difficult situation Guinea was at that time.

Now, after the attempted coup and difficulties in the ensuing months, I remember the ambassador called the staff together and said, "This has been a really rough time for us. Some of you may want to leave and if any of you want to go, I will do everything I can to see that you get good onward assignments, but you don't have to stay on here if you don't want to. Just let me know if you want to do it and I will do it for you." Not a single person at the mission took the ambassador up on that offer because they had such great respect and admiration for him. They were prepared to undergo whatever the hardships were at that time in order to continue their work with him at that mission. I'll never forget him.

Q: How about just day to day working? You need clearances and everything else. Was the government out just to be nasty to you or was this just the way it was, to you as Americans or was this, were other countries having the same problem including say the Soviets?

YOUNG: Oh, no, any Western country, they were very difficult. The Soviets were in their glory day there. The Soviets and the Eastern Bloc countries were treated very nicely, and we did not hear of the difficulties that they had. They didn't have any French embassy there because they had broken relations with the French when the French pulled out in the late '50s. I think in '57 or '58.

Q: What happened to the Lebanese man?

YOUNG: He finally returned after things quieted down, packed up his bags and left. We got him a job at the embassy in Cameroon. He went to Cameroon and he was there for a little while and they finally caught him with his hands in the till and he was released and we didn't hear from him anymore after that.

Q: Could you get out into the country or anything like that?

YOUNG: Absolutely not. We were basically under city arrest. My wife and I made one of the few trips that was possible before they completely shut down any travel out of the country and on that trip we were able to go to Freetown, Sierra Leone. We went by road and returned by road. Again it shows you how fate operates. Little did I know that many years into the future I would return to Sierra Leone as the American ambassador. We went there and we saw colleagues there that I had met. We met two young gentlemen who later on came into the Foreign Service and have done very well. Steve Noland and his brother. They were teenagers at the time. That was one of the last trips anyone was able to make by road outside of Conakry. We were literally confined to the city.

Q: Since you're a Catholic, what was the faith of the church?

YOUNG: That's a good question because the church was fine. No problem with the church. After the coup, the church was kind of implicated in being part of the coup and it was our embassy that managed to get a message to the Vatican on the whereabouts of Archbishop Kimball. We did play a role in that, but the church unfortunately had no way of communicating at least to the Vatican. The Catholic Church was fine.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the Soviets or the East Germans there?

YOUNG: We had pretty good relations I mean to the extent that you could have good relations with Soviets back in 1970. I'll never forget the Soviet ambassador would invite our ambassador over to his residence from time to time for them to sit down and have a tï¿½te-ï¿½-tï¿½te and the ambassador would always say, "Well, I'm going to the Soviet Embassy for lunch. I won't be back for the afternoon because they're going to ply me with Vodka" which they did and of course he couldn't return to the office after that. The relations were good, but limited. For example, the goods that we were able to obtain locally from any kind of store we were able to get from a big Yugoslav store that was set up to cater to the diplomatic community in hard currency. That worked out very nicely. We were very happy for that. I mean it wasn't the caliber of goods that you would get in a Western store, but the Yugoslav store was good and it peddled Yugoslav products and they got dollars for it and they were very happy and we were happy, so it worked out very nicely.

Q: Did you get, I mean I realize your job wasn't political reporting, but I imagine there wasn't much going on there.

YOUNG: Oh, there was a lot going on. The problem was you couldn't get it first hand. You had to get it from bits and pieces that you would glean from different contacts. We had a very active political section and a superb political officer, a young man at the time who has subsequently done well in the Service, a fellow by the name of Al Thibault. Al has done quite well.

Q: I've actually interviewed him.

YOUNG: A terrific officer, a wonderful reporting officer, but you couldn't just go to the ministry and have a discussion with officials. It was what you could get off of radio, reading between the lines, what you could glean from the few contacts that you had. Very few people had real Guinean contacts except for our public affairs officer. He was exceptional, Hank Ryan, in terms of how he was able to get into the Guinean community and we got good bits and pieces of information from him as well. We were trying to read the country and get a sense of where it was going and how the political decisions were being made.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Guineans regretting that they'd broken off with France the way they did and were the other countries like Senegal and all seeming doing much better?

YOUNG: They knew that other countries were doing better. Senegal and Abidjan at that time were really models of success. Guineans were fiercely loyal, fiercely proud and they were also terrorized. I mean by their own government. They were afraid to voice their opinion about what was going on in their country. They couldn't speak to each other. They didn't know who would turn them in. They lived in a state of terror. A huge community of Guineans lived outside in Togo, in Benin, or in the Ivory Coast, but I mean they were just all over. Huge community of them. I think it was up to a quarter of the population. It was very large.

Q: Did Guinea have a segmented into important tribal units?

YOUNG: Oh, no. It's tribal; I mean lots of tribes there, but the main tribe I think was the president's tribe. I think he was what they call Mandinka, if I'm not mistaken. All those tribes, I can't even remember them all. It was not a major issue at that time. People were held together through terror, through sheer force and in that situation suspended their tribal beliefs just to survive.

Q: How did your wife with a new baby adjust to this?

YOUNG: Well, my wife is an extraordinary person. She realized the limitations of the situation we were in and she managed to have a very good life there. She developed a group of friends and she would visit with those friends. They had all kinds of projects that they would work on, but they couldn't do the kinds of volunteer work that she did in the future in other countries. I mean there was no local ladies' group and local charities and that sort of thing. None of that existed in Guinea. Her focus was just on her baby and helping him to grow and develop. She did that very nicely and made a very lovely home for me.

Q: Well, was it '72?

YOUNG: 1972. Now, while we were there she became pregnant with our second child and became so dehydrated that the regional medical doctor who was resident in Conakry, a Dr. Corey Marko, had to confine her to bed. Eventually we left and then she had to be treated in the States for her dehydration. We left somewhat in an emergency situation. I'll never forget I had to pack up the entire house myself and this was at a time when we couldn't call the GSO section although I was the GSO or call the contractor to do the packing. They gave us boxes and tape and paper and we had to do it ourselves. I packed up the entire house myself. Mind you we had only been married a couple of years, but it was amazing what we had accumulated in just a couple of years. I did that. That was my first time to pack up the entire house and I had to do it on one other occasion, but I'll tell you about that later.

Following Conakry I was looking for an onward assignment. We had had a temporary admin officer in Conakry, Marsha Martin, and she liked my work. She liked me. She had received an onward assignment to be the admin officer in Nairobi, Kenya and she told me later on, she said, "You know I like your work a lot. Would you mind coming to Kenya to be the GSO?" I said, "I would love it, but that's a sort of like a triple stretch." At the time I was an FS-6 and she said, "Well, I'll see what I can do, but I can't make any promises." She left and we of course put our bids in on a number of other things. I can't remember what they were, but in the back of my mind I had it in my head well maybe this will work out. One day we got a call and she says I think I have it worked out. I think they're going to allow you to go into this stretch assignment as the supervisory GSO in Nairobi. That's what happened. That was my reward and we were assigned to Nairobi. We went to Washington for a while to have some more training and then in the summer of 1972 we arrived in Nairobi. My wife was very pregnant at that time with our second child and she planned to give birth in Nairobi. Our relatives, her mother and my mother, thought that I was out of my mind to allow her to go to Kenya and to give birth in Kenya. They had in their mind an Africa of huts and things like that.

Q: Lions?

YOUNG: Yes. They had no idea that we were going to a pretty sophisticated city with good facilities and things like that. We went there and that assignment turned out to be really quite a nice one for several reasons. The place is spectacularly beautiful. The job was a dream. As I said it was sort of like a triple stretch. The people were nice, the country was stable. We had a good embassy. Good ambassador. Terrorism wasn't something that we dealt with at that time. Anybody could walk in the embassy and come up and see me and that was it. It was a different time altogether. It had so many positives working in its favor and of course my daughter was born there which made it very special. On October 11th she was born there in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and was healthy, never had a problem which was really quite special because our son was born in Philadelphia at one of the best hospitals in Philadelphia and shortly after birth had an infection or rather my wife developed an infection and was isolated from the baby for about 10 days, but yet we didn't have any problem like that in Nairobi. She had a C-Section, which was what she had in Philadelphia as well, but it all turned out very well.

We were very happy there, very pleased. I had an assistant GSO, a fellow who had been an army officer and had left the army and had come into the Foreign Service. A guy by the name of John Nix, and he was quite good. He stayed for about a year and then I subsequently received another GSO to replace him. My wife and I went out to the airport to receive this replacement, this was in 1973 and we met him. We stopped by Kentucky Fried Chicken, bought chicken, took it home, ate it and gave him some. We put him in the car and took him to his new house, got him settled and my wife and I got in the car and we said we've got a winner. He was a winner. His name was James Walsh and he subsequently many years became U.S. ambassador to Argentina.

Anyway, I'll tell you about some of the fun times in Kenya. Of course we enjoyed ourselves very much there. We were freed. I mean we could travel all over the country. We could travel to neighboring countries and we took advantage of those countries. We went on Safari and we did all kinds of things. One of the big events of our time there occurred in the fall of 1973. At that time Kenya hosted the first meeting in Africa of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. It was a big event. The U.S. government decided it would send a huge delegation to this gathering. George Shultz was the Secretary of the Treasury, Arthur Burns was the head of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker was the head of the Counsel of Economic Advisors. We had Andrew Young. We had Wright Patman, who was the chairman of the House Banking Committee. It was just an incredible group and they were going to be there for 10 days. We had them scheduled to be in two hotels with two control rooms set up for both. I worked the control room in the Hilton Hotel and I remember we were scrounging around for help in supporting this huge activity that was a first for the mission in Kenya. The executive director of the Bureau of African Affairs, Bill Bradford, said I'll send you some help. He said, "You know, I have this new young officer here who is bright and smart. I'm going to send him out there and he can lend you a hand and I think he'll help you out. His name is Pat Kennedy." We said, "Well, we're happy to take whoever you send." Pat came out and he worked with us on this. I'll never forget it. I went out to the airport to meet this group and the plane arrived. We went out with the cars and we had a bus that we were going to put them on. Shultz and some of the other key VIPs were taken in cars, but I had the bus where I rode with the senators and the congressmen and in the bus with me was Congresswoman Margaret Heckler.

Q: Oh, yes from Massachusetts.

YOUNG: From Massachusetts. I'll never forget her as long as I live. There I am in the bus with her and all these other senators, Andrew Young was in there and a whole mess of them. She says, "Oh, I'm so excited to be here. I'm happy to be here. This is great. This is wonderful. I've never been to Africa before. I'm so happy. I can't wait to get to the bush." Then she turned to me and she said, "Are you from the bush?" I said, "No, I'm not. I'm a Foreign Service Officer. I'm from the United States, Philadelphia." It was really so funny. I then got them to their hotel and the majority of the senators and congressmen stayed in the Hilton Hotel where I had the control room and Volcker and Burns and Shultz and company, they stayed at the Intercontinental Hotel, that was another control room. We took care of them for 10 solid days. They went on safari. They traveled around. I'll never forget, I wish I could remember the name of the congressman, I think he was from New Jersey, but anyhow he went on safari one day and this is the way the story was recounted to us. He had been told don't take pictures unless you get approval from the person you want to take the picture of. They went on this safari and they were in this little minibus and he had his camera with the big lens and he was snapping pictures and he didn't see anybody around. They're way out on the way to their camp and suddenly the bus is totally surrounded by Masai tribesmen. He thought they were going to be harmed and the story goes that he said, "You want my camera? You want my watch? Please don't hurt me, whatever you want, don't harm me." They weren't there to harm them. That's the way it was. You could be out in the middle of nowhere and suddenly there would be Masai or somebody else and that's the way it was. They let them go and they had a good safari and they came back and they told us the story and everybody had a good laugh.

Wright Patman was a very distinguished looking gentleman from Texas. Looked every bit the part of a distinguished ambassador or statesman and a fine gentleman, there's no question about that. Well, I'd been working with all of them for 10 days, day and night in this control room so I thought they knew who I was and what I was or wasn't. They all arrived at the airport and the plan was everyone would get on the plane and the chairman would be the last one to get on the plane and then that would be it and the plane would go. It worked that way. I escorted him to the steps of the plane. He turned to me. He said, "Thank you son." He shook my hands and slipped me $2.00. I said, "Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, but I can't accept tips. I'm a Foreign Service Officer." I returned the $2.00 to him. He understood I assume and then he went on, but I thought that was rather amusing.

Q: Oh boy. Who was the ambassador while you were there?

YOUNG: We had two ambassadors. The first one was Robinson McIlvaine who was a very fine ambassador, did an excellent job.

Q: He was ambassador in a number of countries.

YOUNG: Including Conakry, Guinea.

Q: Yes. I was going to say, yes.

YOUNG: Yes, a good man, a good fellow, he did an excellent job. He was particularly keen on trying to limit growth at the embassy. He would face fights on that going and coming from his AID colleagues because AID wanted to just grow and grow there. They were already bigger than any other component of the mission. They were giving about I guess $70 million a year to the Kenyans and they were doing it with about 50 or 60 people. The Germans were giving the same amount of money with six people, but that's just the magnitude of how we had this huge AID apparatus to give this amount of money. The ambassador wanted to limit it. He said, "You know if trouble comes to this country one day there will be a price to pay in having all of these people here. We don't need to be any larger. We want to keep it at a certain level at least during my time here." He just refused to go along with it and it worked at least during that time. Subsequent ambassadors to Kenya did not succeed as well and some of them were very much in favor of growth.

Q: Who succeeded him?

YOUNG: Tony Marshall, a political appointee had been PNG'd from Madagascar and came to Kenya. A very nice man, not the same as McIlvaine, but he was quite good. He wasn't just a run of the mill political appointee, he was someone who had considerable experience in Africa as a private businessman and private citizen. He had had interest in Africa and he had been appointed previously as I mentioned as ambassador to Madagascar from which he had been declared persona non grata.

Q: Do you know why he had been PNG'd or not?

YOUNG: The Malagasy government thought the U.S. was involved in a plot to overthrow the government and they PNG'd the ambassador, the DCM, the political officer, the administrative officer the economic officer and on and on.

Q: Oh, yes. Well, now as GSO the supervisor of GSO could you talk a little bit about working in that environment. Were local employees getting things done?

YOUNG: Getting things done was a dream compared to Conakry. You could actually do the job in a place like Nairobi at that time. The infrastructure was good. The government was stable. Systems were in place that had been put in by the British. They worked very nicely. The Kenyan civil servants were professional. We didn't hear of problems of corruption. We didn't have to bribe officials to get goods in and out of the country so it was the way it should have been. It worked very nicely. The job was a pleasure. I had a super staff of Kenyan employees and East Indians, not East Indians, but Asian Indians from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Goa. The Goans in the embassy were an incredible group of extremely talented, very well educated people.

Q: At that time, Goans were still under Portuguese rule?

YOUNG: It was part of India at that point. They were incredible employees. They all did very well. Now, they were there at a time when the situation for Asians in Uganda turned very bad. They became very frightened and they turned to us and asked if we could help them to leave and we managed to get many of them jobs at our embassy in England. We got a number of them jobs throughout our missions in Canada, in Vancouver, Ottawa, Toronto and many of them moved on. As they moved on we replaced them with Kenyan employees which was going to happen eventually in any case and that worked out very well.

Q: Did we have a subsidiary post in Mombassa?

YOUNG: We had a consulate in Mombassa at the time, but it was very quiet and sleepy, not very much happened there.

Q: Was this our port, I mean did we have much in the way of port calls and that sort of thing?

YOUNG: Yes, we did. In fact we were there when we received I think it was for the first time one of the U.S. aircraft carriers that came through.

Q: A whole city coming through.

YOUNG: They had not seen anything like it. Now, mind you, I have to put all of this in perspective. The aircraft carrier had come from the Arabian Gulf. Now, you have on these aircraft carriers a lot of young men full of energy shall we say and coming from the Arabian Gulf they were looking for a bit of amusement. So, Kenya and the Seychelles, let's put it that way were places where the kind of amusement they sought could be found.

Q: We're talking about females.

YOUNG: Well, I didn't want to get to that. That's a fact.

Q: There it is.

YOUNG: That's it. It was like they had died and gone to heaven and of course the economy in Mombassa welcomed them and did quite well during those visits. The aircraft carrier would not come into Mombassa, but it would anchor out and then bring 200 or 300 in at a time by boat and it worked out very nicely.

Q: When I was in Korea when we used to get aircraft carriers to come into Pusan and there would be buses loaded with young ladies, professional capacity _____ and I would assume there would be busloads going.

YOUNG: Exactly. That's what happened. We were always on the lookout for trouble and what have you, but we had very little trouble.

Q: I think the navy is used to this and it's something they have to deal with and it works.

YOUNG: Yes. We loved that assignment in Kenya. It was good. It was interesting. We loved Jomo Kenyatta, a fantastic man.

Q: Was he the president?

YOUNG: He was the president and he had charisma. You felt that you were in the presence of a truly great and mysterious and wonderful man and he was. He kept that country together. Everybody loved him. When we were there, the big question was well, what will happen when he will no longer be on the scene? All kinds of speculation as to who would replace him and how things would evolve as a result of that. When we left which was in 1974 he was still there and still doing quite well. Now, in '74 we had completed our assignment. Our children had grown up a little. Our son was then four years old. Our daughter was going on two years of age and I was looking around for an onward assignment.

I got a cable one day asking me if I would be interested in setting up the American Embassy in Papua New Guinea and I said yes. I was very excited by that prospect. This was at a time when Papua New Guinea was preparing for its independence. In preparation for their independence they had placed a number of junior government officials in British embassies around the world so that they would be the corps of a new Papua New Guinean diplomatic corps and one of these fellows was at the British Embassy in Kenya. We got a chance to meet him. There was also one at the Australian embassy in Kenya. We got a chance to meet him and we liked him very much. As it turned out there was a delegation passing through Nairobi and this delegation included a fellow who was likely to be the new head of Papua New Guinea. So we got a chance to meet these people and we hit it off with them very nicely. We looked forward to it and we got ourselves very excited by this. People gave us farewell parties. We presumptuously told them we were going to Papua New Guinea, mind you we hadn't received any orders and then two things happened.

It was at the end of the fiscal year and at this time in 1974 the government had run out of money so the State Department had no money for travel for onward assignment travel. I got a cable saying we've very sorry, but someone else was selected for this opportunity. I was heartbroken. We basically had to stay in place until they found another assignment for us. So, our friends jokingly said, we're not going to give another party for you. We've given all these parties for you. We're not having another one. We just cooled our heels and waited until something else came along. Then I got a cable asking me would you be interested in setting up the new American Embassy in Doha, Qatar. I said yes I would be. They said, we will be sending the first American ambassador there, and we need someone to set up the embassy. I said, sure I'd be glad to. Mind you I had no clue where Qatar was, but it was just the opportunity that was so exciting. Discussed it with my wife and we agreed that we would do it. That's what we did in 1974 and I will continue things next time around with that one.

Q: All right, good. Well, we'll pick it up in 1974 when you are off to Doha.

Q: Okay, today is the 29th of November, 2005 and we're back in 1974. Whither?

YOUNG: Following the oil embargo of 1973, the U.S. government decided that it needed fuller representation in the new countries of the Gulf, these countries that had been part of a Trucial state. We decided that we would move from basically a one person operation, I used to call it, the person who basically flew the flag and drank gin all day long to a full-fledged embassy.

Q: I go back to the late 1950s when I used to go from Dhahran to Qatar and to the Trucial states in Bahrain and do my consular work there and pick up tidbits and that was pretty much it. That covered Saudi Arabia.

YOUNG: The flow of funds that came from oil and the importance these states assumed following the oil embargo just changed the world completely. I agreed to this assignment and in the summer of 1974 I left my wife and two children in the States. My wife was left with our son who was four years old and our daughter was two years old and I took off for Doha. I couldn't take them with me because there wasn't any housing and it was my job to find such things. I was to be the administrative officer. I ended up being the administrative officer/DCM. Before that kind of nomenclature became common as it is today, but I was really in the vanguard of persons who perform that dual function. I arrived there in the summer. We did have a building that we had leased for an office. It was my job to furnish it and to fit it out so that it could function as an embassy. I got busy with the one national employee we had working for us and with the person who was assigned as the ambassador's secretary. We were like the three musketeers in going through that town and visiting all of the shops and buying desks and typewriters and chairs and refrigerators and things like that. Then finding residences where we could put the people who were coming in. We were all staying in hotels. Of course the national employee was on the local economy. He was an Indian fellow who still works for the embassy to this day. It's over 40 years now that he's worked for the mission.

We began to buy and buy in order to get things set up. We found houses that were suitable and we began to lease and furnish them. The Department had arranged for sets of furniture to be shipped via Beirut to the mission, but we had to get all of the other things to go with it. The basic living room, dining room sets were provided by the Department, but we had to buy the refrigerators, and the stoves, and the washing machines and dryers and all of those kinds of things to give people some semblance of normal life. We did that and we had no communications whatsoever. All we had was a small telex machine. The Department really didn't want to go the full route in providing all of the equipment we needed to function as a mission. There we were trying to set up a full-fledged mission, but yet we had no communications.

Q: Could you describe what Doha was like at that time? I'm surprised you were able to find houses.

YOUNG: Well, it didn't have very much. I often described it as just emerging out of the sand at that point. There weren't many things. There were some shops. Some nice houses were being built. There was the realization that good times were on the horizon. Entrepreneurs and merchants and real estate developers were all flooding the country to find opportunity and to make way for what was surely to be an influx of expatriates who were going to come in and help this country to develop and prosper.

Q: Who was building? I mean were these, I can't imagine that you'd find at that point much building expertise among the Qataris.

YOUNG: The Qataris. There was one Qatari engineer in the country. I mean a really trained engineer. There were small contractors and what have you.

There weren't many trained engineers and contractors in the city at that time, but there were a few. Some people had come in from the outside to do construction, particularly a lot of Lebanese builders. They had arranged partnerships with basically the Qataris providing the name and perhaps some of the capital and the Lebanese or Palestinian builder would take it from there. They built houses, they built office buildings, then also some American architects were invited in because the city had begun to work on a master plan for development. One of the big projects envisioned was development of a seafront area that was nothing but the sea then, but the idea was to fill this in with dredging and to build on it. A big American architect named William Pereira, the architect of the famous triangular building or the pyramid shaped building in San Francisco came. We worked with him and worked with the government of Qatar and he designed a famous hotel there, the Sheraton Hotel which is built like a pyramid. That was realized years later, bur the initial planning for that occurred during our time there. We located houses. As we furnished them people began to come in. A political officer came and an economic officer and a consular officer. The ambassador arrived.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

YOUNG: The ambassador was a fellow by the name of Robert Paganelli.

Q: I know Bob, he later was my DCM in Rome.

YOUNG: He arrived and we got him settled in a very nice house. It was owned by one of the few trained engineers in the country, a Qatari fellow who had been trained in the United States, had married an American woman and had returned to Qatar. That in itself was something exceptional at that time to have a Qatari married to an American woman. The government of Qatar had made very generous arrangements for people to be educated abroad. However, they did not particularly like the idea of their young men returning with a foreign bride. That caused that fellow some problems later on in limiting his access to government contracts and in his appointment to positions for which he was well qualified. Anyhow, things began to move there. We had this big problem as I mentioned with not being able to communicate with Washington and the rest of the world. We solved that problem initially by preparing reporting telegrams and operational messages on the regular telegram forms, those regular old green forms from years ago. We would do airgrams as well and we bundled them up and we would wait for someone going to Kuwait or going to Lebanon or going to Syria and then we'd send these along with them and then the mission on the other end would take them and then transmit them to Washington. Well, as you can imagine, this did not make for any kind of good current reporting because it wasn't timely by the time it got to Washington or by the time it got to whatever post it was going to. This was a great irritant and a great frustration. We would do messages for example and sometimes run down to the local hotel. If the message was unclassified then we would ask the local hotel if they could send it by a telex to Washington or to Beirut or something like that. That went on for a while. We kept badgering the Department to put in a communications system and sending us someone to operate it and we didn't get anywhere.

Finally, there was the attack on the embassy in Lebanon and that attack had a major, major impact on the evolution of our mission in Qatar, not only in Qatar, but in the Gulf. Some of the other countries, the four embassies that were established at that time were Bahrain, Oman, the Emirates and Qatar. Those were the four that were established at that time. This was a wake up call for the Department when the embassy was bombed in Beirut in '74. Ambassador Paganelli sent a really infuriate message to the Department. He said basically that if terrorists were after us, and we could not assume that we were not immune from this, that we would be very easy targets and we wouldn't even have the means to communicate with the Department to tell them that any of our people had been injured or killed. He put a few expletives in the message as well that got attention. As a result, another office in the mission decided that it would provide everything we needed for a full fledged communications operation and that office acted with alacrity and in no time at all a C141 arrived and brought everything we needed including the man who was assigned at the post to operate the equipment.

That's what saved us and once they got there and they could provide our communications, then the State Department said, well, we have to have some control over this as well. We can't have, the ambassador said, I don't give a damn. I want my messages in and out of here and I don't care who sees them now. If you can do better you send somebody out here to take care of the State side of it. State did then send someone out and sent the equipment out to have then basically a full fledged operation that satisfied us.

Q: Did you have any contact with my old post Dhahran or not?

YOUNG: Dhahran helped a little bit, you know, when we needed to get these messages to the quickest post we could in order to get them further transmitted on, we just took whatever options were open to us.

Q: Did you drive there?

YOUNG: Oh, no, there was no causeway at that point. Heavens no.

Q: This wasn't causeway, this would be going from Doha driving up to Dhahran.

YOUNG: That would have been a hell of a drive.

Q: I remember we had somebody come from Doha, but it was a sheik and he came, we're talking about the late '50s. He came with two burly guys who sat in the back of a Cadillac.

YOUNG: I see. No, we never drove. I mean that came later on. My wife was on one of the first trips from Doha to Dhahran and I'll never forget she went and then came back and told me what a spectacular experience it was. We got equipment. We were then a full-fledged embassy. We could operate independently. We had everything we needed. We even had the emergency generator and everything else to be able to sustain operations in the event of an emergency, so business was going along very nicely. The Qataris were coming to us in droves to find out how they could build a factory here, build a plant there and how they could get this American product in and get that American product in and it was exciting trying to make connections between the Qataris and American merchants to make these deals. Many of these deals worked. However, I must say we were very disappointed to find that in many of these proposals from the Qataris that were let's say in the neighborhood of $20, $30 or $40 million or something like that. We found that many of the American companies who could do the kind of work that was needed in any given project told us at that time thank you very much, but we're not interested. They said, we have basically two areas of interest in this region. Those two areas are Iran and Saudi Arabia. They would let these projects go and as they let those projects go, in came the French, the Japanese, the Koreans, the Germans and everyone else because we all opened up our missions in these places at the same time in 1974, '75 in that time frame. We watched these allies basically fill that vacuum that was left. I'm talking about American giants in communications and aviation and on and on would pass up these opportunities. Other countries would come in and say, yes, we'll take $2 million here, $5 million, $10 million and after some years they had a pretty solid footing in those countries.

Q: I have to say that part of my job was commercial officer. Again, we're going back to '58, '59 or so. It was the same damn thing, you know, it was absolutely ignored although there was money to be made. It would take a little time and at that point it was selling Parker pens, other things of that nature, not the big things, but this lack of initiative on the Americans' part.

YOUNG: Yes, I agree wholeheartedly. Well, we kept trying and trying. I would like to mention several things that were highlights of my time.

Q: You were there from when to when?

YOUNG: I was there from 1974 to 1977. We were there for three years and they were three wonderful years. A period that was very significant for me in my career. One thing that happened very shortly after I had sort of gotten settled was that we had hired a Foreign Service National employee, a Palestinian American, but we engaged him locally as the commercial assistant. He was terrific. He was just wonderful. He had lots of personality and a good talker, a real schmoozer. His father was the top advisor to the Emir of Bahrain. His sister ran the Qatari TV service. They were a Palestinian family very firmly ensconced in Qatar. They had a lot of influence and we enjoyed their company very much. They were very bright and very well educated and good folks.

Well, this FSN was doing very nice work for the mission and he had some difficulty with one of our American residents, a Palestinian, a Lebanese American. I don't remember the fellow's name now. He represented an American company there and he was a real difficult personality. Sometimes when you get two persons of the same ethnic group sometimes there are difficulties instead of understandings. This was a case where there were difficulties and the two personalities just didn't mesh. He thought that this fellow was too demanding and that he was rude and arrogant and what have you and he was. The fact is he was one of our citizens and we had an obligation to treat him with full respect and to provide him with full services offered by the mission. Anyhow, one day he came into the office and he spoke to the FSN and he and the FSN got into a confrontation. The FSN hauled off and socked him right in the nose. I mean cold cocked him right there. The fellow was absolutely furious. "I'm going to write to my congressman. I'll have your head" and on and on. He was just furious. The key to this is that the ambassador had gone away and the ambassador had made me the chargï¿½. I'll tell you about that story in a minute. We calmed the fellow down and then he left and then I called the FSN in and I said, "I'm sorry, but you're fired. I cannot have anyone who represents this mission slugging an American citizen. I cannot have that."

Q: As much as it is often deserved.

YOUNG: Believe me I think it was deserved in this particular case, but we couldn't have it. So, he said, "Well, you know, the guy asked for it" and on. I said, "He might have asked for it, but there is no justification for it and there's no way that I could accept this and there's no way that anyone would accept this." He left the embassy. I said, "Get your things and I'm sorry, but this is it." He left. I was scared because his father had such great influence and I knew the ambassador loved this guy as well, loved The FSN as well and loved The FSN's father as well, so I waited and waited and later on that evening a call came from the palace and the emir wanted to see me. I went out and I saw the emir and he asked me if I would reconsider and rehire The FSN. I told him that as much as I would like to and as much as we appreciated the great work that he had done for us, I could not in good conscience do that. It would not be acceptable; it's not acceptable to me personally. It wouldn't be acceptable to my colleagues and it wouldn't be acceptable to the folks back in Washington as well. He talked and he talked. I said, I'm very sorry. I cannot rescind what I have decided. He thanked me and then I left. The next day I called the ambassador in the States and I told him what I had done and I thought he would be furious with me for having fired the son of his really good contact at the palace, but he said, if that was your decision, that was your decision and I'll stand by you and he did. That was my first big major problem as chargï¿½. I had mentioned that I would tell you about my being chargï¿½.

Before the ambassador went away on this first trip he had observed the different officers in the embassy and we were not a large embassy at all. We were very small. We had a political officer, an economic officer, a consular officer and a secretary, two communicators and that was it and myself. He came to me one day, he says, "Johnny, I'm going away for" I don't know what the period was, a month or something like that and he says, "I want you to be chargï¿½." I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much, but there's no way that the Department will agree to an admin officer being chargï¿½. That doesn't happen." He said, "I know, but I think you can do it." I said, "Well, you have a political officer, you have an econ officer, you have consular. They're going to say you should appoint one of those as chargï¿½ and not me." He says, "This is my embassy, God dammit and I'll do what I want to." If you worked for Bob Paganelli, you know the language.

Q: Well, its interesting that Bob Paganelli and there was a time around '74 or so where they decided to reach down into.

YOUNG: Yes, he was one of them.

Q: He was an FSO-4 I think.

YOUNG: It happened to all four of them. It happened to the one who went to Oman, to Bahrain, to Qatar and the Emirates. All of them were FS-1's. Kissinger decided he would.

Q: Reach down and these were people who were doing this were normally they would have had a 10-year wait.

YOUNG: In fact when they were appointed, they were FS-2's. Later on they were on the promotion list.

Q: Yes, I think in the old days FS0-4's.

YOUNG: Right. So, anyhow, Paganelli was insistent that I be chargï¿½. I said, well, Mr. Ambassador I am not going to get into that battle with our staff and the Department. If you feel that strongly about it and you want to take that on, I said, I'll leave that with you. He says, no, I think you can do it and I like the way you do things. I like your judgment and that's what he did. Now, the political officer was Ryan Crocker who hasn't done badly either. He was just brilliant even in that early assignment. It was his second assignment in the Foreign Service and I was his boss at that time. That was Paganelli's decision and that's how I became chargï¿½. As I said for an admin officer that was extraordinary in that time. You know it might happen today, but at that time that was really something in 1974. He allowed me to be chargï¿½ during the entire three-year period that we were there, every time he went away. This provided an opportunity for me to demonstrate that there was perhaps something a little bit more than the usual that would be expected of an admin officer. It brought me to the attention of some other people in the Department. That's what happened.

Now, in terms of the work. The work was fabulous. I did everything. Everything. Economic work, consular work. It was the easiest consular work I've ever done in the Foreign Service because the government of Qatar provided full scholarships for anyone who wanted to study in the United States. The majority of their students who were going on to university either studied in the United States or they went to American University Beirut, but not that many of them went to AUB, the majority of them went to the United States. A few went to a couple of other places, but it was the United States and they had settled on this one college, on two colleges in the Michigan area. One was a college called Hope College and the other one was called I think Holland something, something Holland, but they had settled on these two schools. These students were not the greatest prospects, but they were bankrolled to the hilt. They were all from the ruling family, so they all got A1, A2 visas. They went to the States. We never had any problems with them. That's why I say it was the easiest consular work I ever had or have ever done and that was just really exciting.

I remember another exciting thing was trying to get the Qataris to buy an American airplane. At that time it was Lockheed 1011 and we succeeded in convincing them to buy some of those planes. Later on we realized that the Egyptian FSN who was helping us with that deal had had his hands deep in the kitty and that surfaced later on. That surfaced many years later, but it was as a result of what was going on in the Gulf at that time that legislation was passed, that made it illegal to get kickbacks and that sort of thing. At least something good came out of that. The deals just kept flowing and small ones and more small ones and it was just an exciting time. I loved it. One of the best assignments I think I've had.

Q: How did you and the rest of the embassy view the rule of the emir and the family? How did that work?

YOUNG: At that time, during the time I was there from '74 to '77 our goal was to keep these guys on our side and to keep the oil flowing. That was the bottom line. We didn't make any pitches about democracy. We didn't make pitches about human rights. I mean there weren't any human rights abuses because these guys really ruled with a fairly tight hand and we didn't concern ourselves with those kinds of issues. That wasn't the name of the game at that point. You have to keep in mind that we came as a result of a crisis in oil and we remained there to make sure that they stayed on our side and we didn't have a problem at that time with Iran, so that was not an issue. There was a great concern in the Gulf at that time about Iraq. The fear was that Saddam or Iraq anyhow would move on the Gulf states and so the Gulf states at that time had moved closer to Iran as a balancing power and that was the way they saw things at that time.

Q: Wasn't Qatar involved in a dispute over some islands?

YOUNG: They were in a dispute with Bahrain over the Hawar Islands. That dispute had been going on at that point for 30 some years and it continued and it was resolved as a matter of fact when I was in Bahrain, but that was a dispute that had been going on for 60 some years.

Q: How were relations with, they were the United Emirates at that time?

YOUNG: Right.

Q: How were relations with Qatar at that time?

YOUNG: They were excellent. Qatar had good relations with all of its former Gulf colleagues I should say or Gulf states, excellent relations.

Q: How about with Saudi Arabia? Did the Saudis?

YOUNG: The Saudis are a force in the region, you cannot deny that, but Qatar was unlike Bahrain or unlike Oman. It had enough oil of its own. They had just begun to realize that they had this enormous reserve of gas. Gas had not taken on the importance that it has had since that time and they were looking for ways to develop that gas as well. They had good relations with the Saudis and no problems there. They had some border disputes, mind you, but they weren't that bad.

Q: At that time you weren't looking towards Qatar and the Trucial states as being military bases or something like that?

YOUNG: Not at all, not at that time. No interest whatsoever at that time. Our base was in Bahrain.

Q: COMMIDEASTFOR (Commander, Mid-East forces).

YOUNG: COMMIDEASTFOR. That was the presence in the Gulf at that time and there was no talk of having anything anywhere else. Certainly not in Qatar. I don't know what talks were going on elsewhere, but I don't recall anything else. We were content with how things were. We did attempt to influence them in terms of the Palestinian situation. We didn't have the issue of terrorism that came on the horizon later on. Those kinds of problems had not surfaced. Qatar was basically such a new state that it hadn't really gotten its footings yet in terms of its membership and a number of international organizations so our multilateral relationship with them was rather limited as well. They were deeply involved in OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries). I remember they had one of the OPEC meetings there in Qatar while we were there and that was a big deal. A lot of attention on OPEC at that time and OPEC had more influence than it has today. Its influence has diminished quite a bit, but at that time it was quite a force to be reckoned with.

Q: Were we acting as a mentor or anything else to the Qatar government or as somebody international, like getting into the UN or others established a diplomatic corps or something like that?

YOUNG: No, that was basically a British undertaking at that point. They were part of the British arrangement in the region. It was Britain that took on that role. We didn't do that at all.

Q: Were they concerned about too many Iranians in the area?

YOUNG: Not at all.

Q: In Bahrain it was a great problem.

YOUNG: It was a problem in Bahrain, but only after 1979. Prior to 1979 there wasn't the problem.

Q: When I was there in the '50s there was concern that they were doing a lot of illegal Iranians working there.

YOUNG: That's true.

Q: That's when the Shah was making noises about its not the Arabian Gulf, it's the Persian Gulf versus Arabian Gulf.

YOUNG: But that wasn't the same as what occurred after '79 when the Ayatollah said, "Well, that's my island also." They made some attempts to extend their rule. Then the Bahrainis really turned on the Iranians in the country and including some of its own citizens who were in this category of stateless persons who were of Iranian ancestry, but who had never opted for Bahraini citizenship. Bahrain issued an ultimatum either you accept Bahraini citizenship or you can accept Iranian citizenship and go to Iran. Many of them didn't opt for either and they stayed and became stateless persons. As far as Qatar is concerned, during '74 to '77 when I was there, we were excellent friends with the Iranians. The Qataris also had superb relationships with them. As I mentioned earlier, they looked to Iran as a balancing power against the threat of an Iraq that might march down the Gulf. Things were good at that time.

Q: Had they started at that point to have a lot of South Koreans, Pakistanis and all coming in and doing the hard labor?

YOUNG: Oh, at that point the Indians had already come. The Pakistanis had already come. The Bangladeshis had come. We were there when the first six Filipinos arrived in Qatar, the first six. I remember it so well because one of our officers in the embassy who is presently DCM in Tokyo, Joe Donovan, dated one of them for a while. It was the first six. When I left Bahrain in 2001 there were 35,000 Filipinos in Qatar, 35,000.

Q: We're talking about a little sum of land.

YOUNG: That's it. I mean it's just incredible. So, the Koreans had not come yet, but they're there now, I mean they're all there. Filipinos, you name it, they're there and in numbers, in thousands.

Q: Well, then is there anything else we should talk about while you were there?

YOUNG: The emir was a fellow who was very quiet, somewhat aloof. We felt that he was basically directed by Mr. Fanoose and another Egyptian fellow who was one of his key advisors. There weren't many educated people in the country at all in terms of Qataris. There was one fellow who was a fantastic contact. He was the minister of information and a graduate of American University Beirut. To this day he remains an advisor to the former emir who was deposed by his son in a coup. You could count the number of Qatari university graduates literally on one hand. It was so few. So, they used their money to buy expertise, to buy knowledge and basically to buy the development that has made that country such a success.

Q: What was the ruling family's name?

YOUNG: The Al-Thani.

Q: Al-Thani?

YOUNG: Yes, the Al-Thani. The emir was Al Khalifa, but the family name was Al-Thani.

Q: What's the family name in Bahrain?

YOUNG: Al Khalifa.

Q: I was going to say was it the same?

YOUNG: No, different families. The emir of Qatar when we were there was Sheik Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani. In Bahrain you had Emir Isa ibn Salman al Khalifa. In Bahrain the majority of the population is Shia. It is the only place other than Iran in the Gulf with Shia majorities. The rest are all Sunni majorities.

Q: Did religion cause any problems there?

YOUNG: Not in Qatar.

Q: You didn't have sort of the Wahhabi type that was?

YOUNG: No, none of that. Extremism and what have you in religion was not an issue there. In Qatar you couldn't openly drink alcohol. For example, when we were in the hotel we couldn't get a drink with a meal, but we could go up to room 502 in the local hotel, knock on the door and say, hey, Bernie sent me or something and go inside and have a drink and then go down and have a meal. There were provisions for diplomats to buy drinks to have in their homes and what have you, so that was it. Women couldn't drive. It was a very restrictive society. It wasn't as strict let's say as Saudi, but it was still a restrictive society, not a lot of mixing, very few, very little mixing and that sort of thing.

Q: Women played no role?

YOUNG: None.

Q: Until later.

YOUNG: That came later on. I can't think of a single woman who was in any responsible position in government. There were one or two out at the university. The woman that I mentioned who ran the television service, she was a Palestinian who was basically a national, a resident alien and there were a few other Palestinian women who were doctors. There were lots of Egyptian women teachers, but they weren't Qatari women in those positions.

Q: Then you left there in '77. Whither?

YOUNG: I want to tell about a little incident. In November of 1974 I found a house, I got it furnished, I told my wife the time has arrived. We will meet in Beirut and then we will all travel back to Qatar together. We were very busy the day before my departure preparing the telegrams and messages that we wanted to get out to the rest of the world so I could take them as a non-pro courier and dump them in the embassy in Beirut and they would be sent out. We worked night and day, a couple days ahead of my visit to get these ready. The day before my departure the ambassador was ill. We went over to his home, the secretary and myself, and he was in his bathrobe and I was smoking at the time. I went in and I sat down, I was smoking my cigarette. He knew that I smoked. He said to me in the rudest way possible, he said, "Put that cigarette out. It stinks and it's making me sick." I said, "Excuse me, I didn't know that was the case." I put it out and I can tell you it was like a sheet of ice that descended on me. I was so stunned. I had worked so hard all hours of the night and day and then all of that hellish heat of the Gulf to make this guy look good as the ambassador to set up that functioning mission for him. I was just deeply, deeply wounded to be treated like that in his residence. He looked at all of the telegrams, made corrections. That meant we had to go back to the embassy, make the corrections and then return for a final review. We got outside and we went to the embassy and we made all the corrections and I told the ambassador's secretary, Libby Cooper, I said, "Libby, I cannot believe what he just did to me. I can't tell you how hurt I am by this." She said, "Oh, don't worry about it, its going to be okay." I said, "I can't forget it. My family is going to meet me in Lebanon tomorrow and I'm going to come back here and I'm going to have to work with this?" She did all of the corrections because she was doing all the typing and we bundled up the whole package and we went back to the residence. When we got to the residence I said to her, I said, "You take them inside, I'm not going to set foot in that house again as long as I'm here." She says, "Oh, no, you're kidding." I said, "No, I'm not going in." She went inside and she must have told the ambassador that I wasn't coming in. I had said, "You can tell him that if I leave tomorrow I may never come back. I'm going to get my family and I may turn around and just go back to the United States. I just feel so badly about what has happened." She went inside and then later on he came outside in his bathrobe. He said, "Come inside." I said, "No, I'm not coming inside." He said, "Come on inside." I said, "No, I'm not." We went back and forth and back and forth. Finally I went inside and I sat there and I sulked the entire time and had absolutely nothing to say to him, nothing to say to his wife and he apologized. He said, I'm sorry and what have you. I heard his wife tell him, Robert that was the rudest thing I've ever seen you do.

Q: Donna.

YOUNG: Donna, yes. Anyhow, I left and I said goodbye and that was it. When I left the next morning I went on to Lebanon and I arrived at the hotel and went into the room and there awaiting me in the room was a big bouquet of flowers and a big bottle of champagne from Bob with a note that he was sorry and wishing me the best with my family. I returned and we got along fine. I thought it was amazing that despite our ups and downs he believed in me and I'll always give him credit for that. He gave me full credit for the work that I did for him because he could be a very difficult customer. We had a swimming pool for example at the residence that we couldn't get to work properly. We tried everything under the sun and he wanted that pool to work properly, and we did too, because it was going to be a community pool. He would call me on weekends and he'd say, "Didn't I tell you to do so and so?" I would say, "Yes." "Get over here right away." I'd go over to the residence or I'd go to the embassy, whatever. I remember one time he did this and it was sort of like Martin Luther with the so many theses nailed to the door. I got to the embassy, there was Paganelli's note nailed to the door. I told you to do so and so. He would come through that embassy sometimes cussing like a mad man. Then he would calm down and then he'd come back and say, "I'm sorry. I really didn't mean that." And on and on. I remember once he told me, he said, "You know, you have a very restraining influence on my language." Because he could really let loose with a few zingers.

Q: Were there constraints on your wife?

YOUNG: There were no constraints on what a foreign woman could do. Foreign women could drive, they could move around, no problem and she drove all over the place in our 1972 Peugeot without air conditioning and she had no problems at all. She'd become very active in a number of groups there. Although she couldn't do the kind of volunteer and charity work that is customary in many foreign situations. Nevertheless she had a good group of friends. She learned how to play bridge and how to do different kinds of arts and crafts. She taught women English at the university. We had a very good and full life and then raising two small children was also a great challenge and managing a house also.

We had an inspection headed by Maurice Dean and Ken Rogers. This story shows how astute inspectors can be. They've done this kind of work a long time and they can see things that perhaps the rest of us can't or think we can cover up. I met them at the airport. I brought them to the embassy. I had everything looking just perfect. They're looking around and they say oh, very nice. Then the night of their arrival, we had I think it was a camel roast for them. One of our junior officers, a fellow by the name of Tom Wukitsch decided he would roast a camel for them. We said, oh, Tom, please don't roast a camel. You know, roast a cow or something. Tom said, no, I'm going to do this camel and he did the camel and it all worked out very well. That night they said to us, "Now, things are too perfect at this post. Tell us what the problems are." We said, "Well, there are no problems, everything is wonderful." They said, "No, something is wrong here." Nothing was revealed that night. Then the night of the dinner at our home when we had all had I think a cognac or two too much tongues loosened and they asked the wives as a matter of fact, what's wrong here? Then the wives said, well, you know, the ambassador picks on our husbands too much and all that. Those kinds of things came out. That was to say that the inspectors smelled a rat despite all of our cosmetic arrangements to make things perfect. Not that there were grave issues that needed correction by the ambassador, but they needed that information in order to sit down with him to say, look, you're running a great mission here, lighten up a little bit. That was basically the bottom line. My career counselor at that time was Mary Ryan. I remember we were going back and forth and she said to me, "I assure you before I leave this job I'm going to get you a good onward assignment. You deserve it after being in that place for three years." Because at that time Qatar had a reputation of being not a very nice place. There was nothing there. It was hot as hell and it was just considered a real hardship. It was and we were getting 25% hardship differential and we deserved it. She worked on various possibilities for me and she finally nailed down Bridgetown, Barbados as my reward, a three-year assignment there. So we went to Bridgetown. The ambassador at that time was Frank Ortiz and the deputy chief of mission was John Eddy.

We arrived in the summer. We moved immediately into a hotel, the Southern Palms Hotel located right on the beach, I mean a holiday setting if ever there was one. Our children were seven and five. They thought they had died and gone to heaven. When it got time for us to move into a regular house they said, what for? They said, this is just heaven. What are we going to move into a regular house for? They swam everyday; they were on the beach everyday. They just loved it and we also loved it, but it was no fun living in a hotel for over three months. We found a house. We rented it. It was the first posting we had been to where the government had not provided furniture, so we had to buy our own furniture. At that time we were able to buy furniture under the government contract. My wife and I scraped the money together and we bought a three bedroom set of Drexel furniture under the government contract and had it shipped to Barbados. We furnished our house with it and we had a very lovely home, up on the top of a hill overlooking the ocean. It was wonderful.

Q: You were in Barbados from '77 to when?

YOUNG: '77 to '79.

Q: Frank Ortiz, its interesting that Frank Ortiz was a regular Foreign Service Officer, was ambassador there because that's the sort of place they usually toss to some political appointee.

YOUNG: They had. In fact Frank was sent to clean up the mess.

Q: Free political ambassadors and then you send a professional to clean it up.

YOUNG: We had an ambassador there who was a disgrace. He was a mess. An absolute mess. His reputation was that he was in every hole and alley and corner of Barbados and that can be a good thing dependent on how its done, but this was not in the most flattering way shall we say. He had gotten into fights with people in the embassy. Shortly before we arrived there he had locked the political officer out of the embassy. He had gotten rid of a couple of officers. He had made some changes to the residence that made parts of it look like it was rented out by the hour and things like that. He had painted every wall in the embassy sort of like sea blue. It was just unbelievable.

Q: What was his background?

YOUNG: Well, he had been an educator and a person involved in development work and what have you. He was a black Republican and that was his reward. Barbados. So, Frank was sent to clean up the mess because the mission was demoralized, unhappy, the ambassador had earned a very bad reputation in the country and the Department wanted a major improvement in that situation so they sent Frank and he made a difference. He was a wonderful ambassador. He did a great job, established excellent rapport with the Bajans they're called.

Q: What are they called?

YOUNG: Bajans, Barbadians are called Bajans.

Q: B-E-?

YOUNG: Bajans. B-A-J-A-N-S. Bajan. Excellent relationship. At that time Barbados was, and I think still is, a symbol of great stability in the Caribbean region. It is the oldest democracy, really a true practicing democracy in the region. It was a symbol that we wanted to use in expanding this kind of stability and success to other countries in the region as well, particularly in Trinidad. Jamaica was going to hell in a handbasket at that time and needed every example it could possibly get. I found it a very nice place, wonderful people, but given the breadth of work that I had carried out in Qatar, I found it dull, the work was not interesting.

Q: You were the administrative officer.

YOUNG: I was just the administrative officer there and I didn't find it that satisfying. After a short time I decided that three years of that would just not be my cup of tea and I asked that my assignment be curtailed to two years which it was. Now, after the curtailment, things began to become a little bit more exciting in the region. I was asked to travel to a number of the islands that were talking about independence to look over the situation in order to prepare for American delegations that would attend the independence celebration of these different countries. I traveled to Saint Lucia, Dominica, and Antigua to find out what they had in the way of hotels and restaurants and this and that and talked to the leaders of the countries to get a sense of where things were going and that was exciting. Things were beginning to happen. It made the assignment more interesting. Then we had a couple of other things that happened there that were fascinating.

There was a coup on the island of Grenada. There was a U.S. medical school there. Our concerns of course were for all American citizens on that island in the face of a coup, but we were particularly concerned about the students who were attending the medical school there. The ambassador wanted to know how we could get some information on what was going on. I had met a young man and his wife earlier when they were visiting Barbados. The woman had been a secretary in the embassy in Barbados and she subsequently married. The fellow she married had entered the Foreign Service. They were passing through when I met them on the way to his first assignment, which was to Caracas. I knew that he was from Grenada. I said to Ambassador Ortiz, "You know we have a fellow in our embassy in Caracas named Roland Bullen. You should contact the ambassador there and see if he would release Roland and allow him to travel to Grenada and then he could get information and send it to us." He did that and it was a great success. Not only was Roland able to get into Grenada and get the information, it turned out his brother was appointed a minister in the New Jewel movement government.

Q: Was that new jewel.

YOUNG: The New Jewel movement government.

Q: Very kooky.

YOUNG: So, that's what happened. That was really a great thing and that worked out very well. Roland has subsequently of course gone on to bigger and better things. He's now our ambassador in Guyana. One other remarkable event was a volcanic eruption on the island of Saint Vincent. One night my wife and I were coming back from a function and we said, my God, we can't believe it is snowing on the island of Barbados because it looked just like snow. I mean we saw all this white stuff coming down and thought, my God, this is very unusual. Then the report came out that this volcano had erupted on the island of Saint Vincent. Again we had concerns about the U.S. citizens there and an evacuation.

The first of the countries to become independent was Dominica, I'll never forget because I remember Pat Kennedy came out to help with the U.S. delegation. He accompanied the U.S. delegation on that trip. That was interesting because it was the first time I had ever attended an independence celebration. It was quite moving. At midnight when the British flag was lowered and the new flag of Dominica was raised, they played God Save the Queen. A member of the American delegation gave me a little nudge and said, "You know, why are they playing My Country This of Thee?" I had to explain to him what that was all about.

We left Barbados in the summer of 1979. Before going I went to the independence celebration of Saint Lucia and again received the American delegation and supported them throughout that exercise and again attended that celebration. That was memorable because Princess Margaret was the representative from the British government. These little children had rehearsed all day long for days for the presentation they were going to make when Princess Margaret made her appearance. We waited and waited and waited and those kids were in the sun and they waited and waited and she never showed up. I thought it was just absolutely awful. I thought it was just terrible. She never showed up for that. Then they continued on with the ceremony. That was it. That was indicative of the kind of person that she was. On various events, even when she came to Dominica, you saw the same thing.

Q: She was very much sort of the indulgent aloof person. She didn't see any sense of duty.

YOUNG: Not at all. I saw her actually in Dominica where she was supposed to officiate. In Saint Lucia it was Princess Alexandra who came out and it was like night and day. I remember we made the comparison and we said, my God, this is a pro in Princess Alexandra.

Q: Did you note while you were in Barbados and other places, I guess in Jamaica it was more pronounced, but was there a racial element taking over, was there a sort of a white colonialist group that was being displaced?

YOUNG: No, not in Barbados. In Barbados there was a long-standing community of white Barbadians. They were not all well off by any means. In fact they were called red legs and some of them were very poor. They were beginning to find their way off the island through immigration to England to the United States and to other places. There was a community of them there. They were well entrenched. Some of them had good businesses. Some of them were also professionals, doctors. They were not the overwhelming element in terms of their influence in the country. They were important, they were there, they had a history there, but no, we didn't run into great racial problems there. The other thing I might add is we didn't run into some of the problems that you find today in Barbados. AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) didn't exist.

Q: The disease.

YOUNG: The disease, yes, it didn't exist at that time. Or crime. We had minor break-ins now and then, no kind of assaults, no murders, that sort of thing. It wasn't a high crime wave. It was, however, beginning to be a transshipment point for narcotics. We were running into an increasing number of cases involving transshipments from further down in Latin America or through other points in the Caribbean using Barbados as a transshipment point. I remember we had one case involving a very well known family who had come through and someone had sent a box of dolls to this family. I don't know if it was in Canada or the United States. This package was addressed to the maid at one of their estates somewhere and the police knew what was in it and when the maid went to get it they nabbed her. Then revealed that inside the dolls there was marijuana or whatever the drug was. They were able to establish really that the maid had absolutely nothing to do with it. It was somebody else's. But I mean that kind of thing was beginning to happen. Now it's a major concern to us. As a matter of fact I think we even have DEA people assigned to the mission in Barbados.

Q: Also in places that had the cruise ship industry sort of started there or was there much of that at the time?

YOUNG: The cruise ships were coming. You know Barbados has some incredible hotels, I mean unbelievable hotels and golf courses and a wonderful stretch of residences for the very well to do. Frank Sinatra and Claudette Colbert and so on. They'd have their beach homes there. Princess Margaret, Oliver Messel, the famous set designer had his spectacular house there. So, many very well known Americans had just gorgeous places there. They were lovely and they still have them and even more have been built. Sandy Lane Hotel, one of the top hotels of the world, is still there. It's gotten bigger and better, way beyond my means.

One thing we liked was that on Sundays we could go to mass and then after mass we'd select a hotel and go to the beach. Each Sunday it was a different hotel and it was a lot of fun. You know, only so much of that and you get tired of it.

Q: Oh, yes, well, then after this time in paradise, whither?

YOUNG: Well, I had cut back the tour, and I was in Washington for a conference and I went to see my career counselor, Mary Ryan. As I was leaving the office she said to me, "What are you going to do when you leave Barbados?" I said, "I don't know, I don't have anything in mind." She said, "You know what I would really like? I'd like you to replace me as a career counselor for administrative personnel in the bureau of personnel." I said, "Gee that would be terrific." She said, "We may have a problem though with timing. I'll keep in touch with you and I'll let you know." I got a call from her one day and she said, "Things are looking a lot better. My supervisor, Bill Jones, is going to retire. He's decided that he would retire and he's asked me to replace him and I'd like you to replace me. That's how it worked out. We still have some finessing to do to see if it will work because of the timing and I would be moving in right away behind him and we're not sure we can wait that long for you to come in and that sort of thing." I said okay, "I'll have to leave it in your goods hands." Sometime later she called and said, "Johnny, it's a done deal. You're going to replace me and I replace Bill." She was the chief of assignments for administrative personnel and I was her deputy. That occurred in the summer of 1979 and that was the beginning of a very difficult year for us from a personal perspective.

Q: This was '78. You were there for how long?

YOUNG: In Washington?

Q: Yes.

YOUNG: I was in Washington for a total of four years, but '79 was when I made the transfer from Barbados to Washington, D.C.

Q: What was the difficulty?

YOUNG: What was the difficulty? There were many. We had purchased a house in 1974 before we went to Qatar and we had rented it out. When we returned to Washington the house was in dreadful shape, not that it was a great house to begin with, but it was a small house in a great neighborhood. We had this three bedroom, one and a half bath, no air conditioning, tiny kitchen home in Chevy Chase, Maryland on Leland Street. A great street. A great neighborhood.

Q: I know Leland Street.

YOUNG: It was a house that when we bought it frankly I couldn't have afforded it because we bought it in 1974. My salary was $17,500 a year and yet we bought a house for $69,000. That was outrageous, but it was possible because the Realtors liked us very much and said you're a nice young couple and we want to help you out so we got all kinds of balloons and all kinds of things like that. We went back to this house. The tenants had been a group of lawyers at one point and a group of nurses at another point. They didn't do justice to the house, not that it was a great house to begin with. We were in a state of shock when my wife and I walked in and saw it. That was one problem. The other problem was our kids had never attended school in the United States. We arrived in the summer. We thought that that would be a good opportunity for them to make friends and what have you. Little did we know everybody in Chevy Chase sends their kids away to camp in the summer. There we were with our kids and our children had nobody to play with because there was nobody around. We did meet one family down the street and we became very friendly with them. I didn't have any money. We didn't have any money. My wife didn't want to work. She said, "I'm not going to work until I get my family settled." I thought that money was more important than getting the family settled. I didn't know anything about the job that I was going into. I didn't know what it meant to be a career counselor. It was all of these factors. I began to do the job and I didn't know that the job really had such a heavy toll on you. When you think about having to offer advice and counsel to people on their careers and what this means to them and to their families it's an enormous responsibility and maybe I took it too seriously, but it began to weigh on me. I began to worry about all kinds of things. As I said we had this house we wanted to fix up and make it look nice and we didn't have any money. My wife didn't want to work and the kids were finally getting settled in a new school. I said to myself, my God, what if I drop dead, what would happen to them? I called the insurance company and said I need to take out some additional insurance. They said okay, fine, we'll be glad to sell you some insurance. So, they sent a representative out and we filled out the application and then he said to me, he said, "Oh your blood pressure is a little bit high." I said, "Well, you know." He said, "I'll wait a few minutes and I'll take it again. During the course of that evening he took it about five or six times and each time it was high. He thought that after a few minutes I'd calm down and it would go down, but it never did. He said, "Well, I'll come back next week and I'll take it again next week." He came the next week and took it and the same thing again, high. He said, "Well, I'll come back next week." He came back again and it was high. That's when I found out that I had high blood pressure. Mind you I had had my physical exam before I left Barbados and I was in perfectly good health, no problem at all which proved to me that stress can indeed bring on these problems and once they're there, once they're manifest in you you have to deal with them. Then I began taking medication to control the high blood pressure.

After a year, my wife did begin to work and we were settled in our house. We had painted, we had fixed it up and it was a cute little house, as small as it was, I remember my wife used to say, my God I'm going to have to lose weight to get into this kitchen because the kitchen was so tiny. We never got air conditioning. We were happy, we were very happy. The kids were doing well in school and I completed two years as a career development and assignments officer. I had gotten promoted out of Barbados and so things were really looking up very nicely.

In 1981 I was looking for a good assignment and I bid for different ones and then I had a couple of interviews. One was with the office of the inspector general for the job of executive director of the office of the inspector general. At that time the inspector general was a fellow named Brewer. They liked me and I got the job. I became the executive director of the office of the inspector general for two years from 1981 to '83.

Q: I'd like to go back to while you were here as a management officer. How did this system work? I mean in the first place you had essentially a stable of administrative officers?

YOUNG: Oh, my stable consisted of not just administrative officers, but general service officers. We had a separate office for security officers and communicators and for secretaries. Primarily mine was building and maintenance people, general services officers, admin officers, those types. I had I forgot how many hundreds and Mary Ryan had the other hundreds. She took them from FS, she had FS-1's and 2's and I had the 3's and 4's.

Q: Well could you work on projecting and working with your group to have a good both development and moving up? I mean was there a promotion and professional ladder to work with?

YOUNG: Oh, there was. Our job was to say to them if you want to achieve this level in the Service and what have you, these are some of the things you need to do and you need to do them well. They had to make those decisions for themselves that they wanted to go that route or not. We provided them with advice and counsel on how to get those assignments that would help them to advance in the system and help them to develop their careers.

Q: When you came in when they had this, when they were really trying to develop professional administrative officers in a special program, by the time you came in there was there something or was it sort of a catch as catch can system as far as recruiting and bringing people. In other words, what did you think of sort of the professional qualities in people?

YOUNG: Well, the people coming in as administrative officers were very talented and well trained. They all had excellent credentials. The goal was to bring them in to do this kind of work and to bring them in trained. They came in either directly from university or from jobs in the private sector.

Q: Was there a problem I come out of consular work which is somewhat the same thing of you might say social distinction or professional distinction between administrative and consular on your part between that and political and economic and all that, was that almost a class distinction?

YOUNG: Oh, yes, it was a big thing for us. We could get an officer assigned as a DCM or as a political officer or as an economic officer. It didn't happen that often, but it was beginning to happen. That's why when I was serving in Qatar that this was such an extraordinary thing for me to be able to serve as de facto DCM and then serve as chargï¿½. So, no, that was still there. There was no question that if you were a political officer or an economic officer, I mean there was a definite pecking order and it was there and our job was to try and make opportunities for people to break through that and we did.

Q: Did you find that on the administrative side the political and economic particularly political, there would be a tendency to if somebody got into ARA or American republics or Asia and Europe especially, if they knew people, once they knew them they would keep them there and did you find that you had problems of getting somebody slogging away in Africa and give them a chance to try something in Europe or something?

YOUNG: It was difficult and I think it is still difficult frankly. It was difficult, but we tried to encourage people to make that effort to break out so that they became known in more than one bureau. Sometimes it meant taking jobs that were not the most desirable, but it allowed you to establish a reputation in that bureau and you could then use that to move on. I was able to get into three different bureaus.

Q: Well, did you find, did you have problems with the European bureau?

YOUNG: Oh, yes, definitely. It remains the most exclusive of the clubs in our Service other than I would say the Arabic club. That has at its core this language and culture that binds its members together. That's a tough one to get into because you need certain kinds of requirements to be a member.

Q: The European one.

YOUNG: It was the old boys' network and not just by specialty, but it was by gender as well and certainly by race and ethnic group, no question about it. It's still the case.

Q: How about I would think the administrative side would women would particularly in the time you're dealing with either on the personnel side or budget and fiscal.

YOUNG: You had some of that, but at the same time you had women generalists as well, but not that many. Mary Ryan was a case in point where she was a generalist, but there weren't too many like her.

Q: Today is the 5th of December, 2005. Johnny, you wanted to put something in about your?

YOUNG: Yes, I feel I've neglected my family in what I've said so far. They have been key to my survival and my well being and my success - particularly my wife. She has forsaken her own interests and career aspirations in order to follow me around the world to these different posts. She set up house for us and served the U.S. government free of charge, representing our government and supporting our government in so many ways in her charitable work, humanitarian work, her outreach to the community. She's been just absolutely extraordinary. I give great credit to my children as well for the moves back and forth to different countries, the break up of their friendships and what have you all to be with their mother and father who are off on this adventure and they quietly supported us and we're really very grateful for that. They, too, contributed to my successes. Just no doubts about it.

Q: I have three kids and my kids came out well with the usual problems particularly coming back to the United States is usually the hardest thing because they find themselves with people who have already been to school together.

YOUNG: That's true.

Q: But for others sometimes it doesn't, but I take it, it worked very well.

YOUNG: It did work very well. Our kids have not shown any interest in following in my footsteps in joining the Foreign Service, but they love to travel. That's in their blood and I think it will always be there. They're particularly culturally sensitive people. If you throw them in a room of strangers, they'll seek out the foreigners in a minute and strike up rapport with them. I've seen it happen over and over again. They gained something special there and they acknowledge it. They have no regrets whatsoever for the experience that they had in accompanying us on these different assignments. They felt it was really an education in itself.

Q: Well, another point is and I don't know how it is today because there's change, I doubt if its changed that much, but the spouse, usually the wife, is so important as you move from post to post, setting up a house, entertaining and entertaining in a business like sense, like your contacts which can't be done by fax or telephone. I mean its getting to know the people, making a home for the children and making acquaintances. So often it's the wife who can say, you know I heard that such and such is happening.

YOUNG: Yes, oh yes, absolutely.

Q: Which is something that the political, economic and other officers haven't heard because the wives are usually more clued in than the men who were stuck in the office.

YOUNG: Exactly, oh yes. That's why I say they contribute to your success in so many ways. For example I had a wife who is an outwardly looking person. She has that kind of personality. People just love her and they gravitate to her and they also provide her with information because they like her. She wins the confidence of people very easily and they do share things with her and some of that on occasion has been very useful to me in my work. She has been like an officer in the embassy in terms of her outreach in the community, in her charitable work and her work with the American community and also in various organizations in the foreign community as well. She's elevated in these positions which she's looked at as a U.S. government official. She's looked at as someone who represents the United States and she does it all for nothing. She has done it all for nothing and frankly with no thanks from the U.S. government. At the end of it all, you would think that someone would say, well done Mrs. So and So. Here's a form of recognition for you for all that you have put in for the U.S. government free of charge, but that's not given at all. Nothing. It's all for the love of the spouse and I must acknowledge that.

Q: Well, let's talk a bit about your time in the inspector general's office. You were there from when to when?

YOUNG: I was there from 1981 to 1983. I had completed my work as the deputy to Mary Ryan in career assignments for administrative personnel and it was time to move on. I had looked around the Department for an appropriate level position, something that would give me some visibility and something that would really be good for me in terms of career development as well. So, I looked at post management jobs and various things and then I zeroed in on this position as executive director to the office of the inspector general. It wasn't a senior executive director position, but let's face it, title does mean something sometimes and executive director looks good on the old PAR as we used to call it. I applied, I went up and I interviewed for the job. At the time the inspector general was moving on and a new one, Robert Brown, was coming onboard. The deputies at that time were Frank Reddy and Dick Fox. I interviewed with them and they interviewed other candidates and some weeks later I got word that they were interested in me and I was eventually assigned there. Before going to that assignment, however, I went on a brief stint with the board of examiners and I did some initial training and then went out for several weeks to give the Foreign Service exam and we went to New York, we went to Boston and we went to Chicago. That was quite a wonderful experience.

Q: What was your impression of the candidates?

YOUNG: The candidates were excellent. We didn't pass very many I must say. It was just as tough then as it is now, but I was impressed with the candidates. The one candidate that impressed us the most was a young man, well, young, he was in his mid '30s and he had been a postman. He didn't have a college degree. He didn't have a degree, was working as a postman and was absolutely superb and we passed him. I don't know if he ever came into the Service or not, but that stuck in my mind and I'll never forget it because it demonstrated that you can really accumulate quite a bit of knowledge and information and have a really good understanding of the world if you apply yourself and you don't necessarily have to go to school to get that in a formal way. This man had done it on his own and it was really remarkable, very impressive.

Q: Well, then you were off, while you were doing this did you go on inspections at all?

YOUNG: I didn't go on any inspections at all. I would get sort of virtual inspections. The inspectors would come back and they would debrief us on their inspections. I thought that was just a fantastic experience because we would sit around and listen to these teams debrief the IG and his deputies on their work and we were able to get a very good sense of what was good and what was bad and who was good and who was bad and I found that very helpful. It was like a textbook exercise. It was quite helpful.

Q: Did you see any areas where the inspectors were coming back and saying, we've really got a problem here. I mean I'm talking about not necessarily the post, but in general.

YOUNG: Oh, yes. There were many times when they would come back and they would say, well, we have a broader systemic problem that we saw in this post, that post and that post and we need to look at that from a systemic point of view. They did that quite often, but more often than not it would be post specific. Here are the problems we're having at this post and I'll get to one in a moment that affected me personally, but that's in a little bit.

Q: Does that come up during the time you were with them?

YOUNG: Yes, my job when I was there as the director general was focused on basically three areas. Finances, money, getting money for the office of the inspector general. It was a time when the office was expanding and we needed more money. We needed more personnel. It was also a time when changes in legislation was being proposed to move from a career inspector general to a non-career inspector general. That was in the works as well. I had responsibility for personnel. I had responsibility for bringing into the inspection corps all these senior officers, people who had been ambassador more than once, but on several occasions people who had the title of career minister and what have you. I would establish contact with them. I would interview them. I would then prepare a sheet that I had ginned up where I could provide the inspector general with a summary of basically how I saw that person talking about their experience, education, where they'd been, this, that that sort of thing and make a recommendation to him. I must say I had a pretty good record and the IG, if I made the recommendation, he would go for it. I was responsible for example for bringing Mary Ryan into the inspection corps and that worked out very nicely. I'm just using that as one example. I brought in a number of ambassadors as well who were team leaders and that worked very nicely.

I remember one incident of an officer that I had worked with in Kenya. We were junior officers together and he was really moving ahead very rapidly leaving the rest of us in the dust and he was a very difficult personality. He called me one day from a Caribbean post where he was the counselor for economic affairs and he says, "Oh, I want to be an inspector." I told him, "Well, that's very nice, but you know we were junior officers together back in Kenya and things were not too good during that time." He says, "Well, that's true, I was difficult. I've grown up a lot and matured and I still don't suffer fools gladly, but I've learned a lot." I said, "Well, you know if I recommend you to the IG and he takes you its my reputation that's on the line." He says, "I understand that, but I assure you you won't regret this" and on and on. I accepted his word. I might as well be honest and give you his name. His name was Tom Forbord. I said, "Okay, Tom, I will recommend you to the IG." I did and the IG took him. He came onboard several months later. Now, Tom is or was probably one of the smartest international economists in the Service at the time. He was absolutely brilliant, but as brilliant as he was he was difficult and abrasive. Anyhow, he came in, started working with the other members of the office and he was there just a couple of months when a delegation of secretaries came to me and asked me, "Who brought this man into this office?" I said, "I did." They said, "Well, you better get him out of here because he's driving us crazy." I said, "Well, I'm sorry about that, but there isn't anything I can do about that now." I just mention that to say that I did go out on a limb, I brought this guy in and he did good work for the office, there's no question about that, but he created difficulties in his interpersonal relations with the other members of the teams.

Q: I think experience shows people really, with interpersonal problems.

YOUNG: They don't change. It's like a leopard changing its spots.

Q: I mean they may try.

YOUNG: Later on, when I was a minister counselor and the director of CDA I had the same problems again in placing that officer. He too at that point had reached the rank of minister counselor, but was still a difficult person to place. Some things really don't change, but I really did like that assignment in the inspector general's office. As I mentioned earlier I was promoted to FS-1 out of that position. I had a good staff. I had a budget person and a personnel person and a couple other people in the office. They were all excellent people and we also did something there that was very interesting and had an impact on the Service. We were bringing in and I sat on the examining team that brought these people in. We were bringing in what we called at the time audit qualified inspectors. These were inspectors who had training in finance and auditing and who could give a very expert, close scrutiny of the financial operations at a post. That worked out very well. Some of these audit-qualified inspectors went on to much bigger and better things in the Department and in the Service. One of them is now the deputy assistant secretary for personnel, Linda Tagliatella in the director general's office. She was one of them. I'm just using her as an example and she's performed just absolutely beautifully. I could name a number of other ones who went on to become admin counselors, etc. Yes, go ahead.

Q: Were you sort of mentally making a list of what you were doing on what you were, you know, if I ever run a mission or something like that, I will do this, I won't do that, seeing the problems, did this help?

YOUNG: No, I never thought I was going to become an ambassador. I was making notes of what was good and what was bad based on these debriefs that we would get from the inspectors, but I never made mental note in terms of well, if I became an ambassador I'd do this and that. No, never entered my mind. I made notes in terms of what a good admin counselor would do. I did that because that was my goal to be the best admin counselor that I could. That was how I made the notes in my mind. I learned a lot from that.

Anyhow, I was getting toward the end of that assignment and it was time once again to bid. That ugly monster of bidding had reared its head and it was time to deal with it once again. I began to look around for a position overseas. I had established very good relationships as a result of this executive director position. I got to know all of the other executive directors. I got to know all of the executive directors in the geographic bureaus and the functional bureaus and they were all very supportive. I narrowed down my list to two key jobs. One was admin counselor in Rabat in Morocco and the other was admin counselor in Amman, Jordan. I had spoken to Sheldon Krys who was the executive director of Near Eastern affairs. He liked me. He was very supportive and he arranged for me to interview with the political appointee ambassador in Morocco, Joseph Verner Reed. He was here in the States at the time and I interviewed with him. He was a character. I interviewed with him. It all turned out very well. He offered me the job, but I didn't accept right away. I went back and conferred again with Sheldon Krys and Sheldon said to me, "Johnny, you can have either of these jobs. You can have Morocco or you can have Amman. If I were you" these were his words, he said, "both of those ambassadors are a pain in the ass, but I would go with the one in Jordan because he's a career man." I took Sheldon's advice and I opted for Amman. I was very happy. It was a very competitive job and it was one in an exciting area. I thought it was just a perfect match. My wife and I were happy. Our kids weren't too happy because they were settled in the States here with their friends. My son was at the point of puberty and friendships are so important at that stage. He didn't want to leave them, so that required some work on our part.

Before I went to Amman an inspection team went out there in the spring of 1983 and they returned and provided a debrief that was a horror story, one of the worst horror stories I think I'd ever heard. I remember they looked at me and they said, "You want to go to that post?" I said, "Yes." They said, "You're out of your mind." I said, "Why?" They said, "It is the biggest mess we have ever run into." I said, "Well, what's going on?" They said, "Well, its been a raging battle between the ambassador and the administrative staff, particularly the admin officer and the budget and fiscal officer. The ambassador has already savaged both of them." The ambassador was Richard Viets, Dick Viets. So, I was terrified after hearing these stories. I didn't know what to think. I read the draft inspection report and it had something like 150 recommendations almost all of them on the administrative side. I just couldn't believe it. I'd never seen anything like it. I was really very worried and this troubled me for months before I went to the post. As you can imagine, as an FS-1 wanting very badly to be a senior officer one day, I was worried about the impact this might have on my chances to cross the threshold to become a senior officer. I just did the best that I could. I prepared and I studied and I read and I briefed and debriefed and then in the summer of 1983 we wound up things here and we moved on to Amman.

Q: You were in Amman from '83 to when?

YOUNG: From 1983 to 1985.

Q: Okay. Before we get into the workings of things, what were sort of the state of, what was happening in Jordan at the time sort of the state of relations with the United States?

YOUNG: Well, I was going to get into that when we got into talking about Jordan. I can do it now.

Q: You can do it now.

YOUNG: Okay. The state of relations were frankly as good as you could expect under the circumstances. Jordan was a moderate state in the middle of the Middle East crisis. A good friend, a loyal friend. It had tremendous problems of its own that it had to deal with. Almost the majority of the population there, I mean the majority of the population was really Palestinian. As you know the Palestinians back in 1971 attempted to take over the country.

Q: Black September.

YOUNG: Yes. This was something that the king had to live with. The king was trying to be a peace maker, trying to be the good moderate, trying to be the good soldier in the Middle East. He was trying to be the good friend of the United States and at the same time trying to demonstrate that he was a solid Arab and a good backer of the Palestinians, so he was in a very delicate position. That said, the relations with the United States remained good and I must say that Ambassador Viets' faults notwithstanding and I'll get to those later, those faults were basically internal, but from a substantive point of view he was an extraordinary ambassador. I have never seen an ambassador with a more effective relationship with the head of state as I witnessed Ambassador Viets and King Hussein of Jordan. It was truly exceptional. Hussein trusted Viets more than any other ambassador there and trusted him more I think than even some of his own ministers. He relied on him for all kinds of advice and counsel. Viets even looked the part which was this great, good looking man, large mane of silver hair, beautiful complexion. So he not only looked it, but he played it, a very smooth fellow, just a top notch professional in his relationship with the host government. He was loved at all levels, not just by the king, but his relationship with the king was truly extraordinary. I've never seen anything like it. I'm not sure, I can't speak to this authoritatively, but I'm not sure any of his successors succeeded as well.

Now, to Jordan. We arrived in the summer. We got settled in our house. Then I had my initial walk around the mission and my initial meeting with the ambassador. He acknowledged that the inspectors had written up a less than favorable report on the mission and that he basically wanted me to clean it up. That was my job to clean it up and I understood that and I respected him telling me okay, you have a free hand, take care of it. I began to do that right away in terms of all kinds of general services, rules and regulations and administrative rules and regulations and financial rules and regulations. It just went on and on and on.

I have to tell you a couple stories to highlight this problem. We arrived at the time the outgoing budget officer was still at post, the one who had had a lot of difficulty with Viets. I might add that when I was in the inspector general's office and when the inspectors had returned from Amman and had told me about some of the things going on there, one of the things they said to me was, you know the budget and fiscal officer had a file about five inches thick and on the cover of this file in big black letters were CYA.

Q: Which means cover your ass.

YOUNG: That's exactly it.

Q: You're protecting yourself.

YOUNG: So, that's what they said. I said, you're kidding. They said, no, he had this file and they showed it to us and we saw all of the things in it, etc. Back to meeting this fellow who was on his way out. His name was Hume. I don't remember his first name. He was on his first or second assignment as a budget officer. Now, he went upstairs to pay his farewell call on the ambassador and after that he came down and he sat in my office and he said, well, here's my checkout sheet. I've done all of the things I'm supposed to do and I can now go and get my tickets. I said, oh, how did your farewell call on the ambassador turn out? He said, well, I sat there in front of the ambassador and he said the ambassador looked at me and said to me you're the sorriest assed thing I've ever seen as a budget and fiscal officer. He said he just laid me out. He said I listened to him. When he finished, I said to him thank you very much Mr. Ambassador and then I took my finger and I pointed it at him, and I told him, thank you Mr. Ambassador, but I'm going to get you one day.

Q: He did.

YOUNG: I know he did. He says, I'm going to get you one day. Mr. Hume then collected his tickets and left and moved on to his next assignment. Bernie Woerz was my predecessor, an admin officer who had an outstanding reputation in the Service. He had done just superb work. Well, he left Amman cowed and savaged by the ambassador. The ambassador just ripped him apart in the EER (employee efficiency report) that was prepared on him. That was how I got started in Jordan. I began to sense that my relationship with Viets was not going to be that difficult. I sensed that it was going to be better. I got terrific guidance and support from the DCM at that time who was Ed Djerejian and a wonderful guy, a very supportive fellow. When I got to difficult points in something that I had to go to the ambassador and tell him about Ed was always there to say, well, maybe you might take this approach or that approach. But he never for a moment tried to back away from what we knew we had to do in terms of complying with what the inspectors had recommended. We were quite a group at that time. I didn't realize it until later on, but I just wanted to mention some of the people who were there at the mission at that time. Ed was the DCM. Jim Collins was the political counselor.

Q: Later ambassador in the Soviet Union, Russia.

YOUNG: Right. A new junior officer on his first assignment was Bill Burns. Molly Williamson had just left as the head of the consular section. Brenne Bachmann was the economic counselor. I began to just focus on getting these numerous recommendations taken care of so that we could say that we had complied with the inspection report and had fulfilled all of the recommendations and we did. I mean it required also in some cases for the ambassador to pay back money, which he did. Some of these problems centered around his pressuring the budget officer and the admin officer to agree to paying certain things for him, certain first class travel, purchase of Christmas cards and all of these things which are clearly prohibited by the regulations, but he pressured them to do it and they did it. Eventually he had to pay all that money back and what have you and he did. We did get things cleaned up. Viets completed his assignment, I don't want to put it that he was pulled out. That was not the case. He completed his assignment and then moved on to await another onward assignment and he was replaced by Paul Boeker who was an economic officer and had come out of, I think his last assignment was as the head of FSI as a matter of fact. A great guy, but no big feats in terms of the rapport and relationship that he established with the king. At that point Ed Djerejian had moved on and the new DCM had arrived, Skip Gnehm. Jim Collins had moved on as well and he was replaced by Ken Brill. We had that turnover in staffing.

Q: You might, are you familiar with what happened to Dick Viets?

YOUNG: I am.

Q: Because to sort of complete the story.

YOUNG: Well, I'll come back to Jordan in a minute, but just to complete the circle in terms of Viets. He returned to the States. There were various possibilities floated as onward assignments for him and for one reason or the other none of them worked out. I was back in the Department one day when I was walking past the director general's office and I noticed Ambassador Viets in there and I went in to say hello. He called me over, welcomed me very warmly, introduced me to the director general who was George Vest at that time and George said, you know, this is a wonderful man. I said, I know and Vest said to Viets, before I leave this job, I'm going to make sure that you get a good onward assignment. We chatted there a few minutes and then I left and that was it. Well, these various possibilities continued to float for Viets. One of them was South Africa, I don't know what else. Finally, Portugal came up and that was the one that seemed to click. He was nominated. All of the papers went through. Everything was going very nicely and then when it became time for his hearing it seems that information that had been in that famous CYA file was made available to the members of the committee. Dick Viets was never confirmed as ambassador to Portugal and left the Service and that was the end of it.

Q: So, the B&F officer got back. How did you read the whole thing? Was it that the B&F, I mean what had gone wrong do you think?

YOUNG: It was a perfect example in my view of how autocratic behavior can get you in big trouble and that's what it boiled down to. Viets was good. He knew he was good. He let that go to his head and he thought that he could then basically bully his way into anything that he wanted to do with his staff and that was his failing in my view. A superb officer in terms of substance, but flawed in terms of his ability to listen to the experts who were there to work for him and to make him look good.

Q: Did you have much problem straightening out the administrative stuff or was it a matter of going through and checking off the list that said don't do this, do this.

YOUNG: It was basically working through the list. At that point he had resigned himself to the fact that although he didn't agree with the actions that were required he had no choice but to go along with them and he did.

Q: How did you find Mrs. Viets?

YOUNG: Mrs. Viets was a lovely lady.

Q: She has quite a distinguished record on her own side during the war in Poland I believe or France?

YOUNG: I didn't know that. We just found her a very lovely person. She and my wife got on just famously and we thought she was just a warm and loving person, a very caring person. She was madly in love with her husband and just a good, a really good person. We liked her a lot. A little bit unusual in terms of her style. She had a very Bohemian style in her dress.

Q: As I recall and I think I'm right, she had distinguished herself during the occupation of France in the resistance.

YOUNG: I don't know. She was originally Romanian.

Q: Well, then, go on with Jordan.

YOUNG: Well, Jordan for all of its good relations with the United States at that time was a very dangerous place from a security perspective. As a matter of fact it was considered the second most dangerous post at that time in the world. Beirut was number one and Jordan was number two. I'll never forget that we had bombs going off all over town, all the time. There were assassinations there of various Palestinian and Jordanian officials. They bombed my water truck in the GSO section in the warehouse. I remember when the new security officer arrived, my wife and I went out to the airport to meet him and we greeted him and on the way to his residence we got a call that there was a suspected bomb at one of the residences. So we took off, he and I to go check that out. Fortunately it was not a bomb in that particular case, but I cite that to indicate the kind of climate that we lived in. We were very careful. Mind you we lived a good life. We went out at nights. We went to restaurants and parties and things like that. We mixed with Jordanians, but we were just very careful.

Now, we had of course during that time the bombings of the embassy in Lebanon and this had a tremendous impact on us in Jordan and we needed to do something to enhance our own security. We were right on a main street. We were right across the street from the InterContinental Hotel. It was a very busy street. There was no kind of setback whatsoever. We began to look desperately for measures to heighten and strengthen our security. We tried all kinds of things. We tried additional guards. We tried all kinds of inspection procedures and this and that and we finally decided that we had to sandbag the embassy and sandbag the residence. We got these sandbags and we built a wall of sandbags around the embassy. It was about six feet thick and about two stories high. That's what we did for both the residence and the embassy. The residence by the way was one that we had in 1971 at the time of Black September and there were still the bullet marks all over the faï¿½ade of that building from the shells that were fired at it during that time. That was really quite something. The country team decided that we should try to make an interim move from where we were to some other building with sufficient setback until such time as a new chancery could be built for us. The ambassador said to me, "Johnny, its your job. I don't care what else you do. You've got to do this." So, that's what I focused on. I put the word out that the embassy was looking for a building. Everybody in town came my way. I looked at building after building after building. We settled on a group of buildings. A team came out from Washington to evaluate them. We took core samples of the cement in these buildings to test them for the how much weight capacity they could hold and things like that. We looked and we looked. Couldn't find anything after all of the analysis. The determination was none of the places we looked at would work. The ambassador met with the assistant secretary for security, Bob Lamb at the time and they had some rather heated discussions and I remember sitting in on a meeting when Lamb said to Boeker, "You find the site. I will build you a new chancery on that site in two years." They agreed on that and we just decided we would continue in our sandbagged embassy until such time as we could move into a new chancery. I was then given responsibility to find land for this new embassy.

Once again the word went out the embassy is looking for land. I had all kinds of people coming to me saying I've got a site here and I've got a site there and my uncle this and my brother has this and that and we looked and looked. Finally, we saw a site that was possible in terms of size. It was if I recall correctly about 13 dunums and a dunum in Arabic measure is over an acre, but I don't remember exactly how much over an acre. This came to I forgot about 14 acres of land or something like that. We could basically have all of this land. It was all together except there was one little part that we weren't sure about, but the rest of it was all-together. We presented this to the Department and to all of the other interested parties and they said, well, this looked good. Again, a team came out and we evaluated all of these different sites, including the largest of the sites with this one little piece that was missing. After their evaluation they said, we can go with that one site. It was located literally in the middle of nowhere. It was off of what was at the time the fifth circle. There was nothing out there except rocks and sheep, nothing. I mean absolutely nothing. It was in the middle of nowhere. I made all of the arrangements and we bought that land and I think we paid about $8 million for it. I remember signing all the agreements. Skip Gnehm was the DCM. He was with me when we made the final assignment and got the checks and gave the purchasers the check, gave the agent the check and what have you. Then we completed the land registration at the office and that was my last major achievement in Jordan in the spring of 1985. I thought that the effort to try and find a transitional building and then the follow on effort to purchase land was going to kill me. I really did. I had never been so pressured in my life as I was during those two exercises. I couldn't sleep. I was just consumed by this because there was so much at stake.

I was consumed by these two projects, the transition that didn't work out and the purchase of the land that I couldn't sleep. I couldn't rest. I was tense. It just bothered me so much. When I finally achieved this, I was really so happy. Yet there was an element of disappointment in some of this. It came efficiency report time and the ambassador wrote a very nice efficiency report on me. The job that I was in in Amman was called a joint administrative operation, so I was the JAO director so the ambassador wrote my efficiency report. All of the reports that I had received prior to that, this was at a time when efficiency reports had these little blocks with gradations of ratings. I had always been in the very top block or in the one just below that. I was always superlative or outstanding. In this report the ambassador gave me one a little bit below that so I was down in the third block and I had never had one, which was wonderful. Yet the substance of the report was extraordinary because he said such things as he gave me this responsibility to find this land and I handled it as well as any minister could have handled it. Really nice stuff. There was good solid meaty examples in this report. I remember I went to the DCM, Skip, I asked him, "Can you see if the ambassador could change this one block?" I was thinking of the appearance that this would have that people would look at that little checkmark and give more attention to that than to the substance of the report. I was also concerned because the year before I had received a meritorious step increase. I wasn't promoted into the senior service and before Ed Djerejian had left I had spoken to him about opening my window and Ed was the one who encouraged me to open my window. I'll never forget it. He said to me, "Johnny, we have both done very well. We're boys from the streets of New York and Philadelphia, respectively. You open your window. You're going to be fine." I took his advice and I opened the window.

Q: You might explain what open the window means.

YOUNG: Well, in the Foreign Service if you want to compete for the Senior Foreign Service you have to basically go on notice that you wish to compete. You get six years of being considered for the Senior Service and if you don't make it in those six reviews then you're out the door. The year I opened my window as I mentioned I received a meritorious step increase so I was very encouraged by this. When I got this report from Ambassador Boeker I was concerned that that checkmark which was down at the third box instead of the second or top box which had been really the pattern in my career might have a negative effect on me. I asked Skip to go to the ambassador and asked him to change it and he said he did and the ambassador wouldn't change it. He kept it that way. There was nothing I could do. I left, but I was disappointed because I had put such a tremendous effort into buying that land for what was to be the new American Embassy.

I was thinking about extending in Amman for an additional year. I had been in touch with Mary Ryan who was the executive director of the bureau of European affairs and she had said to me, "If you decide to move out of the bureau of Near Eastern affairs, I would love to have you in the bureau of European affairs, but I don't have much at the moment in terms of an onward assignment. Whatever comes up you can have." Now, I've never had an offer like that in my career and haven't had one since to tell you the truth. She said, "I don't want you to stay in Jordan. It's too dangerous. I want you to move on." I kind of left things in her hands and I did bid on a couple of things in Europe, but they weren't particularly exciting. Then I got a call from her one day and she said, "Johnny, guess what?" I said, "What?" She said, "The fellow Stan Robinson who is the admin counselor in The Hague is leaving. He has decided that he would retire instead of completing his assignment. Would you be interested in that position?" The timing was just right for me to move into it after Amman. I said, "Yes." She said, "But you have to bid on it and what have you, but as far as I'm concerned, you're my candidate." I bid on the job and that was in '84 for an '85 opening and Mary selected me. I was selected for the job and I didn't say anything to my family. I kept quiet about it. Christmas of 1984 we went to Egypt and then from Egypt we took a tour around the Nile Valley. On Christmas Day 1984 I informed my family that we would be moving on to The Hague. My son who had become very enamored of Jordan wanted to know what do we have to go there for? I'm very happy here in Jordan and on and on. I said, this is going to be our new assignment and he didn't want to go. Later on he did like The Hague quite a bit. That's how we got to The Hague and I will only add that Jordan was truly a remarkable assignment. Years later almost in fact all of the counselors of the embassy except one we all became ambassador. We proudly say we were Viets boys. We learned from him. No matter how you look at it and I'm grateful for what I learned from him although I wasn't consciously thinking of being an ambassador or anything at that time and I've always had the greatest respect for him.

Q: Before we leave Jordan we're talking about bombings. Who was bombing?

YOUNG: These were we believed radical Palestinian elements definitely.

Q: Did you get any feel for fundamental Islamic religion while you were there?

YOUNG: No, there were very conservative types there, but that was not an issue at that point, no. That was something that would come up later on. The king's balancing act was trying to comfort and assure those Palestinians who might stir up trouble in his own country internally as well as those who might come in from the outside and stir up trouble.

Q: Any relation as far as you were concerned with our embassy in Tel Aviv?

YOUNG: No. We, you know, we would inform them of course, we kept them informed in terms of reporting and that sort of thing. There wasn't even any talk at that point of any kind of rapprochement. During that time we could move very easily between Israel and Jordan over the Allenby Bridge and we did that almost daily. In fact we had weekly non-pro courier runs which we would circulate within the mission so everybody got a chance to go over to Israel and sort of have a different kind of environment and to shop and to do all kinds of things like that. It was very nice. We could take our families as well. We could do these runs independently of the non-pro courier run if we wanted to. We just had to make arrangements beforehand. All of us enjoyed it. I don't know how it is today, I can't speak to it today.

Q: Any reflections of the Iran and Iraq War when you were there?

YOUNG: It didn't affect us much at all. I mean I have to be honest with you that I didn't focus on it that much, but I don't recall that being a major issue. I would like to cite another little story. One day I was up in Viets' office and I had read a message and I can't recall the substance of it, but I commented to the ambassador, "That was a really good message." He said, "You liked that message?" I said, "Yes. I thought it was very well done." He said, "It was well done. Who do you think is the best drafter in this mission?" I said, "Surely you Mr. Ambassador." He said, "No, not me." I thought quickly and I said Young, you better go down the list. I said, "The DCM?" He said, "No, not the DCM neither." I said, "The political counselor?" Sticking to the hierarchy. He said, "No, not the political counselor either." I said, "Well, then who?" He said, "You know that new junior officer that just came up from the consular section, Bill Burns?" I said, "Yes." He said, "He is the best. You keep your eyes on that young man. He's going to go far." Believe me if ever there was a prediction that came true, that was it. Bill was an extraordinary officer. Everybody loved him because he was so bright and so clever and yet with it all you would never know it because he was so modest and so decent that it was such a contrast with another officer who was there at that time. We had several junior officers, but the other officers, they arrived all about the same time. The other one was ready to tell you in a half a minute that he had a degree from Princeton and he spoke Arabic and he did this and did that and on and on. Bill would never say anything, ever say anything. You would ask Bill, where did you go to school and he would say well, I went to a small school in Philadelphia. Okay, La Salle College. Did you do any graduate work? Yes, I did some graduate work; he wouldn't tell you that it was at Oxford University. He wouldn't tell you that he had written and published a book. He wouldn't tell you that his father was General Burns. He wouldn't tell you a lot of things about himself. You literally had to pull it out of him. That was the degree to which he was so modest, but you give him anything to do and he would turn out a piece of work that was just masterful in every sense of the word.

Q: What happened to Bill Burns?

YOUNG: He's our ambassador in Russia. Yes. Need I say more?

Q: No.

YOUNG: Before that he was the assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs.

Q: You mentioned Molly Williamson. Her name has come up a number of times. Where is she?

YOUNG: Molly is over at Energy. She has moved up very nicely in the Service and reached the rank of career minister. She's been out of the Department for a while. She was over at Commerce as a DAS at Commerce and now she's an advisor on energy to the Secretary of Energy.

Q: Has she left the Foreign Service?

YOUNG: No, she has not. She's still in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, then you went to The Hague from when to when?

YOUNG: We were in The Hague from 1985 to 1988. I will just add a little note before we get to The Hague. Just before I left I remember Skip Gnehm talking to me and he said to me, "You're going to go to The Hague. The ambassador and I are worried about you." I said, "Oh, really? What about?" He says, "You're going to be there with Jerry Bremer. We're afraid that Bremer is going to eat you alive. You're too nice of an admin officer. We're afraid that this could be a problem for you." I said, "Well, thank you very much, but I can't change now. I'll just deal with it the best I can." I left and after home leave and those kinds of things we arrived in The Hague. We were initially placed in a temporary flat until we could get an apartment or a house that was set aside for us and that all worked out very nicely. We met Bremer. At the time the DCM was Art Hughes and it was quite a dynamic change I must say. We had heard about Jerry Bremer and what a dynamo he was. Within minutes of meeting him it was clear, he was a dynamo. I mean he was a man who demanded that things be done and done well and fast and now. He was just incredible. People had to produce or he had no use for them.

Now, in The Hague we had one burning issue at that time and Jerry was sent there to take care of it. It was basically to get the Dutch to deploy the cruise missiles. Everybody else in NATO had signed on except the Dutch and our goal was to get the Dutch to sign on.

Q: This was part of a basic strategy the Soviets introduced the SS20 intermediate range threatening Europe and we had, our idea was to sort of break Europe off from the United States and we had countered by putting in both cruise missiles and the Pershing missiles which are also medium range as a counter to this. It was very controversial.

YOUNG: Yes. The Dutch were dragging their feet on it. They hadn't committed and it was Jerry's job to get them to turn around. He was I believe 43 years old at the time, certainly the youngest American ambassador ever assigned to The Hague. As a matter of fact he tells the story of how one Saturday he went on a bike ride with his family and they stopped at a little village not too far form The Hague. They went into this store and asked, they bought something, I don't know if it was water or what and the fellow asked him if he was American, he said, yes. He asked him, well, what do you do here and he says, well, I'm the American Ambassador here. The merchant nearly laughed him out of the shop. He was incredulous. He couldn't believe that such a youngster would be the American ambassador and dressed in jeans and what have you. He looked even younger than he was and he is a good looking fellow. There's no question about it. He's like movie star good looking. Jerry said he vowed from that day on that he would wear a suit as often as he could to help basically with the image. Jerry was also very athletic and a great jogger. As in his drive to run and direct the mission he was the same way with his own physical health and he was an obsessive runner and a great runner. The marines couldn't even keep up with him. I mean he was just unbelievable. His discipline, his drive. Talk about achievement oriented. He was the shining example of an achievement oriented type A personality.

Well, we had a good mission there, good people, not the kind of security concerns and challenges that we had in the Middle East, but nevertheless we were having them and they were beginning to manifest themselves more and more. Missions in Europe and elsewhere were beginning to get instructions, go to your host government and get their cooperation to do this and that and on and on. Our problem with dealing with the Dutch was that the Dutch felt that we were always overreacting in terms of our security concerns, that we were too excitable on these issues and they had everything under control and don't worry about it. They really dragged their feet in helping us. We were trying to put barriers around the mission and that sort of thing and they resisted us on this and that and mind you they had had some pretty serious problems, security problems in The Netherlands. A British ambassador had been assassinated there. A Turkish ambassador had been assassinated. The famous Carlos the Jackal was held up in the French Embassy which was literally across the street from our embassy in The Hague, so they had seen some problems over the years, but nevertheless they believed that, well, we have it under control and you Americans are overreacting.

In January of 1985 the Dutch received intelligence that a terrorist action was going to be carried out in The Netherlands. For the first time the Dutch reacted to a security threat with a kind of vigor and seriousness and swiftness that we had all hoped for. I mean they moved into action. They went public. They just about closed down the airports throughout the country as they tried to investigate this information. Tourism went down. I mean it was an incredible move on the part of the Dutch. People were calling us from all over the place. Should I come to The Netherlands? Should I do this, should I do that? So, they really got serious at that point and that was a good thing because we could then ask for their help. We were able to move then to get some barriers around the mission and get flower pots put around and get fences. We were on a main street and on a big sort of plaza in a very old historic plaza and the Dutch didn't want to upset the historic significance of this plaza. They didn't want to do any kind of modernization or anything that would take away from the old pristine way that it had been for literally centuries. But, anyhow, they were cooperating more with us and that was very good.

In the meantime, the financial situation in the State Department was not very good and the Department began looking at closing missions, closing consulates and they selected the consulate in Rotterdam for closure. That consulate had been open for over 200 years and they decided to close it. The Western Europe office fought it but the Department remained firm and it was closed. Ambassador Bremer told me, "It's your job to close it up. But whatever you do, I want everyone to the extent that we can, the local employees, placed in other jobs. There's one employee there that you must find a place for, no matter what." That was a guard, a guard by the name of Ollie. Ollie was an extraordinary guard. He manned the entrance of the consulate in Rotterdam and he was so extraordinary because he had so much personality. He had such an effective way of doing a patdown. Dutch officials and business people frankly resented coming into the mission and being frisked basically. They didn't like it at all. They thought it was an affront to their dignity and they didn't want anything to do with it. They would come into that consulate and the ambassador had observed this many times and that's why he valued Ollie so much. Ollie would say to them, "Good morning, Sir, how are you?" He would go pat, pat, pat, pat and before the person knew it they had been patted down, brought into the building and they would leave and comment, "That is a really nice guard that you have there." Ollie had just done it all so brilliantly and he would do it over and over again. He was really an invaluable asset because we wanted to keep a positive image of the mission despite the fact that we had an obligation to carry out the security check before letting people in the building. I began to work on a plan to try and find places for these people in the consulate and succeeded in getting them positions either in filling openings in The Hague, filling openings in Amsterdam and some of them decided that they didn't want this and they would just leave the mission and look for something elsewhere.

Matters were complicated because the Netherlands like many countries in Europe has very complicated labor laws. You can't just close a building. You can't just declare bankruptcy. You can't just say, well, I don't have any profits and I'm going to close this baby down. You can't do that. You have to continue to pay your employees. Cuckoo labor laws. We had to pay huge sums to people although they didn't want to continue on. They didn't want to be transferred. We had to pay them and we paid substantial sums I must say. I remember one fellow, this is in 1986, we paid $100,000, a huge amount of money at that time, but we had no choice. We had to comply with these Dutch labor laws. They really do handcuff you and restrict what you can do. We finally closed the consulate. We sold the beautiful residence there. One of the prettiest residences I think I've ever seen. Not in terms of size, but in terms of setting on a little lake with a beautiful windmill in the background. It was just spectacular. A fellow by the name of Don Junior was the consul general at that time. I know it was heartbreaking for him to leave that and it certainly was for me to close it because there was so much history there. We had to do it and we did it and we moved on.

One other important thing that I worked on with Ambassador Bremer was a bilateral work agreement. This agreement would allow the wives of our diplomatic personnel to work in the Netherlands and vice versa for the spouses of Dutch diplomats in the United States. Now, in 1986, there were not many of these agreements in Europe, and we were the pioneers in trying to work one out. We needed some examples of successful agreements in Europe which we could then use in encouraging other European governments to sign on. We worked and worked on this agreement. The Dutch can be very stubborn when it comes to something that they consider a principle that should be upheld. On the question of immunity they were so afraid that if they signed the agreement along the lines that we liked that some spouse working in a bank could rip off the funds of the bank, declare immunity and never be prosecuted for that kind of crime. We gave all kinds of assurances that this would not be the case, but they wouldn't budge. So, we tried all kinds of different formulations in order to retain the immunity provision in the draft treaty and at the same time address the concerns of the Dutch. In the end we agreed that if there was a problem we would consider a waiver of immunity and at last that satisfied the Dutch. We got the approval on the U.S. side; we got the approval of the Dutch side. I remember the ambassador and I going to the foreign minister, Hans van den Broek, and all of us signing this bilateral work agreement or bilateral treaty, that was a major achievement for the mission. That treaty in turn served as one that we used in encouraging other European governments to sign it, so that worked out very nicely.

Bremer was a very highly respected ambassador in the Netherlands. In fact people said he was probably the best that they had ever had. He had learned Dutch and I can't tell you how popular that was. Mind you this was in a country where the people are probably the best speakers of English in Europe other than maybe the Danes. They were just unbelievably good with their English. They were very proud that an American ambassador had made the effort to learn Dutch to the point where he could go on television and be interviewed in Dutch and he did it all the time and did it very effectively. Because he was so good and had such a good relationship he was in fact able to get the Dutch to reverse and to sign on and to implement that request that we had for them to deploy the cruise missiles.

Q: Did you have problems at our consulate general in Amsterdam? After the Vietnam War, they had sort of a perpetual demonstration as to it. I would have thought that the, this is the last great surge of what the Soviets were able to get at Western Europe. Were you concerned that you would have more of the demonstrations?

YOUNG: We had our share of demonstrations. We would have them in The Hague and we would have them also in Amsterdam where there was a lot more activity than in The Hague, but as someone said the Dutch are fair weather demonstrators. When its very cold and what have you, they don't come out too much, but when the weather's good, its springtime and young folks are in the streets, they would come out more then. Yes, we had lots of demonstrations, but nothing that stopped anything of any importance. We would alert the police or the police would alert us and we would tell people, well, be careful there's going to be a demonstration today and don't go out for lunch at a certain time, wait, etc. No great problems as a result of that.

We had some funny things also that happened. One night we had a new marine on duty. At night it gets rather lonely in the mission and I guess this fellow just wasn't used to it all. He was being very conscientious. He was doing his inspection and he came up the stairwell. There was a long corridor as you came up the stairwell and at the end of it there was a window. He came up the stairwell on this particular night and he looked down the hall and he saw someone moving. He didn't realize it was himself and he pulled out his gun and fired.

Q: Oh no.

YOUNG: Yes. It was unfortunate, but the poor fellow of course paid a price for that and was removed, but that was one thing that happened.

One spring day the marines were going through one of their exercises, one of their internal hostage things. Someone had left a window that faced the square open. Someone was passing at that point and heard, "Don't shoot him!" and, "Don't do this and that and hold him and this and that and call the police." It sounded like a real hostage situation. The person who overheard this on the outside called the police right away and the police came screaming to the embassy ready to break in and rescue this hostage and on and on.

Another time we had a technician who had come to repair some equipment and he was working late at night. No one knew that he was in the embassy. Suddenly the marine hears screams coming from a really far away part of the embassy, so he traces to where this is coming from. He goes to the person screaming and there's the technician, blood dripping from his hand. He had gotten his fingers caught in the cross-cut shredder.

Q: Oh no.

YOUNG: Yes. So, they called the police and this cross-cut shredder was in a classified area. The police came. The ambulance came, took the fellow out, took the piece of finger out and took him to the hospital and they were able to reattach it. That was the good part. The sad thing was he was written up, the marine was written up for having allowed the medical personnel to come in and have access to this fellow. Well, we took exception to that and did get the marine off the hook on that particular one, but you can see sometimes these problems that can crop up.

Well, Jerry Bremer completed his assignment there.

Q: Did you ever get cross to Jerry Bremer?

YOUNG: I didn't, but I have watched when he has been cross with others. Should we go into that?

Q: Yes, its all part of the web and wolf of how we conduct our foreign relations.

YOUNG: Well, I remember one country team meeting he asked someone for a report and the person didn't have it and Jerry said, "Well, didn't I ask you for this before?" I think the person said yes. He said, "I'm going to ask you one more time and if you can't do it then I think I'll ask someone else to take care of it for me." I mean just boom, shot him down just like that. The incident I really remember the most involved the senior commercial officer, a fellow by the name of Stan Harris. As I said, Jerry wanted us to close down the consulate in Rotterdam as smoothly and as quickly and efficiently as we could and particularly take care of the people. I give him credit. He wanted us to take care of the people. He had asked Stan if he had made arrangements to take care of his commercial person in Rotterdam. Stan had not moved as quickly as Jerry had liked and this meeting took place in Jerry's office. It involved me and Stan Harris and Jerry wanted to know why was the delay because all of the other people had been taken care of. Do you want to stop there?

Q: Oh, no.

YOUNG: Stan said, "Well, I wanted to wait to see this and I wanted to do this" and Jerry was really furious at what was clearly delay on Stan's part. He said, "Stan I told you what I wanted to do and I thought maybe you would have this done by now." Again Stan resisted Jerry's entreaties for him to move swiftly on this. Jerry said, "No, I want this done now and I want you to do it." Literally, physically threw Stan out of his office. Grabbed him by the seat of his pants and threw him out of the office. I was speechless. I could not believe what I was seeing. Stan was considerably older than Jerry. Stan was in his '60s and Jerry wasn't even 50, he was just still in his '40s. He threw him out and he said, "Now, I want this done and I want it done by such and such a date." Stan said, "Jerry I can't believe you just did what you did. Jerry, I can't believe it." In the meantime, Jerry is getting him out the door. He got him out the door and we both left at that point. Stan turned to me and said, "Johnny, can you believe what you've seen?" I said, "Well, what can I say? You know he has asked you to move on this quite a bit and you're not there yet." He said, "That's true, but I can't believe he did what he did. I'm an older man. I remember Jerry when Jerry was a baby basically." That happened. About three hours later Stan called and he said, "I just want you to know Jerry came down to my office and he apologized and he told me he was sorry. That it was over the top. He had crossed the line. He was very sorry. He didn't mean it, but he knew that he'd been pressing for action on this particular item and that he wanted me to do something about it. I accepted his apology and it's fine." Stan was also getting ready to move on to another assignment. He was going to go to London. A couple of months later before Jerry left, Jerry had a very nice farewell dinner for Stan and they remained good friends. I saw a side of his temper at that point. We got along beautifully and he wrote me just a wonderful efficiency report together with Art Hughes and I'll never forget it. It was the report that frankly did the trick in getting me promoted into the Senior Service.

I'll never forget when I got word about that. It was a Friday night. It was September or October of 1986. My wife and I were getting ready to go to bed, it was about midnight, and the phone rang. I picked it up and I said hello and the person on the other end said, "Hi Johnny, this is Mary Ryan." I said, "Oh, hi Mary, how are you doing?" She said, "We just returned from the White House with the Seniors list." I said, "Oh, that's very nice. What does that have to do with me?" She said, "You're on it." I said, "Me?" She said, "Yes, you're on it." Again I think I said, "Me?" Because I didn't think it was going to happen. She said, "Yes, welcome to the Seniors club." Then she extended congratulations and best wishes. My wife and I just could not believe it.

Anyway, Art Hughes and Jerry Bremer moved on. Jerry moved on to become the director for counter terrorism in the Department. Then we got an interim DCM, John Hyman, and his wife was Judy Hyman. They were a team and Judy was on leave without pay and John was the DCM. They had been in The Hague on two previous assignments. They were basically kind of returning home, both fluent speakers of Dutch. That was an easy transition for them. They were good folks. They sort of held things together for a while.

So, Hyman was in an interim role. He had come in to await the appointment of a new ambassador. We finally got word that John Shad, who had been the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, would be visiting several European posts in order to find out which one he liked the best in order to be assigned as ambassador. He would be coming out with his wife who was ill and confined to a wheelchair. He visited Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands. I made all the arrangements to receive him and take care of him and he looked all around and asked lots of questions. In the end he decided that the Netherlands was his post of choice. Before he arrived, we received a 25-section message with all of his holdings. It was my job to check to see if there was any conflict of interest in his holdings and the U.S. Embassy relationship with the various companies and organizations listed in the stocks and bonds that he owned. There was none. At the time he was considered to be the richest man in the Reagan administration. He was very wealthy.

John Hyman decided he would retire. In his place they sent John Rouse. Rouse became the DCM to John Shad. John Shad arrived. We got him settled in his new house and it became very clear to us right away that this was no skilled diplomat. That this was someone who would require a lot of handholding, a lot of direction if he was going to be seen in a positive light. Mr. Shad was quite a character, to say the least. He would fall asleep at meetings, public meetings, I don't mean just in the embassy. He would fall asleep in the embassy meetings, but he would fall asleep in public meetings. I'll never forget my next door neighbor who was a Frenchman said to me one evening, "Oh, I just met your ambassador at the Chamber of Commerce meeting. Oh, he fell asleep at the head table." That was the kind of start we were off to.

Q: Was he elderly?

YOUNG: He was in his '60s at that point. I don't think he'd reached 70 at that point, maybe late '60s. Could have been early '70s as well, but he was an elderly gentleman. His wife was terminally ill. She had cancer of the esophagus. A very nice lady. A woman who had achieved in her own right. She had become sort of the first attorney in whatever state or college or whatever it was that made her unique, but she'd been the first in something and a very nice lady, but she had her problems. The residence had to provide special care for her because she couldn't eat regular food. She was fed through a tube and things like that. He would push her wheelchair for example if it were public, but if it were not public, if they were just in the house, he wouldn't have anything to do with it and he treated her very dismissively and not very nicely. He would say to the staff, you push her, I don't want to push her, that sort of thing. They had separate bedrooms in the residence. We attempted to install some sort of elevator so that she could go up and down and that worked out. He didn't really want much to do with substance. A little bit, but not too much. Mind you the big work and the heavy lifting had been done by Bremer beforehand, but he had to maintain the relationship and keep it productive. The Dutch frankly didn't have much high regard for him. He certainly had the access that he needed as an ambassador. My relationship with him was strained, very strained and I thought that frankly he was going to bring an end to my career. He was very wealthy, but very cheap. He was the cheapest man I've ever run into. He wanted all kinds of things to be paid for by the U.S. government and they were illegal and I couldn't do it. Here we go Christmas cards once again. I said, no, we can't do those kinds of things and I'm not going to do them. I told him, I said, look when I go to jail you're not going to bake cookies for me. The only one who will bake cookies for me will be my wife and no one else and I'm just not going to do it. He didn't like that at all. He didn't like the fact that he considered me negative and I wouldn't agree to all of these things. He wanted us to buy all kinds of little trinkets and what have you. They get hung up on these things. There's just no money for that and he had lots of money. He could buy trinkets and what have you with his own money, but he was really tight with his own money.

The staff at the mission had to write out everything for him. He had to have everything on a card. He read everything. He couldn't do anything extemporaneously. It was really quite a sad state of affairs I thought. Anyhow, efficiency report time came around and I got a wonderful report from John Rouse, a beautifully written report. I was very happy with it in every sense of the word, didn't want to change a word, then it went to the ambassador for his review and I thought well, this is it because I knew what was coming. Anyhow the report came back and it had one sentence. I have nothing further to add to this report which suited me just fine. I couldn't have been happier because any panel would know that there was something there, that clearly when an ambassador puts that on a report something must be wrong, but at least he didn't say anything negative. I accepted that and we called it quits. I want to just tell you a couple of things. He had an obsession with video games and Pac Man. He would go down to the local arcade and play Pac Man with all of these kids. The DCM and I said we can't have the ambassador down in the arcade playing Pac Man with these kids. We would go down there and rescue him out of the arcade and take him back to the residence. Then we had to find a Pac Man machine that we had to put in the residence.

Q: An early computer generation.

YOUNG: Yes, oh, everybody knows Pac Man. Yes, that's true, it was one of these computer generated. P-A-C M-A-N, like Pac Man and Pokemon and whatever else they had at that time. We couldn't believe it that here's a man filthy rich and would indulge in this kind of activity with no sensitivity to his position whatsoever and would be caught doing this kind of thing. Well, I said to the DCM, I can't believe it. Here I am making sixty some thousand dollars a year which was a lot of money at that time running around town here trying to find out where I can buy a Pokemon or a Pac Man machine to put in the residence to keep the ambassador confined to the residence instead of running downtown to an arcade. We did that. Then one night while he was playing Pac Man in his drawers, in his underwear, he locked himself out of the residence. We had to deal with that mess to get him back into the house and what have you. Oh, crazy stuff, just crazy stuff.

Q: What was there about him that made him so wealthy?

YOUNG: Oh, he made a fortune in stocks.

Q: He was good at this.

YOUNG: He was a genius. I mean he made a fortune. Another thing that happened concerned that the Secretary of Commerce, Malcolm Baldridge. He was killed when he was thrown from a horse. Well, before the body was warm Shad sent a cable to the president saying that he wanted that position to replace Baldridge because he only took his ambassadorship as a kind of consolation prize because there was nothing else at the time. Well, he did the message and then he left the copy on his desk. He had sent it classified. Since I was the admin counselor the marine brought it to me because they issued him a violation. I saw the message and I couldn't believe that literally, within hours of Baldridge's death, that he sent this message to Reagan asking that he be appointed. Well, he never was appointed to that position. He basically sort of hung around in that position for the remainder of his time there. I stayed with him until my assignment was concluded in 1988 at which time I received a message saying that I had been selected for the Senior seminar and that's where I was going to go.

Q: So, we'll pick this up in 1988 when you're off to the Senior seminar.

YOUNG: Right, okay.

Q: Great.

Q: Today is the 14th of December, 2005. Johnny, we are 1988 and you've gone to the Senior seminar.

YOUNG: Right.

Q: How did you find the Senior seminar?

YOUNG: Well, I frankly didn't know what to expect. I had heard many things about it over my years in the Service. I went with a very open mind, and found that as the months in the program evolved that it was really one of the best things that ever happened to me. I got so much exposure from that program in terms of leaders in government and industry that I had the opportunity to meet along with the other members of the seminar the places that we visited, the kinds of issues that we dealt with. It was a very broadening experience. It was also for me a great confidence building experience. I had risen through the ranks as an administrative officer and until that program I thought that basically I would continue along those lines and never thought that I could possibly do something else that would be even broader than general administration. The seminar gave me that confidence.

Q: I think this is something for somebody who doesn't understand the Foreign Service might not understand and that is that you might say that people who come in as political officers and to a lesser sense economic officers are told they are going to be the leaders, they're going to be this, they're going to be the ambassadors and all. People who come in as consular officers or administrative officers are told you do a fine job and you'll get promoted, but basically don't get your aspirations up too much.

YOUNG: That's true.

Q: That's changed quite a bit, but at the time so that this I know I went to the Senior seminar in '74 '75 as a consular officer and I was the token consular officer. It did open things.

YOUNG: Yes. I was in the 31st class which began in 1988 through the '89 academic year. In our class we had one consular officer. I think we had two administrative officers, myself and Chris Orozco and the rest were political officers and economic officers.

Q: Were there any particular things that were noteworthy that you can recall during your Senior seminar?

YOUNG: Oh, there were several things that were interesting. One of them was our project before Thanksgiving where we had to do some volunteer work in the community. I went together with another member of the seminar, David Welch, who is now the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. We went to a soup kitchen, but we worked in different parts of this soup kitchen and I made soup and cleaned floors. It was a shelter more than a soup kitchen, it was a shelter for homeless. They couldn't understand why we were there, why we were doing this, why we were giving our time to this kind of effort. A funny thing happened in terms of David Welch. One of the inhabitants asked him why he was there and David in his very wry, dry sense of humor said that I can't do anything else. The guy asked I think why not and David responded I'm an escaped killer. The fellow's eyes bulged. He didn't know what he had on his hands there. I had great sympathy for those poor folks and what they have to go through. I felt that my little contribution was just really a spit in the ocean. Nevertheless, we did it and I think the majority of us in various programs ended with a greater sensitivity of the downtrodden. The underclass was one of the themes of our particular seminar group.

We visited a housing project in Southeast Washington. The tenants had decided that they would attempt to buy these units that they lived in themselves and change the complete makeup of the community. We went there and we visited with the woman who was at the head of this community effort to get the tenants to buy these units and that was quite fascinating. You could see that as impoverished as the community was and as the people in it were, that leadership emerged. We were so-called leaders of tomorrow and we could see that in that group, much less fortunate than we, were leaders. Tammy was the name of the woman at the head of this. She was a formidable leader. You could see her at the head of a table of a big corporation directing things. She knew how to get things done and she knew how to inspire and lead and she was quite a character. It was fascinating.

As part of the underclass theme we visited the Detroit police. That was quite a night, or quite a couple of days. The police chief was very well educated with a Ph.D. There weren't many around in those days with that kind of training. This fellow was very good, very articulate. We met other people in the mayor's office and in the administration in Detroit and that was fascinating. We then went with different police teams and rode shotgun with them in their cars. I'll never forget there were a number of calls that we responded to during the night. We rode with them for several hours.

One call was to respond to a domestic disturbance. It was pouring rain that night and there I was in the back seat. I observed these two policemen respond to all kinds of situations. At one moment they were literally a psychologist, the next moment they were peacemakers, the next moment they were marriage counselors. I mean they just did all kinds of things and my respect for them just went up 10,000 percent. They're just a remarkable group of people, the policemen and what they have to do and how they put their lives on the line everyday to protect us and to provide for our security. Anyhow on this particular call it was for a domestic disturbance and we went to this home. I remember there was a light on the porch. I could see the rain just coming down in sheets and the two policemen told me to stay in the car. They said we're going to go in and check this out and we want you to stay here and when the coast is clear we'll come out and signal to you and then you can come in. I did as they said. I waited, they went inside. I waited and I waited. I listened to the rain and looked at it coming down the window of the car and you know, falling off the roof of the porch of this house.

Finally the door cracked and one of the policemen put his head out and signaled to me to come in. I rushed through the rain and got a little bit wet, went onto the porch and then into the house. When I got into the house I was stopped in my tracks. I looked across the room and there was a woman with an ice pick stuck in the middle of her head. She and her husband had had a fight and he grabbed an ice pick and stabbed her in the head with an ice pick. The ice pick was lodged in her head. I couldn't believe it. It was just the most horrifying thing I had ever seen. The police called for the ambulance. The ambulance came. They put her in. They accompanied her to Detroit Receiving Hospital which was another experience that I'll never forget as long as I live. They took her to the emergency section and in the emergency section there was blood and gore and things that I don't think I would ever want to see again as long as I live. There was a pregnant woman who had attempted suicide and it had failed. She had put a gun in her mouth and had attempted suicide and it had failed. That was just a horrible sight. There was another of a very large fellow who had been beaten to a pulp and his face looked like it was about four times its size. I mean there were all kinds of problems there. I thought my head was going to swirl off with all of these horrible sights that I was seeing. Anyhow the doctors and nurses were all running around. I mean it was just like something off of TV and this was years before ER came about.

Q: ER's is the name for the Emergency Room, which is a very popular TV program.

YOUNG: Yes. The two policemen who were with me were just as calm as could be with all of this. They had seen it all and had become a bit numb to it. At one point they said to me, "Do you want to go across the hall and take a look at the psychiatric unit?" I said, "No, thank you. I think I've had enough for one night." We left, but that was quite an eye opener in terms of seeing what the police go through. I mean I come from the underclass and I understand, but I came from the underclass at a time when there wasn't violence, at least not in my community.

Q: It really has changed. When one thinks about it, I go back to my childhood, too. It just wasn't the violence then.

YOUNG: Yes. We were just poor.

Q: Yes. The whole Depression period people were just plain poor. I mean that was the overriding thing. It had nothing to do with danger.

YOUNG: Yes. We went to Boston and while we were there we visited MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). Mr. Deutch was the head of MIT at the time, a very nice man. Greeted us nicely, we couldn't have been happier. Then we were to have a talk with a prominent member of their faculty. I'm not sure if we knew who it was going to be, but anyhow we were told to report to a room at a given time and we did. We went into the room and began to find our seats. There was a gentleman standing up in the room looking out the window and frankly nobody paid any attention to him and he didn't pay too much attention to us. He sort of would glance at us and then glance outside and we all found our seats and sat down. When we were all in he then turned and faced the class and then he said, "Hello, my name is David Baltimore." We were bowled over. That was the David Baltimore who was a Nobel Prize laureate for molecular biology. The nicest man, the most humble person you could ever meet. No one would have ever suspected that this great scientific mind would be so modest and that was a good lesson to see how you can have it all and still be a very modest and unassuming person and we liked him very much. He told us that he'd never dreamed of winning the Nobel Prize. He thought about science all the time and worked in it all the time and he had this idea and was like eureka. One day there it was and he put it all down and worked on it and that's what got him the Nobel Prize. Quite a remarkable fellow.

We went to Miami, Florida and visited with the mayor there and with his staff. When we left we had a good discussion amongst ourselves that this was a place destined for trouble, racial trouble and it was just as we thought it would be. We thought it was very revealing that the Hispanic mayor didn't have in his administration, at least among the people who briefed us and these were all his close advisors in one capacity or another, there wasn't a single black official in his administration. We interpreted that as a sign of exclusion. We interpreted it as a lack of sensitivity to the black community in Miami and mind you we could have been reading a lot more into this than was the case, but that was how we saw it. We said, well, that's just not right and this place is going to have troubles. A couple of years later they did, they had riots down there.

Q: Well, I think people from outside, I know they've had recent riots basically people of North Africa and black African descent to France and all and you see there are conferences of mayors. I watch French TV and high officials in France, what are we going to do about the problem? Not one dark face in that group. I mean the French talk about it, but you know when you get to the political class this is important.

YOUNG: Yes, well the French believe that they have no problem, that the color of your skin didn't matter as long as you spoke good French and that was it.

Q: But you look at their political class with no real representation.

YOUNG: Exactly. Well, now they realize that. We think they do. We'll have to see what happens as a result of this recent experience they've gone through with these riots.

Q: When you went to the Senior Seminar, did you find yourself getting at all attached or connected to what would be called the black movement. I don't know what you want to call it, but in other words, this whole feeling in the United States. Because in the Foreign Service you know we're off somewhere. You just don't.

YOUNG: The Senior Seminar didn't bring me any closer to that, that's been in my life for a long time. Not as one to lead demonstrations and that sort of thing, but to provide my support in many other ways. That's always been there and the seminar didn't bring me any closer to that. We were asked to write papers on leadership. I decided I would do mine on what had occurred at my church in Washington, DC particularly with the leadership provided by two white priests at what was basically a black Catholic church in Washington and one that was dying at that. These two priests, Father Mudd and Father Kelly, were determined that they were going to resurrect this church and bring it back to life and they did in many ways. They established a number of different ministries in the church and these ministries all reached out to the neighboring community. This church is considered the mother church of black Catholic churches in the District of Columbia. Its at 15th and V and its called Saint Augustine. It was the first black Catholic Church in Washington, DC, first established on 15th Street where the Washington Post is presently located and now it's located at 15th and V. Anyhow, one of the things they did that was so innovative and creative was to ask themselves what can we do to bring in younger people and to also relate more to the black parishioners of this church.

They went to Howard University and decided that they would try to arrange for a gospel mass where they would take the Catholic liturgy and leave it intact, but imprint on to that the black gospel tradition. They would have the Catholic part intact and the black Catholic tradition which appeals to a number of blacks. They went to Howard University and they found a fellow named Leon Roberts. He was a music director there and a chorus director and they hired him and they said, would you come over to our church and establish a choir, a gospel choir? He did. Many of the people they found initially were not members of Saint Augustine at all, but they belonged to different Baptist churches and Methodist churches and on and on. Anyhow, Roberts established this choir, wrote music for the choir, integrated his music into the liturgy and word began to circulate that this extraordinary thing was going on at Saint Augustine Church. People began to come out to that church not in the hundreds, but in the thousands. I mean it was amazing. From a church that was headed literally I would think probably for closure to one where at this particular mass on Sunday if you didn't get there on time you wouldn't get a seat. We first attended this church in 1980. We were living in Chevy Chase, Maryland and we were going to a Catholic church on East West Highway called Our Lady of Lourdes, very nice, very quiet, very staid, very geriatric. Our daughter was preparing for her first communion and this lady came over to us one Sunday and she said, "Would you like to try something different and a little more lively than this church? " We said, "Sure, why not?" She said, "Well, come with me next Sunday." She told us where to meet her and we met her at 15th and V. We went to Saint Augustine, that was 1980, 25 years later we're still going there. This gospel mass that I mentioned is still going on. It's a big tradition at this church. The choir that Mr. Roberts started is still going on. They just had their 28th anniversary. It was just a remarkable example of leadership of creativity and of imagination and how you can take a situation and put new life into it.

Q: Did you get any feel for the interchurch dynamics within the Catholic Church? Were noses put out of joint by gospel masses and things?

YOUNG: Oh, yes it created quite a stir within the church itself. Quite a stir. I mean there was a traditionalist who said, my God there is no place in here for this. We can't have this and on and on. It created quite a bit of dialogue, but these fellows were determined that there was a place for this and they made a place for it and they had the regular usual masses, you know, at 7:00 and 9:00 and 10:00 and they had this gospel mass at 12:30 and they continued with it. Yes, it created quite a bit of controversy and the church itself became quite controversial. They had a number of preachers, or priests I should say, over the years. Some of whom were quite controversial. One of them was Reverend Stallings who got a bit, in my view, too carried away with what he wanted to do. He imposed his charismatic style on the church and finally he left and established his own church and then was excommunicated. We had several other rebels there at the church as well. Recently, unfortunately, they were part of this scandal that has rocked the church. One of the pastors there who we like very much was accused by a woman who is now a professor at a university that 25 years ago inappropriate acts occurred.

Q: A sort of sexual scandal in the Catholic Church in the United States concerning both young priests and young boys and also some women, too. The Catholic Church at the time, going back to the '60s, '70s, '80s and even more recently did not respond very well. In fact they would take the priests and move them around, but not take action.

YOUNG: Yes. Well, this particular case involved a Father whom the parish liked very much. He was very dynamic and a good leader, good priest, but once this kind of thing happens, it was over. It created some division in the church because he had very staunch supporters and they tried their best of course to help him, but it was out of their hands and he was eventually asked to leave.

Q: Well, with the Senior seminar.

YOUNG: We traveled all over the country. It was just an incredible program. As I said it gave me a lot of confidence. I felt that I was on a par with the other members of the seminar no matter where they came from or what their particular experiences were in the Service. I was getting a little bit nervous because some of my colleagues were getting really great assignments. One was going to Bonn as the DCM. One to Tel Aviv as the DCM. One to the American Institute Taiwan as the deputy, those were great jobs. Consul General, you know in some Mexican post and on and on. I was wondering my God what's going to happen to me? I just let it float. I put it really as they say in the hands of the Lord.

I got a call I think it was in February from the human resources people, or as we called them the personnel people. It was the Senior assignments division and they were calling to ask if I would object to my name being put on a list for Sierra Leone and I said, by no means. I'd be crazy to say otherwise.

Q: You're talking about the ambassadorial list?

YOUNG: That's right, yes. I said, yes, by all means. I didn't say anything to anyone. I just kept quiet. More time went by and then in late March I got a call one Friday evening from the deputy assistant secretary for African affairs, Irv Hicks. He said, "Johnny, I'm calling because the D committee" which is the committee that selects ambassadors, "met this afternoon and they liked you for Sierra Leone. But the assistant secretary, Herman Cohen, doesn't know you, so they've tentatively selected you, but they're going to leave the choice up to Assistant Secretary Cohen." I said, "Okay." I thanked him. That very day my mother had arrived in Washington to spend some time with us so I called Ambassador Hank Cohen right away and mentioned to him what had happened. He said he was aware of it. I asked him if we could meet and he said yes. He said, what about Monday? I said, well, Monday wouldn't be good for me because my mother just got here and I need to get her settled. I said, can we meet on Wednesday? He said, sure that will be fine. No problem. April 1st, April Fool's Day, 1989, I went and met with Hank Cohen in his office. We sat and we talked and we talked and we talked about Africa. We talked about running a mission. We talked about a number of things and then he looked at me and he said, I think you'll do just fine. You're going to be my candidate. I thank him very much and I told him that I would welcome his advice and counsel as I prepared for this assignment and I left and that's how I got Sierra Leone.

I stayed in touch with Hank Cohen. I remember one day we had a talk and he says, "Well, when you go out there, just take it easy. You know, it's a country of marginal interest to us. Nothing ever happens out there. If you get bored, go out to the provinces and visit with the Peace Corps volunteers, but don't ever get in the hair of the DCM. You know this is what happened to me in Senegal." I had to keep that in mind because it's very easy to turn inward when you want things to do. I thanked him very much for his advice and counsel and I also needed his advice on something else. I had met the woman who was coming out of Sierra Leone as ambassador, a woman by the name of Cynthia Perry. Cynthia Perry had tried very hard to get me to fire the DCM, Gary Maybarduk, she was leaving behind. She had had some difficulty with him. There was difficulty in that relationship, but she never fired him. She kept him on.

Q: This is Cynthia Perry who came from Houston.

YOUNG: Texas, that's right.

Q: I've interviewed her, but she was a political appointee?

YOUNG: Political appointee. Who has done well.

Q: Yes.

YOUNG: Very well because she subsequently went on to another ambassadorship and then she went on to another ambassadorship all because she was a black Republican, but a smart lady, very clever lady and very capable. Anyhow I didn't agree to what she wanted and I remember asking Hank Cohen before I went out. I said, "Hank, what should I do? She's given this guy a bad mouth; she's badmouthed him all over the place. I don't know what to do." I had interviewed a number of other candidates for the DCM job. Gary Maybarduk flew back to the States to have an interview with me to basically ask if I would keep him on. I told him, well, I'm not sure, I'm interviewing candidates and we'll see how it turns out. I didn't want to commit at that point. I spoke to Hank and Hank said, "Look, you get out there and you see how things are going. Don't make the decision on the basis of the rumors. You get out there and judge for yourself." I did that and it turned out very well. He was an excellent DCM and we did very well together, very well together. Anyhow, back to Hank Cohen who told me, don't worry, nothing ever happens out there, no problems whatsoever.

Q: That's usually the kiss of death.

YOUNG: Well, he didn't know what was going to happen as well. I mean it was based on what was known at that time. I prepared. I had my confirmation hearing and after I had my hearing my wife became ill. She wasn't feeling well. She went to the doctor and the doctor said you must be operated on immediately, I'm not even allowing you to go back home. She was in George Washington Hospital, had an emergency operation and fortunately everything turned out well. We had already made arrangements to pack up the house. I had to pack up the entire house myself which I had done on one other occasion, but that was on our second assignment and that was the different situation. I packed up the house, got everything sorted out and she came out of the hospital, recuperated. We had already rented the house and all the furniture was taken out so when she came out of the hospital, we had to have a place to stay. In good Foreign Service tradition, one of our Foreign Service colleagues, a fellow we had come to know in the Netherlands, Jim Marshall who was our economic counselor there, says, "Oh, you can stay with me" he was a single fellow. We stayed in Jim's house and Angie recuperated in Jim's house.

While she was recuperating I prepared for the swearing in; prepared for our meeting with President Bush, Sr. who was just a wonderful guy. I mean I'll never forget that meeting. We went in to his office, in the oval office in the White House and he greeted us like we had been friends forever. "Hi Johnny, Angie. How are you doing? I understand Angie wasn't feeling well. How are you doing now Angie?" I mean he was just as warm and gentle and knowledgeable as one could ever expect. He says, "Oh, I understand you have a daughter in school in the Netherlands." I said, "Yes." He said, "I know that school. Barbara laid the cornerstone for the new building." I said, "Yes, and when I was there I was partially responsible for getting a lot of the materials for that new building duty free. That was my contribution to it." It was just wonderful. Then he said to me, "Tell me about Sierra Leone." I told him about Sierra Leone. He said, "You know, when I was ambassador to the United Nations, Barbara and I became very friendly with a woman there by the name of Shirley Bujama. Do you know her?" I said, "No, Mr. President, I don't, but I'll make it my business to find out about her and will let you know." He says, "Okay, please do. Please give her my best regards." So, when I goy to Sierra Leone I began to look for her and found her and conveyed his good wishes. I wrote him a letter and passed that on and he wrote me a letter back thanking me for doing that. I thought he was a terrific guy. I liked him very much.

Q: Well, he was very attuned to the foreign affairs process.

YOUNG: Yes. Well, he was, when you look at his experience. Then I had my swearing in which was the event of a lifetime. I'd attended swearing ins before, but there's nothing like it when you're up on that stand yourself. It is a truly memorable moment and I must have had 500 people in that room. You could not move in that room. I was so pleased to see so many people had come out to bear witness to this very special moment in my life. I mean it was great.

Q: Did you have any problems, not even problems, experiences with your confirmation hearings with the senate?

YOUNG: None. None. There was one little blip that didn't occur in the hearing process, but occurred when I went up to the office of the inspector general just to number one pay my respects, number two to get from them the inspection questionnaires which I have always found a useful tool to sort of take the measure of how a post is doing. I wanted to take a set of those with me and of course the IG's office was very proud that one of theirs, I had been in that office, had sort of made big. At the time the Inspector General was Sherman Funk who was quite a character, but I liked him a lot. I must say I liked him, a man of integrity and courage. He said, thank you Johnny for coming. We really appreciate it. We're really proud of it and on and on. Then he says, the only thing that showed up that was a question was we got a request from the Senate Foreign Relations committee wanting to know if there was ever any kind of problem surrounding you and what have you. Then he reached down and pulled out of his file. He says, this was the only thing we had and it was an allegation that when I was admin counselor in The Hague that I had attempted to get my wife a job there. I said, that's totally untrue. He calmed me down right away. He says, we know its untrue, we had investigated it and found that it was without foundation and we passed that on to the senate, but that was the only thing that came up. It just shows you that you never know what's out there.

Q: Did you get any feel for what might have instigated this? It sounds like somebody.

YOUNG: Oh, I think I know how it occurred and what happened. I never had proof of that and he would not reveal who had made the allegation.

Q: Was there sort of malice behind it?

YOUNG: I think what had happened was a position had opened in the Netherlands for a family member and the committee had made its decision and then in the end I recommended for the position a family member who had been at post longer. I felt that the one who had been at post longer deserved an opportunity before one who had just come in yesterday. So, I think it was the one who came in yesterday who was upset and drummed up these changes. I think that's what happened.

Q: As you went up, what had you learned about Sierra Leone at the time? We're talking about 1989.

YOUNG: 1989.

Q: What was the situation there politically, economically and what were you getting into?

YOUNG: Frankly, it was a country that had had so-called multiparty elections, but they were not. They were basically one party elections. They had some problems in their human rights record particularly the continued imprisonment of people who had been arrested during the time of Siaka Stevens. Economically the country was in a shambles. Corruption was a major, major problem. The military was okay, lacking in equipment and what have you, but not bad. Diamonds ruled, diamonds were the name of the game and that was at the center of so much of the corruption. A country very rich in potential. At the time there was a major American company there mining something called rutile, which I had never heard of before until I got involved.

Q: What is it?

YOUNG: Rutile is a titanium ore. It is dug out of clay, out of earth that looks like clay and then it is put in enormous washing machines. They look like huge dryers. The machines that dig this clay up and dump it on to trucks and then take it to these washers, these digging wheels, they must be about three or four stories tall. They're huge and if you could see the devastation that they do to the area where this stuff is done, it's a horror story, that's all I can say, but it was a very successful operation. Sierra Leone was one of the major producers of rutile in the world at that time. This earth is dug up, put on trucks. The trucks take it to these huge washers. It is washed in water and cleansed. Because of centrifugal force in these washers that also become like a spin dryer, the rutile is separated from the sand and the dirt. Then the rutile is put into these dryers where it is dried and it becomes a white powder. That white powder is used in a couple of ways. One is in the manufacture of paint, white paint of all things. It is used to make the titanium skins of airplanes. It was a big operation at the time. In 1989 that operation in Sierra Leone was valued at $500 million. That was a huge investment. Originally this plant was put in by Bethlehem Steel. Then I think somebody else bought it and then somebody else bought it and it eventually became Sierra Rutile. It was a consortium of American, Canadian and I think Australian companies. A country with great potential, great possibilities. It was stable politically. It had many ethnic tribes and there were some tensions there, but basically when I got there it was a stable country. You have to keep in mind.

Q: Surrounded by what countries?

YOUNG: By Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Togo, and Guinea.

Q: At the time you went there were there any border problems with those countries?

YOUNG: Once in a while there'd be something, but nothing of great import, no. The borders that were artificially drawn following the end of the colonial period remained respected and basically intact. At my hearing we thought that one of my colleagues would get more questions than I would, but then I got a number of questions basically on human rights and what I would do in terms of trying to encourage democratization and those kinds of things.

Q: Well, tell me, when you go to a hearing, I mean usually the embassy of a country in which you are going, in a sense as an observer. You're treading on somewhat difficult things because you can say something that can blow you out of a job if the country to which you are going is too critical.

YOUNG: I had that later on and I'll tell you about that when we get it.

Q: Did you feel there was any problem of answering?

YOUNG: No, none whatsoever. I had no problem. I don't recall that Sierra Leone had an observer at that point, but I think one of their newspapers was certainly there and they were observing and they report every word you say in these things. It gives the people in the country you're going to a sense of who you are and what you're going to stand for. You can use that to your advantage. I did that at another post deliberately.

Q: Well, then you got out there when?

YOUNG: We arrived in November of 1989.

Q: Did you have children with you?

YOUNG: My daughter was in her last year of high school and that was a major problem to deal with, how we were going to handle that. She had previously been in the high school in The Hague and then she'd been in high school in the States here for the year. We were only in the States a year. We were fortunate in being able to find a family in The Hague. It was a family we had known when we were in The Hague that agreed to house her and allow her to go to the American School of The Hague to finish her last year which was good because she could then reconnect with some of her friends.

Q: That last year or two of high school is crucial.

YOUNG: Yes. Our son was already in university at that point.

Q: Where did he go?

YOUNG: He was at Brown University. So we arrived, my wife and I, the day before Thanksgiving 1989 and I remember the DCM invited us to his home for Thanksgiving. We of course were met by the Sierra Leone protocol people and what have you who treated us very nicely. The arrival was a bit scary because just before we arrived there had been a helicopter crash. Helicopters were used to carry people from the airport across the channel to the main city of Freetown. The ferry service had basically broken down and was in a state of disrepair. When we were whisked off the plane and into these helicopters, you know, I thought oh God, will we ever see the light of day again? It worked out nicely and we didn't have any problems with the helicopter.

Sierra Leone has a very special place in my heart and in my history. I had mentioned earlier that I was born in Savannah, Georgia. The woman who was my mother and my biological father and all of his brothers and his sisters and what have you, they were not born in Savannah, Georgia. They were born in a place called Lady's Island, South Carolina. Then from Lady's Island the family then migrated to Buford and then from Buford to Savannah. Now, Lady's Island and Buford are part of what are called the Sea Islands and the Sea Islands are off of South Carolina, Georgia and there's some in Florida as well. The interesting thing about these islands, the ones in South Carolina in particular, is that they were populated by slaves from Sierra Leone. The slaves were sent there to grow rice when cotton was no longer viable and they grew rice. The language that they spoke was Gullah in the U.S. and if you look at Mende or if you look at Creole the language spoken as sort of the lingua franca of Sierra Leone you would see they are identical. There is a definite link between those two. And, of course, rice culture is also another link between those places.

Q: I was wondering some of those coastal tribes and areas there were not so much suppliers of slaves as going out and getting slaves from the hinterland. In other words, many of the rulers along the slave coast or whatever.

YOUNG: They captured their own.

Q: Either their own or going farther inland.

YOUNG: Yes, that's true. I mention that as a bit of background. When I got to Sierra Leone and I had my presentation of credentials, I called the president's office and asked if I could bring my wife to the presentation of credentials. He said yes. He said, "We normally don't do that. This is for the ambassador only, but in your case I'll make an exception." So, he did. My wife was there with me. It was quite an elaborate ceremony where all of the presidents, ministers were present. I walked in and my wife took a seat and then I went through all of the pageantry of presenting the papers to him and he received them and then made a little speech and then I made a little speech. As I was walking out I heard one minister say, "Welcome home brother." It was very nice and it added to the moment. I'll never forget it. That's how we got started in Sierra Leone.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about your impressions. What was Freetown like?

YOUNG: When we arrived by the helicopter we couldn't see very much of Freetown simply because it was by helicopter. It was at night. We couldn't see anything and I wondered what it looked like. I had read really wonderful descriptions of what it looks like from the sea, how pretty it is, and what a magical looking place it is until you get up close and you see how run down it is. We were taken to the residence. We got out of the car and I remember we looked around and we thought, oh, what a nice house. This is not so bad. It wasn't so bad. The residence was located in a spectacular location. I couldn't even tell at that point how spectacular it was and I really had to wait until the next morning to get a real sense of what it was like. I was told next door was an apartment building that belonged to the embassy. It had I think about six apartments in it. A nice looking building. The grounds were very nice. Now, before I had gone out to post I had learned that my predecessor, Ambassador Perry, had on her own initiative done a number of improvements to the residence. She knocked out the walls of a bedroom to make the kitchen larger, more appropriate in size for what was needed for a residence. She took another room and knocked a wall out and made a combination of a little sort of family room off of the bedroom. She had done all kinds of little things in the garden. She had built little waterfalls and all that sort of stuff. It was all very nice. Mind you the bureau of foreign buildings was quite upset with her because they said, none of this was done with our approval and we never had the funds for it. She just did it. They were quite annoyed. The inspectors I think even tried to get her to pay back the funds that she expended in undertaking these projects, but she'd have none of it and she never paid anything back. I was very grateful and it was in good shape by the time I got there. I could only think, my God, if I had tried this they would have put me in the jail. Not only in the jail, but under the jail. I was really grateful for all of the nice little changes that she had made.

The next morning when we got up I could really see that we were on top of this hill with this magnificent panoramic view of the Atlantic Ocean. It was just a splendid setup. The house was nice. The garden was built up along the side of this hill in kind of a terraced style. Nice rooms, just a nice residence. Then as I drove around town I could see other nice houses. It was very tropical, very lush. You could see though that in the government buildings that there wasn't much care, that they needed a lot of attention. Things were falling down and breaking down. You could see all of the old mildew and where moss had eaten things up and that sort of thing. The glory days had long passed, but yet you could see the potential was there if only they had taken care of some of these buildings. The embassy itself was located in a large office building, well, it was large at that time. We owned the entire building. I think it had about four floors if I'm not mistaken. It was right on the corner of a very historic point in town.

At that point there was a circle, a roundabout, and in the middle of this roundabout there was this absolutely enormous cotton tree. It was called a cotton tree and it was huge. I mean absolutely huge. Many things were centered around this cotton tree. It was like a center with spokes from this cotton tree. The courthouse and ministry of this and that and what have you. It was quite nice. The impression in all of this lush vegetation and these lovely trees and flowers was of buildings that had seen much better days and that were really deteriorated and falling down.

I began my series of calls on various ministries and ministers and found that very interesting and very worthwhile and found a cadre of very talented people. Sierra Leoneans were really quite smart.

Q: Where had they gone to, had they gone basically to, many of them had gotten their education in England or not?

YOUNG: Remember that at one time Sierra Leone was the key location. There were two prominent universities in English speaking Africa. One was on the East Coast in Uganda, Makerere University and the other was in Sierra Leone at Fourah Bay College. These two schools were very important in training the first generation of leaders following the end of the colonial period at the beginning of the 1960s. They would train their own at Fourah and then from Fourah they would then go to Manchester or University of London or Cambridge or Oxford for graduate degrees. In many ways it was very similar to what we had in the United States in terms of the training of blacks up until the time when mainstream universities were fully open to black candidates. Blacks would train initially at historically black colleges, let's say in the South and then from there they would go to the University of Chicago and Harvard and Wisconsin to get graduate degrees. So, it was a similar situation in Sierra Leone. Fourah College played a very historic role.

Q: In a way Sierra Leone was somewhat similar to the relationship that we had with Liberia wasn't it, to England?

YOUNG: No, not quite. There are some similarities. What happened was following the international ban on slavery, a place was needed basically for people to be sent when they were picked up on the seas and freed.

Q: They were very active on picking up slavers and taking them back to Africa.

YOUNG: Right, so they took them to Freetown. They had this land that they governed and ran in Sierra Leone, so they took them to Freetown. In Freetown these people were from Portuguese speaking places, French speaking places. Here you had all of these different mixtures, so what happened is that to understand each other and to communicate they created a language of their own. They created Creole and Creole is a mixture of English, Yoruba, Portuguese, French. It is a mixture of all of those put together in Sierra Leone and it's the only place where you have it. They have this Creole which helped the people to communicate with each other. That's how that came. The name free town, that's how they got the name Freetown also.

Q: Let's talk about what was on your plate when you got there.

YOUNG: Number one democratization, economic reform, and political reform. This is what we wanted to push the government to do. To reform itself, to become more democratic. Now, at that time the Berlin Wall had just fallen.

Q: November of?

YOUNG: October of 1989. It had just fallen. The full impact of that wasn't appreciated at that point. We knew that the ramifications were going to be felt around the world, but we didn't know the extent. It was really in 1990 with the end of the Soviet Union that you had a tremendous impact on Africa because when that happened we completely changed our interest in the continent. Russia changed its interest in the continent. The competition between the two subsided and we basically cut the knot and put it adrift. I thought that was a major, major mistake. A major mistake. The country didn't have money. It didn't have food. It didn't have the means for development and we weren't interested. At that point '89 to '90 we said it's a whole new paradigm, a new world, new reality and we're going to only focus on countries that are democratic now. So, I asked the question, how were these countries to become democratic overnight? They had no history of democracy per se.

Q: Well, supposedly Sierra Leone had been independent for 30 or 40 years?

YOUNG: '61.

Q: So, in a way do you feel, I mean it's a little bit presumptuous for us to go and say we want you to be a democracy.

YOUNG: True, but that's what we were saying at that point, particularly after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union because then that was the end of the competition. It wasn't a question of well, this African country is on our side and that one's on our side and what have you. It was just a whole new ballgame. It really made things worse for Africa. I don't think it made things better for Africa. Now, we began to talk about focused countries and all kinds of things like that. One of the focused countries was Zimbabwe. That shows you how, well, I don't want to get into that.

Q: We're talking about at this point under Mugabe or Zimbabwe is an absolute disaster.

YOUNG: Well, of course it's a disaster. But I'm just saying we thought it was going to be a model that we could show the rest of Africa at the time and it didn't work out that way at all. Some of the other ones that we had picked out as models didn't quite work. Zaire I mean and some others didn't work out as well. We got to Freetown in November of 1989. Most of November was taken up with introductions in learning the lay of the land, the issues and that sort of thing.

Christmas Eve 1989 we got a report that there was an incursion into neighboring Liberia up by the border with the Ivory Coast. It was carried out by Charles Taylor. I got an instruction to go to the president who was Joseph Momoh at the time and to elicit his support in weighing in with President Doe of Liberia to bring an end to this as quickly as possible. I went to the palace; there was nobody at the palace. No one knew where Momoh was. No one knew where any minister was. It was Christmas and all of the ministers had gone to their villages. Everybody had gone to their villages for the holiday. There was nothing I could do until after Christmas. I think it was the day after Christmas I got my meeting with the president and he was a very helpful man. He says, "Well, I will do my best. I will certainly encourage Doe to get this sorted out quickly. If not, this will be trouble for him, it could be trouble for the region. I know that boy," that's what he called him, "I know that boy Taylor. He came here to Sierra Leone. He tried to launch his coup from our country, but I denied him that privilege. We put him in jail" because he had come from the States where he had been in jail for a while. Then he got out of jail and then he floated around and went to different places. He said, "So, obviously he got the approval of the Ivorians to launch this incursion to begin his coup from the Ivory Coast" which is what he did. I did my job and we left it and we concerned ourselves with things Sierra Leonean and as we did so we watched the war. Taylor made inroads into Liberia in taking town after town. As he did so reports of atrocities and that sort of thing would surface and he moved closer and closer. We didn't bother too much about Liberia. We watched very carefully as events unfolded there.

Ambassador Jim Bishop was in Liberia at the time and was preparing to conclude his work there and then the new ambassador Peter de Vos was to replace him. I don't remember exactly the timing, but it was sometime in 1990 before the summer of 1990 that Peter de Vos was nominated and approved for Liberia. Bishop came out and Pete de Vos came through Sierra Leone and was getting ready to go to Liberia via a very small, chartered plane. That was the only way you could get in and out at that point because the war had grown in such intensity that there were no longer commercial flights in and out of Liberia. You could only get in by a small, chartered plane.

I'll never forget this particular incident. Pete de Vos was already to go. He had spent a few days with us. We were sending cables back and forth. We were observing this situation that was growing in intensity as the fighting grew closer and closer to the capital city. We then began to talk about possible evacuations and things like that, but no evacuation had been made at that point. Pete was all set to go. We rented the plane for him to go to Monrovia. We took him out with an embassy car. Just before he got on the plane we got a telegram that said you cannot go to Liberia until you have been sworn into office. We thought my God how are we going to do this because we needed to get him there as quickly as possible. We got him on the radio because we got the driver on the radio and we put all of our heads together and I said, well, we're going to have to do this swearing in via two-way radio. We spoke to Pete and we said, do you have a bible with you? He said, I don't travel with a bible. We said, do you have anything that could substitute for a bible? He said, well, I have my address book. We said, take that address book out and put your hand on the address book, raise your right hand. I think he got the pilot on the plane to hold the address book for him and he put his hand on the address book and then the consular officer, Allen Latimer, I said, Allen, here's the oath you've got to get him to repeat it over the phone and then we can sign it and certify it and send it out to him and he can sign it and he'll have his copy in the works and that's how we did it. It was a riot. An officer in a holding pattern in Sierra Leone at the time, Charles Gurney, wrote a cable on this that became a classic that described how Pete de Vos was out in the middle of this field. There was a man passing with goats and looking at him with his hand on this address book and his other hand in the air, you know, listening to the radio saying, I, Peter de Vos, do solemnly swear and on and on. It turned out well and he went on to Liberia.

Now, the intensity of the fighting just continued to accelerate. The government forces appeared to be losing and Charles Taylor's forces made headway and they headed straight for the capital city. They were held off and didn't quite make it to the presidential palace. Now, we're up to about May of 1990. I was going on R&R (Rest & Recuperation travel). I wanted that R&R very badly for several reasons. My daughter was graduating. She was going to her prom and we needed a break as well. We needed to also get her situated in the States for university and things like that. This was a very important time for us. We arrived in The Hague where we had made arrangements for a very nice house and the house came with a car. It was a house-sitting arrangement that was just the most perfect one I have ever run into and it came with a car and everything that you could possibly ask for. Since we had been in The Hague, we had lots of friends there and we arrived and that night we were with our friends and we had wonderful food and wine and caviar in the works. It was a night made in heaven. We couldn't have asked for better. Good conversation, good jokes, I mean it was just wonderful. Lovely home, car, what more could you ask for? Daughter happy. So, my wife and I arrived home and it was about 2:00 in the morning and the phone rang and it was Deputy Assistant Secretary Irvin Hicks. He says, "Johnny, I'm calling because the situation in Liberia is looking pretty bad. It looks like we may have to evacuate and if we do we're thinking of doing it through Sierra Leone although Sierra Leone has very little in the way of infrastructure to support this kind of thing. I know why you went to The Hague and we know why you're there and we understand that. We're not asking you to leave now. But if the situation gets much worse, we may have to ask you to return." I thanked him very much and we went to bed.

The next night we went somewhere else and had another one of those great nights, another great night in The Hague and we returned home and once again the phone rang at 2:00 in the morning and it was Irv Hicks once more and he said, "Johnny, I'm sorry, but you've got to get back to post. The situation is just getting too bad and we have already sent military people to Sierra Leone and you've got to get back there and you've got to keep them under control." I was upset because then we were into June and my wife's birthday was on June 3rd so a day later on her birthday, June 3rd I returned to Sierra Leone. As our plane hit the ground and as it was taxiing in, I could see part of our problem already. The military people had already strung out at the airport all of their tents and equipment and that sort of thing and that was not what we wanted. We wanted a less visible footprint than that. That was the first thing I had to do was to get that sorted out. We got it sorted out in very quick order.

Q: How did you sort it out?

YOUNG: By speaking to the head person there and also to their leader in Europe in EUCOM (U.S. European Command).

Q: What kind of troops were these?

YOUNG: These were Marines.

Q: Were they off one of our carriers?

YOUNG: That came later on. These were flown in. That came later on. So, in June the decision was made that we would evacuate Liberia and we would evacuate through Sierra Leone. We had tried two evacuations. We had tried one evacuation out of the Ivory Coast with several planes, but found that the government of the Ivory Coast was very unhelpful.

Q: At the time, you mentioned that Sierra Leone had not helped Taylor, but the Ivory Coast did. The Ivory Coast had such close ties with the French. Did you feel that the French were meddling? I mean was that the impression?

YOUNG: We learned that later on. Not initially, we didn't. We learned later on that Charles Taylor had business relationships with French President Mitterrand's son, but that didn't come until later. We decided to evacuate. As I said, I returned. I went to the president and asked for permission for our planes to land and to evacuate people through Sierra Leone and he said, you have it, do whatever you have to do. With that over the next months we evacuated 2,400 people, 40 different nationalities and in one of the longest naval evacuations at the time. I want to go back to the evacuation and I want to highlight a particular incident that occurred. When a decision was made to evacuate, the Defense Department said that they were going to come in with ships behind our embassy in Liberia. They would just come right in onto the shore behind the embassy and take people out that way. Ambassador de Vos said you can't do that, that's impossible because the government had put these huge boulders all along the beach as a breakwater. They had done that years before any fighting so it wasn't an immediate measure that was taken. Defense said no, we have it all under control. We'll take care of it. Ambassador de Vos said again, no you can't do it. They said yes. They had this back and forth and de Vos finally told them, he said, "Okay, if you come in that way the moment you set foot on Liberian soil I relinquish my responsibility as ambassador and turn the responsibility for the Americans and for this mission over to you." That got their attention and they backed off and then they thought about a different approach. That different approach entailed the use of helicopters.

They decided that they could use the basketball court of the embassy compound as a helicopter pad. They could position the helicopters in Sierra Leone, Huey 53s and then send them over and take out the people that way. The big question was how do you secure helicopters in the middle of a war zone because there was a war going on all around the city in Monrovia. What we did was we got the word out very clearly that we were going to evacuate, that it was going to be by helicopters and that the helicopters would be carrying sharp shooters and that anyone who fired on these helicopters, the fire would be returned with the intent to kill. That was obviously believed because in all of those flights we didn't lose a single person because not one of those helicopters was fired on. It worked very well. I could watch the helicopters as they came in, I watched them from the ambassador's residence and saw them land and take off. People would come in. They would be discharged and then they would be sent on commercial flights to wherever they were going. We did I think 400 Lebanese alone. Its amazing when you have this kind of problem. You find people from everywhere. We even had one Iraqi. If you keep in mind this was 1990 when Saddam was a big problem then, so we didn't know what to do with this Iraqi. In the end we did the right thing. We evacuated him. We brought him to Sierra Leone and put him on a plane and he went on his own, which I think was the right thing to do.

Q: Did you get, then this must have been essentially an administrative problem for you making sure that the right people got on the right planes and all. How did you do that?

YOUNG: We put everybody in the mission to work. We had a little bit of TDY (temporary duty) help, consular people had sent in some additional people as well. We managed. We worked it out with the local airlines. In some cases they had chartered flights. For example with the Lebanese they took a whole planeload out.

Before the evacuation, and shortly after Pete de Vos arrived in Liberia, the first peace talks to ever take place in trying to resolve the Liberian problem occurred at the American Embassy in Freetown where we had people from the Charles Taylor faction. We had people from civil society, basically from the churches and the chamber of commerce and people from the Liberian government as well. Those talks didn't succeed because Taylor really didn't empower his people to decide anything. Taylor, despite what he was saying at that time, that he really didn't want to govern Liberia, really didn't empower his people to do anything, so the talks in the end didn't go anywhere.

Q: Okay, well, we'll pick this up the next time and we're talking about the evacuation from Liberia and what you were doing, but what were you getting, first I'll ask you the next time, what were you getting about Charles Taylor and his crew, you know, what were your impressions and what were you hearing about them. Then we haven't talked much about your dealings with the Sierra Leone government except that you were getting much cooperation, but we'll come back to that. Great.

YOUNG: Yes. Okay, good.

Q: Today is the 21st of December, 2005. Johnny, talk a bit about what were you getting sort of at the time and the problem about Charles Taylor.

YOUNG: We weren't getting lots of information from Charles Taylor because he was making his push from up by the Ivorian border and moving closer and closer to the capital city. It was clear that what he had said initially about not wanting to assume power was not to be believed because it was clear that his goal was really to take over the presidency. His troops were very efficient. We were beginning to get reports of atrocities in villages. It was beginning to surface that he was ruthless, that the would take over villages and also exploit them economically for whatever resources could be found in those villages that his troops subdued and he just continued his press onto the capital city.

In Freetown, we just continued to monitor the situation and to help in whatever way we could. I related to you earlier about the evacuation of Liberia in 1990. That was quite an exercise for us, but in the meantime with the government of Sierra Leone we continued to have a normal bilateral relationship. The government was trying to reform itself. We were pressing them on reforming the economy. We were pressing them in terms of making it possible to have multiparty elections at some point. We were pressing them on human rights as well although the human rights problems there really stemmed from actions that had been taken by the previous president, Siaka Stevens. President Momoh was not accused of any human rights abuses; it's just that he never released from prison those persons that had been incarcerated by Siaka Stevens. The press was relatively free. We didn't have many problems there in terms of the press. The biggest problem was really one of the corruption. The country was deteriorating rapidly. It had no resources. The money that was coming in from the diamonds and from other resources was basically being squandered by the various people who could get their hands on the funds. As I said our relationship was normal. The government was helpful and it continued to plod along. They would come to us and plead for food assistance. I would go to our government and ask for aid. We turned our backs on Sierra Leone at that point. We knew the situation was bad. Infrastructurally it was bad, economically it was bad, politically a one party state, but still stable, not too many problems in terms of human rights, but we turned our backs on it. We said we didn't want to help. We pulled out the AID mission. That happened before I arrived there and we didn't want anything to do with it. We said, well, it's a new world now. The Berlin Wall has fallen. The Cold War is over. The former Soviet Union has disappeared and we have a new paradigm now and we're only going to help a certain number of countries that are clearly democratic.

Q: What about saying okay, we got Liberia and we have a responsibility, but you Brits have got Sierra Leone, that's your problem? Was there any of that attitude?

YOUNG: No. The British were very helpful. The British remained considerably more loyal to Sierra Leone than we did. I mean it was a former British colony, so I guess there's a greater natural inclination for them to do that. They didn't abandon the country. They did continue to help and they were very concerned and I think they would have done more if we had indicated that we were willing to do more.

Now, I must add something that will indicate the extent to which the government of Sierra Leone was very helpful to us. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, we put out the word to get cooperation from partners to form a coalition. That word went all over the world and our ambassadors all over the world went in to their host governments and attempted to get them to sign on to this coalition. I went to the government of Sierra Leone and I asked President Momoh. I explained to him what we wanted to do. I told him it would be good if Sierra Leone could be seen as contributing to this effort and he says, okay, I'll see what I can do. What he did was he put together a 26 man medical team and sent them to Iraq as part of the coalition effort. He and two other black African countries were the only sub-Saharan countries to do anything whatsoever for the coalition. The three were Senegal, Niger and Sierra Leone. No one else in all of Africa lifted a finger to do anything. They gave some lip service and that was about it, but nothing. Now, we know 26 persons is not enormous, but it really was significant symbolically and it was very important and it wasn't forgotten and I'll explain later on how it wasn't forgotten. That's indicative of the kind of support that we got from that government, but despite that, we kept our distance from helping Sierra Leone because there were other places that were sexier and more attractive at that time. This was a little small country and we figured oh, well, no big deal to us. War had not broken out in Sierra Leone yet. The war was going on next door in Liberia, so, you know, we never thought in terms of, well, let's try to help this country and maybe we can make it stronger so that this situation would not spill over from Liberia. We weren't thinking in that way at all. We were just thinking one country at a time.

Q: Was anybody explicitly spelling this out for you?

YOUNG: That was my job.

Q: I know, but I mean when you're back in Washington.

YOUNG: They just weren't interested.

Q: It was more a matter of indifference as opposed to somebody saying, look we've got priorities and you're not on them.

YOUNG: That was the story. I mean that was it plain and simple that it's a new ball game now and Sierra Leone doesn't figure into our priorities, despite what was going on at the time next door, not in Sierra Leone itself.

Q: Did you get any feel about the attitude of the African bureau and it's not just the African bureau, but I'm talking about the NSC and the White House and all towards sub-Saharan Africa at the time?

YOUNG: Well, I was after aid. I was after plain and simple food. That's what I wanted for that country. That's what they needed at that time. They needed military assistance as well because their military was in pretty bad shape although we continued with our military assistance program which paid off very handsomely and I will cite an example later on of how I think that paid off quite nicely. We continued to provide some assistance there because we thought that the military in Sierra Leone was fairly good relative to what was in the region. They were disciplined; well trained, not well equipped, but as good as could be expected under the circumstances. As I said, I wanted food. They were starving and couldn't get any help from AID, couldn't get any help from the State Department. At one point I went into the Department of Agriculture and I sought out a fellow I had met in The Hague. He was the AG attachï¿½ in The Hague, Bud Anderson, a wonderful man. He had then become the administrator for the food and agricultural service and I went to him and said, can you help me. Can we get a shipment of PL480 rice or grain of some kind, food, so that we can have it delivered to Sierra Leone, monetize it and then put the money in development projects. He says, I'll see what I can do. In the end he came through and I think we had a shipment of about five or six million dollars worth of rice and we did this and that staved off the hunger for a while and the desperation as well for a while, but things just continued to get worse. That was the last that the U.S. government provided any food of any kind during my time there.

I'd like to make a couple of other points about the war. At one point when the situation was getting so bad and we feared for the lives of American citizens in Liberia, we brought in the Marine amphibious ready group. It had I think about six ships. They were anchored off of Sierra Leone, close to Sierra Leone and Liberia with 5,000 Marines onboard so that if need be they could go in and evacuate. That wasn't necessary because in the end the evacuation was carried out by helicopter, but that group remained off the coast of Sierra Leone and Liberia for months until it finally was directed elsewhere. I could only think that if we had employed that group then to go in and put an end to this fighting, which they could have done easily, very easily, we would have saved that country. We would have saved the world so much suffering, not only in Liberia, but as well in Sierra Leone. There was no will whatsoever to do that, just the thought of it was anathema to the folks in Washington. They didn't want to hear anything about any kind of American intervention. This was an internal matter in Liberia and by God the Liberians were going to sort it out and we weren't going to get involved.

Q: Doe and the way he came in, with the slaughter of the cabinet and all that, had left such a bad taste in peoples' mouths. The name of Doe was sort of anathema anyway, this was a problem because whatever we did would have been essentially in support of Doe.

YOUNG: It would have been, but there are various types of devils.

Q: Yes, I know.

YOUNG: When you look back on Charles Taylor versus what Doe did it's like night and day. I never thought that I'd live to say that, but that is an absolute fact. As horrible as Doe was and as many bad things as he did, his evil was not at all comparable to the atrocities and the evils committed by Charles Taylor. Anyhow, I wanted to make that point about the Marine amphibious ready group being there, being prepared and having all of those resources available, but as I said there was absolutely no will whatsoever to introduce that force into Liberia, to end that problem there.

Q: Could they do any R&Rs in Sierra Leone or not or in groups?

YOUNG: They could have, but no they did serve as a supply center. Supplies, for example, for the military who were stationed in Sierra Leone would be affected through from Europe to the MARG and then from the MARG to Sierra Leone.

Q: MARG being?

YOUNG: The Marine Amphibious Ready Group. Yes. Particularly, mail and food and things like that because we had all of these helicopters based in Freetown and the men who took care of those had to be fed and they got their mail and so on. We had military people and we had our embassy in Monrovia that also received supplies and other equipment that way as well.

I remember the embassy in Monrovia needed a new generator. The generator was purchased and was flown to the MARG. Then the helicopter was supposed to pick it up and fly it from the MARG to Monrovia. The helicopter picked up this, I think it was like a 15,000 pound generator. I mean a real behemoth and lifted it up, up, up and then the helicopter tilted slightly to the side, a little bit more to the side and dropped the generator which sank to the bottom of the sea. It was quite a loss, but unfortunately these things do happen. The pilot was subsequently court-martialed and all of those kinds of things, which is what the military do in situations like that.

So, we had this evacuation. We took out 2,400 people from over 40 different nationalities. They were taken out by Huey 53s I think they're called, those big helicopters. Those helicopters would land at a facility near a big hotel in Freetown, disgorge its passengers and then the passengers would then be taken to buses and what have you and then they had to go over the channel to get their planes to leave Sierra Leone. One of the funny things that occurred was among the children who lived near this helipad. Across the street from the helipad there was a fence and these kids would sit on this fence and they found that as the helicopter passed overhead the downdraft was so powerful it would blow them all over. It would knock them all off the fence. They found this the greatest game. They would just sit on this fence and wait for the helicopters to pass over and then they'd all get rolled over, just like ducks. It was really cute. They would just wait there and wait there. They thought that was just the funniest game. I thought that was cute, too. One of those images I think I will always remember.

In 1991, about March, things had quieted down; the big part of the evacuation was over. The group that had come into to do the evacuation left Sierra Leone and we had smaller commercial planes to go back and forth at that point. The airport in Liberia was not open, but there were small craft, aircraft that would go in and take people out. Once in a while I'd get a call from Ambassador de Vos. Johnny, you've got to help me get this man out. It was somebody in the government who was considered a destabilizing person to have around so we would get him out and get him to Europe or the States or whatever the case may be. We had several cases like that.

I'll never forget one of them. Pete called and said, oh, you've got to help me get this guy out and we got him out and he was one of the worst killers going. If he had stayed there he would have been a really destabilizing force, so we got him out. I remember looking at him and saying to myself, my God, he really doesn't look like a killer. He looks just as normal as anybody else. I remember the DCM at that time, Gary Maybarduk, it was 1990.

Q: DCM where?

YOUNG: In Freetown. We had worked so hard on Liberia. It was almost to the detriment of our bilateral relationship. There was so little that we could do with it in terms of any kind of support from Washington, we just did the best we could. We had our self-help projects and things like that. We tried to give some support to civil society - projects that would encourage democracy, the press, and little community groups to help themselves with various little projects to improve health and sanitation and water. That was very useful. We had a very active Peace Corps program and that worked very nicely. Our efforts really were on Liberia and my deputy and I looked at each other one morning and said, wow, its at last quiet. We were feeling very good. Then we got a report in I think it was March of 1991. We heard that rebels had crossed over into Sierra Leone from Liberia. Initially we said, oh my God, but we didn't think that it would really get worse. We thought that the government forces would be able to put it down and that would be the end of it. Well, that wasn't the end of it because the government forces were so badly equipped. Although they were not too badly trained, they just didn't have equipment. The rebels that came over were much better equipped, very disciplined and undisciplined both, and they began to make inroads into Sierra Leone.

Q: Were these Charles Taylor types?

YOUNG: Definitely. I left out a key development that occurred prior to this point and I'd like to go back to that. The economic community of West Africa, ECOWAS, became involved in trying to bring about peace to Liberia and trying to bring an end to the problem there. They had put together a peace force. It was stationed in Sierra Leone and it agreed to go into Liberia and try to bring about peace. They would try to do it militarily. These forces were made up of Guineans and Nigerians and I don't recall some of the other groups from Africa, but they were headed by a Nigerian and subsequently a Guinean. It was basically between the Nigerians and the Guineans as to who headed up this group and they went in. They were based in Sierra Leone and they went in and they stopped Charles Taylor's forces from advancing further into Monrovia. Taylor was just about at the presidential palace, almost had the prize in his hands when this economic community of West African force went in and stopped him. He was furious, absolutely furious. He made it known that he resented President Momoh's allowing these forces to come into Liberia and to basically have stopped him. He said that he was going to overthrow the government of Sierra Leone and he was going to get back at them. He made that public, it was clear, that was at that time. Anyhow, ECOWAS went in and ECOWAS kept him from assuming power. That's to be kept in mind because later on his forces do exactly what he said he wanted them to do at that point.

Anyhow these rebels entered Sierra Leone, crossed over from Liberia. They began to take over points held by the Sierra Leone military. The fighting went on. It increased as the months went by. The military officers who were trying to stave off the rebels complained to the government that they didn't have supplies, they didn't have medicines, they didn't have food and on and on and the government ignored them. I wouldn't say the government ignored, but the government basically didn't respond sufficiently to their pleas for assistance and this is key. Anyhow we monitored the situation. We asked Washington for help for this government. The help wasn't forthcoming. The Sierra Leone forces struggled as best they could to deal with this problem. It was like a festering sore that basically was sort of staunched, but would just open up from time to time. That went on for some months.

Then, at the end of the quick Gulf War two things happened that gave Sierra Leone recognition for what it had done in becoming a part of the coalition. First, we got word from the military that they had something like sixty 40-foot containers of meals ready to eat. MREs. I said I'll take them and this would be a nice way to say thank you to this little country that helped us during the Gulf War. So they shipped the 60 containers to Sierra Leone. We arranged to have those MREs distributed to churches and it was a big success. That was number one, thank you.

Number two was in March of 1992. We got word that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, wanted to visit the three African countries that had contributed to the coalition effort. This was going to be his first trip ever to Africa. Powell wanted to visit the three countries that had contributed to the coalition effort and thank them personally for their support. Those countries were Senegal, Niger and Sierra Leone. He was also going to make a stop in Nigeria, but the stop in Nigeria was to encourage the government there to reform itself and to change its ways. He went first to Senegal. You may not recall, but Senegal lost an entire planeload of its soldiers during the Gulf effort. One of their planes went down with their soldiers and they lost everyone. I think it was 90 some soldiers. It was quite a tragedy. Anyhow he went to Senegal, had a good visit there, then he came to Sierra Leone where he was welcomed like the king of England. The Sierra Leoneans were just absolutely ecstatic that he came. He had a terrific visit. The government loved him. The people loved him. He liked the people. He liked the country. We showed him some things that he wasn't aware of. One was an island where slaves were basically kept, captured and kept on that island before they were shipped to the New World. That New World in terms of Sierra Leone meant they were shipped basically to the United States or to Cuba or to the United States via Cuba. In fact it was from this island that the ship the Amistad left.

Q: Oh, yes, the famous mutiny and takeover.

YOUNG: That's right. A Sierra Leonean by the name of Sengbe Pieh who led the mutiny on the Amistad. That was when it left Cuba for the United States and, if you recall, John Adams came out of retirement and argued their case. Really one of the first civil rights cases before the supreme court and he won. The mutineers were set free and it really was a great moment I think in American history. Anyhow, we showed them that island. We showed them other things and he was prepared then to move on to the next phase of his trip to Niger when there was a report of an attempted coup in Niger. He canceled the Niger trip and stayed with us an extra two days. We just had a wonderful time with him. One of the things that we did was to arrange for a dinner, just a very private dinner at the residence. We had Denny Bray and Art Lewis. Art Lewis had been the American ambassador to Sierra Leone prior to Cynthia Perry. He also happened to be the first cousin of Colin Powell. So it was a very nice evening. We wanted to do a Jamaican meal for him because he has Jamaican ancestry. We found all of the ingredients and we wanted to prepare this one Jamaican specialty called Ackee, salt fish and Ackee. We got the salt fish and we found an Ackee tree.

Q: How do you spell that?

YOUNG: A-C-K-E-E, I think, Ackee. Now, this Ackee tree is very interesting. It produces a fruit that looks like an opened avocado, that's what it looks like inside. We had a friend there. She was Jamaican and she knew how to make this dish. We asked her to make it for us. She said yes, I'll do it, but you have to get the Ackee. She told us where this tree was and we went there. Now, this tree, this Ackee, you have to allow it to open by itself naturally. You can't force it open. If you force it open and eat it you die instantly. It's a deadly poison. The Sierra Leoneans don't touch it at all. They don't bother with it one way or the other. While I was observing, while this fellow was collecting these Ackees that had opened up naturally and had fallen to the ground this little Sierra Leonean man came over. In Creole he asked what are you doing with this fruit from this tree. Her fellow said, we're going to cook them. He says oh you are, are you? He says yes. He says when. Oh, we're going to cook them tonight. This little Sierra Leonean fellow said, well, you'll have some dead people later on this evening because they know this tree as being just a deadly poison. But it is not poisonous if you eat it the proper way, allowing it to open naturally and then you scoop the fruit out. It looks like scrambled eggs when it's cooked. We had Ackee and salt fish and the rice with peas and jerk chicken and just a wonderful evening of relaxation and good conversation. It was really very, very special.

Q: I take it no one died.

YOUNG: And no one died.

Q: If I would have heard the story I think I would have thought twice about serving it.

YOUNG: Yes, I know, but that was Colin Powell's trip to Africa and our first time meeting him. I'll tell you something else he did that indicated to me that this is a very special man. We had had a photo op for the diplomatic corps and for other VIPs with Powell because he was such a well-known celebrity. He had gotten us through the Gulf War and of course was known all over the world. I remember asking him why didn't he retire. I asked him, "Why didn't you retire and make your money the way Schwarzkopf did?" He says, "I'm a military man. I am committed to my profession. I'm committed to the government. I plan to serve my full term. I'm going to retire in a couple of years. If there's money to make, I'll make it. If not, I won't worry about it." I thought that was wonderful.

Then, after this photo op for the VIPs and the members of the diplomatic corps, I got a call from the woman who ran the British Council. This is equivalent to our United States Information Office. She was a single parent and she asked me if I would ask the good general if she could come over with her children and take a couple of pictures. I said, well, I'll ask him. I asked him and he said, sure, have them come over. They came over to the residence and we introduced each other and we began to take pictures. She had a little girl eight years old and a boy about 12. They took pictures with General Powell and I thought it was all over. He said, just a minute and he took off his jacket with all of the medals on the side. He took it and he put it around the shoulders of the little girl and he said, now isn't that better, let's take some more pictures. That's a really sweet, touching, personal thing. There are not many people who would do that who would be that thoughtful and kind. I said this is a really special great guy.

Q: Now, did the question of the Sierra Leone military and of the Taylor incursion come up when he was there?

YOUNG: It didn't. I mean he met with the military. The military fellow described their problem in the north as dealing with some rebels who had come over from Sierra Leone, but it was never regarded at that point as a major threat to the country. I mean if we thought it was a threat to the country we wouldn't have even allowed Powell to come in. It seemed to be just a local problem way out in the north or west somewhere, and the government figured it had it contained at that point. That was in March of 1992. So, Powell left. We had a very successful visit. It couldn't have been better, really.

Then in April of 1992, for Easter, my wife and I decided to visit some of our former posts in West Africa. We went to Guinea and Senegal and the Gambia. We had a very nice time, just loved it. We returned home on the 26th of April. Before going to bed that night we were talking about the trip and about our good fortune and being in Sierra Leone and how well things had gone. We said, you know, we've been very lucky. This has been a fascinating assignment in a poor country, wonderful people, but we've been blessed. We haven't had any coups. The government has been helpful and we've been very lucky. We kissed each other and went to bed. The 29th of April, 1992, I went to the office as usual. We were beginning our work and it must have been around 9:00 or so. I think we were getting ready for country team meeting. We heard what sounded like gun shots. Someone said, oh, what's that? We heard it again. I went over to the window and looked down on the road below and saw a motorbike going around this big tree called the cotton tree that was in front of the circle on which the embassy was located. I said, oh, that's the backfire from this motorcycle going around the cotton tree. Then we heard it again and with greater intensity and greater thunder. Then I looked down the street and could see the fire spewing from the barrels of these big guns that were mounted on trucks. I screamed to everyone hit the floor and get under your desks and that's what we did. It was clear immediately that there was an insurrection underway. I got on the phone immediately to call the president. I got him and he said, oh don't worry, these are just young military boys discontented, don't worry about the situation. We have it under control. It's okay. So, we called our people right away, told them don't move, stay where you are. Try to get to a protected area in your residences and what have you. My secretary, a woman of incredible skill and talent, but even more noteworthy is her calm. Her name is Lupe. She called my wife and in the calmest way possible said to her, "Mrs. Young, this is Lupe. I'm calling because we seem to be experiencing a little bit of problems at the moment. There seems to be some gun fire in the street." I mean just calm like that. She said, "I just want you to take it easy and try to protect yourself and go to a safe area." My wife says, "Well, where are you calling from?" "I'm under my desk at the moment on the floor. The ambassador told us all to hit the floor." But I mean just calm like that and then my wife called the other wives in the area and had them all come over to the residence so they were all congregated there at the residence.

For the next several days we remained at the residence and it goes to show you, you never know how things will work out. The DCM happened to be sick on that occasion and I had changed DCMs at that point. The new DCM was Frank Urbancic. Frank was sick that day and when this incident occurred he couldn't get to the embassy. We had to carry on without him. The next couple of days we were trapped in the embassy. We couldn't go anywhere. We heard gun shots all night long, fighting all night long. During the day I continued to call the president. He continued to give me assurances that everything was okay, but when I began to call and call and couldn't get an answer I knew that it was over. That he had fled and that someone else had taken control of the government. Then later on it came over the radio that that in fact had happened. I then got a call from the man who was the head of the ministry of the interior, a very feared fellow. He was in hiding. He was calling me to see if he could seek refuge in the embassy. I wanted to let him in to save his life, but I realized that that could possibly pose a risk for us because the folks who were leading this effort were after him. I cabled Washington for guidance on what to do and they said, you know, don't take him in. I didn't and unfortunately later on they found him and shot him.

A couple of things happened during that first night. One was my secretary slept on the sofa and then I had a love seat. The DCM's secretary slept on the love seat and I slept on a chair and put my feet on a hassock or hammock, hassock. All night long we heard the rat a tat tat and boom boom of machine guns. The DCM's secretary was a woman who had come into the Foreign Service rather late after raising eight children and her name was Jenny Leon Gariro and Jenny had had one previous assignment. I think it was in India somewhere and she came to us in Sierra Leone. She had an incredible wit. There we were at 2:00 in the morning a small lull in the sound of gunfire and she says out loud, "This is what I always dreamed about in joining the Foreign Service, sleeping with the ambassador." We had such a good laugh and it was such a nice way to break the tension of the moment.

Anyhow the next day things were still very tense. I think it might have been on the third day, I put the word out that we wanted to meet the new head of the government, whoever that is. Kiki Munshi the public affairs officer went out and put the word out that this was what the American ambassador wanted. We got word back that they would be prepared to do it and we agreed on the time. The venue was going to be at the embassy and we also invited the other Western embassies as well. We invited all of the embassies that wanted to come. That took place I think about like 5:00 or 6:00 on the 3rd day. The new leader was a fellow named Strasser. He was a young fellow, 20 some years old. He had been one of our IMET graduates, International Military Educational and Training graduates. I think that had a very good positive impact on him in terms of what I said to him. He came in with his folks at 5:00 and I had the people from the embassy there. I had the other embassies there. They explained to us that they really had no intention of taking over the government, but the government wouldn't pay any attention to their pleas for assistance. They came to town to basically address the government, but when the government wouldn't pay any attention to them, they decided they would just take it over. It was almost really by accident that this happened. If President Momoh and his group had paid attention to these fellows perhaps this wouldn't have occurred, but it did. I told them we were very sorry that there had to be a change in government as a result of fighting and the killing of people. I pleaded with them not to take any retaliation or retaliatory measures against those persons suspected of being involved in this. I begged them, pleaded with them in the presence of these other diplomats. I think it had a positive impact. I told him that we were thinking of possibly evacuating. I wasn't sure, but if that happened we were doing it because we thought it was in the best interest of our people to do so. Then they left.

We subsequently had a country team meeting to discuss what we should do. We decided that we would evacuate, that the situation was too unstable and too unpenetrable at that point, so we decided that we would evacuate. They hadn't decided who was going to be at the leadership of the government. We thought that this could be the beginning of further tensions within this group. We decided we would evacuate. The Department agreed and we got the word out. We managed to get all the volunteers in, all the missionaries, anybody who wanted to go, we got them out. We did it within 48 hours.

Q: Where did they go?

YOUNG: They went to Senegal.

Q: By driving?

YOUNG: No, by plane. By plane and at the time of the coup, something occurred. We had a medical team in town. They were looking at eyes and teeth and mouths and everything else. One of these military medical teams. In fact when it happened the military team wanted to pull out and leave us there. I spoke to the head of the European command or EUCOM and told them we can't have this. If we're going to be evacuated, we all have to go together. He gave the order to keep the military there and we would all leave together. He would send in whatever additional resources were needed to take out the other Americans as well, but the military, they were ready to pull out and leave us all there. I was shocked that they would basically put their tail between their legs and take off. We did it on a first come, first serve basis and they helped us. The new government regretted that we did that, but I told them we had no choice. Our first concern was the safety of our nationals and that's what we had to do.

I made some decisions also that were not in accord with the emergency evacuation plan in terms of who would stay and who would leave and that sort of thing. For example, I kept the doctor, the Peace Corps doctor. All of the other Peace Corps folks including the director and the other associate directors, they all left. I kept the GSO, but not the admin officer and I kept the public affairs officer, Kiki Munshi. That's the way it went. We managed to do, we just did everything. We all flipped around and did all kinds of jobs. We had the Peace Corps doctor doing political reporting and on and on. I mean we just did what had to be done. Just a couple of days after the coup the DCM was able to get in.

Q: I have a question on this. What was developing, in the first place, did you feel that the government of Momoh was sort of oblivious to the military problems I mean essentially that was it just not responsible, how did you find it?

YOUNG: I just think that they were strapped for cash. They were strapped for supplies and they didn't give them the attention they needed. I mean they were people who had been wounded in the fighting to try and keep these rebels at bay, that hadn't been treated, couldn't be treated because the government had nothing to treat them with. Some of the ones who came on this journey to put their petitions before the government, they were still wrapped up in bandages and what have you from wounds that they had incurred in fighting the rebels. The government just was not serious about listening to what was coming from its military people.

Q: Was there such a thing as a presidential guard as part of the army?

YOUNG: Yes, they had that.

Q: Were they supporting the president?

YOUNG: They were loyal to the president, definitely, yes.

Q: Did capitalism ever appear at all?

YOUNG: At this point it didn't. This was not, at this point it was not. Just before the coup I remember there were reports beginning to surface of atrocities in the area where the rebels had been fighting the government forces. A Peace Corps volunteer came to us one day and said oh, ambassador, you know I saw something I've never seen before. I saw a child soldier and he had a machine gun. I was scared to death with this little boy and a machine gun.

It wasn't too far from Freetown where he saw this. This was the first time anyone had seen a child soldier in Sierra Leone, the first time. That was the beginning of something that would really manifest itself quite a bit in Sierra Leone in the coming years as well as the atrocities. The Sierra Leoneans were a very peaceful, gentle people. They never engaged in atrocities and pillaging and burning villages and all of these kinds of things. They were poor, but just very nice folks. The first signs of these kinds of problems were seen before the coup occurred.

Q: When you say atrocities, I think later we heard about children with ____.

YOUNG: That's right, yes, not only children, I mean adults, babies, it was awful.

Q: What was motivating this?

YOUNG: This came from Charles Taylor. These are the kinds of tactics. The man who was leading the rebel forces at that time was a fellow by the name of Foday Sankoh. No one had heard of this fellow, no one knew him. They knew that there had been a Foday Sankoh who was a military man and had been put in jail. No one knew where he was or what he had done, but he had obviously gone over to Liberia and lined up with Taylor and then had crossed back over. Sierra Leone had no history whatsoever of the kinds of atrocities that occurred basically for the next decade while that war was underway.

Q: What developed, I mean your people left. They went to.

YOUNG: Senegal and then from Senegal they went home, went to the States or wherever they were going.

Q: What happened at the time you left what happened?

YOUNG: Until the time I transferred?

Q: Yes.

YOUNG: Oh, well, we continued our work with the new government trying to establish some kind of rapport. That was the only alternative. The new government was young and confused. Despite promises that it was going to be different and they were going to lead the country in a new direction, it became apparent to us rather quickly that this was going to be more of the same. The first thing they did was confiscate all of the fancy Mercedes and BMWs that they could put their hands on. Then they took over the fanciest villas. Then there were shipments of liquor to the villas and the girls and on and on. It was the spoils of having taken over the government. It was clear that these were not serious people in terms of governing a nation. They were falling into the traps of what people often fall into when they get into a position of power. They want all of the things they think that go with power, the fancy house and the cars and the girls and the booze and the food and everything else. We could see that.

Some of them were Catholic. I went to mass one Sunday. Several of the top people in the new government pulled up in their BMWs. They hopped out in their military uniforms carrying their machine guns. We had a Catholic priest who had been there for 40 some years. He stopped in the middle of the mass and told them, "Get these guns out of this church. There is no place for guns in this church." The fellows listened to him and they took the guns outside and he said, don't bring any guns into this church. Then he continued with the mass. After the mass I said, "Father, I'm amazed that you addressed those fellows the way that you did." He says, "Oh, sure, I know them all. I remember when they use to piss on the side of my cassock." He did. He knew them all from the time they were babies. It was clear that this was not a serious group and that this country was going to be in for trouble as it sorted itself out.

Q: Well, I mean obviously you were reporting back what you were seeing.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: What was the response from Washington?

YOUNG: Oh, the response in Washington wasn't too enthusiastic. They basically wanted stability. They wanted us to encourage the government to do the right thing, to hold elections as soon as possible. Don't embark on any programs of killing. It's the standard stuff that you get. Let's have elections as quick as possible and when you turn over the government to civilian rule and those kinds of things. It was the standard.

Q: What was the feeling, I mean sort of going into it sounds like a bordello gone wild or something like that, delivered your message.

YOUNG: They were beginning to learn quickly in terms of responding in a way that provided positive answers. They said they planned for transition to democratic governance and those kinds of things and what they were going to do and on and on. They weren't going to tolerate corruption and this and that. I met with a group of Lebanese businessmen and the Lebanese business people in Sierra Leone were quite a force to be reckoned with. I mean they controlled a substantial part of that economy. They said, oh, yes, we met with so and so and so the new president and the new minister of the economy and on and on and you know, they refused our offer of assistance. Assistance really meant bribes and the head of them said, well, that's okay. Give us two months, we'll have them just where we want them. They were right.

Anyhow, things were calm for the following month. They were calm the next month and then I began to press to try and get the evacuation order lifted so that people could return. I was leaving in July and I wanted my wife back so that we could say farewell together and we could leave together. There was resistance to this in Washington because at the time I think there was a 90-day rule or something like that. They weren't going to look at you until 90 days had passed and then they would make a decision if they should lift it or not. Anyhow in our case they lifted it after I think 30 days and my wife was able to come back and we were able to conclude our assignment there and then move on to Washington. Before I left I received a telegram from Ed Perkins who was the Director General of the Foreign Service. He said, "Johnny, I have a key position in my office that I will be filling and I've looked around at people for this position and I've decided you are the perfect man for it, to be the director of Career Development and Assignments." I sent him a message back saying thanks very much, but no thanks. The last time I was in Washington in personnel I developed high blood pressure and haven't gotten rid of it since. I don't want to go to Washington; I really want to stay in the field. He cabled back and said, no, I want you for this job and I said, no thank you. Then I tried to get the support of my friends in high places like Mary Ryan and Ambassador Hicks and a few others to weigh it on my behalf with the Director General and they said, Johnny, forget it. He wants you for this job, you should do it and that's that. That's how I ended up as the Director of Career Development and Assignments. Perkins called me up and we spoke and he said, "Johnny, you take this job. I assure you I'll take care of you." That was that. I did transfer to Washington. Before I had even gotten to Washington Perkins was transferred out of the job and moved to the United Nations and Genta Hawkins Holmes was his replacement as the Director General of the Foreign Service.

Q: So, you started that job what in '92?

YOUNG: In 1992.

Q: For how long?

YOUNG: Two years.

Q: How did you find, well, in the first place, how did Ambassador Holmes operate?

YOUNG: She was I would say very informal. She was very laid back, relaxed. I think she listened most of the time to her various section chiefs. But if she had it in her mind that she wanted something done in a particular way or that she frankly didn't like a particular person, you couldn't change her mind. I saw that and witnessed it and couldn't understand it, but she was unshakable if she didn't want to support a particular person. Before I went to that job I found out that I suddenly had hundreds of friends than I ever realized. Literally, it was in the hundreds. You know, they all congratulated me and this and that, no I'm going to stop by to see you and the Christmas cards and on and on. It was a wonderful job I must say. I liked it very much and I'll tell you about it in a moment.

Before we returned to Washington in 1989 we had sold the house that we had lived in on Leland Street in Chevy Chase, Maryland. We couldn't upgrade in the same neighborhood so we moved to a nearby neighborhood in Kensington, Maryland.

Q: Talk about your job. What were the responsibilities? What did it involve?

YOUNG: The Office of Career Developments and Assignments had responsibility for assigning all of our Foreign Service personnel and for providing career counseling to all of our Foreign Service personnel. The assignments were carried out by chiefs of geographic divisions and we also had counselors for all of the various specialties in the Foreign Service. An assignment was worked out in conjunction with these assignment chiefs who worked for the bureaus, who basically represented the bureaus' interests and these counselors who basically represented the officers or the employees of the Foreign Service. The goal was to work an assignment in such a way that you basically had agreement among these elements and then an assignment would be made. I had about 100 people working for me in that office between the assignments offices and the counselors and the senior training division. All these different offices were part of the Career Development and Assignments. When I was there people were saying, oh this office is too big and the Department was looking for ways to cut it. A huge reorganization was underway while I was there. Fortunately it was concluded after I left and I think they reduced the office. Now the office is even bigger than it was before. They realized that if you're serious about career counseling and if you're serious about assignments there's just a certain way you have to do it.

Q: Of course, too, unlike the normal civil service and most other businesses, assignments are almost the depths of our organization because its not resources, its people. We have I don't know it could be 200 posts to staff and to get it right with all the problems in it, there's no way you can get around it.

YOUNG: Exactly. Yes. There were various discussions of well, we ought to do it like the military and on and on. Well, that would be fine if we had the kind of disciplined service like the military. We could do it with fewer people and we could say to someone you're going to X post and finished, case closed, but we have become a service that has become more family oriented, more family friendly and we try to work out assignments in a way that is beneficial to the employee in terms of his personal needs and requirements, in terms of the needs and requirements of his family and in terms of the needs and requirements of the Service.

It takes human resources people to get all of this sorted out. You have competing interests: the interests of the Service, of the employee, of his family and professional needs and what have you to get all of this sorted out. In addition, we were going through a period when we were expanding posts. We needed people to fill these new posts in the former Soviet Union. We were closing posts in order to get resources to open up these new places. It was quite a juggling act to make all of this come out. We weren't getting any additional people at all to help us with this.

Q: Especially during a time moneywise.

YOUNG: Oh, it was awful. It was dreadful. This was the time when we decided, well, we won't take in any junior officers this year and we will cut the numbers. This was when we really went on a huge diet and reduced the intake of junior officers and other officers as well. It was not an easy time.

Q: At this time, I come from an era where there was, it sounds way off, but you look for discipline, you put in your wish list due on the 1st of April, known as the April Fool's Report and you're assigned somewhere and you've got to go. That is for most of us. Those who knew better would negotiate and work it out, but some of the old boys network and all. If you weren't smart, you just submitted. I wasn't smart. I didn't understand. I've got the feeling that positions are negotiated, almost an officer appears with his or her lawyer. How did you find it at the time? Did you find it was hard getting people to go to places?

YOUNG: Yes it was hard to get people to go to places they didn't want to. We used to tell people that they should be known to the offices that they want to be assigned to, but we didn't encourage strong lobbying as is the case today. Today the lobbying effort is intense. I mean it is just unbelievable. I'm no longer in the Foreign Service and I continue to receive requests from people begging me to write letters and e-mails to various offices and individuals to support them for the various jobs that they're bidding on. The bidding process is more intense. I think it's more stressful. It's more automated. It's certainly automated in terms of making sure the round pegs fall into the round holes and that sort of thing, but the personal involvement is considerably more, the lobbying.

Q: Let's talk, break this down into various parts. What about, let's talk about junior officers. What was your impression of junior officer recruitment particularly just plain junior officer recruitment and also the effort that goes on, they're so wrong for minorities. What was your, when you got there, what was your feeling of how we were dealing with all this.

YOUNG: Well, this was my second time in personnel. When I was first in personnel from 1979 to 1981 I was a counselor for admin officers. I was the deputy to Mary Ryan in counseling administrative types. They weren't all administrative officers, but just administrative types. When I returned in '92 it was as director of the office, so things had changed considerably. We were still getting in high quality top-notch junior officers. I certainly didn't see any problem with the quality of officers. Junior officers, however, during this later period in '92 to '94 were certainly more outspoken in terms of what they wanted and what they didn't want and what they would do and what they wouldn't do and their rights and prerogatives and that sort of thing. That had changed a lot. It wasn't a question of the new recruit receiving his orders and marching off to duty. No, they came in with their list of demands. It was just unbelievable. I couldn't believe some of them. They come in knowing everything and wanting everything. In terms of minority recruitment, the emphasis had shifted quite a bit. When back in that '79 to '81 period we still had a minority entry program and we had a mid-level program that could bring in minorities in at the mid-level. That ended very quickly when the Republican administration came into power, that was the end of that. That was the source of some minority talent that we got into the Service. All of that had ended by 1992. The efforts to recruit minorities had shifted to programs initially like the foreign affairs fellows program, which subsequently evolved into the Pickering program. That was one tack that seemed to be working, that has subsequently shifted. There was certainly a great effort, but the goal was to find a way to get minorities interested in the Service without breaking the law. A great emphasis was placed on the diplomat in residence program. Using the diplomats in residence as a recruiting tool to encourage minorities to study the right subjects in school and to prepare for taking the Foreign Service exam. That certainly had changed. I think there's still a great emphasis on the persons in those programs as a recruiting tool for the Service and it has worked.

Q: By the time you were there it was '92 to '94 period, had things sort of leveled off so it was no longer a particular program getting female junior officers to come in?

YOUNG: That was not an issue. No.

Q: Because at one point it was a major issue.

YOUNG: Yes, when I was in personnel back in '79 to '81 period. If you were to look at statistics at how many women were entering the Service at that time versus how many were entering during that '92 to '94 period, not because of me, but just because it had changed considerably. Yes. We were in '92 anxious to find good opportunities for women officers so that we could give them an opportunity to compete with their male colleagues. We needed to make up for that.

Q: On assignments, did you find was there essentially people trying to go around the system I mean you all would come up with the idea that X should go into Y position because it makes sense and somebody's got to fill Y position, but X would then go off and say I don't want that I want Z position.

YOUNG: I always looked at it in terms of people being along the bell curve. You had those on one end who really didn't need the system. They were so good and so well known and so popular and so highly visible that people were fighting to get them. Those people would always be taken care of. Then on the other extreme you had the poor schlub that nobody wanted, nobody fought for, nobody would take. You had to really beg people to take them. Then you had the people in the middle, which is where the majority of us fell in and we had to get all of that sorted out. Yes.

Q: Well, did you find during this period you were there it was we straddled the Bush I and Clinton a bit. Did you find were political appointees, were they a factor in getting reaching down and pushing people as far as they should in making assignments?

YOUNG: That didn't affect my operation that much and it didn't affect us really because we were dealing with career positions. We might have had one or two exceptions to that where maybe some ambassador decided he was going to put a political appointee in a position that would normally be held by a DCM or something like that, but that rarely happened. All of the positions we dealt with were career positions except at the ambassadorial level and that was really a matter of what the White House wanted to do.

Q: Certainly the director general and above.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: What about discipline matters or selection out, problems. I think and this is a period if I recall that all of a sudden sexual harassment became everybody was thinking oh my God, am I being sexually harassed or am I a harasser?

YOUNG: The sensitivity about that subject was on everyone's mind. When I was in the job as director of career development and assignments, I decided that because of this sexual harassment business that I would not meet with any female officer in my office with the door closed. I always kept the door open and that was how we had our talks and what have you. I had a number of women on my staff. Suddenly you have a female colleague who decides that she's going to have a makeover or something like that. She comes in looking very different. I would reserve comment and not compliment them on how nice they look or something like that. You just never knew when it was going to be, how it was going to be interpreted. I was very aware of that. At that time it was a big issue.

Q: What were your biggest problems?

YOUNG: Fights with the bureaus over their choices for positions based on favoritism, based on the old boy's network and that sort of thing versus our perception of what a candidate needed, you know, versus our perception of who should have that job. We had those problems that we had to resolve. Those were the biggest problems. Then you would assign someone to a position and suddenly for medical or personal reasons the job would fall apart at the last minute and the person couldn't go and then you had to scramble and find someone else. Those kinds of things happened. Problems of bringing people out, breaking jobs because of problems at post. At one post we had to suddenly take this man out. He was brought out in handcuffs because of terrible allegations of child abuse. So, we had all kinds of problems. Also the problem of one ambassador who allegedly slugged his political officer. He denied it.

Q: Well, there are policy disagreements.

YOUNG: The ambassador denied it. One day, Jim Whitlock who was the counselor for political officers came running to my office. He said, I have so and so on the phone. I said, what's wrong. He says, well, he claims the ambassador just slugged him. I said, oh, well, tell him don't do anything. Just cool it. Later on the fellow calmed down. He never retracted his story, but the ambassador never agreed that he did it, so we never knew where the truth lay in that particular case.

Q: I would imagine that did you find yourself having to deal with clubs like the Soviet club, the Berlin I mean the German club, the Italian club?

YOUNG: We knew that those existed. I'd look at those as part of the old boy's network, but that was another kind of network. No, we didn't have problems of that type. The bureaus were the, they were the managers of those situations.

Q: Well, did you have a problem over staffing that became known as the Stans, the former Soviet, because some of those places were, they weren't.

YOUNG: They were horrible.

Q: They were all horrible. I spent three weeks in Bishkek as a retiree, but talking to the consular service and Kyrgyzstan. They were essentially a run down cottage.

YOUNG: They were, but these were pioneers. The people who went out there were pioneers. They were the same as the ones who went to Francophone Africa or whatever and set up posts in those places in the '60s. These were the trailblazers. These people were wonderful and they did a fantastic job. The kind of esprit de corps we had was unbelievable and they volunteered. We forced no one into any of those assignments. The people who went out there did well by the Service and they did well by themselves also. In the end it helped many of them in their careers.

Q: How about.

YOUNG: This happened so suddenly and you had them all at once. Where were you going to get people? Where were you going to get an Azeri speaker and a Krygyzi speaker?

Q: I know that a number of my friends who by this time had retired were brought back in the Service were opening up posts. I mean did you find yourself using retired officers as a real resource?

YOUNG: Maybe they did, but that was not my bailiwick. That was another office that used WAEs (when actually employed). I didn't. We just dealt with the people we had and we pulled them from all over and they went and they did really the Lord's work in opening these places and living in such dreadful conditions.

Q: Did you have any problems with political ambassadors trying to change their staffs. In other words political ambassadors come from businesses somewhere else and are used to having control of people around them. Was this a problem for you?

YOUNG: It was. I mean that's always a problem. That's nothing new. I think that we do a better job of preparing political ambassadors before they go out on assignment these days than we did. So you don't have as much of that kind of problem as you did perhaps in the past of them saying well, I want so and so out of here. Just a wave of a hand and they're gone. We had some of that. I can't think of a particular case right now that was particularly egregious, but we did have them, definitely.

Q: What was the sort of you might say the spirit of the State Department from your perspective obviously that you were getting from the officers you were seeing during this particular time? Was the cutting down of funds and all this, when the Clinton administration came in, the administration, which came in, had very much a domestic outlook and Christopher was not a dynamic leader. I mean he was the president's policy advisor.

YOUNG: He was good in that sense, but no interest in leading and managing this place.

Q: I was going to say. There seemed to be a, it was not terribly an inspiring time at the beginning.

YOUNG: At the beginning it may not have been, but there was a great deal of admiration for Clinton and for his administration. Christopher was respected and got a great deal of respect, but he was not an inspirational leader at all. I think there was a sense of kind of drift. We were just treading water and that was about it until he left and then Madeleine Albright came in and things changed.

Q: During the time you were there the Balkans didn't present a particular problem or not?

YOUNG: From a staffing point of view we were more concerned with people coming out and where were we going to place them. People were being evacuated out of the Balkans then. I remember the siege of Sarajevo and Belgrade and on and on. In fact one of the fellows who closed down Zagreb, Mike Einik came to work for me following his closure of Zagreb. We were busy trying to find places for all these people who were coming out.

Q: Were there any other issues we should talk about at this period?

YOUNG: Well, we covered I think most of the issues. I was there for two years. My first director, my first deputy in that job was a woman named Lange Schermerhorn.

Q: Oh Lange and I go back to Vietnam.

YOUNG: Oh really. Yes, she was wonderful. I liked her a lot. Such a wise person. I liked her a lot. She was fair and witty and smart and I liked her very much. My only problem with her was that she was a rat packer. I mean you would go into Lange's office and you would look around and say, my God I've never seen so much paper and piles of stuff in my life. Yet I would say to her, Lange, do you have that note that we got from the director general and she'd go right over to it and say its right here. She was just wonderful. I liked her a lot. Then she was followed by a woman named Phyllis Ritoud. Phyllis was a good consular officer, a different type altogether. Just the opposite of Lange in terms of the tidiness of the office. Everything was in order. Very effective. Good judgment as well. I got along with both very well. Genta Hawkins Holmes was the Director General and Peter Burleigh was the principal deputy assistant secretary.

As I said, if Genta didn't like you, you might as well hang it up. I thought she was very good in many ways and did an excellent job. But one thing that I could not understand for the life of me. How she did her job as director general was amazing because Dick Moose, who was the Undersecretary for Management at that time, constantly looked over her shoulder and just about ran personnel. It was called personnel at that time, from his office. He treated her just horribly, I mean with the greatest disrespect, even in public meetings. She took it. And Genta was a woman who could out curse any sailor that I have ever run into. Yet she would smile and just do whatever he wanted. I remember once Peter Burleigh and I talking about it and he says, you know, first of all he knows better. He would never speak to me in that way and I can't understand at all why he treats her that way. I thought he treated her just dreadfully. If it had been at a lower level I am convinced that she could have filed a suit against him and would have won because we all saw it. It was just absolutely awful. I think you know she probably knew that he would have a big hand in anything she wanted following that job and in the end she got something very nice because she got Australia as ambassador. I guess we endure what we must in order to reap what we want. That was just one little inside. Peter, I thought. was an absolutely marvelous deputy. He gave Genta good advice. He gave all of us good advice. I found that he was always fair. He was decent. He was just a wise, good balanced deputy director general. He was just terrific and knowledgeable, just a good man, a solid man. Unfortunately he got very badly treated in the system.

Q: What happened?

YOUNG: He was designated as ambassador to the Philippines and we were all so happy for him and he was happy. He had his hearing. Everything went well. Then Senator Grassley, I think it was, put a hold on his assignment and it wasn't about Peter; it was about something else.

Q: Grassley from Iowa.

YOUNG: Yes and as I said it wasn't about Peter. It was about something else. This went on for months and months. In the meantime Peter began working on a project of this right sizing. I think that's what it was. This was going on for months and months and the man didn't have a job at that point. Somebody had replaced him in personnel and the new director general had come on, etc. Then Richard Holbrooke had been nominated to be our ambassador to the UN and there was a hold on Holbrooke. That's it, Holbrooke was held first. This went on for months and months and in the meantime Peter's nomination had not come up for a full vote by the senate. Then the Department began to negotiate with the senate and they said we've got to get Holbrooke broken so that he can be confirmed and go to the UN. After all of these negations, I think it was Grassley who said, okay, I'll lift the hold on Holbrooke and that's when he put the hold on Peter's assignment and that went on for months and months. After nearly a year there was no indication that it was going to be lifted. It wasn't against Peter. It was just a matter of principle because there was something that Grassley wanted from the Department. I don't know what it was, but he was holding the Department hostage for something and as a result he kept this hold on Peter's assignment. In the end Peter said I've had enough. One morning he went down to the retirement office and filled out the papers and left and has retired to Florida where he lives a very happy and contented life. So, that's what happened. It was awful, terrible.

Now, Peter had been ambassador at one point. I mean he was going on his second ambassadorial assignment. He had been ambassador at one point to Sri Lanka and had done very well there. Now before I left, Genta took very good care of all of us. I had been recommended to be ambassador to Luxembourg and the Secretary agreed. My name went over to the White House and it sat in the White House for three months waiting for a decision by the President. The word kept coming back, well, maybe, maybe not. We think its going to be political.

Q: It's almost always political.

YOUNG: Almost. Once in a while, I mean we had Ed Rowell there and that worked out, but you know, we just didn't know and I didn't get optimistic about it. In the meantime, I was considered for other prospects and those prospects did not work out. So, in the end I was asked would you be interested in going to Togo and I said that would be interesting. I have the language and its in West Africa, why not. I put my name in for Togo and that's what worked out and that's how I got to Togo in 1994.

Q: Today is January 4th, 2006. We're now moving into another year. You were in Togo from '94 to when?

YOUNG: '94 to '97.

Q: Okay, tell me at the time what was happening in Togo and how were the relations with the United States?

YOUNG: Relations with the United States were fair. They were not that great. We were not too pleased with Togo because since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, we had a whole new paradigm for our relationship with countries in Africa and in the rest of the world as well. Democracy was the name of the new game. We wanted Togo to move in a more democratic way. We wanted it to reform its economy. It wasn't doing any of these things. The ruler at that time was Gnassingbe Eyadema who had come to power in a coup in 1967. Other than Joseph Mobutu of the Congo who was still around then he was the second longest serving head of state in Africa. That meant that by sheer tenure or longevity he enjoyed a considerable amount of respect from his fellow African leaders despite the fact that some of them were changing and reforming and moving in the right direction. He was not. My mandate when I went to Togo was to try and get the country to change, to reform, both politically and economically.

Q: What was Eyadema doing in Togo? I mean with his people and with the economy?

YOUNG: One word. Nothing. Absolutely nothing and the people were very frustrated as a result of that. Togo was a model of development and stability at one time during the late '60s, rather I would say during the '70s and '80s. It was a vacation spot; French and other nationalities would fly in from all over to enjoy the beaches and the resorts. The hotels were first class. It was famous for being a nice little place of stability. At the height of Togo's fame was when a lot of other countries in Africa were moving towards the left and moving towards socialism and communism and things like that. Togo remained stable and it was very pro-Democratic, very loyal to France, very loyal to the United States. Eyadema came to the U.S. and was welcomed by our President and was welcomed at famous universities who had given honorary doctorates and things like that because he was considered a good soldier in the war with the communists. That worked too well for him at that time.

Then when he began to lose favor and the aid and support wasn't there anymore. The country began to decline and it continued its downward slope. The European Union had begun to make its financial assistance or economic assistance conditional on reform so they had reduced the amount they were giving. The French had reduced the amount they were giving although they were still the principal country contributing. The Germans were basically doing the same as we were doing and the Italians and all of the others. Of course there was nothing forthcoming in terms of any kind of development assistance from other African countries. They were there basically as part of this solidarity with the other African countries. He wasn't doing anything. We arrived. It was clear to us when we took a glance around that this country was fading. It had had a glorious past and now it was into a dowdy, seedy future. The buildings were all shabby and hadn't been painted. Mildew and moss were growing on them. The number one hotel in town had great prospects. You could tell it was a grand hotel at one time. It was the largest skyscraper in town. I think about 15 or 20 floors. They had about six or seven upper floors that were not even constructed and had never been finished. The elevator didn't work. The water didn't work. Just all kinds of problems, yet Togo continued to reach out and present itself as a place that was perfect for international conferences and gatherings and meetings of that type. The other hotel in town the other big one had a similar situation. You could see it had a glorious past at one time and was struggling just to keep its head above water.

Shortly after I arrived I presented my credentials to President Eyadema. He allowed me to bring along my deputy which was very nice although the deputy sat in an outer room. We had our tï¿½te-ï¿½-tï¿½te after the presentation of credentials. I looked at him and I said to myself, you know, you look just like you have been described in various narratives - as a snake. I mean he looked like a snake. He had these slanted eyes and the whites were not white, but sort of orangey looking and penetrating black centers to them. Very well groomed and coifed, but just something about him that was slippery and it came through. A very clever man.

Over the course of my time there I was invited to many functions. It used to break my heart to go to these things, but I had no choice. I was the representative of the U.S. and I was expected to be there. I used every opportunity possible to make known what we would like to see in that country. We would go to these dinners. He loved hosting various leaders who would come to Africa. Because of his longevity they came and paid respects. They paid deference to him and he was a good intermediary from time to time. I'll tell you at one point where he was particularly helpful to us. The French loved him. They loved him and they knew that they could use him for political reasons as an intermediary with other African leaders.

I remember when we were pushing so hard for reform the German ambassador and the European Union and the Americans were all on the same script, but we couldn't get the French to buy in. I remember talking to the French ambassador and he says, "Johnny, I can't help you. This man is important to us and we don't want to upset him. I'm sorry I can't join your cause."

Q: How was he important do you think?

YOUNG: As I said, as someone they could use as an entrï¿½e to get to other African leaders because of the virtue of his position. This was at a time also when Mobutu was fading because his health was failing and he was just not as useful, so Eyadema was the number one man. If you were to look at TV clips of Francophone meetings during that period you will find seated next to the French president, to his right, Eyadema because that was the number one place of honor. Eyadema lived like a king. He lived very high, no question about it. His office was beautifully done up. I mean you would look at his office building from the outside and say oh, that's not bad, but some seedy touches here and there. But when you walked inside it had the finest furniture from France and the finest curtains and on and on, very nice. This was equally true for his residences as well. I say residences as well because he had many. There had been several attempted efforts on his life. They all failed and as a result the word was that he never slept in the same place two nights in a row. That he had always had a different place to sleep. I found that was probably true because I remember on one occasion when I was in a desperate state to contact him at night, I really got a runaround before I finally got him.

He would have these lavish functions where he would host visiting African leaders and he would invite the entire diplomatic corps. We would go to these functions and we would begin with the finest caviar. We'd have all of these lovely things to begin the meal and the finest Dom Pï¿½rignon champagne and the finest French white and red wines. Then we would have the best filet mignon. You just name it. It was unbelievable. These were not small gatherings for two or three people, but these were gatherings for hundreds. He spent a fortune doing these kinds of functions, yet the teachers could not be paid, hospital workers couldn't be paid, government workers couldn't be paid. People were starving. In a country where corruption was already high, people in their desperation resorted to very corrupt measures to get additional cash in order to take care of themselves and their families. For example the teachers would only impart let's say 60% of what they were supposed to cover. It used to sell some phosphates to the U.S. until we banned it for environmental reasons, but they had other purchasers who were still interested in purchasing it for agricultural purposes.

Q: It's the sort of thing that passes on tremendous wealth.

YOUNG: Well, when you can get your cut of that, it's not bad. If they sell $150 million, I'm just using that as an example and you can get a nice 10% or so you could live quite nicely off of that I would say. The president always got his cut, you can rest assured. In addition to phosphates, they had cocoa and they had coffee and those were the principle exports. Some marine items like shrimp and crabs, but that was basically local, no big production for export.

Q: Did we have any particular stake in the country?

YOUNG: Economic stake?

Q: Yes.

YOUNG: None. No. Our stake was in basically regional stability and how it could contribute to that.

Q: What was around Togo, what were the states?

YOUNG: Oh, the states around it were Ghana, Benin. Ghana and Benin and to the north was Niger. Togo made a lot of money because it had access to the sea. Niger, Burkina Faso, those countries did not have access to the sea, so they could use the port of Lome, Togo, to get their goods in and these goods were trucked in. This is significant for another reason as well because it was also along this route that AIDS began to develop in Togo. It was with these truck drivers who would of course do a lot of things that truck drivers do and the prostitutes would seek them out or they would seek them out. Anyhow that route was a path for the spread of AIDS. We did something original that worked very well. I don't know if its still working or not, but we were able to win the support of the prostitutes in working with people in the communities and educating them about AIDS. That was a very effective initiative. We found that these prostitutes were very happy to receive the heightened community status and recognition that they got from being educators and teachers in the community in the fight against AIDS. I thought that was a very effective program. They helped. They helped to distribute condoms and things like that. That worked out very nicely.

Q: Did you get any trouble from old church groups or members of congress?

YOUNG: Not when I was there. Now, that may have happened later on and that's quite possible. You have to keep in mind that I was there during the Clinton administration when that was not an issue. I don't know what has transpired since that time, but this initiative was certainly applauded and recognized for its creativity when I was there.

Q: Had AIDS made the inroads that it had in some countries, 30% of the population?

YOUNG: No, not to that degree. It had not reached the epidemic proportions that it had for example in the Ivory Coast. The Ivory Coast was probably the worst area I can recall in West Africa in terms of AIDS. That had not reached Togo. Although I had people who worked for me in Togo who contracted AIDS and who died. We had one who worked for us right in the residence, and we tried to help him as much as we could. We did not fire him. We allowed him to continue his work with the residence. When I left and the new ambassador was coming in, we told her what the situation was and allowed her to make a decision what she wanted to do and she decided that she, too, would keep him on. We had a couple of other people that we knew of as well who worked for the mission who died of AIDS, but it had not at that point reached the numbers that it had in other places in West Africa or in Southern Africa.

I wanted to get back to Eyadema and his style. I mentioned about the dinners. Another thing that he liked to do was to go out to the airport and meet all the VIPs who were passing through Togo, particularly heads of state. If Nelson Mandela was passing through, he would make sure that he stopped in Togo and they met in the airport. He would call out the entire diplomatic corps and we would go out to the airport and wait and wait for the arrival of this person and for the departure of this person. The president would come around with the VIP while we stood in line like God knows what. We shook hands and bowed and that sort of thing. I would go out to these things. I would just tell my staff, okay, I'm going out to sweat for my government because I was going out to the airport and would have to stand in that sun. Sometimes of course you never knew, these things were rarely carried out in any kind of precise time. You'd go out and just wait and wait and wait. I remember my French colleague once said, this is terrible. You know we waste so much time here. We should each be given a Game Boy. I thought that was kind of amusing. There was a practical side to it. At least if you had Game Boy there you could sort of fiddle around with your thumbs until the time came to say hello and say goodbye. The president was from one of the minority tribes in Togo, from the north up towards the border with Burkina Faso. He had a home and palace and office up in a place called Kara, which was basically a de facto second capital city. He would sometimes summon us up to meetings there. He would send the jet down. He would get on his 707 and fly up to Kara and have a meeting up there. Again, very nicely decorated palace with all of the accouterments and furnishings from the best dealers in Europe and it was really quite up to date in that sense.

Before I went to Togo there were clear signs that there was really lots of trouble brewing under the surface. We got there I think in October of '94. I think in that September there had been an attempted coup. There had been the slaughter of a number of opposition people. Other opposition people gathered all of the bodies, put them in a truck, and drove them to the American Embassy. They dumped them all in front of the American Embassy. I'm told it was a ghastly, gruesome sight, which I'm sure it was, but they were trying to make a point. They were trying to get our attention. They were trying to get us to weigh in to get this man to rein in his boys. When I arrived there was no question that there were disappearances, people that we knew, particularly newspaper people and opposition people. They would disappear. You'd never hear from them again. Later you would find a picture in the press of their mutilated body. The press began to have some very difficult times with the government and some of those press people began to disappear. Now, one thing we did that I thought was very successful was to keep the pressure on the government in terms of being accountable for the disappearance of people. We wouldn't let up, the Germans wouldn't let up, the European Union wouldn't let up. Some of this change came about because of a change in technology as well. Just a few years earlier you could have someone disappear in Togo. It would be written up maybe if some outside source got wind of it, but it would basically be contained internally because the technology wasn't there. The phone system didn't work. Cell phones didn't work, the fax system didn't work, computers were just getting started. But while we were there these things began to really mushroom and it made a tremendous difference. We would encourage other organizations to send faxes, to keep the pressure on so that when someone went missing suddenly the government was hit from all angles and realized that it couldn't just hush these things up. We had a big hand in making that possible and that was a big success. We got a lot of credit from the people of Togo for that. They recognized that the U.S. had a big hand in it and they gave us credit.

Q: How did this work? Were the EU or other countries, would you get together and say okay, so and so has gone, let's do something about it?

YOUNG: Absolutely. I can give you an example about a German diplomat. There would be these periods when security in Togo would be heightened because of information the government received that there was going to be some attempt to either invade the country or some attempt on the president's life. Things would tighten up and you could tell when they would tighten up. You would get no notice on the radio or the newspaper or anything like that, but barricades would suddenly mushroom throughout the city. You would get the word that you just had to be extremely careful at night. Well, one night during one of these periods of heightened security one of our German colleagues, I think he was a security officer at the German embassy, was returning home. He was stopped at one of these barricades. They searched his car. I think he became indignant with the fact that he was stopped and searched since he was a diplomat. He got in his car and drove off. As he drove off the police at the barricade opened fire with their machine guns and killed him, 32 bullets in the back. It was horrible. Absolutely horrible.

Well, we went through the government. I asked for a meeting with the government. We got together our colleagues from the diplomatic corps and we marched in to protest this and to demand an accounting. This was one of the occasions for example when the French Ambassador sat there after this atrocity with his mouth totally shut. He didn't say a thing. Now, here he is a fellow European and a German diplomat was gunned down savagely like that and he didn't say one word. I was the one who led the discussion. I told the government how outrageous this was and how they needed to do something about the security situation. Here we have all these inexperienced people manning these barricades. He did absolutely nothing. The government was very embarrassed by this. It was a horrible thing that happened. As horrible as it was I think some good came out of it. I think it made the government more sensitive in terms of what was going on, not only in terms of with foreigners, but even with its own people. Some transparency began to enter the process and it did make a difference. The government did apologize to the widow of this fellow. They offered her money. I don't know how much, but I think they offered her a pension and all kinds of things like that which they should have done.

Q: Did you find that the French were sort of I won't say excluded, but sort of kept off to one side when the rest of you got together?

YOUNG: They would always come. They always wanted to know what we were doing so they could report back home of course about what the American said and what the European Union fellow said and what the group said, but they would never join in. They would never say absolutely right. We're going to tell the president so and so and so. On a couple of occasions we were very unhappy with how the president was treating the opposition, how they were being harassed and not given an opportunity to basically put their message before the public. The government controlled the media so they didn't have access to television and things like that. We tried to help the opposition to get a fair hearing and they were very grateful for that. They were very pleased with that.

Q: Were there any forces the equivalent of Charles Taylor the thing or anything like that going on?

YOUNG: The president had structured the military so that it was totally loyal to him. The top people in the military were all of his ethnic group. They were not of the majority Ewe ethnic group. All of the top dogs in the military were his people. He had the military right in his pocket and then in addition to that he had a son who was a key person in the military although not the top person. That basically assured him some loyalty at the mid-level as well through his son Ernest who was quite a rascal in his own right.

Q: How about looking at the dates '94 to '97, were the Russians, they were now the Russians by this time, were they out of the game completely or were they even there?

YOUNG: They had left. This was not a country of interest to them any longer so they had left. They were represented either in Nigeria or through the Ivory Coast, one of those, but prior to '90 they did have a mission there, but they closed it up. The Chinese were there. You'll find the Chinese wherever you find us just about.

Q: What were the Chinese doing?

YOUNG: They had a few building projects. They were contributing aid to a few building projects and things like that. That's about all and of course the Togolese buy considerable merchandise from the Chinese. You go to these African markets and you find such plain simple things as matches and they're all made in China. Matches and these little mosquito coils to keep away the mosquitoes and malarial areas and what have you, all done by the Chinese. I remember visiting a factory, not a factory, a warehouse with just mosquito coils, which is a very simple thing. I could not believe it and they were all from China. It was enough to fill a football stadium. The quantity was so huge I couldn't believe it. They buy lots of products; a lot of the toys that are sold in the local markets, all made in China. Soccer balls, so the trade is quite significant, but it's basically a one-sided trading arrangement. There's very little that Togo offers to China. A little bit, maybe some phosphates because China is not as environmentally rigorous about that kind of thing as we are and maybe a little coffee and cocoa, but nothing much. It's more of a one-sided arrangement. More coming from China than going to.

Q: Were the South Koreans or North Koreans?

YOUNG: No, neither.

Q: Israel?

YOUNG: No, none, neither, no. None of them were there.

Q: Did you have any sort of exchange program doing anything or was there much contact with the United States?

YOUNG: We had a very active public affairs program. That's how we made great strides with the press through our public affairs program. We could go out to the provinces and do outreach programs. We could have speakers and we could have all kinds of programs of one kind or another. We had a very active and very successful English teaching program that was self-funded. We had hundreds of students and could have had even hundreds more if the State Department were willing to expand it, but it was not. I mean, again, we had a certain mindset in the State Department at that time. In other words, don't bother me with that country. I have other things to do, but yet this was a key means of influencing young minds, particularly young minds making them favorably disposed towards the United States. These English teaching programs were just the best thing we ever did. So, that worked out very nicely. We had one of the best programs I have ever seen anywhere in terms of celebration of black history month. We would bring in representatives from the schools from all over the country and have them engage in a black history quiz. It was broadcast live on radio. We held it in the USIS building and it worked out very well. I would give a speech at the beginning of the thing and then I would award the prizes for the best school. We would have plays. We would have poetry readings. I would go out to the university and do a lecture. It was just a very dynamic active program in terms of black history month.

Q: How did you find you and your wife dealing with the Togolese? Are they open people?

YOUNG: Lovely people, wonderful. It is a country divided along ethnic lines. We were in Lome, which is in the southern part of the country right on the coast. The predominant tribe in that area is the Ewe tribe, which is made up of an ethnic group that is predominant in Ghana and spilled over into Togo as well. If you recall, at one point Togoland was controlled by Germany. Germany was the colonial power. After World War II it was under the UN and eventually in the '50s people were given an option to either become part of Ghana or become part of Togo. The line was drawn right down the middle. This is again one of these artificial lines in Africa that literally split this ethnic group right down the middle. So you have half of the Ewe people in Ghana, the largest half in Ghana and then you have the other half in Togo. They are the predominant tribe in the Lome area. You have other tribes as well. I think Togo has something like 30 some different tribal groups. The president is from one of the minor tribes, the Kabye, from the northern part of the country. Kabye are predominantly Muslim. Ewe are predominantly Christian. You have a big split there, but we got along with all of them very well. They treated us quite nicely and we just felt sorry that such nice people couldn't have better leadership.

I wanted to cite another example of how Eyadema could be helpful at times. On a couple of occasions we got annoyed with him. We were not fully justified. There were upcoming elections in Benin. The president of Benin, Soglo, President Soglo was running. The polls were beginning to indicate that as admired and as liked as he was that perhaps he wasn't going to win, that perhaps somebody else was going to win. Word got to Washington that the Togolese were meddling in the affairs of Benin. Washington told me to speak to President Eyadema about this and I did as I was instructed. I went to him and said, Mr. President, we're concerned that there are reports so and so. He was furious. He said, that is absolutely not true, I can tell you right now, I am not meddling in the affairs of Benin. However those elections turn out it won't be because of anything that I've done here. He says, you have your satellites in the sky, beam them down on me and you can see that there's nothing happening in my country affecting Benin. I think that frankly he was right. I think that we had become so enamored of President Soglo in Benin and we were so anxious to have the Benin story continue along successful lines with President Soglo at the helm that we were prepared to believe anything. I reported that back to Washington in terms of what he said and what he did and that was the end of that. The elections took place and Soglo lost the election. A former head of state named of Kerekou won the elections, but they were free and fair and democratic and transparent and that was the important thing. It worked out very well.

On another occasion, the situation in the Congo was falling apart. We desperately needed to get Mobutu out of the Congo and get him somewhere and various places were proposed. Eyadema played a very key role in inviting Mobutu to leave the Congo and to make his way elsewhere via Togo. This occurred after a series of meetings by the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West Africa. There were entreaties from us as well for Eyadema to be encouraged in this effort to invite Mobutu to at least spend some time in Togo before moving on. In the end it did work. Mobutu came and that eased tensions in Zaire for a short period anyhow. He spent some time in Lome and then from Lome he went on to Morocco where he eventually died and that was the end of that. Eyadema was very helpful in that regard.

We were concerned about Eyadema's continuance in power and his then ascending to the role of the longest serving head of state in Africa. I would ask him in my meetings with him what were his plans for running because elections were going to take place very soon. What was he going to do? He says I've made up my mind, I'm not going to run again. I promise I'm not going to run again. The constitution says so and so, but I'm not going to do it. Well, I left Togo and the RPT Party, the president's party, controlled the legislature and they amended the constitution to allow him to run an additional year and he subsequently took advantage of that and ran an additional year and just continued on in power. Finally he died last year (2005) on February 5th I think it was while he was en route to France, had a heart attack and died. Then power was passed to his son which was totally out of line with the constitution. Once again, his party, the RPT Party stepped in and amended the constitution that allowed the son to become the president. Well, the African Union was outraged. This is a repeat of the kind of thing we had in Africa years ago and we're in a new era now, we don't do that sort of thing anymore. They put the pressure on and the president resigned and said that he would run in a legitimate election. Of course he ran and everybody knew that he would win. The RPT Party, which the father controlled and the son basically took over, controlled everything. We knew it was going to be less than a fair election. That's where it is.

Q: I was wondering, did Togo play any part in things like trying to bring about peace in other parts of the country? I mean I think of Liberia.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Rwanda and Sierra Leone?

YOUNG: Yes. It played a mediating role. Eyadema hosted a number of conferences that were held, summits that were held in an effort to bring about peace in Liberia. He did play that kind of role, and unfortunately I don't think he was that successful at them. It wasn't because of him. He tried his best. The will was not there on the part of the parties to bring an end to these conflicts, but he definitely played a role there.

I had a very interesting development toward the end of my assignment. I had a young junior officer, Joel Ehrendreich, whom I liked very much. Smart, bright, the future of the Service. I really felt good about him. He did excellent work for us as a consular officer and then also reporting on political developments as well until we had a full time political officer, but he was a great consular officer. One day he came to me and he said, "I just had a group of people outside there. They wanted visas to go to the States to present some dance. You know they were people who had been cooks and bottle washers and all of these different jobs of that type." He said, how do I know you can dance? So, I took them outside in the courtyard of the embassy and said dance for me. So, they danced for him and he was satisfied that they were good dancers. Now, they had come with a note from the government saying that they were going as a troupe basically under government auspices. So, they danced for him. I said, well, that's fine. That's within your prerogative as the visa-issuing officer to satisfy yourself that peoples' bona fides are in order. If you did that fine, no problem, but he did have the presence of mind to come and tell me about it. He said, well, you might hear about this from the minister of foreign affairs, who was a moron of the highest order. I'm trying to think of his name now. He was just impossible, very pompous fellow who every step the president made you could see him dragging behind licking his boot. He was just the sycophantic type. I guess about a couple of hours later I got a call from this minister of foreign affairs. He says, can you come to the ministry right away. I said sure. He got me there and he said, you know, I got a report from our group that we sent over to get the visa that they were asked to dance before they got their visas. I said, well, that's within the prerogative of the consular officer and if he felt that that was necessary, so be it. He says, this is an outrage. We cannot have this. The dignity of the people of Togo has been insulted and on and on. I said, well, I'm sorry about that, but these are our rules. If they want to go this is what's required. That was that.

Later on that evening my wife and I went to a fashion show at the French ambassador's residence. It was a lavish event. The runway was strung across the swimming pool and these gorgeous ladies would just come floating across in the evening night with their beautiful billowing gowns. It was just a lovely event and champagne flowed and lovely hors' d'oeuvres, it was all done in the best French fashion. We had a good time, good food, good conversation. We were out in the garden, the stars were out and the leaves in the palm trees. I mean it was just wonderful. We got home and we said, gee what a lovely evening that was. That was very nice.

Then as I entered the front door I almost stepped on this huge white envelope. I picked I up and I opened it and there was a sign on it. Urgence. So, I opened it up and there was this elaborate note from the ministry of foreign affairs advising me that the government took exception to the manner in which the dancers were required to perform in the courtyard of the embassy before they were issued their visas. We find that not proper. Beneath the dignity of the people of Togo and on and on. The officer responsible for it, Mr. Ehrendreich, is hereby declared persona non grata and must leave the country within 48 hours. Well, I was horrified and so was Mr. Ehrendreich. I called him and told him what had happened. I said, don't worry I'm behind you 100%. I'm going to do everything I can to keep you here. His tour was going to end in a couple of months in any case. I could have taken the easy way out and said, okay Joel, the government has declared you PNG and that's it. I got on the phone immediately. I tried everything. This is when I basically corroborated the rumor that Eyadema stayed in a different place every night because I had all these numbers for him and I kept calling all of these different numbers and they said no he's not here, try this number. I tried and tried. Finally I got him and I said Monsieur Presidente, I have to see you tomorrow. Even now if possible. He said, no, come tomorrow morning at 6:30. I said okay. The next day my DCM and I went to see Eyadema. I told him what I had come for. He knew, but he didn't acknowledge that he knew. This is 6:30, maybe 7:30 in the morning. Then he offered us lamb brochettes at 7:00 in the morning, lamb brochettes and then he brought out the Dom Pï¿½rignon champagne. There we are at 7:00 in the morning in the president's office eating lamb brochettes and drinking Dom Pï¿½rignon champagne while the president listens to us and regales us with stories of his past life. He stands up at one point and he says, did I ever tell you this story? I said, no Mr. President. He went around to his desk and he walked around and he said, "You know, I was up in [inaudible] and I was giving a speech and a man tried to kill me. He shot at me and fired at me. He didn't succeed. You know why?" I said, "No, Mr. President." He reached in his pocket and he pulled out a notebook. The notebook had the passage where the bullet had attempted to penetrate and he said, "Because of this. This is what saved me." You could see where it hadn't gone through and it literally did save him. I listened to the story. I looked at the DCM who was Terry McCulley who is presently our ambassador in Mali. Terry looked at me, I looked at Terry, we thought, this is weird. He said, thank you very much and that was the end of the meeting. I said, "But Mr. President, what I came to see you about." He said, "I'll talk to you later" and we left. As we were leaving the German ambassador was coming in.

That evening we were at a function where the German ambassador was present and I said, "How did your meeting with the president go?" He says, "My meeting went well. Did he tell that story about how he was." I said, "Yes, he did." He said, "Did he tell you the same story also?" I said, "Yes. I don't understand what that meant." He says, "Oh, there is a method to his madness. He was trying to tell you as God saved him on that occasion he will save you on this occasion as well." That was a little bit too thick for me to comprehend at that point so I let it go. The next day I called the president and he told me, don't worry its okay. Mr. Ehrendreich could stay. Joel stayed and completed his assignment and went on. Those were some of our fascinating tales with President Eyadema who was quite a character.

Whenever I saw him he said, when can I get a visit to the United States? I just ducked the issue each time by saying the timing isn't right, Mr. President, we really can't do it. I found one excuse after another when I was saying in my heart, not on my watch Buster, no way. I would be laughed out of the Service if I recommended him for a visit to the U.S. and particularly with the change in circumstances in terms of our relationship with Africa in the late '90s versus what our relationship was in the late '80s. In the late '80s, mid '80s, he would have been welcomed once again, but it was a whole new world. We weren't in competition with the communists anymore, so his use to us was really not the same. He could not change. He would say, well, you invited the president of Ghana. What was his name?

Q: I was thinking he was a flight lieutenant.

YOUNG: That's right, Jerry Rawlings. He said, you invited Rawlings. I said, yes, but Rawlings came to power the way you did in a bloody coup, but Rawlings reformed and changed and as a result has been recognized and has been given a place of honor in the international community. When you change, the same will happen to you. He couldn't buy that at all. He said, I was your good friend, I stayed by you through thick and thin and he did, but the fact is the times had changed. He was not prepared to change with the times so he paid the price for that.

Q: Did you feel any of the rumblings of the dispute between the president, the democratic president and the republican congress or the shutting down of the government and shutting down of offices.

YOUNG: You mean when we closed embassies and that sort of thing? No, we didn't feel that. I felt some of that when I was in Sierra Leone when they attempted to decrease the size of the mission. I said, don't do it, this is a terrible mistake because I realized the great utility we got from that office particularly when we had the coup in Sierra Leone. I mean they provided me with very valuable information.

We had a small staff, but a great staff. A magnificent public affairs operation. George Newman was the last public affairs officer there, an older gentleman who came into the Service later, basically had two tours that he could do, maybe three before retiring mandatorily. Togo was his second tour and he did quite well. I was very proud of him and we not only became great colleagues, but good friends as well. We're friends to this day.

Q: All right, well, then '97 whither?

YOUNG: '97. I had gotten promoted to my great shock and surprise to career minister. This I think put the Department in a dilemma. In other words, what do they do with me? Here I am one of the few black career ministers in the Foreign Service and they wanted to give me another assignment. Several proposals had come up and I had spoken to a number of people. I made my case to the Department and I said, now, if you're serious about wanting to try and encourage some black officers about advancement in the Foreign Service or even entering the Foreign Service and being able to advance to the top and being able to serve in places other than Africa, I said, I'm your man. You know, you can use me as an experiment to see if this works. I definitely would like an assignment overseas. I'm not interested in anything in Washington whatsoever. I said, but I do not want to go to Africa. I have spent my time in Africa. I've loved every minute of it. I've learned a tremendous amount from it, but enough is enough and it is time to do something else. At the time the director general was Tony Quainton and I put my case to him. He said, you're pretty persuasive. He says, we're going to work with you to see what we can do. I put in various bids of different types. Frankly I didn't think any of them would work. I was not a European hand per se. I was not a Near Eastern hand or a Caribbean hand or an East Asian hand. I wasn't any of them. I said if this is going to work it's going to work because the central system is going to be my advocate in making this work. I will not be the candidate of any of the geographic bureaus for this. I had this series of e-mails going back and forth and back and forth. Oh, God, I'm trying to think of the woman who was my career counselor at the time. Margaret Dean, a wonderful officer, just a wonderful officer. She worked very closely with me and we looked at various possibilities. We came down to a couple of possibilities, but they said, well, you might be a prospect for Bahrain. I couldn't believe it. The last time I was in Bahrain or had anything to do with Bahrain was when I was in Qatar from '74 to '77. We used to go over there from time to time because it was like heaven. I said, well, I certainly would be interested but I realize I'm not the bureau's candidate and I know its going to be very competitive. We'll see what happens.

Months went by and we kept the correspondence going back and forth between myself and Margaret Dean, the PDAS in personnel at the time and Quainton. I remember getting a note that the D committee would be meeting on X date and then they'd let me know what was what. The date kept being postponed and postponed, which is often the case with these committee meetings. Then I got an e-mail saying that the committee had met and that I was going to be the candidate for Manama in Bahrain. Well I was absolutely thrilled. If this all worked out, this meant that I was going to be the only black ambassador in the Near Eastern bureau and one of the few outside of Africa. There were none in Europe at the time and I think there was one in Latin America and the rest were all in Africa. This was going to be a bit of history. I remember announcing to my staff in Togo that this prospect was looking good. Then I left for the States and prepared myself for confirmation. I went on a direct transfer with deferred home leave and stopped in time to prepare myself and to have hearings and meetings and those kinds of things.

On December 19, 1997 we arrived in Bahrain. Bahrain's national day is on the 15th. The town was festooned with red and white lights, which are the national colors of Bahrain. I remember my wife saying, oh, Johnny, look at all of these lights. Isn't it wonderful they have decorated for Christmas? I had to say, honey; this is not for Christmas. These are the national colors of Bahrain. All of the buildings, red and white lights trimmed in the buildings and they were decked out in the streets and what have you. Now, that said, there were places that had Christmas lights as well for the expatriate community there.

We arrived, were met by the chief of protocol and then we were whisked to our new residence. We were the first people to occupy this new residence. Before we arrived we heard that the former residence was being returned to the owner who wanted it and the embassy was looking desperately for a new appropriate residence. Before we left the States we got word from the man who was to be my DCM, George Staples. George said, we think we have found something for you. He made a videotape of the potential new residence. He sent it to us. It looked good to us by videotape. We said go for it. That was the house they rented. When we arrived they had transferred the furniture from the former residence which was occupied by Ambassador David Ransom and into the new residence. It really did look nice. It was a mini palace, a lovely place. We could hold a reception for 200 people in the foyer. The living room was in three sections and 75 feet long.

Q: I'm just thinking, that's not a very big island.

YOUNG: Oh, but some fabulous houses on that little island, and a lot of wealth on that little island. Six bedrooms, all with on-suite baths. Lovely. Beautiful family room. A big, huge kitchen plus an outside kitchen where you could prepare foods outside, meals outside without having all the smells come in the kitchen for big functions. An indoor swimming pool with sauna and steam bath, exercise room, I mean it was just unbelievable. No garden, just a sandpit, so we saw our work cut out for us in terms of trying to make a garden, finishing up the touches in terms of the residence and things like that. The Emir of Bahrain agreed to receive my credentials within days of my arrival so that was very nice. I remember asking if I could take my wife and they said, no, I could not. I understood that because these functions are just for the principal and I couldn't take her. We went to the palace. I had never been in a palace before. I mean I had been in official government offices and other buildings, but these were actually called palaces and were indeed palaces. I mean they were unbelievable and the emir had so many of them it was unbelievable. He had one downtown and this was at the palace in Manama downtown.

The deputy chief of mission accompanied me and we went to the palace. Prior to that meeting at the palace the chief of protocol had instructed me on how I was to proceed in presenting the letters of credence. How I would walk so many steps, stand at a certain line that would be on the floor, then proceed so many steps after that, present the letters and I was to back up at that point and then stand and wait for the emir to make any comments and then I was to make comments. I had written out some comments and had submitted them to the chief of protocol beforehand. After that I was to go with the emir to a little side area where we would sit and talk. After the whole thing was over then I was to leave. Now, I did all of that. It all worked out very nicely. I was told you can tell when its over because a server would come with a perfume bottle of rose water. He would sprinkle rose water on your hands and then he would come with burning incense like a chalice. You were supposed to take this incense and bring the fumes of it into your clothing. Then you would take the rose water and rinse your hands. That marked the end of the function. During our talk we didn't discuss anything of any substance, just little tidbits of our families and things like that; where the emir had traveled and how he likes the United States and he's so fond of us and we'd been so good to the island. I said, well, you've been good to us, which they were. They were just a fantastic ally. So, the fellow came with the incense and I sort of fanned it into my clothes. We had lived in Qatar and we learned a little something there. He brought the rose water and I rubbed it in my hands and then thanked the emir. Before we left, he said, "You know I'm impressed. You knew exactly what to do." I said, "Well, thank you, your highness." He said, "You're not like one of the ambassadors we've had here. He took the rose water and he tried to put out the fire in the incense holder." I said, "Oh, no, I wouldn't try that, I learned how to do this in Qatar." He said, "Well, that's very nice." I asked him, "Who was that?" He was reluctant to tell me. He said, "Well, he was the fellow who was one of the former Japanese ambassadors who had tried that." Anyhow we were off to a good start with the emir.

That was quite an assignment for me. Bahrain had never had a black ambassador from the U.S. It had never had a black in any senior position frankly in the mission. I learned later they were all curious as to what I was going to be like and how many heads I had and that sort of thing.

Q: Did you carry a spear?

YOUNG: Exactly. There was a lot of watching and observing and seeing what was I going to be like and what was I going to say and how supportive I was going to be. They learned very quickly that they had in me a very good friend impressing on the U.S. what a good friend we had in Bahrain as well. It worked both ways. We had the fifth fleet there. At the time the fifth fleet was managed by Admiral Thomas Fargo and he was doing a magnificent job. We were very busy enforcing the no fly zone in Iraq. We were policing the Gulf, interdicting illegal smuggling of petroleum and other products through the Gulf and also keeping an eye on the Iranians who were making mischief in the Gulf. We wanted them to know they couldn't do any harm there. The fifth fleet was really very important, very key, very strategic to our interests in the Gulf.

Q: The sixth fleet.

YOUNG: Fifth fleet.

Q: The fifth fleet.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: That was its headquarters then.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: It used to be something called COMIDEAST Four.

YOUNG: It was COMIDEAST Four. They had a big white ship, the COMIDEAST Four. The USS La Salle. At one point we told the government of Bahrain that we were having a change in policy, that we were closing down that operation and that this symbolic ship was going to leave and was going to be decommissioned. I think we told them it was going to be decommissioned. Well, as it turned out later, the ship was removed and that's when we changed the name to the fifth fleet because the Bahrainis were originally not particularly keen on having the fifth fleet. They preferred the COMIDEAST Four arrangement. So, anyhow in the end it all worked out, but they never forgave us. They always remembered that that was a bit of deception on our part because the La Salle did go to another place and it remained I think in Italy or someplace. I can't recall where. It was a country that was extremely important to our interests there.

At the time we didn't have anything comparable to Bahrain. We did have a base in Kuwait following the first Iraqi war. The Kuwaitis were very open, but you know, being in Kuwait is not the same as being in Bahrain by any means. We didn't have much in Abu Dhabi. We did have free access. We could go in and out and the fellows could have some shore leave and that sort of thing. We also had some permanent, but not acknowledged operations in Saudi. The Saudis would say, no, no we don't have anything permanent. We only have temporary duty people here. That was a fiction at the time. We had a little something in Saudi as well. Then we had a little bit of something in Oman and that was it. All of those operations in the Gulf, big or small, were all controlled by the commander of the fifth fleet in Bahrain.

Now, my relationship with the commander of the fifth fleet was good. I attempted to be as inclusive as I could in terms of including him on any meetings that had anything to do with the military. If I were going to talk about something economic or what have you, there would be no need to include him. That worked out very nicely with Admiral Fargo. With his replacement I think there was some resentment that he couldn't move more freely in terms of his relationship with the host government, but I had to make it very clear that I was the one who spoke for the U.S. government and not the commander of the fifth fleet, although the commander of the fifth fleet had all of the assets. That's the way it was. I just tried to be as inclusive as I possibly could. It worked out. We had a good working relationship. We saw, I think, eye to eye on most things until we had the incident of the Cole which I'll talk about later. That changed how I would look at things or how my mission looked at things versus how they were looked at from the fifth fleet.

Q: Had there been any of that move towards making Qatar sort of a central command center?

YOUNG: No, there was talk and that was it at that point, but nothing. We had nothing in Qatar at that point. In fact, the Bahrainis and the Qataris were in dispute at that time over territorial issues and had a big case before the international court in The Hague. A case that had been around for 60 some years.

Q: Is that the Hawar Island or something?

YOUNG: On Hawar Island. In fact it was resolved while I was there. It worked out. It was resolved basically in favor of Bahrain. We'll get to that a little bit later.

That was my introduction. I began to make calls, which is standard procedure for an arriving ambassador, on all the different ministers. The foreign minister was an incredible fellow and turned out to be really one of my best colleagues, one of the best foreign ministers I think I have ever worked with. He was just a consummate professional, well trained Ph.D. from England, perfect speaker of English, so knowledgeable, had been foreign minister from the time of independence in 1971. He had already been foreign minister for 30 years by the time I got there or pretty close to it anyhow. He was wonderful. Sheik Mohammad bin Mubarak Al Khalifa. Until recently he was foreign minister. He is now the deputy prime minister. This Al Khalifa family, it's basically a family business. The prime minister was the brother of the fellow who was emir when I first went to Bahrain, Sheik Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. His brother, Sheik Al Khalifa, was the prime minister and was reportedly the most corrupt of all of the Al Khalifas. He would demand 10% of any government project. One major project that was carried out before I arrived was the hydroelectric plant that was valued at $500 million and allegedly his man went from contract to contract to say, okay, now when can we expect your 10%. I mean he was one of the wealthiest men there. It was a fascinating family. Sheik Isa had the brother who was the prime minister. He had another brother who was just a renegade and a little bit off the deep end, but he was a businessman and the prime minister and his renegade brother used to even have fist fights. It's still a legend in Bahrain that these two had a fist fight at one time and the renegade brother beat up the prime minister. It was all over some land dispute or what have you, but this renegade brother refused to put license plates on his many cars and had always traveled with a shotgun displayed in the back window of his car. Nobody would fool with him because they were afraid to. He didn't hurt anyone although, according to legend; he did shoot up one fellow or scared him anyhow by sort of shooting at him, a top businessman in town. People treated him very delicately. Because he was a member of the royal family I paid a call on him and he took a liking to my wife and me. He invited us to his home and I'll have to tell you some of the tales of visiting with him on his island. That's one of the highlights of our stay in Bahrain.

Many interesting things went on when we were in Bahrain. Before I arrived, Bahrain was interested in purchasing some additional F16s, but we had not agreed that they could have them. They wanted to get the F16s with a certain type of missile. We said no, we haven't released this technology to any Arab country. We were thinking what would the Israelis think. We didn't come out and say that, but that was a fact. I remember talking to the DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in PM (Bureau of Political Military Affairs) at that time, Mike Lennon. Mike would bring me into work in the morning because I was basically on TDY (temporary duty) as I was preparing to go out to Bahrain. I told him this is one of the things they want. He says, over my dead body Johnny. It's just not going to happen. They're not going to get those missiles. I said, okay. I wouldn't give up though. I didn't give up on the sale of the F16s or on the missiles. This country had been our good ally. They said they wanted them so that if they had a similar situation as in the first Gulf War, they wanted to be prepared so they could be fully integrated and contribute to a joint effort. These missiles weren't going to do any good because they were five minutes by F16s from Iran, but if they needed them to be a part of a larger effort then it would help. This was the argument we tried to make, but we weren't getting anywhere. We'd get turned back every time, but we just kept hammering away and hammering away. As VIP visitors would come over, the Secretary of Defense and so on, the Bahrainis would make their case over and over. We told them frankly.

The emir was invited for a visit in May of '98. I accompanied him on that visit. We met with President Clinton. They had a lunch for him. It was very nice I must say. That visit was in May of '98. Before he came Secretary Albright came and they were all very grateful for the role that Bahrain was playing in the no fly zone and also in hosting the UN team searching in Iraq for weapons of mass destruction. They were all supported out of Bahrain. Logistically this is where they would fly in, would fly out. When they came out I would meet with the head of the team for a debrief. He would meet with me, with the Brits, and the French and the Russians. We would get a debrief then of course we'd fire that right back to our governments and if they needed any special help on some things. I mean there were certain things that we would do that we didn't tell the Russians about or we didn't tell the French about and that sort of thing because this was such an important mission. That's when I met at the time the Swede who was the head of the UN inspection team, Hans Blix.

We were very appreciative of the role that Bahrain was playing in support of this activity. Whenever our VIPs would come out they would give them a big pat on the back for the role they were playing. They would play up how important it was because we would launch some of our retaliatory attacks also on Iraq from Bahrain.

Now, I mention, I'm going back to the time prior to the emir's visit because of something that happened that I want to get on the record.

Q: Okay.

YOUNG: It was in March of 1998. Madeleine Albright was coming out to visit. She was basically visiting the region and also wanted a blank check in terms of the launch of attacks on Iraq from Bahrain. Before she arrived I got a call from the royal chief of protocol and he said, "Johnny, I want to talk to you." I said, "Okay." I went over to his office. He said, "Johnny, I called you in because I don't want a repeat of what happened the last time Madeleine Albright visited Bahrain." I said, "What happened?" He said, "She arrived and the minister of the interior was the acting minister of foreign affairs. He met her and he got ready to get in the car with her and was pushed aside and told you can't ride with her." He was outraged that this had happened and he said, "Okay, if you don't want me to ride with her, I won't ride with her." Now, this man was representing the emir of Bahrain as the acting minister of foreign affairs because the minister of foreign affairs was out of the country at the time. It was not appreciated at all. He says, "I don't want a repeat of that. I don't want it." I said, "Okay, I'll make sure that this is made clear to the Secretary and her party." The advance person for her visit was David Hale. I explained what the situation was and I said would you please send a cable to her party advising what we should do, that the foreign minister plans to meet her plane side and expects to ride with her. If that is not possible we need to tell them up front. The royal chief of protocol wants to know. He said, okay. He sent a message and I was amazed that we had quite a bit of going back and forth including messages from Tom Pickering on this issue of the minister of foreign affairs riding from the airport to the initial meeting with the emir and the prime minister. We finally got an okay, after much going back and forth, that it was okay.

Now, mind you this is a government of Bahrain that agreed to give us something like 50 hotel rooms and 30 Mercedes, all free. I remember specifically asking Dick Shinnick, whom I know, if we could accept this and he agreed that we could, that the government had given us this to carry out our mission. Here we got all of this free and we're quibbling over the foreign minister riding for just a few minutes literally to a meeting with the prime minister and the emir. I would then ride with the Secretary from that meeting to the embassy where she was going to meet with the embassy staff and take a few photos. Well, in the end it worked out very well. The Secretary came and the foreign minister rode with her and then I rode with her to the embassy and that all turned out very well. It was a one-day visit and they all spent the night in the hotel and the next morning when it was time to leave we were supposed to reverse the procedure. The foreign minister was to meet her at the hotel. He would wait downstairs for her. When she was ready she would come downstairs. She would join him. They would get in the car together and go to the airport, which was all of 15 minutes away.

Well, that morning, I'm sitting in the little room with the foreign minister when the phone rang and I was told oh, its for you Mr. Young. I went over. It was the Secretary's chief of staff. I've forgotten the name of this woman, but she was a horrible woman and she said, "The foreign minister can't ride with the Secretary." I said, "You must be kidding. I'm sitting right there." He wasn't right next to me, but I said, "The foreign minister is in the room here downstairs waiting. I cannot go over to him now and tell him, Mr. Minister, you cannot ride with the Secretary to the airport, which is 15 minutes away. If you want to turn what has been a very successful visit into a disaster, then I'll go over and tell him." They thought about that for a while and then she got off the phone and then she put David Hale on the phone. He said, "Johnny, this is terrible. We can't have this. We never have people ride with the Secretary. Now the foreign minister rode with her once. He shouldn't be expected to ride with her a second time. This is going to look bad on your record." I said, "I really don't care. I've had a wonderful career and I have to watch this relationship, that's what's important to me. If you want to ruin this relationship or really put a blemish on it at this point, you proceed with what you've just told me." I was just livid. I could not believe the insensitivity of people who are working so closely with the Secretary that they would do something like this. I said, "This is just awful." After some hemming and hawing and some threats to me and what have you, they said, okay, he can do it this time, but if we come here again, this can't happen. I didn't have to go and carry out that dreadful message to the foreign minister. The plans proceeded as they were laid out. The Secretary came out downstairs. The foreign minister met her. They got in the car together and less than 15 minutes later they were at the airport. I asked someone, why is this? They said, well, you know, she likes to sleep in the car. She likes to doze in the car. I said, she's going from here to Egypt, that's about four hours on the plane, she can certainly sleep plenty on the plane to Egypt. Anyhow, I got in the car with Martin Indyk who was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern affairs at the time. I said, "Martin, this is just what unfolded while I was waiting there at the hotel. They threatened me that this is not going to look good on my record and on and on. Martin, I don't give a damn. I don't care. I've had a wonderful career. I could care less. My job is to protect this relationship. It is of maximum benefit to the U.S. government." He said, "I understand Johnny. Don't worry about it." Well, I accepted his word for it, don't worry about it. Would you believe two months later I get a call from the deputy assistant secretary of State for Near Eastern affairs, Ron Neumann, who eventually replaced me in Bahrain. He said, "Oh, Johnny, I'm just checking in to see how things are going." He tried to do it in a very casual kind of way. He said, "Well, I just want you to know that if the Secretary comes out there again we can't have a repeat of what we had with the foreign minister riding in the car with her." I said, "That's not a problem, but we've got to let them know ahead of time that this is her preference. Otherwise they'll make other arrangements and they won't have the foreign minister. They'll have some clerk meet her.

Q: Politically they were people of such little consequence after she departed the scene they were never heard again since.

YOUNG: Well, I'm not so sure.

Q: Baker had a court and they're still around because they were good.

YOUNG: Yes, well, I'm not so sure about that though, about them not being heard from again. The woman I was thinking of her name was Elaine Schouse. I know it was Elaine. I think it was Elaine Schouse or something like that. As I said David Hale was a Foreign Service Officer just trying to please the Secretary of State and he was basically taking orders from Elaine and others around her. For example, when I rode in the car with the Secretary from the prime minister's office to the embassy where she was going to take pictures with children I asked her about that and she said oh, I love to do that sort of thing. Her staff had told me just the reverse. They told me, oh, she really doesn't like that and she doesn't want to be bothered with it. She said I love that sort of thing. I think that in certainly in that particular case they did her a disservice. But, that said, I saw another side of her. For example on the day that we had the official state visit of the emir in May of 1998, I was invited to her office to brief her before the emir paid a visit to her. I walked in her office and there she was with a few other people and she said, "The last thing I want to hear about today is Bahrain" I mean in a nasty arrogant tone like that. Now, here I am the American representative there. I went to her office to brief her on what the issues would be that he would likely raise and that was the greeting that I got as I walked into her office. I was not impressed.

Q: One has to say I think there's a lot of expectation of Madeleine Albright because she made Secretary of State and I haven't heard much very positive. I mean she has not turned out to be a very impressive Secretary of State.

YOUNG: I would add that for a woman of her standing and stature, I expected a little bit more in terms of how she made her presentations. I'll never forget that meeting with the emir when she sat there with her legs crossed and with a relatively short skirt shall we say and so her legs crossed which was not appropriate for that kind of setting in the Arab world. I mean she was dressed very nicely, but that kind of position was just not the right one for that kind of setting. She had these 5 x 8 cards and she would basically read her presentation from the cards. On that visit Tom Pickering was with her and a few other big shots. Pickering had visited Bahrain before and they just adored him. On another occasion when Pickering was coming out on a possible visit by himself I remember the prime minister saying to me, "Oh I love that man so much. He's so bright. He doesn't use those cards." That told the story right there - he doesn't use those cards. Well, that's how she made her presentations. That's how she made them to the emir. That's how she made them to the prime minister. That's how she made them to the foreign minister. You know, thanking them for their help and support and blah, blah and asking for basically a blanket approval to launch attacks from Bahrain on Iraq and the emir would not agree. He said, launch them from one of your ships in the sea. He said, we're going to have to live with this guy after you've gone. The other thing he said was we don't think you're serious. You talk about getting rid of Saddam, he said, but what you're doing is you're strengthening him. You hit him a little bit here and you hit him a little bit there. It doesn't get rid of him. It weakens him a little bit, he gets stronger. He wins sympathy from others in the Arab world and, he says, if you're serious, we're with you. But other than that he says, no, we have to think more in terms of living with this guy. That was the emir's take on it.

Now, unlike Madeleine Albright who came out there just once, the other top visitors were the Secretary of Defense William Cohen who came nine times during my assignment there. He came regularly. The head of the Central Command, General Zinni, also came many, many times. The Central Command really had control over the fifth fleet and all of the entire region. It was all that theater. These guys were great visitors. They knew the importance of how you massage a relationship in the Arab world and how you keep it going and how you keep that friendship going just on a friendly level so that when you need him one day you can go in and say, hey, can you help me out here and they'll come through. They always did come through for us.

Well, anyhow, when the emir came to the States, he put his case before President Clinton and he put his case before the Secretary of Defense and in the end we were successful in getting them the planes. They bought a dozen F16s. They got the missiles to go with the F16s as well. The missiles that they wanted to go with them. That was a major achievement. That worked out very well. I was very pleased with that.

Then things continued to go along very nicely. We continued the policing. We continued these periodic attacks on Iraq as we say to demean and diminish his various sites and equipment. In the end it sort of broke down things a little bit, but really didn't make a significant difference. Then Secretary Cohen came out for a visit in March of 1999. Cohen and I and other members of the team met with the emir. The emir was lively, but not his usual lively self. We met for 45 minutes. We had a couple of moments when we had pregnant pauses where we had to sort of pull things out of him and he did acknowledge that he didn't feel particularly well that morning. We left his office. It was a good, cordial, friendly meeting. The emir said, well, if I hadn't agreed to meet with you I probably wouldn't have come in today, but I agreed. He kept his word. That was the kind of man that he was. The prime minister and the foreign minister were in the meeting as well. The minister of defense was there. I was sitting next to Cohen. We had a couple of other people from the embassy, the notetakers and so on. The plan was we would then proceed from the palace to the ministry of defense where we would have a lunch and from that lunch Cohen would fly out directly.

I think maybe we'll take that up next time. We'll start from there next time?

Q: Okay, fine, so we'll talk about this meeting with the emir. He wasn't feeling well and you had just left.

Okay, today is the 13th of January. Today is Friday the 13th.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Johnny, okay, you left the emir's for lunch and what happened?

YOUNG: It was March 6, 1999. We had a meeting with the emir in the morning. We then proceeded to the ministry of defense for lunch. I was at the head table with the Secretary of Defense, together with the minister of defense and the chief of staff of the Bahrainian armed forces. I was sitting next to the chief of staff of the Bahrainian armed forces and the Secretary was seated next to the minister of defense.

Everything was going along nicely, but we were there for a very short time when the minister of defense got up and left the room. Then he came back and then he got up again and he left and he came back and then he got up a third time and he didn't come back. Very shortly after that the chief of staff leaned over to me and said, "Sheik Isa is dead." I said, "I don't believe it." He said, "No, he just died." Well, we were all speechless. We passed the news immediately to others in the room and the Secretary learned of it because he was at the head table with the rest of us. We were absolutely stunned. I mean we just couldn't believe it because we had left him literally 15 minutes ago, no more than 15 to 20 minutes ago and he died of a massive heart attack we learned later. Well, our Secretary of Defense was going to proceed with his plans, but I told him you can't proceed with your plans. We have to stay. You have to stay and pay your condolences to the family. You have to go to the new emir who assumed power immediately upon the death of Sheik Isa. His son Sheik Hamad became the new emir. So, Cohen discussed it with his party and agreed that that would happen.

Q: Oh, yes.

YOUNG: Of course as you can imagine the telegrams were immediately flying back and forth to Washington over this. After a while we returned to Sheik Isa's palace, to his palace where his son greeted us. The Secretary extended condolences on behalf of the U.S. government and on behalf of himself personally. I did the same and when we left the new emir grabbed us both and hugged us. It was an incredible moment. I don't ever remember and I would guess that Secretary Cohen, former Secretary Cohen probably can't recall a meeting where a head of state embraced him so emotionally as happened on that occasion. It was such a touching moment. Well, those of us in the embassy were deeply saddened by this death. Sheik Isa was a remarkable man. A man of enormous generosity and kindness; great understanding, loved by his people. Here's a man who despite internal turmoil in his country up to the time of his death, in terms of the Shia community which represented the majority of the Bahrainis, they represented about 65% of the population, but the country was run by the Sunni Al Khalifa family. Despite setting off bombs all over town and things like that to get the attention of the government and to try and get the changes that they wanted in the way things were done in Bahrain, Sheik Isa never allowed security to be put in place in his biweekly meetings with the population. At the time we were in Bahrain the local tradition of the population coming once or twice a week to pay deference to the head of state was still the practice.

Q: It wasn't just deference. It was sort of a majlis.

YOUNG: It was a majlis.

Q: They would come and present petitions.

YOUNG: Oh definitely come and present petitions. I mean if anything it was their form of democracy in a sense. It was their way of staying in touch with the people and listening to the will of the people at least in terms of what the people wanted in a material sense in any case. That worked out very nicely because he would meet literally thousands in the course of a week and they would come and say well, you know, I need this and I need this and can you help me with this and that and he would say, well, see Mr. so and so on my staff or here's some money for this, here's some money for that. I mean he was literally the father figure dispensing kindness and largesse to his people and they loved him. They respected him enormously. I think it's a very revealing fact that despite this turmoil that had really been in effect for a couple of years at no time did he allow his people to put in security where he would screen and frisk people and tighten up measures. People came in freely. They left freely. They embraced him. They shook his hand. I mean it was truly remarkable and that was up until the time of his death. That to me was indicative of the kind of respect that people had for him. No one harmed him or wanted to harm him. In keeping with Muslim tradition, the emir was buried immediately in a traditional Muslim ceremony, cleansed, washed, wrapped in very simple cotton or muslin material and placed in a very simple grave outside of Bahrain. Later on we went to the gravesite and saw it and it was as simple as you would expect. There is a more prominent marker there than the others, but nothing terribly elaborate, nothing in the grand style that you would find in so many cemeteries.

March 11, 1999 marked the day of a major change in governance in Bahrain as well. The new emir certainly was aware that one day he would assume power, but he didn't know when that would be. It was totally unexpected. He was prepared for it. I thought it was interesting that prior to his father's death he had said certain things to us that we found quite interesting and quite surprising. For example, he had indicated that if he were in power he was prepared to open up the system to a much greater degree than what his father was. Now, he did that very carefully. He didn't do it in any open way to criticize his father while his father was living. In our meetings with him immediately following his father's death he was considerably expansive in that regard saying that he wanted to open the system up, that he wanted to give people an opportunity to participate in the government more and he wanted to take the country in a new direction. He began to do that. In the meantime we continued our pressure on Iraq. It was clear to us that we would continue to get good support form the new emir, that he was as cooperative as his father, perhaps a little bit more deliberative than his father. We could go to his father and say oh, Sheik Isa, can we do so and so and he'd say, sure go ahead and do it and that would be that. With this new fellow it would be sounds like a good idea, sounds reasonable, let me think about that. I'll get back to you. It was a different way of doing business.

Q: It sounds like somebody who hasn't been on the job that long, you know.

YOUNG: He wasn't, but he was in close contact of course with his father and in the decisions taken by his father and he was the minister of defense.

Q: Oh, I see, okay.

YOUNG: He was the crown prince and the commander in chief of the armed forces and he took great pride in his military training. He had been trained as a military man. He had spent a time in Brussels. He had spent time at Sandhurst in England and he had spent a year in the United States at Fort Leavenworth at the Army Staff College. In fact, both the emir Sheik Hamad and his wife Sheika Sabika have said separately that their year in the United States was one of the best times in their lives. I remember the emir Sheik Hamad saying that when he left that people cried. That was not true when he left England and it wasn't true when he left Belgium, but when he left the United States, the outpouring of affection and the friendships that he had established was unprecedented. He had not had that kind of experience anywhere else. I remember Sheika Sabika not saying to me, but saying to my wife that the time for her in the United States was so wonderful and so liberating. She gave the example of being in a room where these ladies were doing something. They were working on some project or something like this and suddenly this lady from the other end of the room said, "Hey, Sabika, can you come over here and help me with so and so?" She said she was absolutely startled when she heard that because she had always heard, your highness this, your highness that, but she was treated as just a regular person and she loved it. She really, really liked that. Again, she spoke of the friendships and the emotional attachments of that period in the United States with great fondness. That had a great impact on them. As a result it helped to make them even better friends of the United States.

We wanted to move as quickly as we could to bring the new emir to the United States to meet with the president. We wanted to seize the opportunity to put a stamp on them so to speak to encourage them to move ahead with the reforms that he had in mind. We began to push for an official visit and we eventually got one. Once again, in May of 2000, I had the privilege of accompanying the emir back on a visit to the United States. He met with President Clinton. It was an opportunity to reaffirm the relationship. It was also an opportunity to put in his plug for some military equipment that they wanted, some missiles that they wanted. It was also an opportunity for the emir to also ask for something that he wanted restored and I'll explain what that was in a minute. It was basically to have the dependents return, the military dependents return to Bahrain. Following the incident of the USS Cole, and some other security threats that were occurring in the region, the commander of the fifth fleet decided to send the dependents home. A good number of the dependents were returned to the U.S. and no new ones could come out. This of course created quite a problem for the school which was a DOD school. It was a most unusual schools in the entire DOD system. Although it was set up primarily to provide for the education of military dependents it had a very large community of Bahrainis and international students. It was basically more of an international school than a DOD school and it had an international baccalaureate program, advanced placement programs, many of which you don't find in the usual DOD school. The new crown prince had his two children in the school. He himself was a graduate of the school, that is the new crown prince, the son of the new emir. That was also a factor in the support that the school received from DOD. Those were the key things that the new emir took up in his visits with the president, the Secretary of State, and with the Secretary of Defense. Those were the three key individual meetings that he had and it was great.

I remember certain things about that visit. For example, we knew that the emir had agreed to stay at the Four Seasons Hotel and that's a very fine hotel. They certainly made it clear that they would accommodate in whatever way they could. I was part of the receiving party at the airport when his plane arrived at Andrews Air Force Base. We met him and we took the long route back, sort of took a little tour and then we arrived at the Four Seasons Hotel. We went in. Mind you, I was back on TDY to stay for the duration of his visit, but of course I couldn't stay at the Four Seasons Hotel. There's no way that per diem would cover me for that, so I stayed at a hotel two blocks away. Anyhow the emir said, "Well, why don't you stay here with me? Don't worry about it, I'll take care of it." I thanked him very much, but said, no, I couldn't and I stayed at my hotel." He said, "Please come on up to my room, my suite." I went up there and the other person who met him and accompanied him on this trip was the former Saudi ambassador to Washington. He had also been the dean of the diplomatic corps at that time, Sheik Bandar. We went up to that suite and I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked around and I looked around and I could have been in one of the emir's palaces back in Bahrain. The hotel had literally pulled out all the stops imaginable and had made his suite look exactly like one of his palaces in Bahrain. It was a remarkable job. God knows what it cost them, but of course money was not a factor. It was one of those little things that I'll remember.

It was a good visit, lasted a couple of days. The emir met all of the people he wanted to see. In the end he achieved what he wanted also in terms of getting the military equipment or at least a commitment in principle. He got an agreement also to have the dependents returned and that worked out very well. I mean this was important in terms of the image of Bahrain, a country that prided itself on being such a good friend of the United States and being a rock of stability in the Gulf. They were very concerned about that.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about your impression of the meeting with President Clinton and how he engaged in this?

YOUNG: Yes. President Clinton is a master at these kinds of things. I mean he has the ability to make the person he's receiving the center of everything that is going on around him and that's the way he was in this meeting. I mean he was truly remarkable. He had a way of taking that person aside and as he walked with them through the White House pointing out different little things, little historical things. Here, let me tell you a little something about this picture here and there and on and on. He did the same with the emir's father, Sheik Isa as well. That was quite a picture as you could imagine. I mean Sheik Isa was about 5' and Clinton was what about 6' 2" or something like that, so it was a wonderful picture of this little emir from the Gulf with all of his regalia and President Clinton looking as smooth, as easy as possible with this fellow. He's just remarkable and also very supportive in terms of how he addressed issues without making any commitments that wouldn't be cleared by his staff and that sort of thing. He knows how to do it in such a way that the person putting the petition for him leaves feeling that he's been heard and that there's hope and he did it beautifully. He's a master, just one of the best there is. Of course he's so articulate and what more can I say on that score? He made us all very proud.

Q: Then you went back after this reception in the United States and how long were you there, when did you leave Bahrain?

YOUNG: Oh, I just want to add a couple of other things that I have forgotten and I wanted to add. I'd like to go back to February of 1999. In February of 1999 I decided to visit a cardiologist in Bahrain because I was having some chest pains. I had spoken to Sheik Isa and he had said to me, I want you to go to the military hospital. It has the best cardiologist in the country and they'll take care of you. If you need to be flown out I will fly you out. I will take care of everything and on and on. I went to this cardiologist. He examined me and he said, oh, you have a blockage in one of your arteries. I had an angioplasty there in Bahrain at their army hospital which is as good as you'll find anywhere. The State Department was quite alarmed that I agreed to do it there. While I was in the hospital, the regional medical doctor flew in from Saudi Arabia to check things and to see what was going on. He satisfied himself that it was as good as you were going to get. They even made a DVD, a CD Rom of everything they did to me. It was incredible. Later on I took this CD back to the States for an evaluation of what they had done. They looked at it and said, wow, this is as good as it gets.

Sheik Isa was just incredibly supportive during that time. When I was in the hospital the outpouring of affection for me, or for the position, I don't know if it was for me or for the position, but it was unbelievable. I received 125 bouquets of flowers. I mean there were so many they couldn't keep them in the hospital anymore, they had to take them out because they said this may cause allergic reactions to other patients in the hospital. I felt like I was either dead or something. I'd never seen so many flowers before and I mean these flowers were done in the most elaborate fashion you can imagine. I mean very little is done simply in that part of the world, but with great elaboration. Anyhow it was wonderful. The emir couldn't have been better. I'll never forget after I went home he called me one day. I answered the phone and I said hello, who is this? He said, hello, this is Isa. That's all, not this is Sheik so and so. This is Isa. How are you doing? How are you feeling? Are you getting better? Do you need anything, do you want anything? I mean he was that kind of guy. Then he came out to the house to sit with me and to see how I was doing. It's just another example of what an extraordinary person he was.

In 2000 we had the visit of his son, Sheik Hamad to the States. As I said that was a very successful visit. We returned and continued our work with the Bahrainis in terms of their support of what we were doing in Iraq in policing the no fly zone and occasionally having these hits on Saddam's facilities, either his radar facilities or some bunker or something like that, none of which really did him any great harm. From the new emir we continued to hear what we had heard from the former emir, which was that if we were serious in our efforts to take down Saddam, they would be with us. They would be with us. The emir said, until you do that, what you're doing is not helping the case, but its enhancing Saddam's standing in the region. We've got to live with this guy. If he survives he's going to be the tough guy in the neighborhood and we've got to be able to deal with him. That was how they felt about that at that time.

Now, during this period differences began to develop between the embassy and the fifth fleet in terms of how we saw the security situation there. It was serious. The situation of Palestinians had a very serious impact on sentiments in Bahrain and in other countries in the Gulf. That said, I still saw us as being in a relatively good secure situation. The commander of the fifth fleet was considerably more cautious. I think that basically what was in his mind was that, look, this USS Cole incident occurred on my watch. I can't have anything else happen on my watch. That is an understandable view. If I were in his shoes I would probably be thinking with the same amount of caution and carefulness and would probably make my decisions accordingly as well. He was really frightened and would not take any chances at all. That's why the dependents were sent home. That was why they weren't letting replacements with dependents come in. That situation continued for quite some time.

Now, July 4th, 2001 was an example of how this came to a head. It was a really glaring example of the difference that the two of us saw. Leading up to July 4th we were seeing a lot of chatter in intelligence channels about the possibility of something happening in the region. No one knew what it was, what it was going to be, when, where, how and what have you. This made us all very nervous and if it made us nervous at the embassy you can only imagine that it made the commander of the fifth fleet even more nervous. We always had a very elaborate and remarkable July 4th party. We held it in one of the top hotels in Bahrain. We had thousands attend it. About 2,500 people attended, if not, more like 5,000, huge, elaborately decorated, the best food you could think of. Each year we had a theme. One year it was Main Street, USA and another year, the last year I was there in 2001 it centered on our diversity. We had foods to fit the different ethnic groups that you would find around the United States. We held it at the Gulf Hotel, which had the largest conference center in Bahrain. The money for this didn't come from the State Department.

Q: I was starting to say, it was all very nice.

YOUNG: This event ran like $40,000 to $50,000 and it all came from contributions from American companies there. Primarily from IBM and Microsoft and particularly the American banks, Citibank and banks of that type. It was just unbelievable. We had agreed with the hotel. We had worked out the menu. I was working on my speech or rather people were working on my speech. We had everything set up. We had agreement with the daughter of a fellow who was an officer with the fifth fleet for her to sing the National Anthem. We were going to have then a Bahraini fellow sing the Bahraini National Anthem. We had the band from the Bahrain police, a top-notch band, so everything was agreed. Then, as I said, this chatter, this intelligence chatter picked up in pitch and it looked like something may go down, that something was going to go down in Bahrain. I'll never forget that July 4th. It was one of the most troublesome days of my life because at the very last minute we had a piece of very credible intelligence that indicated that again there could be something. Of course we shared this, we shared everything with the military. I had gone to the minister of the interior, I had gone to the emir. I told him we're down to the wire now. Either I cancel this whole thing or we proceed and we have to have every security measure in place. I conferred with my country team. I conferred with the security officer and I got support from all of them. There was only one member of the country team who was not sure of going ahead with this thing or not. It came down to a decision that I had to make myself. I thought about it hard. I thought about the assurances I had from the government. I thought about the material we had looked at, the intelligence we had looked at. I thought about the physical arrangements we had made and I decided I would proceed, that I would go ahead with it.

At about the same time the admiral of the fifth fleet issued an immediate order to his people prohibiting them from attending the 4th of July function at the Gulf Hotel. We had invited hundreds of his people and we were particularly counting on this young girl who was a dependent of one of his officers to sing the National Anthem. At the last minute something happened that I wasn't aware of. The DCM had asked Joe Mussomeli to ask his daughter, Alexis, if she would mind singing the National Anthem. First of all I didn't know that Alexis could sing and I'd never heard her sing. She had certainly never performed to my knowledge in front of any large groups. She had no time to rehearse because this was all decided on the day of the function itself. She didn't have time to practice with the band that was going to be there and that sort of thing.

Anyhow, we proceeded with the function. Thousands came. We got to the point in the program where the national anthems were played. The Bahraini sung his and then Alexis got up and she sang and she did a magnificent job. I mean it was like listening to an angel. We were moved to tears. My wife, Joe Mussomeli, his wife, we just couldn't believe it. Here this young girl, she was no more than about 15 I think at the time or 14, and she just did a truly magnificent job. I mean talking about stepping up to the plate and taking on this kind of challenge. She did it and I mean talk about hitting a home run. It was something I will never, never forget. The function was a great success. We didn't have any security problems at all and I was in the end very relieved that it turned out so well.

Q: I take it the admiral did not show up.

YOUNG: Oh, no, not at all. Normally he would have been in the receiving line with me because he was a key official.

Q: How did this go with the Bahraini authorities?

YOUNG: They were disappointed that he was not in the line because they'd been coming to these things for years and expected to see him there, but they also understood his sensitivity to the security situation in Bahrain at the time. Our work proceeded as usual. We continued to receive all kinds of VIPs. I think I had mentioned earlier that Secretary Cohen came out nine times during my visit there. He was I thought absolutely wonderful in how he would try to keep this relationship well oiled shall we say. He would come out sometimes with no particular request, just because he was in the region. He wanted to say hello to our good friends. This kind of expression of friendship is deeply appreciated in the Arab world. They don't like it when you come just when you want something. They like it when you come and chit chat and say hello, how's the family in that tradition that is theirs. Its part of the thing that you do when you're in the desert, let's say. I may be exaggerating here, but it is related to that tradition that was developed in the desert as people would pass through and sit in tents and visit. This way you know when they needed help they could get it. He was just a wonderful guy and of course we had visitors from the central command and on and on. All kinds of VIPs. It was just an endless number.

I'm going to go back to 2000. One day I got a call from the director general of the Foreign Service because I was supposed to leave Bahrain in 2000 and my mind was made up that I was going to retire. My days in the Service I thought were finished and I was going to leave. If all had gone well I would have left in December of 2000. That's when I would have had my three years. Anyhow I got a call from the director general, Skip Gnehm, and he said, "Johnny, this is Skip. I'm calling to ask a favor." I said, "What is that?" In fact I said, "Now, what have I done wrong this time?" because that would be the only time that they would call me is if I'd done something wrong. They never called to say, hey you're doing a great job. I said, "What have I done wrong?" He said, "Nothing. I want to call to ask you something." I said, "What is that?" He said, "Would you mind staying another year?" I thought about it literally in a second because although my mind was made up that I was going to complete my three years and leave I said, "I don't mind. What's the problem?" He said, "Well, your replacement" and my replacement had been named, Ron Neumann, "his nomination is in trouble and there's no way he's going to get confirmed by the senate this time around. So, would you stay the extra year?" I said, "I don't mind." I agreed. That's what extended me from 2000 to 2001. Let's advance forward now.

Q: I was wondering could you just give us a little bit of the workings. Do you know what the problem was?

YOUNG: It was a security problem. I mean I learned later on. Skip did not go into the details at that time. He just said it was a security problem. If you recall during Madeleine Albright's tenure as Secretary of State there was a security problem with computers.

Q: Yes, a couple of laptop computers disappeared.

YOUNG: Right. Well, Ron's computer didn't disappear, but I guess one that he had on some of his trips with Martin Indyk was checked and found that it hadn't been secured at all times as it should have been. So, that was the problem. I mean the Secretary had made this bold move that no one would be spared if they were caught violating the rules on security and that sort of thing. That made it impossible for his nomination to then be advanced to the senate. That's what happened.

Q: He's now.

YOUNG: I'm going to get to that. He didn't make it on that round, but there were elections in 2000. A new regime came in. His name was forwarded again, he made it through and he was confirmed and replaced me in 2001. I left at the end of September, 2001. I just would like to mention two things prior to my departure. The first and most important of course was September 11th. I'll never forget I was in my office and someone called and said turn on the TV right away. It seems like a plane has crashed into the World Trade Center, one of the buildings in New York. I put on the TV right away. Several people had come to my office. There was an immediate replay of what had happened with the first plane and we looked at it and all of us said immediately well, maybe it was an accident. Then we began to talk about it and we said, maybe, but how could that be? A plane that size wouldn't make that kind of error. While we're watching the screen plane number two occurs. That hits the second tower. We knew immediately then this had to have been a terrorist act, no question about it. We were all in a state of shock over this. We got immediate expressions of sympathy and of concern from the government of Bahrain. The calls began to come to the embassy and we began the procedure of setting up a condolence book and things like that and we began to work immediately to have a memorial service which we held in one of the local hotels. In fact we held it in the same hotel where we had the 4th of July reception.

It was a beautiful service that we did. I mean a really respectful and dignified service. It was an interfaith service where we had Muslim prayers and we had Catholic prayers. I don't think we had any Jewish prayers because there wasn't any kind of rabbi available and then the different chaplains. It was nice. We had these huge candles and we had a candle for the 50 states and then we had a candle for each nationality that we knew of.. As we called the names of each state we would light a candle. Then we called the different countries, United Kingdom, France, Germany and a candle was lit until the entire stage in this huge hall was lit with candles. Somber, respectful, beautifully done. The hall was packed with people. It was really a very sad time.

Well, as you can imagine I continued my arrangements to leave. I continued my round of farewell calls. Then some days before I was to leave, maybe a week or so, we got a message we were positioning our assets to go into Afghanistan. I got a request to ask the government of Bahrain for permission to base refueling tankers in Bahrain. At that point that little island was already packed with planes from the fifth fleet because of what we were doing in Iraq and there just wasn't much room. Nevertheless I went to the emir and I relayed the urgency and the importance of the request. I was given 48 hours to get back to the military on this. Prior to this, messages were going back and forth to the mission asking what is your assessment of this, what is your assessment of that. Messages were also going directly to the defense attachï¿½ without my inclusion. It was clear that DOD was doing one thing, the State Department was doing something else. I was getting calls at all hours of the morning and night telling me do this, do that. You've got to do this, you've got to do that. I'll never forget a screaming match with Jim Larocco who was managing all of this at that time screaming at me like a mad man.

Q: Where was he located?

YOUNG: Oh, he was back in Washington. He was the principal DAS in the bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. I forgot that particular request, but you've got to do it, you know. I knew what I had to do. I didn't have to have him scream at me. Anyhow, he was screaming at this particular request that had to be done in 48 hours. I went to the government and the emir said, yes in principle, but we need time to work this out with our people before I give you the final okay. That was literally within hours of my receiving the request because I met with him literally right away. That wasn't good enough and I'd get calls. Have you got it yet? Have you got it yet? I said, in your message you said 48 hours. It isn't even 24 hours yet or 30 hours or anything like that. The pressure was on me. I couldn't sleep. I was irritable. It was quite a time. Of course the military, they were just pushing, pushing to move ahead on this. I'd get calls from them as well on this. Have you got the okay yet Johnny? It was about 30 hours, 30 hours had gone by and let's say on the 31st hour that morning I got a call from Washington saying the planes are on the way. I had not gotten the okay from the government yet so I scrambled like a mad man to get the emir to get everyone I possibly could. It had to come from the emir because no one else could issue that authority, but the emir. I had visions of these tankers arriving and having them turned away. Anyhow, I chased the emir down. I literally tracked him down and said you know, you've got to help us on this one. This is when we really need you and I said the planes are on the way. He said, don't bring them here. I said, there's no alternative, they're on the way. He thought about it and thought about it and he called me back later on and he said it was okay and then I conveyed that and the planes came in. Then it was a question of where are you going to get the fuel to fuel them. That became a logistical issue, but now that they were in place the rest we could work out. We had special tankers to travel many miles over the desert to fuel these things, but in the end it did work out. That was the last big crisis before I left and I left a matter of days after that. The last day of my time in Bahrain the former commander of the fifth fleet, Admiral Fargo, had come into town and he asked for a courtesy call on the crown prince which we agreed to. We had that meeting with the crown prince. It was basically to say that Admiral Fargo was going out to Diego Garcia to take charge of operations in preparation for what was going to go down in Afghanistan. So, that all turned out very nicely. It gave me an opportunity to once again say hello and farewell to Admiral Fargo. I returned home to finish up my packing and when I was in the midst of doing one of the suitcases the doorbell rang. The staff went to the door and they said, oh, here's something from the crown prince. It was a tube about 12 feet long, and about 12 inches in diameter. I said, what is that. They said oh, this is from the crown prince. It's for you. I said, thank you very much. My wife and I opened it up and it was the most magnificent carpet that you could imagine. My guess is that that carpet must have been worth about $25,000 or $30,000. It was just magnificent. I sent a note of thanks and I called the DCM and I said this is yours. I'm leaving it for the embassy. I can't take it and you know that, but I want that documented that I left it here with you. We left it and later on that evening we went out to the airport, took the plane and said our farewell to Bahrain. It was on the 30th of September, 2001.

Q: Well, I've just a couple of questions Johnny. One is when the attack of 9/11 happened, you were all Middle Eastern hands, did the finger point immediately in your mind or almost immediately to Bin Laden or was that the consensus?

YOUNG: Oh, clearly. There was no question as to who might have done it. It looked like it was his footprint or handprint or whatever you call it. That was clear. There was no question because we had sufficient evidence of the kind of activities that were going on in Afghanistan. In fact we were one of the posts that was able to intercept two trainees who had been in camps in Afghanistan and had questioned them and then we'd turn them over to the Saudis. They were Saudi citizens, but we were able to get our hooks into them before they were turned over to the Saudis.

Q: While you were there, I'm talking about the bombs going off and security things. I go back to the time I was in when Bahrain was part of my consular district as the vice consul, back in the late '50s. At the time we were worried about the Shias particularly of Iranian influence. This was at that time the Shah, how did we see, were the Iranians behind what was going on?

YOUNG: I think that is a lingering concern among the Sunnis in Bahrain that Iran has a hand in these evil acts that people would perpetrate against the government. There was no trust of the Iranians. There was an Iranian ambassador there, but Bahrain after one attempted coup some years earlier had put a curb on Iranian activities. They closed the school down; they closed their club down and things like that and wouldn't allow them to reopen. When the Ayatollah came to power in '79, this emboldened the Shia in Bahrain quite a bit. They felt that their day had come. This was their time to ascend to power in Bahrain and that Iran would back them up and therefore they began to agitate for change. The Bahrainis cracked down and they remained very suspicious

I wanted to discuss the political reforms that occurred in Bahrain during my time there. The emir indicated that he was willing to open up the system and he had in mind at that time two key elements of change. One was to basically have what he called a national charter, a new type of constitution. One of the criticisms of the government up to that point was that the constitution had been suspended by his father and that's what ended the parliament and was never allowed to restart. The new emir, Sheik Hamad, realized that there were flaws in the old constitution and that if it had operated as it had been written it would have been the end of the power of the Al Khalifas in Bahrain. He initiated and actively supported this idea of a new national charter. This charter would be drafted by a wide range of business and civic leaders and scholars and what have you and it would then be put to a vote. The people would agree with this and this charter would then lead to the creation of two legislative bodies. One already existed, the Shura counsel, which was a consultative body. It had no real power to enact legislation. Now, this new arrangement would have meant a two-house chamber. One chamber would be consultative. It would be similar to the Shura counsel, consultative. The other would be legislative. Legislation would require passage in both chambers before the emir could sign it into law, but veto power rested with the emir. He could veto any bill that was passed by these two chambers. After much discussion and all kinds of TV programs and all kinds of involvement in the press and what have you, this charter was put to a vote. I think on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 2001, that this national charter was passed. It was very well received. It was passed with a huge margin. We sent out people to monitor things to see how the elections were going. They were free, fair, transparent, I mean it was very nicely done. We have to keep in mind that Bahrain did have some tradition of voting prior to the suspension of the parliament back in the 1970s.

This was the beginning of major changes in Bahrain. Those changes have not been without problems. The country continues to this day to have these eruptions primarily from the Shia community. Although I'm not there now I do follow events and I must say that, like it or not, what has occurred in Iraq has emboldened the Shia in Bahrain. Keep in mind that there were three countries in the Gulf with majority Shia populations. Iran, Iraq and Bahrain. In Iraq the Sunni were the key leaders. In Bahrain the Sunnis are the key leaders, but the situation has changed in Iraq. It is now the Shia who have come into power and this has given encouragement to the Shia in Bahrain. So, they continue to press for more and more change. This is something that I think we will have to watch very carefully. We press for change in the Middle East. We congratulate Bahrain on the changes it has made, but let's face it, if we pressed all the way and true democratic change came to Bahrain in terms of one person one vote that would be the end of the Sunni regime. It would bring into power the Shia who would be, there's no question, aligned 100% with Iran. It would be a whole new ball game in that little country and I think we'd have to look at sort of packing up our bags and moving on.

Now, the Saudis don't want to see this. Let's be honest, we don't want to see it either. We want a country that is stable and that is still friendly to us, so it's in our interest. It's in the interest of the Al Khalifas also to try and find some accommodation that pleases the Shia community.

Q: I mean I realize you left shortly after 9/11, but at the time, by the time you left, what was the thinking of you and your staff and maybe those others around, maybe our military, was Iraq involved in this or?

YOUNG: Absolutely not.

Q: I mean were we looking at Afghanistan?

YOUNG: We were looking at Afghanistan. We were dealing with Iraq as a separate issue altogether. Iraq was not the center of terrorism. We were dealing with Iraq in terms of weapons of mass destruction and a rotten leader there, but not in terms of having been the place that harbored the people who did us harm on September 11th. That was the formulation that came about later.

Q: Then you left and retired or what?

YOUNG: Oh, no. During the time that I was asked to stay and given that extra year I then began to agitate for another assignment. Not agitate, that's the wrong word. I began to let it be known that I was available. I had been promoted to career minister and hadn't been assigned really as a career minister to a new assignment. I made a case once again to the central personnel system that number one there weren't that many blacks at my level in the Service. In fact there was only one other at that point, and that was George Moose. George was already assigned and I said I'm interested and I think the Department wanted to do something with me. They didn't want to throw me to the wolves at that point. I was a symbol that they could use frankly. I was prepared to be used as a symbol. I had no problems with that at all, but I did have my limitations. I said I did not want to serve in Africa, that I had done my time in Africa, that I thought it was time once again for the Service to demonstrate that it could assign minority ambassadors to regions other than the traditional places than in Africa. I had put in my wish list and my wish list consisted of 10 different countries and I remember the order of them very well. Number one on the list was the Netherlands. Number two was Sweden. Number three was Jordan and number four was Slovenia and then I had a whole lot of other ones down the line. I knew that the Netherlands would go political. I knew that Sweden would go political. Jordan I thought could have been a possibility and Slovenia I frankly thought, well, you never know. It was in Europe, a lovely country, a country doing a lot of things right. A beautiful, nicely situated place so I thought, why not. That's a possibility. The other thing I figured was that I could be used also not just in terms of my color, but I could be used as a career administrative officer who could possibly hold this assignment of the career service, that I could be used in that kind of argument as well. I think my color even added to it. The first two that I mentioned didn't work out. The third one, Jordan, may have been a possibility, but what happened was at the last minute they had to find the place for Skip Gnehm. All of the other places that might have worked out for him were all gone.

Q: He was a Middle Eastern hand.

YOUNG: Right and they gave him Jordan. He went to Jordan and I got a call that the D committee had selected me for Slovenia and I was very pleased about that. Then, later on, I was told, well, you'll have to, now this was in 2000 that the committee made its selection. This was in the summer of 2000 before 2001. Well, that didn't go anywhere because all of those selections made by the committee died.

Q: Because of the elections.

YOUNG: Because of the elections and then they resurfaced again. Some of them had changes in them at that point when they resurfaced and I was lucky that my name was selected when it was resubmitted the second time under the Bush administration. That's how I got to Slovenia.

Q: You were in Slovenia from when to when?

YOUNG: It was in the fall of 2001 that I arrived. Prior to my arrival in Slovenia I came back here for my hearings. I was preparing myself all along before returning in terms of the issues that we had with Slovenia. I had my hearing and I want to tell you a little bit about that hearing. There was a moment in it that I thought was quite memorable. I was up with Dan Coats who was going to Germany. The fellow who was going to the Czech Republic who was the cousin of the president. Ambassador Lynch who was going to Ireland. It was quite a nice hearing. We were all treated very nicely. No great controversy. Dan Coats of course it was like a lovefest since he was a former senator. Senator Sarbanes introduced me. My daughter and son were seated behind me and I had the pleasure of introducing them to the members of the committee. Senator Sarbanes was chairing the committee at that time, but at one point Senator Helms came in and he was allowed to speak and he said and I'll try to imitate his voice. I'm not sure I'm that good at it, but he said, "Ambassador designate Lynch, you're going to Ireland. There's something I want you to do for me when you get to Ireland." Ambassador Lynch said, "Yes, Senator Helms, I'd be glad to. What is it?" He said, "I want you to meet somebody who is going to be in Ireland and I want you to take good care of him. He's a good man and he does good work and I want you to treat him fine." Ambassador designate Lynch said, "Why, by all means I'll be happy to have him. Yes, I'll be glad to take care of him." Helms chimed in again, "I can assure you this is a very good man and I want you to take good care of him and I appreciate your pledge that you're going to take good care of him. His name is Bono." Well, my daughter kicked my seat behind me and later on she said, "Dad, I thought I was going to lose it at that point. When Helms tells the Ambassador designate to Ireland to take good care of Bono, I couldn't believe that that would come up at a hearing" and I couldn't either nor could anyone else.

Q: You might explain who Bono is.

YOUNG: Well, Bono is the lead singer in the U2 rock group and Bono does incredible humanitarian work particularly in Africa.

Q: He made man of the year.

YOUNG: He's been knighted by the Queen of England. That aside, you wouldn't think of Senator Helms, this right of right fellow lining up with this knee jerk liberal doing humanitarian work, but they became great friends. I thought it was interesting. We were asked a few questions and it all turned out very well. I had a statement prepared and I remember at one point Senator Helms saying, well, this looks like a really nice group of nominees here. I think they're all fine. We're going to break for lunch, not break for lunch; we're going to break because we have to take a vote. I think we ought to wish the best to this group and thank them for coming here. We just put our statements in the box at the end of the table. I was getting ready to say that such is the prerogative of the senate. They can do whatever they want in terms of how they interpret their role to advise and consent. You can prepare and prepare, but in the end if they say to you just drop your statement in the box at the end of the table, that's what you do. I mean we did have a small amount of time to make our individual statements, which we did. We were asked a couple of questions, but it was all brought to an end by Sarbanes and that was that.

I decided after I was confirmed that I would do something completely different for my swearing in. I had had three previous ceremonies in the Benjamin Franklin room to which hundreds of persons were invited. This time I decided I would do something different. I was told that the Secretary of State would swear me in if I decided to hold it in the Department, but my decision was to take it away from the Department, the swearing in, and take it to my high school in Philadelphia. I attended a vocational, technical high school in Philadelphia. It was a school that catered to underprivileged kids in the inner city and I wanted to do it there as a symbol of what is possible from kids coming out from that kind of school, not that they could all aspire to be ambassador or what have you, but to offer them a symbol and some encouragement.

Q: That's great.

YOUNG: I did that at the Edward Bok Vocational Technical High School in Philadelphia. I asked my mentor, Assistant Secretary Mary Ryan, to officiate and she agreed. We arranged with the wife of the then Mayor of Philadelphia, he's now the Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, for his wife to swear me in and we had it in Philadelphia. It was in September and it all turned out very well. Following the swearing in, which was something that these kids had frankly never seen before, we had a little reception in the library which had been named for me, the Johnny Young Library, which I thought was very nice. The local TV station covered it and it was written up in the newspaper. Billy Boy makes good, that sort of thing. There was one thing that made me feel particularly good about the whole thing. I was talking to a young girl who was graduating from this high school and she said, I wasn't sure that I wanted to go to college until today. Now I know I want to go. If she is the only one that I touched on that occasion, it was worth it.

Q: Absolutely. What was the situation in Slovenia?

YOUNG: In my statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I had mentioned several items that I knew were controversial and that would get things kind of stirred up, but I wanted them to get things stirred up. I used that as a deliberate mechanism to engage the Slovenes in dialogue on these issues. One was the return of property confiscated during the time of the Tito regime, property that had not been returned to American citizens. Mind you the property had been confiscated before these persons had become U.S. citizens. Nevertheless, they were making claims now on their property. Slovenia was one of the countries that upon its independence said that it would return property. This was something that they decided that they would do on their own and that was a good thing. It was something that was looked upon very favorably by the transatlantic institutions that they wanted to get into such as NATO, European Union, etc. That was one issue.

The other was intellectual property. Slovenia had the reputation of its pharmaceutical companies taking the data developed by American drug companies and using that data to manufacture generics. This had the pharmaceutical industry up in arms. That was an issue I wanted to flag. Another was Slovenia's candidacy for NATO. The U.S. had not committed yet to supporting Slovenia's candidacy and I wanted to keep the dialogue on that open also. I also wanted to make sure that we could get as much leverage out of this as possible before we committed to supporting Slovenia's candidacy. Another was, of course, to try and help the country in whatever way we could with its transition from a centrally directed economy and state to one that was more open, with open markets and that was democratic and things like that, to support their civic institutions.

I arrived in Slovenia. The press had interpreted my remarks about the return of property as no support for Slovenia's candidacy for NATO if these changes in terms of property, in terms of intellectual property rights, did not occur in a positive way that we would not support Slovenia's candidacy for NATO. I had immediately to try and correct that misunderstanding because it was clear that it was going to follow me everywhere. That was one thing that I found right away. The Slovenes were very thin skinned. They didn't like criticism at all. They were worried about me. I began to see in the press right away racial comments about me. I was portrayed in local cartoons in an unflattering way in terms of my race and what have you. I said right away, look, if I am going to have any relationship with the people of Slovenia and with this government, then we've got to take race off the table. There's no way that this is going to fly. I said, you can challenge me, you can challenge my government on anything that you want except it cannot be based on race. Let's put that aside and if we put that aside we can be friends and we can discuss business and we can work together. If that's going to be on the table, I can't deal with you. That cleared the air. I did it on television. I did it in editorials to the press. I made it very clear that that was a topic that I would not accept as a responsible basis for any kind of dialogue. The government never engaged in this sort of thing, but it certainly could affect my relationship with the government. We got that cleared up right away and we could then move on to do business.

After being in the country a very short time, it was very clear to me that Slovenia was indeed a very good candidate for NATO. I favored strongly supporting their candidacy although we had not committed yet. I continued to press them on the reform of the law on intellectual property. What had happened was in preparation for their European Union candidacy, Slovenia had passed a law that made it illegal for companies to use the intellectual property of someone else to support generics. That was good, but they did that well in advance of their candidacy for European entry. What happened was their own pharmaceutical companies were furious. They realized what this meant to them. They pressured the government which immediately passed a law that rescinded the law that they passed. Pharmaceutical companies reverted back to using this data developed by other drug companies.

Q: When you're talking about pharmaceutical companies, you're talking about the indigenous pharmaceutical companies.

YOUNG: Yes.

Q: Because in no way could a country go into the European Union which is engaging in stealing of intellectual property.

YOUNG: That's correct, right, that's why they passed this law, but they passed it almost two years before they had to meet this requirement. The pharmaceutical companies said my God, that's two years that we can continue stealing, so rescind the law. That's what happened. The American companies of course were furious. I continued to pressure. They thought, oh God, if we don't do this we won't get the U.S. support for our candidacy for NATO and they knew that if we didn't support them for NATO, they would never get in. They had had an opportunity to join NATO in 1999. It was a foregone conclusion at that time that of any of the countries to be considered, Slovenia was going to be number one. Slovenia was going to be number one, not the Czech Republic, not Hungary, not Slovakia, but in the end Slovenia was cast aside and it was Hungary and I think it was Hungary, Poland and Czech. They were brought in. The Slovenes were devastated.

Q: What was behind it?

YOUNG: Well, no one has heard the definitive answer why. Some say it was the French who screwed them at the last minute and did them in because they wanted these others in. Some said no it was the U.S. who did it and I don't know what the pressures were, but we never got to the bottom of it frankly. Anyhow, they were devastated that they didn't get in. They wanted this more than anything else. This to them was a badge of respectability and of status and, you know, it really made sense. Also it meant that they could reduce the amount of money that they were spending to defend their small territory and basically count on the umbrella that would be provided by NATO and channel their funds in a more efficient way. It really made good sense.

We made our case to our government that we should support Slovenia, but we were not getting full support. I mean there was a great deal of opposition by one element in the Department of Defense to this. There was the feeling out there at that time, I don't know how it started, but the feeling was that Slovenia was somehow arrogant about its candidacy, that it was too sure of itself, that it was too cocky. If you looked at it in terms of GDP, when you look at it in terms of democracy, when you look at it in terms of economic reform, when you look at it in terms of the military, the kind of military they had, the discipline in the military, all of these kinds of issues, they were at the top of the list. Number one, number one, number one, but the feeling developed that because they were number one in all of these categories, they were arrogant. They weren't taking it seriously enough. That they needed to do more to demonstrate that they really wanted this in the worst way. Well, the Slovenes' response was we do want it in the worst way, but hey don't you remember what happened to us in '99 when you screwed us? They said we're like a rejected suitor. We tried the first time and we were turned away. We're trying again, but we are afraid we may be turned away again. So we are reserving a little bit of perhaps enthusiasm and are being a bit guarded just in case this doesn't work out. We will not be as devastated and as disappointed as we were the last time. This didn't fly over. Nobody bought this in Washington and as I said the biggest obstacle to a more immediate support from the U.S. side came from the Department of Defense.

Q: Any particular branch?

YOUNG: Yes, specifically the office run by Ian Brzezinski. I don't remember the specific office. He was determined that he was going to make Slovenia a case that to demonstrate the seriousness with which we were taking this whole business of the expansion of NATO that we weren't going to just take a country because they were good in every respect, but we were going to really be tough and hard on them.

Q: It sounds like something that I've seen described before and that is one somebody trying to show they have, let me put it in diplomatic terms, somebody in a bureau or a place in the government showing they had balls. At the same time picking on the small country when they knew they couldn't get away with it say with Poland or something.

YOUNG: That's the bottom line.

Q: I can prove to my guys at the golf club that I'm really tough. I mean did you get that feeling?

YOUNG: Oh, no question about it. I'll demonstrate that in other ways later on. Here we had this little country that was doing things its way and we feel that little countries frankly should dance to our tune. When we want them to do something they should do it and that should be that. Slovenia was a very successful country. One that succeeded because it did things its way. For example, the World Bank and the IMF had counseled Slovenia to take a certain approach in its economy following its independence in 1991. Slovenia didn't listen to that advice at all and did it its way and was able to demonstrate in black and white that if it had taken the approach suggested and recommended by the fund in the bank it would have been in a terrible state compared to where it was. So, it did it its own way and it made it very difficult for subsequent IMF and World Bank teams to come out and tell them do this this way, because they had done it themselves. That was in their nature and it's part of their nature anyhow. They're very stubborn people and I always said that's part of the reason why they existed for 800 years under Austrian rule because of a certain stubbornness and a certain cautiousness and carefulness as well.

Anyhow, we had this resistance on the part of DOD in saying okay we're going to support Slovenia whereas we had said we were going to do this. In terms of a few other countries, we'd said it informally; we hadn't come out and said so publicly. There was good support in the congress for Slovenia's inclusion. There was support in other quarters as well. All of the European countries, all of the European members of NATO were fully committed to Slovenia, but we had not committed yet. Anyhow, in May of 2002 we succeeded in getting a visit to the United States by the then prime minister of Slovenia, Drnovsek. He came and was able to make his case with President Bush. He had visited the country in June of 2001 where he met Putin for the first time. They had their meeting in Slovenia. When I had my photo op with President Bush in August of 2001, he greeted me and he said, "You're going to Slovenia?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You're going to love it. It's a wonderful country. I loved it. Laura and I had no idea that it was so beautiful and that the people were so nice" and on and on. He said, "You're going to enjoy this." When I met him again in May of 2002 for the pre-brief prior to the meeting in the Oval Office with Prime Ministers Drnovsek, the first thing he said to me was "How do you like Slovenia?" I said, "It was just as you said, Mr. President. It is absolutely wonderful." He said, "See, I told you so." Then we got down to discussion the issues and he said, well, what are the problems? I said the problem is Slovenia wants to join NATO and it would like our support. I think it should be a member of the alliance. They continue to make the reforms necessary to complete their application for NATO membership and they're doing a good job in reforming their economy. It's a solid democracy and on and on. He listened and then we had the meeting. The photographers came in and they're snapping all away and then the word was get them out. Then like rats leaving the ship, they all left and we were left there to have our discussion with the Slovenes. President Bush, Secretary of State Powell was in on that meeting, Condoleezza Rice left to attend another meeting, but Scooter Libby was thee. I'll never forget that because I have a photograph of it.

Q: Libby being the principal aide to the Vice President.

YOUNG: I don't know what role he was in at that point, but he was in the meeting and Dan Freed who was the head of the European office in the White House was in on the meeting as well. Now, a couple of amusing incidents during this meeting. Of course the Slovene expressed his friendship and solidarity with the U.S. in terms of September 11th. They're with us and they want to help us and what a good relationship we have and what an important role we played in terms of Bosnia how important a role Slovenia played in that as well. When we got ready to do the bombing we had asked for overflight clearance from Austria and Austria denied us and then we asked Slovenia and Slovenia agreed. So, the planes came over Slovenia and then into Bosnia.

The president was at one point reared back in the chair like this, just his basically his shoulders resting on the back of the chair and his legs way out. His heels basically on the bottom of the floor and he's sort of swinging a little bit like that. The prime minister said, oh, we'd love you to come back to Slovenia and the president said, well, I don't travel. My Secretary of State doesn't like me to travel. He's afraid I'm going to make a faux pas. We all had a good laugh and Powell didn't say anything, he just looked on. The president asked good questions. He was briefed. He knew exactly what to ask. He asked how the reforms were coming along and how was the country doing, etc. Then he said, "Oh, I don't know why but there's this reputation that Slovenia has taken for granted that it's going to get into NATO. There's this feeling that Slovenia is arrogant about this whole process. Mr. Prime Minister, do you have any idea why that happened or why this has gotten out and is circulating?" Prime Minister Drnovsek is a very sour looking fellow with a sort of a pear shaped face, he looks almost like something out of Munch's painting, The Scream. He literally has that kind of head and that kind of tight mouth, very serious intellectual. I mean a brilliant man. He said in his perfect English, "Mr. President, I have no idea where these things circulate. I, too have heard rumors of that type. But, I want to tell you there's no basis to them whatsoever. We work very hard to try and meet all of the requirements of our NATO membership application. We will be a good and responsible member of the alliance if we are selected. I don't know how these things get started. Maybe some low-level person on your staff has put this in a report and its gotten its way up to you. At that point the president turns to Dan Freed and says, "Dan, did you put this in my report?" Well, I thought I would fall out of the chair at that point. Dan said no or didn't respond, I'm not sure what it was. That was really quite something that he would do that because Dan wasn't fully committed either I must say at that point, but I give Dan full credit in the reporting cable, he reported that incident in the telegram which I thought meant a lot. That showed a great deal of integrity on his part. He was at least faithful to what transpired although it was sort of in a light moment. It was a good meeting. In the end the president kind of let slip when he said to the prime minister, he said, I'll see you in November at the summit which was the big meeting that would decide who would be invited into NATO and who would not. That was a slip. It was a positive one because the president did not commit in that meeting. He was as supportive as he could, but he didn't commit that, you know, you have our support. It was a good meeting. The prime minister left happy. I left happy and all turned out well. That was May of 2002.

The big NATO summit was scheduled for Prague in November of 2002 and it would be at that meeting that the decision would be made. Now, prior to that we had many meetings in the United States trying to firm up our position. Prior to the Prague summit we received a cable in which I was instructed to go to the government and tell them that the U.S. would support Slovenia's candidacy for NATO. That was one of the most wonderful moments that I can remember.

Q: Did you get any feel for where again the Department of Defense you're saying one section of the Department of Defense, did you feel that the prime minister's visit had sort of trumped the, I mean it was, I'm sure the prime minister knew exactly where the problem lay.

YOUNG: Yes, I think that it was certainly beneficial. I think that there were two meetings that were crucial and that helped. The prime minister also had a separate meeting with Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense. Now, Rumsfeld had been an ambassador to NATO, so he understood I think to a much greater degree what was involved here versus members of his staff including Brzezinski with all of his brilliance.

Q: This is Zbigniew's son?

YOUNG: Yes. So, those two meetings were key and of course the meeting he had with the Secretary where the Secretary was very favorable and very positive. I think it was basically those three meetings that helped to bring it all together and we had piled on the reporting. We had put it on every way you could possibly think of in terms of our analysis of the economy, of the political situation, of the reforms of the military; all of the data was there and clearly positive in terms of this is what should happen. As I said that glorious moment did come when I could go to the government and say we will do it. The cables went out to all of the posts at the same time. I think it was either in Estonia or Latvia the ambassador went in and told the prime minister or president of the U.S. support. The official said, "Read it to me one more time. I want to her it again." It was truly a glorious moment.

Then in November there was the summit where it was all formalized. The day following the summit Rumsfeld visited Slovenia to reaffirm what had occurred. He said, now that this has happened and we want you to follow through on these reforms. Brzezinski was there and was just chomping at the bit to say, you got in, but let me tell you, let me just slap you around a little bit. But he was kept in check. I remember later on in a private meeting Rumsfeld saying to Brzezinski, "I knew you wanted to say something, but I'm proud of you that you kept quiet." It was really a good meeting. It was with the prime minister, the president and the foreign minister and all. That was my first time to meet Rumsfeld, the most charming guy you'd want to meet. Smart as a whip. It showed Slovenia at its most glorious so it was really wonderful. That was in November of 2002.

Q: Okay, well, we'll stop at this point and we'll pick this up the next time. We talked about Slovenia and NATO. Not much else about Slovenia.

YOUNG: I want to talk about the intellectual property rights and some of the other reforms. I want to talk about what we were doing with some of the civic society or civic institutions. Then I want to talk about the Iraq war.

Q: Today is the 31st of January, 2006. Johnny, just refresh my memory. You were in Slovenia from when to when?

YOUNG: From 2001 to 2004.

Q: Okay, you were mentioning a whole series of things to talk about. Do you want to start with intellectual rights and explain what that was and what the problem was.

YOUNG: At my confirmation hearing I had put down a marker in terms of intellectual property rights being one of the issues that I would take on. I knew that this would get people stirred up in Slovenia, but I wanted them to really engage with us in dialogue on this particular issue. I arrived and the press was waiting for me to just shock me to pieces. The pharmaceutical companies in Slovenia had put pressure on the politicians in the country and on the press to go after me. The issue was a very simple one. American pharmaceutical companies had spent considerable money in developing their brand name products. Slovenia has a very extensive and successful generics industry and they would take the data developed to support the American brand name products to produce generics and then sell these generics throughout Europe, Africa, India, you name it, making lots of money.

Q: With no money going to the drug companies?

YOUNG: Oh, absolutely. None going to the American drug company for the use of their data. The drug companies were very upset. All of them, Pfizer and Wyeth and all of them were there and they were quite upset. They would come to me and they appreciated that I had taken this on as an issue. They wanted me to move ahead on it and I did in press conferences, in TV interviews and in special meetings that I would hold. In other words, press conferences that I would call to speak on this issue. I was just relentless in raising this and in making it known that this was something that had to be dealt with.

Q: Would you call it stealing?

YOUNG: Well, that's what it is. We just said it was wrong and it was wrong and Slovenia knew that it was wrong. What had happened was in preparation for its candidacy to enter the European Union it had passed a law that made it illegal to use data and intellectual property illegally. That was fine. It had passed this law well in advance of the time that it would be required to be passed. Then the pharmaceutical industry in Slovenia pressured the politicians to pass a law to repeal the law that they had passed. They basically said, look we've got a good thing here. We don't need to have this law in place for another year and a half to two years, so why do we do it now. Let's repeal it and enjoy for the next two years the benefits of being able to use the intellectual property and data from these American companies. Now the Europeans didn't concern themselves with this. It was only the Americans who were carrying the ball on this.

Q: Were the pharmaceutical companies doing this in Slovenia really homegrown or were they sort of offshoots of other outfits in other parts of Europe?

YOUNG: These were companies developed locally. These two companies were Slovene inventions and were part of the Slovene success story. These two companies together had sales of $1 billion, which is quite substantial for a small country of two million people. They were just quite a force to be reckoned with. Since during my time there one of them was bought out by Novartis and is a part of Novartis at the moment. I had all kinds of meetings with the parliamentarians and I told them, this is not going to look good. If you want to be a real member of the alliance you've got to demonstrate that you carry yourself in a way that is consistent with the standards expected of the members of the alliance. I used that as part of my argumentation as well.

Q: Was there any illicit threat on our part?

YOUNG: No, our only threat was how they would be viewed in the alliance and the kind of support we would give them. We were giving them military support as well in order to prepare them for their membership in the alliance. No out and out threats. This was through jawboning and moral persuasion that we finally succeeded and we got the law repealed and the American pharmaceutical companies were very happy. The Slovene pharmaceutical companies were not and it was amazing how they bounced back though after that. For example, shortly after that I mentioned one of the companies became part of Novartis and then what they began doing was bid on American contracts for generics. They had still some requirements to fulfill before they could really succeed in that era in that way and they finally did and then began selling generics to the United States. It was a win-win all the way around. Now, that didn't end all of the problems in terms of pharmaceuticals. Let's face it, American pharmaceutical companies I don't think are 100% happy in any country that they're in. They are constant moaners and groaners and that's just the way it is and it's our job to try and help them in whatever way we can.

Their next complaint was that the government had concocted a scheme to bring down medical costs which is something that I think governments around the world are faced with and it's no different in this country as well. The government's program was very similar to one in Italy. It was similar I think to one in practice in one or two of the Scandinavian countries. It was basically to limit the amount of reimbursement patients could receive for their medications with the highest reimbursement going to those patients who use generics versus those who used name brand products. Those who used name brand products got a very small reimbursement. This had an impact on those American pharmaceutical products because all of the American products were name brand products and some of them of course were able to stand on their own and really didn't have generics to equal them. This was another complaint. They wanted my support in trying to get the government to implement a scheme that would be more generous to brand name products. I did my best on that, but really there was little defense that I could offer for that. This was a problem that is being dealt with internationally.

I just wanted to add one thing on the success of our program in Slovenia. It was cited in telegrams that went out worldwide as an example of how this can be done. I remember Tony Wayne, the assistant secretary for economic affairs, sending out a telegram and we took great pride in that I must say.

Q: What was the reaction among the Slovenian contacts, the ones who were not specifically connected to the pharmaceutical thing? I mean did they understand what they should.

YOUNG: They did. Many Slovenes who were anti the regime in power gave me a pat on the back. You're showing them. This government needs to be shown that it can't get away with anything and it needs to do the right thing. They were pleased with the moral implication of pushing the government to do the right thing. That is not inconsistent with Slovene morals. They are very strict people, very moralistic. They don't look for sideways to do things. They're very straight.

Q: How did you find the government reaction in the people you would meet in government. Were they just sort of uncomfortable?

YOUNG: They knew that it had to be done. They knew that it was something they had to do. It was a requirement to join the European Union. They just wanted to postpone it as long as possible. I got cooperation from the folks in the government and they knew that it was political, that it was the money and the influence of the pharmaceutical firms that brought about this problem.

Q: How did you find the media? Was the media a good response?

YOUNG: The media was after me. They were after me because of what I had mentioned earlier in terms of Slovenia's entry into NATO. They thought that I was going to sabotage Slovenia's entry into NATO by working to deny them support from the U.S. government for their candidacy. They learned very shortly that they had one of the best allies they could find in me and applauded my efforts.

Q: Was there any other intellectual property problems like books?

YOUNG: No, you didn't find counterfeit books and you didn't find counterfeit CDs and tapes and that sort of thing. They had a good record in that regard, but that was petty business. It's not a country that specializes or has much of that kind of gray market trade.

Q: Sometimes border countries are basically smuggling countries. It's what they do for a living.

YOUNG: Yes, but this is not a smuggling country. This is a very successful country with a developed economy and a sound political system so they don't have those kinds of problems. It was just in pharmaceuticals because it was such a big business. Those two pharmaceutical companies there, they were national treasures and they were regarded as part of the patrimony. These companies were incredible. In many ways they were exactly like Hershey. It's not just the product that they produce, but its their impact on the total community where that product is produced. That was true in the case of these two pharmaceutical companies. They run schools, they run clinics, they have basketball teams, they have soccer teams. I mean they have all of these different things, all of these different institutions that you find in the community and very often maybe just supported in a small way. I mean they literally run them and it's so funny to see the basketball team. They've brought in a couple of black players from the United States and those few black players and myself, we were the only blacks in the entire country. Of course they stood out even more than I did because they were so tall.

Q: What were some of the other issues you were dealing with?

YOUNG: We tried to contribute to the development of civil society. We tried to help with funding small groups that had begun to support and encourage democratic governance in various areas at the community level. We attempted to help groups that would try and help with wayward youth and with the elderly. We tried to work with the judiciary in areas of judicial reform particularly in the implementation of the alternative dispute procedures. That was very important particularly with the judiciary. Slovenia had a wickedly backlogged judicial system. Our goal was to try to break that up so that justice could be administered in a more efficient and faster manner. We brought over judges. We sent judges from Slovenia to the United States to meet with judges here to show them our court system in all of its different levels and had terrific dialogue on that particular issue.

One big problem was also in trafficking of persons. Slovenia was not a destination point. It was a transit point for people coming out of the Dalmatian coast, Albania, Macedonia and Serbia through Slovenia and into Italy and then into Europe. There were some who remained there. The majority of the people traffic were of course women. There were no organizations really set up to deal with that problem. One group began during our time there and we helped to fund them to get them started. They opened up a shelter for women who were traffic and we worked with the government in providing them some money so that they could continue this work and expand it. We had some leverage there because Slovenia was a category two country. We classified countries in their trafficking as category one, two or three. Category one is basically the top of the line, no problems of any significance and category two countries have some problems and government needs to do more. Category three countries are where you have major problems. Slovenia, as a new member of the alliance and as an aspirant to the European Union, wanted to be in the same company as European Union countries and that is category one. The leverage was in persuading the government that it had to do more to get into category one. At the time of my departure we were lucky in maintaining them in category two because there was a push really to move them into category three.

Q: What was the problem because I think of Slovenia as being so small and you have this all going through and if they don't stay over, I mean.

YOUNG: The government had no laws on the books to protect people who were the victims of trafficking. That was the problem to persuade the government, the parliament to do something, to put some laws on the books, to protect those who were traffic. What you raise is a very good point. You would go next door to Italy and trafficking was as obvious and as flagrantly practiced as you would want to find it anywhere. In the middle of the day in Rome you could pass these little alleys and you'd see women waiting there, African women and Asian women, waiting to be solicited. We raised this with the folks in Washington. Why was Italy with this kind of practice being so obvious being in category one, and yet a country like Slovenia where you didn't have that kind of behavior at all was a category two. They said, as bad as it is in Italy, Italy has laws on the books. So people who are traffic can actually go to the courts and say under law number 23 or so and so my rights have been violated. There was nothing like that in Slovenia.

Q: I'm thinking Slovenia since they weren't the ultimate destination there would be no particular problem for them to pass a law.

YOUNG: Well, they finally did, but it took a lot of pressure to get them to do so. It finally did.

Q: They didn't see a need or were they forced to say don't do this because we're making money.

YOUNG: Slovenes are inclined to let things alone if they don't see it as a problem. I don't think that's so unusual. I don't think they're unique in that regard. They feel that if it's not a problem, you know, why bother with it. They didn't see it as a problem. It took a lot of sensitizing to get them to see it differently and they also view sex completely differently than we do. We think it's immoral and wrong to have people trafficked and to have people engaged in prostitution and that sort of thing. Their attitude is different. I forgot the number, but there were something like 60 private clubs in Slovenia where prostitution was practiced and the government knew that it was practiced and it was legal. It's a completely different attitude.

Q: What about relations with Italy? You know for years particularly around the area of Istria and all there were Slovenians trying to have Slovenian taught in the public schools, the Italians were vehement about this and all. How did that work?

YOUNG: I think overall I would say relations with Italy were good, but there would be flare-ups from time to time. As you probably know there is an Italian minority in Slovenia and there is a Slovene minority in Italy all around the border areas where the border had shifted back and forth before the lines were finally drawn. Anyhow the Italians do have a member in the Slovene parliament, but I don't think there's a Slovene in the Italian parliament. I could be wrong, but I know there is an Italian in the Slovene parliament. Relations were good. Problems occurred when Slovenia was moving towards its entry to the European Union. One of the minority parties in Italy rose up and said it was going to block Slovenia's entry because Slovenia had not settled debts from World War II with the Italians who had lost property and business interests in Slovenia at that time. That was not true. There had been a settlement on those issues. In fact the U.S. government was party to it, but the Italians despite having signed the agreement at the time hadn't moved to collect the money that had been put in the accounts to settle those disputes. That would flare up from time to time. Slovenia was a little bit uncertain about Italian support for its entry to NATO. I mean it finally did get it and for its entry to the European Union.

As far as Croatia is concerned, there were border dispute problems. There were some other problems that had been around since the time of independence in 1991. Those issues were believed to be resolved in an agreement that was initiated by the prime ministers of both Croatia and Slovenia in 2001. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief that this agreement was resolved. The borders were established. Property claims were settled on both sides and a number of other issues as well. Number one was the border and also the demarcation of the territorial waters. That was a major issue as to where the Croatian line was in in the Adriatic and where the Slovene line was in the Adriatic. This affected fishing and lobstering and that sort of thing. This was a very nice agreement. Prime Minister Drnovsek was very pleased with it and the Croatian government seemed pleased and little by little it began to fall apart. The Croats said we're not going to adhere to it, this is no good; the party that raised this was a party that was campaigning to be elected in place of the party that had signed this agreement with Drnovsek. The Slovenes just stood their ground. They said we signed the agreement. We're not going to budge. That's it. It's up to you to honor it. This went back and forth and back and forth. When I left in 2004 it still had not been resolved, but the Slovenes had not backed up at all. Special envoys were appointed to go to negotiate between the two countries, but when I left in 2004 nothing had been resolved. It was basically the status quo. There were flare ups during my time there when Slovene fishing vessels were seized and then Croat crabbing vessels or lobstering vessels were seized. They had these little spats going back and forth. Then you'd have Slovenes who would say, well, I went down to Croatia for my vacation. I was treated like a dog. They were disrespectful and it was nothing but contempt and they looked down on me. Mind you, they'd go by the tens of thousands to their vacations in Dubrovnik and Cortula and all of these lovely places along the Dalmatian coast. Some of this resentment goes back decades because when they were all together in the Republic of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was the most envied of all of them. The other members of the republic thought the Slovenes were haughty and arrogant and disdainful of them and the Slovenes thought the others were a bunch of slackers because the Slovenes work hard. They had the most successful economy in the republic. They made up about a thirteenth of the population, but produced a quarter of the GDP. They were very proud of this and they are very proud in any case. Then there was also the feeling that when Slovenia broke away in 1991 that they left the others holding the bag. Some of them said, well, yes, those Slovenes broke away and they had a war that lasted 10 days, but the rest fell on us. That's not quite the case either. There are a number of reasons for that kind of resentment, but nevertheless things were good. As I said, relations stayed fairly even. You'd have these flare-ups over fishing, you'd have flare-ups at the border and the Croats would decide all of a sudden that they were going to slow things down and the cars couldn't get through and they'd be at the border backed up for tens of miles and that sort of thing. Overall, pretty good.

Slovenia knows that the best place for Croatia would be in the alliance and in the European Union.

Q: The alliance, you mean?

YOUNG: NATO. That these are key anchors for stability in the region. The only one who has that at the moment is Slovenia, but Slovenia would like to see the other members of the former republic of Yugoslavia become members of these institutions as well. Relations with Austria were good except again for some of the same reasons that I mentioned earlier in terms of Italy; you have a Slovene minority in Austria. You don't have it the other way around. You have some of it, but not too much. You have more the other way around of the small Slovene minority in Austria. Unfortunately it was in the region of Styria which is the area headed by Haider.

Q: I was going to say Haider, we've talked about him.

YOUNG: Yes, well, he's quite a guy to say the least, a real troublemaker. Austria had laws that said there would be bilingual education in the schools where the Slovene communities were located. There would be bilingual signs and things like that. This was by law and by affirmation by the courts of Austria. Haider said, I don't care what the courts say, we are not having bilingual education any longer and we're going to take down the signs and they're going to be in German and that's that. Of course this got everyone riled up and by the time I left things were still pretty much the same. There would be these flare-ups that would occur in that region of Styria where Haider was.

Q: Haider had been Prime Minister for a little while, wasn't he?

YOUNG: Oh, yes, he was impossible.

Q: He was essentially seen as a neo-Nazi.

YOUNG: Well, he is.

Q: Certainly an extreme nationalist.

YOUNG: An extreme nationalist is a gentler word.

Q: He had his followings in Styria?

YOUNG: Yes, Styria. You know the Slovenes were ruled by the Austrians for 800 years and that has put a certain stamp on the Slovenes. I think their sense of orderliness, their drive to work hard, I think there's a streak in them that you find in Austria as well.

Q: Sort of Germanic.

YOUNG: Yes, Calvinistic I would say. They worked very hard. Don't take too much outwardly, don't make very outward shows of emotion and pleasure. I went to a dinner hosted by the U.S. government for the graduates of a program we had in the region to send college graduates to the States for graduate education where they got masters. It was for the Balkans and for Central Europe. I remember at this function the speaker was giving awards. He said, now we have an award for Mr. so and so of Romania. There would be some applause. Then he said, we now have such and such an award for Mr. so and so let's say, Hungary. Again, gently even applause. This went on and on. Then he said we have an award for Mr. so and so of Slovenia, very quiet applause. Then he said we have an award for Mr. so and so of Serbia. Well, the room went crazy. There was all kinds of yelling. The Slovene fellow next to me gave me a nudge and said, Serbs. In other words they're full of emotion and you don't get this outward show of emotion on the part of Slovenes. They certainly have fun and they make jokes and what have you, but they are completely different in terms of they are more Germanic and more Austrian in that sense of the word. The Slovenes have this great admiration for Austria and they take pride in, they're also neat the clean and as I said orderly. That's why if you travel from Slovenia into Austria it's a seamless transition. You travel from Italy, from Slovenia to Italy; you can see the difference. You travel from Slovenia to Croatia you see the difference. You travel from Slovenia to Hungary you see the difference, but into Austria it's a seamless transition. It's amazing.

Relations with Hungary were very good. No major problems there. The Slovenes looked at Hungary as a model of what they could do in terms of being a member of NATO. Hungary had not yet entered the European Union. They were in the same line of candidates as the Slovenes. There is a Hungarian minority in Slovenia and there is a Hungarian member of the Slovene parliament. There is a Hungarian who is in the Slovene parliament, but not the opposite way around. Very good solid relationships there, very good.

Q: Well, how did the Balkan troubles, particularly Bosnia and Kosovo. We're talking 2001 to 2004. How did they play I mean or were you seeing new repercussions or was Slovenia somewhat removed?

YOUNG: They were removed, concerned, and the recipient of many thousands of refugees as a result of this. As removed as they were, they were affected. They played a key role for us in the bombing of Serbia because when we were ready to do it, when we were ready for the air strikes we asked the Austrians because that was the shortest distance to fly and the Austrians declined. They wouldn't allow us to overfly their country. Then we asked the Slovenes and the Slovenes said yes. We did it and the Slovenes felt it was the right thing to do. They knew that this problem had to be put to an end.

Q: The Serbians _____ Kosovo in the area and it was a tremendous crisis.

YOUNG: They got all of these refugees in, mostly Serbs. They got some others as well, but the majority were Serbs and that created some problems for them. They had to find a place for them and then at some point they gave them the opportunity of becoming permanent residents there and they handled it fairly well. In 2001, however, this issue of those refugees who had come in became a political issue. One party said that the people who had come in had been given permanent resident status and was then stripped of that status and were not allowed to vote and things like that. This particular candidate wanted that whole issue reexamined and it became a huge issue in the campaign for prime minister in 2001. It was a significant issue. The guy who raised it. He won. He ousted the regime that had been in power since the time of independence.

Q: Was this a major factor?

YOUNG: It was a factor, definitely. But I think the main reason why the opposition was elected was because people had grown tired of the regime that had been in power since independence in 1991 and wanted to try something different. The feeling was that in some ways this was basically like the old communist days with the old regime. Everybody knew everyone and everything got done through these connections and they felt that the time for that was over.

Q: Were there any other developments of this political nature? I mean was this something that, did we get involved in the refugee matter at all?

YOUNG: No, we didn't. We got involved to the extent that we kept emphasizing human rights. The need for the rule of law, the need for fair play and those kinds of things. Its amazing these human rights cases. Some of them were just unbelievable. There's a small Muslim community in Slovenia. The Muslim community had been campaigning for years to build a mosque and the government finally gave them land or agreed that they could buy land in this particular area for this mosque. Then this became a huge issue whether they were going to get this mosque or not. They got the land and then questions were raised as to putting this issue to a referendum or just allowing it just to go forward on its own. We knew that if it had gone to a referendum it would have been defeated. Then it would have gotten into another area in terms of a religion not being able to practice freely. We kept emphasizing with the government the importance of demonstrating that there was religious freedom in Slovenia and that this mosque would move forward. In the end it got into the courts and everyone got involved. I mean these things that seemed so small became an emotional issue. This was a serious issue though. I mean serious concern here. In the end they agreed, I think it was a result of a court decision, that basically said even if they had a referendum they couldn't have abridged the right to religion or freedom of religion. That was a basic right that everyone enjoyed.

Q: Well, now, what was the role of the Catholic Church?

YOUNG: Good question. The Catholic Church. If you ask a Slovene what religion are you he'll say Roman Catholic. About 85% Roman Catholic, by profession, not by practice. You'd go to Catholic Church on a Sunday and you could count the number of people in the church.

Q: Particularly all women.

YOUNG: The majority, you're right there, but that's not unusual anywhere.

Q: It was like that when I was in Italy.

YOUNG: Yes, that's very true, but you ask the man and they'll tell you they're Catholic. Almost everyone in the country, 85%. My wife and I are Roman Catholic and we'd go to mass there on Sunday. We would make these observations that you have, look its all women. The Catholic Church had considerable influence and had owned at one point extensive properties. Following independence the Slovenes said they would return property to former owners and one of the former owners was the Roman Catholic Church. They owned forests, they owned basically state parks. I mean what came to be a state park that encompassed hundreds of thousands of acres, way up in the mountains. They had these schools all over. They had monasteries all over. They had chapels all over. The church played quite a significant role in the evolution of the country going back to the time of the attempts by the Turks to conquer that area. You go to Slovenia for example and on every hill there's a church. On every hill there's a church and those churches were placed on those hills for strategic reasons. They would serve as lookouts and around the church there's always a wall. The person who was the lookout would keep an eye out for the Turks. If he saw Turks coming he would give the signal, the villagers would come into the yard at the church and then they would fight the Turks from the wall of the church. The role of the church in Slovenia as being able to defend the country from subjugation from the Turks is just one example of their influence. Then they ran all of the schools at one time. They ran the universities. They've had a tremendous impact in the evolution of the country, but during the time of the communists the church was cut out. Basically the church was brought back into society at the time of independence. People were allowed to exercise their right to practice their religion, so the church was basically reborn at the time of independence. It wasn't happy with just being able to practice as it wanted to. It wanted the government to give it more money. It wanted the government to insist on religious education in the schools and things like that, that just would not go, would not be acceptable to Slovenes. So you had this tension between the church and the government. While I was there an agreement was hammered out between the Vatican and the government that allows the church to operate freely, to have its own schools, to have Catholic education in the schools, but not have it in the public schools and not getting huge amounts of money from the government. The archbishop was a very controversial fellow named Rodey who has subsequently moved on to be one of the key figures in the Vatican working with the present Pope. He was very outspoken. In fact he on occasion would inflame the situation in Slovenia particularly among the people in the Muslim community. In one public statement he equated them to all being terrorists and the government had to be careful in measures to be sure that we weren't encouraging them in their terrorist activities and that sort of thing. Well, everyone went ballistic when they heard. He would do things like that.

He was very influential. For example, in terms of persuading Slovenes to vote for NATO and also persuading Slovenes to vote for entry into the European Union. Slovenia was the only country of the candidates invited to join NATO that had a referendum on it. The referendum succeeded. I think I mentioned that earlier that the referendum succeeded.

Q: Yes.

YOUNG: I wanted to go back to that a little bit because it leads to what was happening in terms of the war on Iraq. In 2003, at the beginning of the year, the talk of a possible war was getting louder and louder and as it got louder and louder the opposition to it in Slovenia grew in intensity. It was very clear. The Slovenes wanted absolutely nothing to do with the war in Iraq. The referendum on NATO and the European Union was scheduled for March 21st I think in 2003. Little did we know that the war would begin I think it was the 23rd of March or the 22nd of March, 2003, so it was literally within days. We had no doubts about the Slovenes agreeing to enter the European Union, but the polls indicated that it was very uncertain about the Slovenes voting for entry to NATO. We were afraid that with the war on the horizon that the Slovenes would vote against it. In the end they voted for it, two-thirds of them voted for entry to NATO and 90% voted for entry to the European Union. That was a big success.

Q: Were certain assurances given at that time saying the war in Iraq is not a NATO matter?

YOUNG: Despite those assurance and what have you, it was the U.S. NATO was looked at unfortunately through the prism of the U.S. - that this is a U.S. run institution and you know, if we vote for this, we are voting basically for the U.S. and we're agreeing to war with Iraq. A very important thing did occur just before the war started. We knew we were going to go into Iraq. I got a message from Washington instructing me to go to the government to get permission for our planes to overfly Slovenia to get to Iraq. I went in, put the request in and the government was very quick to get back to me. They said no thank you. I communicated that back to Washington. They were very unhappy as you can imagine. Literally we had hours to move because the instructions were given that we were going to go that night. We couldn't do it, so the planes were going to come out of Aviano in Italy and over Slovenia and then on down. But we couldn't do it, so they went over Macedonia.

Q: Did they have to go over Albania?

YOUNG: They did that as well and so those two countries as a result of that became our best friends, among our dearest friends and best friends. Slovenia ended up in the dog house as a result of that. That was a major item. The war started. The opposition just grew and grew in intensity. We had all kinds of demonstrations outside of the embassy. My car was attacked one day while I was leaving for home. The editorials in the papers were all anti-U.S. and it was all directed at President Bush. It was all seen as a result of this man. It was Bush, Bush, Bush. Nothing we could do would deter them from this. I continued to give access to the press anytime they wanted it. They were relentless in asking me about the war and what the U.S. was doing and how wrong it was. I would give the spiel about what we were trying to do there and how we were going to build democracy and how this was necessary and we got rid of a wicked dictator and that sort of thing. I don't know if I mentioned what had happened with Slovenia's signing on to the Vishegrad statement. This was when Powell went to the United Nations. Did I mention that?

Q: No, I don't think so.

YOUNG: Oh, okay, well that was a big issue. We were looking for support in terms of proof that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and that the United Nations should support the Secretary in what he was proposing to the United Nations. We went to the 10 countries that were proposed for membership in NATO and/or the European Union. They were called the Vishegrad 10. All of them had signed this letter except Slovenia. I remember calling Foreign Minster Dimitrij Rupel and saying this is going to look really bad. You want to look good. You want to be counted among those who have signed this letter. We've got the proof. Holding up like Powell did later on, we've got the proof. He said, well, I've got to run this by a couple of people here and I will get back to you and I gave him I think 15 minutes and I called him again and I said, we're waiting in Washington, you know. They're waiting for you. You're the only holdout on this. We need this. This is so important. This is critical; we've got to have it. He said, well, I've got to run it by more people. In the meantime I learned later on that one fellow who was sort of a real anti-American member of the ruling government was pressing him on how to tweak the statement and Rupel did make a few little tweaks here, but nothing significant in terms of the substance of it. This letter basically said, based on the evidence that Secretary of State Powell has represented to the United States, we believe that the United Nations blah, blah, that this is what they should do. That was pretty powerful stuff. Anyhow, I kept after the foreign minister. I was relentless in my pressure on him and in the end he signed. We were able to communicate that back to Washington and that was one of the statements that Powell used in his discussion with the United Nations. The Slovenes regretted that later on and Powell did too as a matter of fact, but anyhow that was what happened in that particular case.

Q: Did you feel, I've had sort of the impression that being the number one, the most powerful country in the world and all, obviously this brings resentment, you can't help it. I mean this just comes with the territory and the fact that Bush seemed to give no attention or care to European sensitivities allowed all this anti-American resentment to sort of well up and concentrate even before the Iraq war.

YOUNG: Yes, at the time.

Q: There was the ____ agreement, a lot of this, a little could have been done to assuage the sensibilities of the Europeans which other presidents had done, like Bush's father, but he didn't. Did you have a feeling that this was kind of built into it?

YOUNG: There's no question about it that that was the case. When Bush was initially elected there wasn't euphoria at his election, but there was certainly a willingness to stand back and give him a chance to see what he was going to do. Then when he took these unilateral moves, abrogating agreements that we had signed and what have you.

Q: Anti-ballistic.

YOUNG: Yes, an alarm went out, not only an alarm, but opposition and criticism and it just never stopped. They felt that, well, if we are members of an alliance, if we have this relationship that's very special. I'm not just saying Slovenes, but Europe in general, then we should be consulted. I remember having a discussion with Secretary Powell and I said, "You know we don't do a good job in communicating with our friends in telling them privately, not going public, but handling it in a private way that this is how we feel about a particular issue. We know you don't feel that way about it, but we want you to know this is how we're thinking. This is how things are shaping up in the U.S. This is how it's likely to come up." That would I think have had a different result than just barreling ahead without any kind of consultations at all. That's just not the way you deal with a friend.

Q: How did Powell respond?

YOUNG: Well, he listened. I think he was just in a listening mode at that point. I think Powell was a believer in this. He was a believer in consulting and conferring with your friends and what have you, but this was a little bit beyond him.

Q: Tell me, now this is, I'm just moving as we do these oral histories with people who have been dealing with this particular time and I have to state my prejudice. I feel this has probably been the darkest period of American foreign policy since World War II I mean as far as our ability to exert our influence through diplomatic means. Did you find one in yourself and also in the officers there having trouble dealing with this major reverse in American foreign policy?

YOUNG: We did, but we kept that to ourselves. We realized that we had a responsibility to represent the president and to do that in a professional and resolute way, and if the situation got so bad that we couldn't do that anymore, then it was really time to leave. Someone like myself, for example, I knew that upon completion of my assignment, that I was going to leave and that I would be a free man in a relatively short time. So, that sort of helped me to stay the course. The others would voice their views privately. They wouldn't even voice them to non-Americans, but amongst ourselves there was great disappointment of the direction we were going. I think it may have changed a little, but I think the Secretary has done some positive things to try and change it.

Q: I've talked to someone who was serving as the DCM at a European post. He had a lot of trouble because people would come up and say, all right, you've talked about this and you've presented it, but what do you really think.

YOUNG: Oh, we get that. We get that, yes. If you're dealing with the press, you have to be extremely careful or else it will get out, well, although Ambassador Young said so and so and so, he privately believed so and so. I never let my private thoughts out in public.

Q: Did you have much consultation with your fellow ambassadors around the area?

YOUNG: They were very nice, very gracious. You mean of the fellow American ambassadors?

Q: Fellow American ambassadors.

YOUNG: We'd have a conference here in Washington once a year, which was always interesting, because we'd have 54 ambassadors there. I was the only black in the entire room. I said that I was president of the association of black ambassadors in Europe. Then later on we got one more, the guy who was in Iceland, and so I told him, now you're the vice president. I'm the president. We would have those and they would provide an opportunity for informal discussions. The career people did their job in terms of defending the president and speaking out and not trying to hide and duck from the issues. I think some of the political people took a very low profile and wouldn't speak out and wouldn't have the same kind of relationship with the press that they would normally have. So, we would meet there. NATO would have an annual regional conference and we'd meet at that conference as well, but that was about it.

Q: How did your public affairs officer deal with this matter because this was a very difficult time.

YOUNG: An extremely difficult time. I was very fortunate though in having one of the best public affairs officers I have ever worked with. A woman named Laurie Weitzenkorn who worked with me in seizing every opportunity imaginable to do exactly what I wanted to do which was to show the U.S. government in a very positive way. If we were doing something for example with the judiciary and an alternative dispute resolution conference or something like that, she would arrange for me to have press conferences. She would arrange for me to give the keynote address and of course this would be carried in the papers and then she would arrange for me to be on a panel or something like that with other ambassadors or jurors or jurists. Again all of this would be picked up in the press, and it was neutral. It was neutral; it wasn't political at all. That worked out very nicely. She would arrange to do something with Fulbrighters. We had a good size Fulbright program. Programs with scholars and speakers on different issues. She programmed me to the hilt, but always with one goal in mind. She didn't skirt those occasions when it was clear that the reporter or the press or the television wanted something said politically. That's what they were after. She did her best to prep me and to get me ready for this and it all ended up very nicely. She was just an extraordinary public affairs officer. Engaged, creative, full of energy, very well connected in the community, particularly among people in the press and academia, just what you want.

Q: How did you find life in Slovenia?

YOUNG: I always tell people that I certainly enjoyed the issues and enjoyed my time there. I couldn't have asked for a nicer post to conclude a career. To do so in a country that was democratic, that had open markets, that respected the rule of law, that believed in integrity that didn't have problems of corruption, that was moving ahead, that believed in reforms. I mean it was doing all of those things that we had attempted to do in one way or another in so many countries that we had been in over the years. Then to be able to do that in a country that was so spectacularly beautiful was an extra treat. The other thing was to also do it in a country that took such pride in culture and art and music was also an extra treat. I went to more concerts in Slovenia than I have gone to in total in the United States and other countries combined. There were all kinds of world class performers. They had a world class orchestra of their own. The little country had three symphony orchestras. Just unbelievable. We just loved it, soaked it all up, traveled all over the country, just loved it.

I attended the ski flying competition in Planica. I had never been to a ski resort let alone to a ski flying competition. We were at the foot of the mountain where the skiers land and to see them come off of this run. Slovenia has the longest run in the world for this kind of jump. Its I think its 250 meters which is just unbelievable. To see these people go up in the air and then come down, they literally are like birds, but its just absolutely spectacular. I've never seen anything like it. It was one of the most breathtaking and thrilling things I've ever seen. I went every year I was there except the year that the war started and I wanted to go. I had been talking about it for a long time and my country team advised me don't go. They said, look you're going to be very visible, there's no question about that although you'll have 40,000 people there you're going to be a very visible person in that 40,000 crowd. That was the one year that I didn't go, but I did go the next year and loved it, loved every minute of it. It was wonderful. Slovenia is a gorgeous country. Ljubljana is just a delightful town. A small city of 325,000 people. One person described the country to me I think in a very apropos way. She said, you know if Disney created an Alpine village it would look like Slovenia. I think there's some truth in that. Its just gorgeous.

Q: I'm thinking as sort of an up to date note, just last week they had an election and a very solid free election in Palestine which the fundamentalists Hamas won and you were saying that in talking about Bahrain that you know if they had a full democracy in Bahrain, you thought that sort of the fundamentalists could well win.

YOUNG: I think that's the case if it were a one man one vote because its clear with three quarters population of Shia and the Shia being very sympathetic to Iran and to other Islamists and sympathetic to the Shia in Iraq, I think that that would probably be the outcome and I don't think that would be in our interests frankly.

Q: We're pushing democracy, but at the same time it's a complicated world out there.

YOUNG: It's a very complicated world. I don't know what will finally prevail in Bahrain, but they do have a charter that was voted in democratically and that charter does provide for some participation by the citizens in those who represent them in the legislature. As I mentioned final veto rests with the king and the king wants to maintain his power. In fact when the former emir ran into difficulty with the legislators, that is Sheik Isa, he disbanded it. He disbanded the parliament because it was clear the parliament was moving in a direction that if it continued to exercise the power that it did, he and his entire family would have been out on the street. He disbanded them and they had no legislature until his successor. His son made this new arrangement as a result of a national charter that was voted in.

Q: Well, back to Slovenia, is there anything more we should discuss do you think?

YOUNG: No, I think we've covered the major issues, the intellectual property, the war continues to be a big thorn in our side. After the war got started, Slovenia was asked if it wanted to be a member of the coalition of the willing, even a silent member of the coalition of the willing and they said no thank you. We don't want to be a part of the coalition of the willing. We have to also keep in mind that at the time Slovenia had a new prime minister. He was afraid of taking any stance that was inconsistent with public sentiments for fear of not being reelected which he was not eventually and so he was not about to stick out his neck at all. He would say the right things when we would meet privately and he talked a good game, but he was not prepared to back us. We were pressing him to send some forces to Iraq, to send some forces to Afghanistan, but they were not prepared to do any of that unless it was under the cover of NATO. Slovenia was not about to break on its own, break ranks with its European Union allies in order to demonstrate support for the United States. If it demonstrated any support for the United States it would only do that under the umbrella of NATO or the European Union. Now, for example, they are about to send I think a few people to Iraq, but this would be under the NATO training program that is being worked out now. They do have people in Afghanistan. That started while I was in Slovenia, but again this is not a unilateral thing. It is part of NATO. They are part of the NATO alliance and they're demonstrating that they're good members. They don't have huge numbers out there. I forgot the numbers, but its small, 10, 12, 14 or something like that. As we know it's the symbolism that's important in this. We talk about the coalition of the willing. If you look at the real numbers it was still the U.S. that was doing this. It was just symbolic.

Q: Well, now you retired in 2004?

YOUNG: I left Slovenia in September of 2004. I put in my papers to retire and then I got word that I had been selected to career ambassador. Now this created a problem for me because I had no idea when that position would be confirmed by the senate and I had signed up for the retirement seminar. If I had taken the retirement seminar, particularly the job search portion of the retirement seminar when you conclude the job search portion of it, you must leave the Service or you have to pay back all of your salary that you've been paid for the past two months. I spoke to a number of people in the Department including Ruth Whiteside in the office of human resources and a couple of other people. They said, well, that is a problem, but we'll help you sort it out. Then I spoke to someone in the board of examiners and asked if I could spend some time over there until this whole matter was sorted out about senate confirmation of this nomination to career ambassador. They agreed to allow me to come over there. I canceled my registration for the retirement seminar and instead went into the board of examiners. That worked out very nicely and then the senate did confirm the nomination. I think confirmation was in November and the minute they confirmed I put in my papers to retire. I had a very nice ceremony with Colin Powell. He called us all up to his office together with Armitage. The nominees were Marc Grossman, Beth Jones, Ryan Crocker, Larson from economics and myself.

Q: Ruth Davis?

YOUNG: No, she had been nominated about two years earlier. I think, did I miss anyone? I think that was about it. It was very nice and quite dignified. We had a nice exchange with the Secretary and with Armitage and a little champagne after and that was that. I put my papers in and left.

Q: What have you been doing since?

YOUNG: Well, I had made arrangements to work for the office of the inspector general as an inspector. One of the first things I did with them in January of 2005 was a study of how we staff the mission in Iraq. We looked at how we got the people to go out in that first round, how we were getting them to that second round and what would likely happen in that third round. What we found was really a great demonstration of patriotism, volunteerism and professionalism in that first round. People went out and they did a great job. We found some of that in that second round of staffing as well, but we could see problems in the third attempt to staff because the pool of people had already been tapped. There weren't that many more out there. We offered some ideas on additional incentives that perhaps the Department could offer in enticing people to go out.

That study was done in two parts. My team did the domestic overview and then Ambassador John Monjo went out to the field and looked at it in terms of what was the right level of staffing. That gets to be such a subjective matter in terms of what is the right size for a mission. That's what I did for a couple of months. Then I joined a team that then went on an inspection of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic in May and in June. We were also supposed to do Haiti, but Haiti was not doable because the security situation there was deteriorating so rapidly we were monitoring it daily and it was getting worse and worse. We finally called and said, look, you're evacuating the post, how could we possibly go in when you're evacuating and do an inspection. The last thing you need is to have us around. We never got to Haiti. At some point it will have to be inspected. It's a mess. The people there were doing a great job. Based on our preliminary work we saw a really dedicated, hardworking good staff doing tough work under extremely difficult situations. Since I had postponed my entry to the retirement program, in August and September I joined the retirement program.

Q: Which would be 2005?

YOUNG: 2005. Did that for a couple of months and since October, I've been kind of looking around to see what might be out there that I might be able to do. I've been letting friends and colleagues know that I've been looking for something. What I would like to do I think falls into three areas. One would be to sit on a corporate board for pay. I'm on enough committees gratis. That's not easy to do though. You really need friends, relatives and well-placed colleagues so that has not worked out, at least not for pay. Then I think I could run an association of some kind. I think that's a possibility. We're looking into that. The other would be to engage in the international operations of a private firm, of a profit-making firm I should say. So, that's what I'm looking at. In the meantime, I'm also active in my rotary club. I'm active in the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs. I'm on the membership committee there. I do the program committee for the Rotary Club. The Academy of Diplomacy I'm in it, but I haven't done a thing for it. This exercise you know, here at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, we've been doing this for a bit and other organizations that I'm with as well. We have the Retirees of Maryland, the foreign affairs retirees of Maryland and different groups like that as well. So, I've been busy.

I wanted to, I was wondering, I wasn't sure that I had covered an event that occurred in Bahrain. Since you are a party to this you can tell me if I did so or not. If I didn't, I'd like to add it now so that it is included because it was an important event that happened in the mission and demonstrates what can happen.

We had a regional office at the embassy in Bahrain, a regional personnel office. We had a regional diplomatic courier office. Those two were attached to the mission. We had three couriers, they'd go out and deliver their stuff and then come back. On the 23rd of August, 2000, my wife and I were getting ready to host a dinner party. We were waiting for the guests to arrive and the phone rang. It was the security officer. He said, we think we have a problem here. A plane has crashed in Bahrain and we believe that our diplomatic courier, Seth Foti, is on that plane. So, I said, call the country team, meet at the embassy, I'm on my way in.

I went in. The country team was there. We decided that we would assign certain responsibilities. We needed to establish first of all if Seth was on that plane. We needed to establish if there were other Americans on that plane. We needed to get certain things going right away, notifying the Department.

Q: Also, the classified material.

YOUNG: Oh, yes, that was important as well. We were concerned with the person first.

Q: Oh, yes.

YOUNG: The DCM handled the group that we established. I immediately got on the phone to the minister of transportation and to a couple others to try and assess what was going on. A key thing that we wanted to get our hands on was the manifest from the plane. I called the minister of transportation. He wasn't in the country, he was in Paris. I called him in Paris and got him and he agreed to release a copy of the document to us and we got it and we went through it. We were also in touch with our embassy in Cairo to see that Seth had gotten on that plane, established that he had gotten on that plane and when we got the manifest we were then convinced that he was on the plane. The next thing then was to find his body and find survivors. The U.S. navy had already gone out on a search and rescue operation where the plane had come down. They were able to mobilize their resources faster than the government of Bahrain. They took the lead in the search and rescue. A fellow from the courier office and one of the national employees went with them. They did find the different bodies.

My wife and I then went to the home of this fellow to be with his wife. They had been married on the 3rd of June, they were just the happiest, loveliest couple. He was a young, handsome, smart fellow and I remember when he first came to the embassy I sat him down for my usual talk with people and because of his education and his background I teased him, I said, you know, I think you're a closet political officer. He says, oh, no, no. I said, given your college education, you speak Russian fluently and all of these things, you've traveled. If you are that's okay. We just want you to do a good job in this job and then take that and move on to something else. I was convinced that the guy had the potential to do really wonderful things in the Service. I left the DCM in charge of operations in the embassy. My wife and I then went to the home of this fellow and rang the bell. She came to the door. She looked at us. She didn't know what to expect and I told her that it looks like we had a very bad situation here. A plane had crashed. We're trying to determine if Seth is on that plane and as soon as we get any news we will let her know. We wanted to stay with her until we got the news. We waited and waited and then I got a call that confirmed they had found Seth's body and that he was very badly hurt in that crash. He was dead, but how he died was not very pleasant. I had to tell her her husband was dead. That was the most difficult thing I've ever done in the Foreign Service was to tell this young bride that her husband of just a matter of a couple of months had been killed in that plane crash. He was the kind of fellow that everyone loved. We all took a liking to him. Everybody loved him. He was very pleasant and smart and didn't have a bad word to say about anyone. He was always dressed in a suit and a tie and I mean he really looked more than the part. The mission was just devastated, both Americans and the national employees in the mission. We then began to make arrangements to take his body back to the States. I agreed that I would accompany her back to the States with his body. We did that. Before that happened we had a little memorial service in the embassy. We then began the trip back home. When we got to Washington we were met by Marc Grossman who was the Director General at the time. Marc Grossman was there, the Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security was there because the couriers came under them and the top people in the courier service and what have you. The body then went from the airport directly to his home in a place called Browntown in Virginia, a little tiny town in Virginia. A day or two later they had a lovely ceremony in the garden of his home and the sad thing was, very touching, was that the ceremony was in the garden that his parents had built for the wedding of this fellow and his new bride. So, his urn sat right under the canopy that had built for him and his new bride. It was a lovely ceremony, I mean well attended. People came from all over and it was very nice.

Then I had a battle with AFSA. I returned to post and asked AFSA when would his name appear on the wall.

Q: The plaque.

YOUNG: Right, for those who have died in service. AFSA said, oh, his name would not appear. I was stunned. Absolutely stunned. I couldn't believe it. They said, well, we don't think the circumstance is warranted. I said you must be kidding. The man died in the line of duty carrying a diplomatic pouch in his hand and guarding others in the hold of the plane. They wouldn't agree. So, I sent a telegram in, in which I said if AFSA didn't reconsider that I would withdraw my membership and the other members of the mission said the same thing, that they would withdraw as well their membership. I made the telegram to all consular and diplomatic posts. I sent it all over the world. Replies started to come in. The cable from so and so and we're going to withdraw our membership and on and on. It was really snowballing fast. As a result of that, AFSA changed the rules and allowed Seth's name to be placed on the wall and when they changed the rules they then went out with a telegram asking if people knew anything about the deaths of several other people that they sort of had in this questionable category.

One of the persons in that suspense category was a woman by the name of Marie Burke who was murdered in London in 1989. She was a consular officer who was found killed in her apartment. I was able to give them some information in terms of her having died while on duty as well. There was another fellow who had died in a plane crash in Togo. Anyhow, this was a revolutionary change for AFSA and I was so happy that I was instrumental in bringing about that change. So, that's about it. I wanted to make sure that that particular incident got in.

Q: Well, I'm very glad you did. Okay, well, this concludes this.

YOUNG: Yes.

End of interview