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

AMBASSADOR DOROTHY M. SAMPAS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 27th of October, 1998. This is an interview with Dorothy M. Sampas, and it's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well, sort of to begin, could you tell me when, where you were born and something about your parents.

SAMPAS: Alright. I was born in the District of Columbia, and my parents, both of whom are from the Midwest, had come here in 1927. My father had already agreed to a position at the Department of Agriculture. Mother had been a registered nurse, but not they type that works with individual patients, rather one that is interested in public health, and she was working on the eradication of tuberculosis in Minnesota. They settled here, and along I came several years later.

Q: You were born when? 193-

SAMPAS: -'33.

Q: '33. That was an interesting year in Washington: you and Roosevelt arrived at the same time.

SAMPAS: That's right. That's right. And Washington has always been a very interesting city, but I didn't realize it at the time of my birth. A couple of years after my birth, in 1936, to be specific, they moved from a small house in Virginia to a small house in Maryland. And Maryland and the District were really home base for me. I still feel lost

when I come over to Virginia. My father's work took him first through a number of different agricultural products. He worked in potatoes for a while, worked in cotton for a while. Just at the end of the war, he had been loaned to UNRRA.

Q: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

SAMPAS: And after that, when he moved back to Agriculture, they assigned him to the office of the Secretary of Agriculture. He was, I think, rather uncomfortable there because he wanted to be very non-partisan. He was so non-partisan that throughout most of his life here, he didn't even vote or participate in the electoral process because he thought that the founding fathers thought that all civil service people would live in Washington, DC, and therefore banned voting from Washington, DC. And he didn't want people to think he was playing a trick by living in Maryland. And when he finally did retire from government and he went with a private firm, first one and then another, he was comfortable with that. But he wanted to get out of the Secretary's office as quickly as possible, and they assigned for him as director of the Sugar Division in the Agriculture Department. Sugar is different from most of the other commodities that we grow and infinitely more political in Washington.

Q: Louisiana and Cuba and, oh, boy.

SAMPAS: Absolutely.

Q: And where are the sugar beets?

SAMPAS: There are some in the Midwest. There are some in Minnesota, I think, a good deal more in the Dakotas, even out to Colorado. But he did feel comfortable with that and took a forthright stance when people came in to dicker with him on different things. Since we don't grow enough sugar for our own needs, other countries that grow sugar for very little money are jumping after the lure of the American market and doing almost anything that they can do to get into selling sugar to the United States, where it brings a higher price. And interestingly enough, the big U.S. consumers, the soft drink industry, for instance, don't push terribly hard to keep our price down. Some of the lobbyists for these Latin American countries - and I suppose I shouldn't exclude the Philippines, either - some of them, I think, were actually paid on the basis of how many tons of sugar imports into the U.S. were written in for that country into our sugar legislation. At that time, we attempted to grow about half of the sugar we needed within the U.S., but by determining how much we're going to need to import, the U.S. government effectively determines the price of sugar in the U.S. as well. And therein lies a good deal of the politics. There have been congressmen who got too involved in the process and are no longer serving in Congress.

Q: Well, were the politics and the sugar market a topic at the dinner table for you and your family?

SAMPAS: Yes, but with great precautions as to not to give away anything about which

way the market was going. I did hear about somebody back in the days when my father was in the wheat division, somebody outside the government who had called somebody in government to ask what the quotas were going to be on wheat, and after that he went to the window and either raised or lowered the shade and thereby gave the signal to people outside. It affected the market tremendously. So my father was extraordinarily keen on not giving away any information that would be inappropriate.

Q: Where were you going to school?

SAMPAS: I went to public schools here.
Q: In Maryland or in the District?

SAMPAS: Both. I started out in Maryland, and when I finished grade school, my parents thought that the DC schools would be a better place. DC schools were very good schools in those days, and to get into District schools, I had to go down to Georgetown, because Alice Deal School, which would have been the closest one, was already fairly full. So I trundled off on the streetcar down to Gordon Junior High School in Georgetown. And we had pretty good teachers there. The student body was more mixed than the students that I was acquainted with in Maryland or that I would have been acquainted with in Alice Deal, but I think the learning was good, and after I finished three years there, I went over to Woodrow Wilson, which was the pride of the District at the time and had really a wonderful group of teachers.

Q: Both in elementary school and middle and then high school, what were your favorite subjects?

SAMPAS: Well, I loved English in high school because I had a remarkable teacher in that. She retired in my junior year, and during my senior year another student and I went over to her apartment to get what she would have given us in class if we had been in her class. But she was really quite remarkable. I had a French teacher whose husband was very prominent in international politics, and she was quite a - I won't say a "spitfire" - but I remember her saying about one person, who was the daughter of a very prominent senator, that if she had realized how he was going to vote on a certain issue, she might not have given such a good mark to his daughter. I'm sure she would have been fair - but still...

Q: What about reading? What sort of books were you reading?

SAMPAS: I was reading biographies. If you read part of something in English class, I tended to want to finish reading the whole thing, and I stuck in some biographies of musicians at the time because I was playing the piano rather actively in those days. We also benefited by being in Washington and having a student body that had many children of members of Congress in it. We often had senators or congressmen who came to the school and talked about what they were trying to do, and I really did find that fascinating.

Q: How about outside activities?

SAMPAS: Well, I was very serious about music in those days, and the piano took a good deal of my time and didn't leave a whole lot of time for other things.

Q: No, it doesn't leave much time, no. What were you thinking about when you got ready to graduate? What were you pointed towards? Where did you go to school?

SAMPAS: I went to the University of Michigan. I think a couple of my teachers couldn't understand why I didn't go to one of the big eastern girls' schools, but I wanted a little bit of a different atmosphere than I had been used to, and I had some friends who were going to the University of Michigan, so I thoughts that that would be an interesting place. I had at one time had an aunt and uncle who lived in Ann Arbor, but they had so long since moved on. I did have an aunt in Detroit, so I knew that if I got into real trouble, there would be a caring relative nearby.

Q: Well, what was the University of Michigan - you started there when, about 1950 or so?

SAMPAS: '51, yes.

Q: '51. What was the campus like then?
SAMPAS: Well, I think it was rather calm at that time. It had been somewhat radical when the GI's first came home from the war, and indeed, at the end of my first year, I joined up as a reporter on the *Michigan Daily*, which was a daily newspaper run by students but with the bills paid for by the university. And when I would listen to some of the old linotypists talking about what the *Daily's* atmosphere had been like in those years right after the war, he made it sound like a Communist Party meeting. We were far from that. I think we probably took ourselves a little bit too seriously.

Q: No, you're supposed to at that time.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: The Korean War was going on at least part of the time you were there. Did that have much of an impact on the campus, or not?

SAMPAS: I don't think so. Certainly, I think the young men were aware that they could be drafted for it, but I don't recall people being picked out of class and sent off to Korea. If that had happened, it had happened earlier.

Q: Yes, probably before your term started. What were you majoring in at Michigan?

SAMPAS: Political science.

Q: What interested you in political science at that time?

SAMPAS: Well, frankly, it seemed like the core material that I wanted to be interested in. It was just a subject of much greater fascination than any other.

Q: You grew up in Washington, which is a political town, and you were in college during the time of, really, the beginning of the Cold War. I mean, the Korean War was on, and even in high school, from about '48 on, you might call it the Cold War. Did the world intrude very much in your world?

SAMPAS: Well, in a sense, we were always alert to the Cold War, and you must not forget that those were also the days of McCarthyism, and Washington, I think, as a town was shuddering with what was going on and really quite fearful. The blacklisted writers were kept out of Hollywood. While I think everyone now accepts that Alger Hiss truly was a spy, in those days, there wasn't the certainty about that. Some people simply stopped talking about certain political subjects and didn't want to be overheard talking about certain subjects for fear they might be accused of disloyalty. When I went off to my second year at the university, I started a couple of weeks early with an invitation to a youth program. The university wasn't backing it, but it made its facilities available. I don't know exactly who was backing it at the time, but it was a discussion of how we might make our world a better world and a kinder world.

Q: There was a National Students' Association.

SAMPAS: Yes, but this discussion was initiated by a totally different organization.

Q: That was a different one, oh.

SAMPAS: This group simply wanted people to start thinking about what it would take. Later on, when I became involved in Democratic Party politics in Michigan, I went to the State Democratic Convention and was asked to report on this discussion on Ann Arbor prior to the school team, since it had been the Young Democrats of Michigan that had paid my way. I didn't know until later that even talking about this very innocent, sweet organization that might have been criticized for naïveté but never for anything like evil plotting, my name was turned in as a possibly disloyal citizen. It just shows how jumpy everybody was about discussions. The atmosphere in the U.S. had been very seriously affected by the charges of disloyalty, the discovery of some actually disloyal government officials (i.e., Hiss), and the fear there might have been others who endangered our country but had never been uncovered and prosecuted.

Q: Well, international political science covers a multitude of topics. Did you find yourself moving towards a concentration in certain areas?

SAMPAS: No, I liked both the international side and the domestic side, and I didn't truly want to choose between the two of them at that time. So I just let the interests go along, side by side. Yet more of my courses were on the international side. I tried to make certain that I was following the substance of what was happening overseas, so I had a course in the Middle East and a course in Europe and two courses in Asia - one on China

and one on Japan. I didn't take a course on Latin America. If there were perhaps a part of the world that I was less interested in, that was certainly it. And in those days there wasn't much that I would call, in terms of courses, an active interest in Africa. It was still not very well know, and I don't believe at the time that the University of Michigan ever offered a course on politics in Africa.

Q: It was essentially a colonial area. Even the Department of State had very few posts there at that time - a couple of them, not a couple, but not many.

SAMPAS: That's right. I remember when the Department started building up to staff embassies in Africa in the late '50s, very early '60s, and one of the old timers said, "Do we have to have all those ducks on the water?" He really couldn't understand, since Africa was breaking into 30-some pieces there, that the Department was planning on putting embassies in every country.

Q: Had you started to think, as you went about, whither Dorothy Myers at this point - I mean, while you were in college?

SAMPAS: Yes, I thought of possibly a career as a journalist or as a faculty member. I had also in Washington had a good deal of contact - socially, just socially - with various embassies, so I knew a little bit about what people did in other people's countries when they worked in embassies, and so it certainly crossed my mind that that was something that would be interesting.

Q: Well, had you heard of the Foreign Service, or did that occur to you?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes. I had heard of the Foreign Service for some time. My father represented the United States at various international sugar conferences and really worked in alliance with Foreign Service people when he was doing that at these conferences. Some attendees would come out from Washington, specialists from the Department of State's Economic Bureau, while others in attendance came out from the nearest U.S. embassy. Often, the conferences were in London, sometimes in Switzerland.

Q: Well, you graduated, this would be, what, 195-

SAMPAS: '51.

Q: '51. What did you do then?

SAMPAS: Well, that's when I went off to the University of Michigan.

Q: No, I mean after graduating in . . . from 1955.

SAMPAS: From Michigan, oh, yes.
Q: Michigan, yes.

SAMPAS: Well, at that point, I went overseas, thanks to my father's personal scholarship for me, to attend the *Ecole des Etudes Politiques* in Paris. This was a school that had been a private school before World War II and lost part of its reputation in that war because a number of the people who graduated were not with the Free French when the chips were down. It had become a state school afterwards, and indeed was used as a typical preparatory school for the French foreign service. So I thought that that would be an interesting place to be and a chance to work on my French at the same time.

Q: Had you been keeping your French up while you were at Michigan?

SAMPAS: I had taken some French, but not a great deal. I had a freshman course and then a two-hour writing course later on, but I won't say that I was really wholeheartedly involved in it. They had a language laboratory, and I used that from time to time.

Q: How long were you in school in France? From '55 to . . . a year, was it, or two years?

SAMPAS: One year, 1955-1956, and then I came back. I realized by that time that the degree that they offered, or the certificate, was a good degree - there was nothing wrong with it - but it wasn't quite a master's degree. It was sort of off-beat, and people in the United States looking over a résumé really wouldn't know quite what to do with that. So I thought it best to come back, and when I did, one of our family friends suggested that it was high time that I go down to the State Department and see whether I could get into the Foreign Service. So I did.

Q: First, I'd like to go back to while you were in France. What was your impression of France, politics, or the French world at that time? I mean, you're coming out of Michigan and Ann Arbor and all.

SAMPAS: Well, it was interesting. They were certainly much more formal in their school than we were, standing up when the professor came into the class. Interestingly, after the class was over, at the end of the year, and periodically during the year, we would go out and buy the written version of what the professor had said, so you could study that, so that you could regurgitate it at exam time. And most people did a pretty good job, I think, of regurgitating. I did adequately. I really didn't expect to pass everything, so I took several more exams than I had taken courses for. And to my surprise, I passed everything, although there were some courses that I certainly couldn't give a very good summary of - that's for sure.

But those were the years when France was all absorbed in Algeria, and it was hard to see these people who were really so intelligent and so sophisticated coming back, and if somebody said anything about Algeria in class, one professor, who knew the United States very well, would actually say, *"Et vos peaux-rouges? [And your redskins?]* What have done with them?" As if that was really related. And in one of my final exams, we got into the Algerian question, and the questioners really wondered what I saw that was different between the real world and their opinions on Algeria, and I told them quite frankly that I couldn't imagine, even though France was a great democracy, I couldn't

imagine the French of that day ever allowing the Algerians to have equal rights in voting for representatives to sit in the French parliament as the French had. That sort of took them aback. I think they said, "How could anyone imagine that?" But of course, that would have been the essence of democracy combined with their view that Algeria was as much a part of France as Normandy or Provence.

And there were heavily armed militia on the streets of Paris when the French cinemas showed newsreels, which they had at that time as well as we, people in the theaters would start chanting *Algérie française!* You never knew when something might break out. I had to walk past the Arc de Triomphe daily to get back to my room, and quite frequently they seemed just on the verge of an outbreak of violence there. So it was exciting and troubling at the same time. That country, above all, one might have thought, would have been able to understand both sides of the situation well enough to make a diplomatic exit.

Q: Well, when you came back, you say your family sort of pushed you towards the Foreign Service?

SAMPAS: Well, friends of my family.

Q: Friends of your family. Did you take the Foreign Service Exam?

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: When did you take it?

SAMPAS: Let's see. I went to Georgetown University in '57, so I must have taken it in the early summer of '57?

Q: '57. And I assume you passed it then?

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: And how about the oral exam? How did the oral exam go? Do you remember it?

SAMPAS: Yes, that took place in August of that summer, and there were, I believe, three people at a table asking questions. They knew that I had been involved in politics, so one asked me if I could give a summary of politics in the state of Michigan, and I knew quite well that what they were really asking was, “Are you going to be able to see this thing straight up, or are we going to hear tilted politics from you?” And I gave them, I think, a very good summary of it, one they certainly couldn't quibble with much. It was a straightforward exam.

Q: Did they give you any problems - you know, you're vice consul in some place, and you have to settle a problem or something like that?

SAMPAS: I don't recall any practical problem or question. I think it was all pretty much

factual, and they didn't push their questions very hard either.

Q: Did they ask the question that they seemed to be prone to do in those days: "Well, if you join the Foreign Service, are you going to get married and leave us?" or something like that? Did that come up?

SAMPAS: Yes, they did, and I said that I was sure I'd be able to handle that. I got the same question, curiously enough, when I came back into the Foreign Service in 1973. By that time, the winds of change had blown under the doors, even in the hallowed State Department, and we already had women's groups trying to see that women had a better shake in the Service. And again there were three people at a table at one point and myself. And one of them asked a similar question about combining career and family. By that time, I had two children. The chairman of the board stopped the question in a hurry and said I needn't answer. I said, "I don't mind answering this." "No, no, we don't want that question answered." They knew perfectly well that the lawyers could hop all over them. So that's how much the atmosphere had changed.

Q: It's interesting. I've interviewed one woman with whom I worked, an outstanding officer, and she was, around this time, told, "Well, you didn't pass, but I think it would be just splendid if you'd marry a Foreign Service officer." You can imagine, she didn't exactly hold that gentleman in any high regard.

SAMPAS: Oh, dear, as if they were offering to bring one to the table with a ring in his nose!

Q: Well, it's interesting just to document the... Well, when you came in, you came into the Foreign Service when?

SAMPAS: The first time was in October 1957.

Q: And you, I assume, went to the basic officer's course known as the A-100 course.

SAMPAS: Absolutely.

Q: Can you describe the composition and sort of the outlook of the people you were with?

SAMPAS: Yes, of course in those days, the groups were quite a bit younger than they are now. The oldest person in our group was 30, and we all thought that very strange and old. We had more women than I think any course had had until that time - five. And I think it was a very collegial group. If there was any embarrassment to it, it was not for the women but for the one Afro-American, who wasn't always treated appropriately when we went out, say, to visit some place in the countryside. And he did not have a full career in the Foreign Service either.

They brought in people who had served in various parts of the world to talk to us. It was not always a very enlightening kind of seminar.

Q: It's hard to stay awake sometimes. I took it two years before you did, and it was an awful lot of just plain talking to us, people from various places, and they were not the most dynamic.

SAMPAS: No, and when I really felt annoyed was when two people came in, one after the other, for Latin America and they really were anxious to talk about apartments and maids - where the best maids and apartments were - and it was hard for me to believe that somebody would sit there and do that, really hard. Political discussion wasn't even on their agenda!

Q: Did you catch the spirit of what you all, this basic course, this officer group, was doing. I mean, was there a sense of mission, would you say, or were people going in for a job, or do you have a way of characterizing it?

SAMPAS: I don't think we had a very good sense of mission. It was mostly just waiting around until you're dealt a job, and then, Gee whiz, what am I going to do with this? And we hadn't, I think, spent enough time discussing some of the issues - what were the issues? - outlined in a sharp enough way that we found ourselves taking issue with the presenters. You know, I couldn't help but think, when I was in Africa recently, that if, back in the very early '60s, instead of going in for these broad-brush, huge projects - a dam here and a dam there and so forth - we had taken it more as a one-on-one or a small group of people, we will loan you a certain amount of money and you have to keep track of that and you have to keep it going - something like the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and its microcredit loan program for the poor. Some of the people since have found out that the poorer the people are to whom you loan money, the better the record of repayment they will have, and, in addition, you can get the poor to begin to take responsibility for themselves; whereas, with a big dam you don't get any sense of individual accomplishment. And with Africa, a continent which is still so torn up by various ethnicities, I don't think we helped it much with our huge aid programs of the '60s.

Q: This is a sad thing. One looks at it, it's very difficult to say, Yes, we did this.

SAMPAS: That's right. Some areas are poorer now than they were then.

Q: Well, when you were coming out of this course after a few weeks, still 1957, where did you figure, whither did you want to go?

SAMPAS: Oh, well, sometime late in '57, after we had been given a writing sample to do, but didn't know exactly for whom it was - and I was kind of smart-alecky in those days, to be quite frank - we were told that the correspondence branch of the Public Services Division was looking for a couple of new recruits to answer the public's correspondence. So somebody said, I guess, some thing like, "Here's a smart-aleck who can write something." So they said, Why don't you go over there and work? And it was alright. Nearly all the other six writers in the Branch, junior Foreign Service officers, and

the experience taught us all a little bit about what foreign policy was and how you had to explain it to people. Sometimes we got to meet groups that were coming through and gave them short talks. So, serving in the Branch was as good an introduction as any to learn what the Department was about.

Q: You did this from '57 to when?

SAMPAS: '60. It was actually, January of '58 when I arrived in the Branch and about May of 1960 when I left.

Q: Well, would you be given guidance on what you were supposed to write, or were you sort of working on your own, or how did it work?

SAMPAS: Well, they in those days, almost every one of the Secretary's speeches was published in a little book - paperback, to be sure - so you could scan through the various addresses that the Secretary (John Foster Dulles) had given recently and say, “Here's what fits.” So you would say, “ere's what our secretary has said on that particular subject.” Or if you had a great deal of mail and were really rushed, you'd give them an automatic address: "Thank you for your letter. We've enclosed something that will be of interest" - without even specifying particularly what it was.

Q: Well, now, I take it that replies to Congress went to a different place. Was that-

SAMPAS: We received congressional correspondence as well. And this was in the days before they had automatic typewriters. Somebody had come over from the White House at one point and said they thought we needed them, and some people had started inquiring as to how we could make use of such equipment, but the equipment wasn’t weren't really well developed yet. Mostly, we had a typing pool in the back room, with carbon paper and erasers. And in those days, too, there was a correspondence review staff on the same floor as the Secretary's office, no less, that was run by - I think they were all widows. And the head of this staff was a Marine Corps widow. In those days, this correspondence review staff didn't allow a single letter to get sent out that wasn't spelled correctly, in correct grammar, with correct margins, etc. They would call us on the telephone if anything was wrong and make us pick up the offending letter and correct it. We all kind of fussed at it at the time, but in retrospect, I'm kind of proud of the product the Department put out.

Q: Were you getting any feel of what the public was interested in?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, we had to even keep a record of the public opinions expressed in our correspondence until sometime someone let the press know how the mail was running on an issue. The White House and the Secretary didn't want the public to know what the public criticized, so that never happened again; afterward, we kept a record only of the topics on which we received mail - not of the pros and cons.

Q: I was wondering, were any issues sort of hot during this time?

SAMPAS: They came and went. You know, the American public doesn't have very long-lasting interest in anything. This was the time *The Ugly American* was published, so there were-

Q: Lederer and... I can't think of who the other person was. [Burdick]

SAMPAS: But people thought, that really is a book that describes the Foreign Service perfectly, so we tried to explain that it wasn't just quite that way. In fact, something on the radio just recently brought up the same thing. Somebody had complained that the staff in a certain embassy didn't know the local language, and once again, the Department pulled out of a sack - the same sack that we used to use - "There are so many Foreign Service officers who know one language, and there are so and so many officers who know two or who know three" - which doesn't say at all, of course, whether they know the language of the country they're in. And that's something they apparently still don't want to talk about.

Q: Well, it's difficult because it's hard to get enough people, say, to learn Eritrean or it takes more than a year to get them up to speed in Eritrean, and then they're gone.

SAMPAS: Well, it's a terribly difficult job. I just wonder if it wouldn't be better if sometime we would explain more clearly to people how difficult a job it is, and then ask for the resources to do it better.

Q: Were you getting a bit restive in this job? I mean, Foreign Service means foreign, and there you are...

SAMPAS: Yes, I think we all did look forward to going overseas, and one by one they would be picked out and sent. So, yes, I wanted to go overseas, but I was working on my doctorate in the evenings at that time and wanted to complete all my course work fast.

Q: Oh, a doctorate in political science?

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Where?

SAMPAS: Georgetown University.

Q: Georgetown University.

SAMPAS: And indeed, I finished those oral exams in 1960.

Q: What was your focus?

SAMPAS: It was really semi-historical, semi-political science, somewhat military: what

foreign policy decisions did the French government make, let's say, between '36 and '40 that led to its failure in the war, its humiliating defeat?

Q: I asked if you could get into the French archives, but nothing like that was... I mean, freedom of information was not a French expression.

SAMPAS: It was certainly not. They do publish a number of their documents, and some very interesting ones, and I had one file that they published. I think it might have been 1938. Since then they've published some others, but the French are, I think, really not interested in making their documents available to the general scholar.

Q: Well, had you reached the dissertation point yet? Or you had done the orals. Does that include a dissertation?

SAMPAS: No. I didn't finish my dissertation till 1970.

Q: Oh, okay.

SAMPAS: I thought I'd be able to work on it overseas. I was sent off to Hamburg, Germany, as my first overseas assignment, and I thought that that would be a fairly quiet place where I could work on some things, but it was busier than I thought it would be.

Q: You were in Hamburg from '60 to when?

SAMPAS: The end of '62.

Q: What was Hamburg like then? I know it had terrible bombing during World War II. The first big fire raid of the war was there. Thousands were killed. What was it like when you were there, '60-62?

SAMPAS: They had rebuilt vast areas of it, and so it was this sort of modern apartment or office building humdrum kind of place downtown. You couldn't find very much that had survived the war or represent the atmosphere that they had before the war. Once in a while you'd see the side of an old building. There would be some suburban areas that were still untouched, but as you say, there had been a tremendous fire bombing of Hamburg, and there was no person from Hamburg who was there at the time that it happened who wasn't traumatized by it.

Q: How were relations with the Germans at that time from your perspective?

SAMPAS: I think they were quite good. The Germans relied upon us a good deal. We were, I think, their staunchest ally at the time. It was we who had found a way to get them into NATO without bothering their neighbors too much. We had active military to military relations with them. We didn't see much of that up north in Hamburg. It was only when you got down into Bavaria that you would see so many of our soldiers and so many of theirs as well.

Q: You were in the British Zone, and their military was smaller, I think, than ours.

SAMPAS: That's right, much smaller and, I think, deliberately out of the way. And presumably, there were camps between Hamburg and the East German border, but we didn't often go in that direction, quite frankly.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

SAMPAS: I was doing consular work.

Q: What sort of consular work were you doing?

SAMPAS: Oh, I was examining people for visas - visitor's visas. People were just starting to pick up on the trend toward international tourism and study. Student visas for those who were going to come over and study for a year or two. It was a wide variety of visa work. Indeed, some of the cases I can still remember as if it were yesterday.

Q: To get a flavor for this, can you talk about, say, some complicated visa cases?

SAMPAS: Well, yes, there was one man who came in bearing flowers, of all things, a few flowers. He felt that he had been deported from the U.S. He was a Jewish German and sometime or other toward the end of the war had managed to get into Mexico, and everyone had said, “Well, the Mexican border was the easiest border to cross into the U.S.” You didn't have to have a visa anymore. You just drove across the border. So he bought himself a loud shirt and started chewing a big stick of gum while he and his friends tried driving across the border into the U.S. He got in at that time and eventually married someone here. But his wife wasn't perhaps a person he should have trusted with all of his history, and sometime or other she got angry at him and turned him in to the INS, saying he doesn't really belong here, he didn’t come in with the proper documents. So he was sent out, but when we tried to find out about his deportation, INS said it had no record of a formal deportation order. It was an interesting case. The first immigrant visa that I worked on started out as naturally as the visitor's visas. I got a pile of immigrant visas to start on, and I was going over things in minute detail, over and over, to check my German, to make certain that I understood this lady's German and got to that question, "Are you now or have you ever been a communist" and by golly, she said, “Yes.” So, of course, you know, my sirens went off, and I asked the chief of the section if he wanted to come in and sit in. "No, no, no, you just finish up and do the right thing." But she had wanted to get a job in a store in East Germany, and things were naturally tight. The East German regime gave jobs to people who were members of the East German Communist Party, rather than to others. The first time she applied for a job, she didn't get it, so she went back and joined the East German Communist Party and, lo and behold, later got the job. Each time you had to figure out what was really at stake here. Was it duress or not? And it isn't always easy to tell. She said she lost weight when she didn't have the job, and I had no problem believing that, but whether it was the only job, the only decent job she could have had as a non-communist - I doubt that as well. There weren't so many people

applying for jobs in East Germany in those days. But eventually she convinced somebody, my successor there - she was really, really difficult - and she secured a visa.

Q: I would think being a major seaport - and we had very tight regulations on prostitution - I would think this would make a real problem with sailors and the Reeperbahn and all that for a consular officer. Speaking of new consular officers, I had an awful lot of trouble. I was doing visas in Frankfurt about five years before you and, you know, asking the details - "Have you ever sold yourself for money" and that sort of thing. Did you encounter problems of that nature?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes. We had quite a lot of prostitutes, and I guess I was rather discouraged that the U.S. military would go ahead and authorize our soldiers to marry prostitutes and then hold consular officers accountable if the soldiers' wives couldn't quickly get an immigrant visa to come into the United States. We even had one prostitute who, after she got to the United States, started working at her old trade in houses for Asian gentlemen.

Q: There was no real recourse. If someone was a prostitute, they had to have a special act of Congress to get there.

SAMPAS: Well, they could get waivers of a different sort then. How did that work? The INS would process a waiver at the time I was there, and they did. It just took some time.

Q: Did you have any problems with protection and welfare of Americans, sailors and shipping seamen, that sort of thing?

SAMPAS: I don't recall that we had any jail cases in those days - surprising, you would think that sailors, with their certain history of getting drunk in foreign ports would get into trouble there as much as anywhere, but I just don't recall, but that would have gone to another office in any case.

Q: Who was our consul general there at the time?

SAMPAS: E. Tomlin Bailey. He had been an old-time officer in the Service. His last time before he went to Hamburg had been as head of diplomatic security, and he was a grand old gentleman.

Q: What did you think about the Foreign Service?

SAMPAS: Well, I guess I've always been pulled in the direction of devotion to an occupation (the Foreign Service) that if done well is really a very honorable activity and to be done well must be done with a good deal of sensitivity and toughness, more than is required in most jobs, certainly. And yet, on the other hand, always a feeling that we as a Service have tremendous lapses on the part of individuals or something outside. I can remember one Foreign Service officer who came over to Germany just for a visit - he wasn't assigned there - but we were talking about, I guess, Czech-Polish relations, and here was somebody who had done his doctorate on Eastern Europe. I assumed he had a

clear understanding of what the points of grievance were before the war, and since the war in that area of the world. It was hard for me to believe that he could have had his doctorate already, and might have been a teacher for certain aspects of consular work. But after talking to him for a while, I would never have put him up in front of others and expected them to get much of a story of Eastern Europe. He didn't even understand where the boundaries of different countries in Eastern Europe were, and was surprised to learn that Poland and Czechoslovakia bordered on each other.

Q: It's always a puzzlement sometimes about the recruiting process, but I suppose it's natural in almost any business, but it's so evident because Foreign Service officers, you expect a certain amount of I don't know what - expertise, ability to see various sides of a question, poise, and sort of the diplomatic qualities - and I'm not sure we test very well for these.

SAMPAS: No, as a nation, that's certainly one of our greatest strengths. People trust America to get involved in problems because by and large we do manage to sort things out fairly. So you have right now the Israelis and Palestinians looking at us favorably, the Northern Irish and Southern Irish looking at us favorably, and we would never be invited in so closely to their affairs if they didn't have a great deal of respect for us, so when we see somebody in our own Service with such a big gap, it's-

Q: It's a shock. It's a shock. It really is.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Of course this was at the time when they had the Wriston program, when civil servants were coming in who often had an expertise in something but had been rather narrow focused and were really coming out of a different box - not a better or worse box - but just a different box than the people recruited for the Foreign Service. And it was a difficult mix for a few years there.

SAMPAS: Oh, it certainly was, but I had heard about that problem from my father, because he thought that Foreign Service people were often extraordinarily snobbish. One of his friends was a State Department economist who did really splendid work on various aspects of the sugar problem and had applied for the Foreign Service under the Wriston Program. At some point, he was invited in, but at several grades lower than he had already achieved, and my father thought that was a tremendous slap in the face for his friend and didn't think it was at all deserved. At the same time, at one time there was an assistant secretary of State (and career Foreign Service officer) who gave a speech to a number of people interested in sugar in Latin America, and this man suggested to them that there was big opportunity to grow sugar on the beaches of islands in the Caribbean Sea around Cuba. A number of the attendees phoned Dad to relate what had happened: they were dumbfounded that a senior officer in the Department of State suggested that it would be quick and easy to replace Cuban sugar on the world market. So each side has its strengths and its weaknesses, and often they just don't quite see eye to eye, and don't spend enough time discussing issues respectfully until a real consensus is reached.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the German authorities while you were at the consulate general?

SAMPAS: Not too much, no. Once in a while.

Q: I know, when I was in Frankfurt, at one point I was protection and welfare officer. I had done visas, too. And there you dealt a lot with Germans who, particularly in those days, were a different breed of cat. They would sort of dismiss you until they found out that you were a vice consul - Herr Vizekonsul - and all of a sudden the heels would click, and all the things that... It was sort of a shocker to see this up and down business depending on what your position was.

SAMPAS: Yes, I once had an elderly woman come in one time to my office for a visa, and I tried to help her along. They were not the days of five-minute visas in those days. And she wanted to know what ship she should go on and why and so forth. So we were talking about things, and then finally she said, "Can I have my visa now?" and I said, "Yes, it's already in your passport, here." And all of a sudden, it dawned on her that I was the person she had come to see, this young thing on the other side of the desk, and this up until that time dignified, elderly woman stood up and said in wonderful German, "Oh, if I had known that, I would have said 'Good day' when I came in." And all I could think of was if you didn't think you had to say it to all the people you met before you came to me, don't bother when you get here. It was just the way they were.

Q: We were talking to a different generation. It's a long-gone generation, but they're really coming out of, well, the old period culminating in the Hitler time.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: After your time, you've got sort of the traditional Foreign Service initiation, you know, working in a paper mill in Washington and then working on visas overseas, what did you want to do? Did you have any feeling now that you were moving along where you wanted to go and specialize?

SAMPAS: Well, by the time I left Hamburg, I had certainly learned that political work was the place to be - political work (They didn't have ”cones" quite yet.) and that it was very difficult work to get into. And I certainly felt that my credentials were as good as anybody else's and that I must have some chance, with my credentials, but of course, at the time I left Hamburg, I resigned because I was going to get married to a fellow Foreign Service officer. At that time, although there was no rule that you couldn't marry a fellow Foreign Service officer, it was certainly frowned on. The Department was certainly going to do nothing to try to seek an assignment together for the couple. In fact, I'm sure if they had had their druthers, they would have put each one on the far side of the earth, because they didn't believe in it and they didn't want it. And there were no grievances in those days. So I left, thinking, well, that's the end of my Foreign Service career.

Q: How did you feel about that at the time?

SAMPAS: Well, I didn't like it then. I didn't like it then at all. But at least I was going to have the pleasure of seeing different societies, since my husband was also in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, did you feel, I mean at the time, make sort of a mental calculation, Yes, I could carry on as a Foreign Service officer being married and all that?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, I thought I certainly could. There was nothing in marriage itself that keeps you from being a good Foreign Service officer, contrary to what the Department's standard opinion seemed to be in those days. Obviously, arrangements have to be made, if you're going to have children, to see that the children are well taken care of. You can't have your children running hither and yon all over the city getting into trouble, but joint careers are possible. If you apply a little intelligence and a little money toward it, there you are.

Q: Well, you were married. Your husband's name is-

SAMPAS: James.

Q: Sampas - where does that come from?

SAMPAS: Greek.

Q: Greek. I was wondering. It looked almost like it might be Finnish or something like that.

SAMPAS: No, originally it was Sampatakakis, but the family decided to shorten it sometime around the Second World War.

Q: I'd like to cover a bit of being a wife before we return, but a Foreign Service wife. Where did you go from Hamburg. You both returned and got married?

SAMPAS: Well, he was in Canada at the time, so I came back to Washington, resigned, we were married in Washington, and then I went with him back to Ottawa.

Q: Where did you meet him if you were in Hamburg and he was in Canada?

SAMPAS: I had had a letter of introduction to him years earlier when I was a student in Paris and he was a vice consul in Paris doing welfare and whereabouts. And I remember on one of our dates we went around to several police stations and hospitals while he looked in on his various clients. But we really hadn't been in touch much since then. But he had come back - I forget from where - he had come back and walked down a corridor in one of the annexes over on the mall and saw my name on one of those little plaques and looked in and said hello. And so we saw one another a few times before I moved off

to Germany.

Q: Where did you go in Canada?

SAMPAS: He was in Ottawa, so we settled in in Ottawa and stayed pretty much there. I had a child in Ottawa, and we didn't do a great deal of traveling around.

Q: You were in Ottawa from when to when?

SAMPAS: We must have arrived there in very early '63 and we must have left in the summer of 1964.

Q: Having been newly married and with a child shortly thereafter, I take it you must have not been overly enmeshed in the diplomatic social life.
SAMPAS: Certainly not, no, I wasn't. That didn't seem to be the case for many people until you got to the rank of counselor there. It's a big embassy and a kind of modern city. It reminded me of Washington 20 or 30 years ago.

Q: You'd probably have gotten in the way if you tried to be too active.

SAMPAS: Yes, I think so.

Q: Well, did you get any feel for Canadian politics vis-à-vis the United States? Were you getting - I'm not sure if Diefenbaker was still there or not. This was not the sunniest time for American-Canadian relations. Did you pick up any of this?

SAMPAS: Some of it. You have a very good memory for all of these places. Yes, at one point Diefenbaker had talked about some confidential American documents on the floor of the parliament, and that did not make our government happy at all.

Q: I think it had to do with missiles and airplanes, airplane missiles, or something like that.

SAMPAS: Yes, and shortly after that, what would you know? He was defeated. So I think Lester Pearson was much more friendly with the United States. Certainly not a pawn, by any means - I wouldn't say that.

Q: Your Canadian friends - did you find that generally Diefenbaker was no - I mean the people you'd meet - a particular model for them?

SAMPAS: Oh, I think they were somewhat embarrassed by him. He was not the quality that I-

Q: He was really a populist, from the Midwest, in a way. I mean he represented something that normally isn't - I mean he was almost an oddball in the Canadian premier line.

SAMPAS: Yes, there was another what you might call oddball group, even further out - the New Democrats - and it was always interesting to listen to comments about them on the radio. Even further out, there was a religious sect out in the Canadian midwest and west called the Dukhabours, who removed their clothing upon hearing speeches they didn't like.

Q: Is this the "True Believers" or something?

SAMPAS: Yes, and they gave a very amusing side to Canadian politics.

Q: Did you get from your Canadian acquaintances the thing that's still here alive - poor us and big you and you've got to sort of plan on the idea that somehow or other we have to be especially nice to the Canadians because we're so big, and so forth.

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, so powerful and so forth. Yes, there is a bit of a chip on the shoulder of many Canadians. It's really too bad because they have been able to carve their own little niche and, I think, have things to teach us as well.

Q: Oh, absolutely.

SAMPAS: But there are times that we're not too sensitive in listening.

Q: Well, you'd left Canada in 1964, whither?

SAMPAS: For summer and home leave in the United States, and then off to Paris, where Jim was assigned to our delegation to NATO at Porte Dauphine. So he had a regular job in a regular office building. He shuttled back and forth on the subway.

Q: You were there from '64-'65. I can't remember, was this the time when De Gaulle sort of said, "Thanks a lot, but take off?"

SAMPAS: Yes, that was 1966 with actual departures to be in 1967.

So, yes, things were already changed. I don't know that the staffing had been very much reduced, but it was in the process of being reduced, and people were in the process of moving off - to Brussels, as it turned out. NATO would move to Belgium.

Q: Were you able to do anything on your dissertation while you were there?

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, I found an interesting little library that specialized in international questions not too far from the Arc de Triomphe, where I could work on things, and it was helpful. I enjoyed that very much.

Q: I'm not very knowledgeable about French politics, but a theme that I hear during this period and even unto this day was this problem of who collaborated, who didn't, and

France - what you were playing with I think would be in a way sensitive - not secret sensitive, but I mean just plain sensitive to people. Did you find yourself running across this?

SAMPAS: Yes, indeed, those problems and concerns were not very far below the surface of many French men of our age and French women of our age, too. I didn't get, in my dissertation, I really didn't get beyond the year 1940. By the end of June 1940, France had collapsed. But clearly some of the people who were making life difficult for France just before that time made it even more difficult for France during the war. And I don't know how long it will go on that the French continue to discover one or another French officials involved in war crimes. It could happen several more times still.

Q: Really, until actuarial tables will take care of it. Did you find that, as you were looking at this, was there a strong left-right movement in the French body politic in the just before the war years?

SAMPAS: As a member of a family involved with the embassy, I don't know that I ever actually met an actual communist in those years. I must say, I didn't look for any, either. There were right-wingers around who had hidden their past somewhat. I only found one woman in all the time that I was there who brought up the subject of Franco-German wartime collaboration. But, of course, you had a major socialist-communist-democrat coalition sweeping the French elections in 1936, and a more centered government by 1939-40, with a number of officials ready to accept defeat by Germany. So that certainly was a strong left to right movement.

Q: I would have thought that an American looking at French history and at the concentrated level of a Ph.D., you would have found some quite interested in what you were doing. Did you find this, or were you sort of off doing this in a lonely fashion?

SAMPAS: Mostly I was doing it in a lonely fashion, because Jim was associated with our NATO delegation. They don't really get into the bilateral social relations that an embassy does, so I really didn't have a great many contacts with the French themselves. I had some. I still had a couple of friends with whom I'd gone to school in France, and so from time to time I'd get together with them and talk about things, but they were busy, really. One of them, my best friend, had joined the French diplomatic service and was preparing to go to Moscow, so she didn't have a lot of time to waste on her other specialty, which was America. But I think I could have asked that friend for an introduction into French society more generally. I suppose in some ways I was trying to protect the friendship.

Q: I can understand. It's just that the French put such a weight on their intelligencia and all, and you were sort of rowing in those same waters, in a way.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: But did you, by being with a husband in NATO, I take it that this was in many ways not the traditional diplomatic post.

SAMPAS: It was for us, but I'm not at all certain that it was for the French, or NATO itself. The U.S. leadership there never seemed to take the initiative to introduce their people around. That's my impression. I don't know exactly why they didn't. Perhaps because the head of our mission to NATO then was a political appointee whose wife didn't participate in the way a Foreign Service wife might have. I think most of the French people involved in NATO were military people rather than foreign service people because their foreign service people would do only "that which we are trained to do, and that's foreign policy."

Q: De Gaulle was still De Gaulle, wasn't he, at this time? Wasn't it '68 when the students and De Gaulle did not get along, and he departed. But did you feel at all, just from the papers and what you'd see, that sort of a - if not anti-American - a not very positive approach towards the United States?

SAMPAS: Well, I think that spirit in France of being very different from "Anglo-Saxons" has underlain the surface of French politics for quite some time. They tried to bury it a little bit in the years right after the war, the years of the Marshall Plan, but I had run into that very markedly in school there. You know, there's never a good word in public for an American political viewpoint. There were suspicions that the Marshall Plan was somehow designed to bolster the black market. The French are wonderful people, but they certainly have a way of spinning facts to their own view of life, and they're not the only country in Europe which has great suspicion of the United States. In fact, I think the Greeks have it just as much.

Q: I served four years in Greece. They're a peculiar breed of cat.

SAMPAS: If anything goes wrong there, it's the CIA's fault, right?

Q: Absolutely, absolutely. Did you, as you were working on your dissertation, did you find that you were up against - being an American and sort of looking at things in a practical manner - this came up, so-and-so coming up against the French way of those three reasons - I guess it's the Cartesian approach to things-

SAMPAS: Oh, yes.

Q: -and did this show up in how you-

SAMPAS: Oh, yes. We had a course that was supposed to help the foreign students understand France and the French a little bit more, and I got rather quickly fed up with this business of, you know, in every exposé or brief speech, you start with the givens and then you have the development - two parts maybe, three parts always better - and then the far-reaching conclusions, terribly far-reaching. And one day in this course, when we had changed professors, and I thought I could get away with it, I really gave them just a, you know, sarcastic view of this. They didn't like it at all. They didn't like this mirror held up to them. They do here, in this system of "logic," a wonderful way to develop a point, if

you're really going to do it honestly and well, but you often really have to jump. Suppose the in-between part, the development, doesn't fall into two or three easy pieces. Do you dare do four? Do you cut back? There has to be some sort of symmetry there, and if you miss the symmetry, you miss the whole point of this wonderful development that the French have fashioned for themselves. But you can also hide so much. If you forget - or deliberately ignore - something in your "givens" at the beginning, that fact simply doesn't exist for the argument. So it is a way for people to miss a point, and I feel that it is as often misused as it is well used. And yet, when we hear a wonderful little speech of 10 minutes here and 10 minutes there, you can really think it's marvelous. But I never heard a French ambassador give one of those little speeches we practiced at "Science Po." We had two ambassadors of France when I was in Mauritania, and I knew them both, one rather well, and I always was waiting for one of these marvelous little speeches to start. But it never came about, never.

Q: Well, how did you find life in Paris? I mean, raising a child and all this, still quite young - was this a problem?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, the French always have a difficult administrative procedure for whatever was involved. But they do have some things that are thoughtful. They do have a system of schools for the very young that is, I think, better than anything we have because ours aren't state-run, except, I suppose, Head Start would be comparable. But it's just that everything in French life is just terribly complicated. The only thing that was easy was getting registered for school and the various courses within the school. You just show up. They don't know what you're doing there. You don't know what you're doing there either. And you tell them you want to enroll. Do you have your summary of previous work? Yes, here it is. Well, alright. Then you pay a very minimal fee, and off you go. When I heard of what a friend of mine had to go through to do her doctoral level examinations in Jungian philosophy, well, it would have taken a doctorate to find out which way to proceed. And I think I've been persuaded by her that that's part of the game. If you can manage to find your way to the examination room on the correct day, you're a success.

Q: Well, you left France in '66, and where did you go?

SAMPAS: Iceland.

Q: Iceland. You were in Iceland from when to when?

SAMPAS: '66 to '69.

Q: What was your husband doing there?

SAMPAS: He was the political officer there. It was a nice small embassy. You had an ambassador, a DCM, one political officer, one economic officer, one consular officer, one administrative officer, and two Foreign Service secretaries.

Q: This is before the period when they were looking hard at utilizing qualified wives to

handle things in our organization?

SAMPAS: Yes, that came about after we came home from Iceland. My husband's next assignment was back here in the Department, and I think it was something like '71 to '73 that revolutionizing the Department's treatment of women came along. And I remember the Department of State newsletter had an article in it one time about the Department was going to seek to keep some of the Foreign Service women who would otherwise resign, making it possible for them to have joint assignments with their husbands if that proved practical, and the last paragraph or two said something that I recall - not word for word, to be sure, but I recall - "And we'll even consider taking some of the old bags back." And I said, "They mean me! They really mean me."

Iceland was a very peaceful, pleasant country. They had some issues with the military base that we have there.
Q: Keflavik.

SAMPAS: Yes. But they are not a violent people, a very pleasant people; I had met someone in Paris who was the wife of a senior Icelandic Foreign Service officer, and they had been transferred back to Iceland at about the same time we were going, so I had one friend who could tell me how things were done. It was hard because of the language. Not everybody spoke English, although a great many people did. And you can learn to shop with no language at all. You could shop if you were deaf and dumb by pointing to whatever you wanted, but if you wanted to know exactly how to get your child enrolled in the local nursery school, you needed some help. And my friend was very helpful there and went over with me and got my older boy enrolled, and that was that. I was able to take him around the corner to school every afternoon and pick him up about the time the northern lights came on - 5:00 or 6:00 pm. And he enjoyed it, and I enjoyed it, the peace and quiet. Obviously, it's not a country where you look for extensive libraries of French or English documents, diplomatic documents, but it is the time for thinking some things through where you really could reach a conclusion that said that the French were no more able to react to the Germans in 1936 than they were in 1940.

It's a very well-developed country for its size. They only have about a hundredth of the people we have here, but they have a university with seven faculties, which you can attend for free if you've got the grades. They have three highly qualified academic high schools that would turn out the equivalent of a baccalaureate in different parts of the country, so that you could get a very good education in the public school system. They had a symphony orchestra. They had children's musical school. They had a national theater. It was incredible what these people, with no resources but fish, had been able to achieve. They brought in theatrical groups from time to time. We saw *Fiddler on the Roof* there, in Icelandic, and they brought in visiting conductors for their biweekly symphony concerts. So there certainly was an abundance of things that one could do and find really quite interesting.
They have a problem with alcoholism, but I must say that didn't bother our particular relationships with our friends. No one ever made a fool of himself at our house, although they certainly could drink until way into the morning hours, but never showed a sign of it.

And as it turned out, my very dear first friend was herself an alcoholic, but very disciplined, and I had never noticed it. But it didn't affect her then as it did later on when they were transferred overseas again. I suspect that that problem with alcoholism among the residents of the Nordic countries has something to do with depression and the lack of light in wintertime.

Q: Yes, you find people much more susceptible to light and what it does to you than we used to think.

SAMPAS: That's right, and if people had known years ago about these electric lights that can bring the full spectrum of daylight anytime of year and help people ward off depression, we might not see the quantity of alcoholics we have in these northern regions. Certainly as soon as the spring showed signs of coming, you would find Icelanders sitting outside all over the place, soaking up the sun's rays. So inherently, intuitively, they knew that that was what they needed, but doctors weren't yet giving medical prescriptions for a certain amount of time in front of intense light, and engineers hadn't yet perfected full-spectrum intense lights.

Q: What about Vietnam during this period? One thinks of the Swedes as being so strongly anti-American over the Vietnam issue, which was raging at this time. How about the Icelanders?

SAMPAS: You know, I don't think they much noticed. I'm sure some of them did. I don't mean to belittle them or their interest in foreign policy, but I'm not sure that anyone even brought it up while we were there. I don't feel they followed it very carefully. It just wasn't very much a part of their lives. But they saw themselves rather apart from the rest of Europeans. Other Europeans would come up for part of the summer, but there was definitely a division there. The major east-west confrontational issue with the Icelanders was the Keflavik NATO air base and whether it should remain an open base staffed with U.S. military personnel.

Q: Well, Iceland, of course, was terribly important to us because it's sort of the cork in the submarine bottle or something. The Soviets had to go through one side or the other of Iceland, and that's what we were doing there. So it was not just a base, it was on every count a very strategic point.

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: Were we nervous about our situation there during the time you were there?

SAMPAS: No, I don't think that... The U.S. military officers were concerned that we wouldn't have serious events such as recently have happened on Okinawa. They certainly didn't want any of those. And Iceland had one dry day a week where no alcohol was served. I think it was Wednesday, so that was the day that they let a number of the U.S. military people stationed in Keflavik off the base. The other days, the U.S. military were pretty much confined to the base, because it's just too easy to get drunk and have some

sort of incident. The Icelanders did have a couple of marches about something, perhaps the base. Another issue that upset them that so many of our military people were marrying their pretty women. Icelandic women tend to be quite beautiful, and they didn't like it that their women would be enticed to marry our men and then go off to the USA to live. And not too many of those women got into social contacts when they came back to visit. I'm sure most of them came back once a year or once every second year to visit their family, but I was never in a context where they went around and visited all their other friends as well. Their disappointed suitors remained disappointed.

Q: Was this the period of the "cod wars" with Great Britain?

SAMPAS: That was just after we left.

Q: Just after, you were fortunate to get out - of having to choose between allies. What about relations with the base people? Was there an effort on the part of our embassy to try to make the people on the base (one) feel loved and wanted and (two) to understand what they were doing, and all that?

SAMPAS: Yes, there was one ambassador's wife (Mrs. Penfield) who had been a former USIA [United States Information Agency] officer, and worked with the base commander's wife on developing social contacts between embassy and military wives. The embassy women would drive out to the base on a monthly basis for an officers' wives' lunch, where we would sit at the table and talk about things. But that was not so much structured. They did have a speaker, but the speaker didn't say, "Here's what our major interests are." That would have been done separately because there were Icelandic women who came as well. The base and the embassy were far apart, over a very bleak road and sometimes - often - very bad weather. Once or twice a month, the military wives would come to the ambassador's residence and help produce items for a Christmas bazaar. Embassy high school children had to go to the base school - or to a boarding school elsewhere. There was a school bus that eventually came in for the children, the embassy parents were concerned about putting their children on that school bus that would take this 40 mile trip to get over this windswept barren peninsula to Keflavik. I think more could have been done, particularly if the wives and their husbands had had small dinners and get-togethers. I think that would have been useful, but difficult because of the difficult road.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

SAMPAS: Well, we had three. The first one was Ambassador James K. Penfield, who had been there about five years when we got there and knew everyone of note in Iceland. He had been in Greenland during the Second World War, so he had a good background for it.

Q: It's sort of unusual for ambassadors.

SAMPAS: Absolutely. And he understood the Icelandic people and their willingness, like

the Greenlanders, to go for an hour without saying much. And he by that time had met everybody. He didn't like his DCM at all.

Q: Who was that?

SAMPAS: David Henry. And I felt badly about it. It affected everyone in that small an embassy.

Q: Oh, yes.

SAMPAS: When he gave his two farewell parties, he worked it out so that all the officers were invited to one or another party except for the DCM.

Q: Oh, God!

SAMPAS: The very person who most needed to pick up on his contacts. And Iceland is not an easy place to get to know people. The names are complex. The wives' names aren't the husbands' names, and the children's names are something else again. Icelandic children didn't come to the American schools, so that was not a point of contact. It just took a while. You know, even when somebody is trying to nurture contact, people on both sides have to be willing, have to be reaching out to each other. You can lead the horses to the bucket, but maybe neither one will take a drink, and that's something that every ambassador has to think about.

Q: Well, who was the second ambassador?

SAMPAS: It was the former governor of Minnesota, Karl F. Rolvaag. He had been defeated, but remained close to Hubert Humphrey, President Johnson's Vice President. So when he came, he had enough clout to have the Department do some extensive work on the ambassador's residence - enlarging the dining room so that it could seat more than the 12 it had, and modernizing the kitchen. After the basic work was done, the Department's interior designers furnished it very nicely. Unfortunately, Mrs. Rolvaag became ill shortly after arriving in Iceland, and no one learned exactly what the physical problem was until much later. The Rolvaags were kind, but I think it was a great jump from Minnesota politics - as boisterous as they were at times - and Reykjavik's. The fact that Governor Rolvaag's father had been Ole Rolvaag, author of Giants in the Earth, impressed Americans more than Icelanders, who were mostly unfamiliar with American literature.

I'm no doctor, but eventually began to suspect that both Ambassador Rolvaag and his wife might be alcoholics. Iceland just wasn't good for that sort of problem. They returned to the U.S. in late 1968 or early 1969. He attended the infamous Democratic political convention in Chicago in 1968 and gave the embassy staff much to think about when he recounted to us what had happened there and in Washington after the King assassination.

Q: And the third ambassador?

SAMPAS: He was the person who makes your globes - Replogle. He was a very sweet businessman from the Chicago area whose first wife had been a journalist and had an idea of making low-cost globes, so he got into that and became "Mr. Globe" in the United States, everything from small to huge. And he was very sweet. We met him first here in Washington just before he went over. His wife had died or was removed from the scene - perhaps by a coma. His daughter was very bright and was working on a Ph.D. in Greek history, but she said something to our Icelandic hosts at the time indicating that she wasn't certain that her father would actually be living in Iceland. That, of course, set people to looking very perplexed. But he was very sweet, and tried to do a nice job.

Q: Going back to your remark about how people felt when Governor Rolvaag talked about the Washington, DC reaction to the King assassination, I would imagine we were at that point really wrestling with a racial problem, and in a country like Iceland, where they're... You know, just by the pool of people there, there's no racial problem. It would be hard for them to understand what we're doing and also the depth of the problem.

SAMPAS: Yes, that's right.

Q: Well, you then came back in 1969, went to Washington again. Your husband went to Washington.

SAMPAS: Yes, yes.

Q: And what was he doing then?

SAMPAS: Scandinavian Affairs and the Science Bureau (now OES).

Q: How old were your children by this time?

SAMPAS: Well, I had one child born in '68 in Iceland and one child born in '63 in Canada.
Q: Oh, so you were busy.

SAMPAS: Yes, and volunteer nursery school.

Q: Yes. I thought we might go to... This would probably be a good place to stop, and I'll put at the end of the tape where we are. So just when did you, sort of, begin to get the urge and find out what the opportunity was to get back into the Foreign Service?

SAMPAS: The minute I saw that article in the Department of State Newsletter.

Q: So this was in the early, what? '71?

SAMPAS: It must have been in '71 or early ''72 that I saw the article. And I met Gladys Rogers, who was the special person for women's affairs at the time, and asked her if there

was anything I could do about this. She called Jim and asked if that was somebody related to him. My husband and I had a friend who had worked one of the potential class action grievance cases against the Department with Gladys Rogers. Our friend is a lawyer and discussed the individual case with Mrs. Rogers. She was impressed with Gladys Rogers, and Gladys Rogers was so impressed by her that she started to go to law school herself. Subsequently, Gladys Rogers called me in and made certain that my application was being processed, and in due course I went in for the oral exam - again. That's when I had the same question that I'd had many years before about possible family versus career conflicts. And I remember at the time, I asked if anyone had considered part-time work. No! Certainly not. That wasn't in the scheme of things. But it took a long time. As a matter of fact, I didn't get back into the Service until 1973.

Q: Well, why don't we pick it up next time at the point when you came into the Foreign Service, just there, and how that worked?

SAMPAS: Okay, great.

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Q: Today is the 2nd of February, 1999. So when did you come into the Foreign Service?

SAMPAS: I came in in 1957, October 3, 1957, for the first time.

Q: And how did that come about?

SAMPAS: Well, I took the Foreign Service Exam the previous year, passed, went in for one of the oral interviews, which at that time consisted of three senior Foreign Service officers asking, and one newcomer answering, questions. I passed and eventually got a letter saying "Time to come in." So that was fine. I think I may have prompted it by saying, "If I don't come soon, I'm not going to be available until such and such a time," because I was at Georgetown University graduate school and I planned to take a full load of coursework if I didn't come into the Foreign Service soon.

Q: So you got into a basic officers' course.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Could you talk about the basic officers' course a bit - kind of how you were taught and some of the members and all?

SAMPAS: Well, the A-100 course then was offered at a building that's now an apartment building in Rosslyn. We had people come over from the Department, and some of them were quite good, I think, in talking about the issues between there area or their countries and the United States. And some of them were really lousy. I remember, in the latter category, someone from Latin America who seemed to portray Latin America as an ideal place to serve because of the maids and apartments that one could get.

Q: Oh, isn't that nice.

SAMPAS: Yes. I was a little bit surprised when the people talking about the Far East seemed not to have considered the question of whether to recognize China promptly or wait until such time as China might have built itself up considerably. I thought that was a question that they would naturally have asked themselves and answered one way or another. But it was in general a good course. At one time or other, we had sort of a writing experiment there, and whether they thought I did well or poorly on it I can't say, but anyway, the FSI people recommended me to the people who answered constituent letters at the Department. The Department normally received somewhere between, oh, I suppose, 30 and 150 letters a day from U.S. citizens and others complaining about foreign policy - very seldom praising it. Sometimes these were forwarded to us by congressmen who didn't quite know how to handle them, and we had responsibility for drafting up answers. It was very much a manual process, in those days. There was a room with, I suppose, eight or nine typists in it and a senior manager of the typing pool, who reviewed the letters to see that they didn't have too many typographical errors or spelling errors. And then, after they were finished in the public correspondence office, they were sent over to an area not far from the Secretary of State's own office, managed by a group of military widows, who had the final say about whether they could be sent out of the Department. They had an eye for typographical errors, for smears with an eraser, that was fabulous. And every time they came across a letter that didn't meet their high standards, our office would get a call explaining exactly what was wrong with one of these hundreds of letters that we had sent over. It seemed a little persnickety at the time, but it kept up the good name of the Department of State for what was proper grammar, proper spelling, proper punctuation - things that I think have probably gone down the drain considerably since then.

Q: Where did you get your guidance as you were drafting up these replies? I mean, did you have a stock set of paragraphs, or did you call up a desk?

SAMPAS: We did a little bit of everything. Almost never did somebody on a desk or in an administrative office think of the questions people were asking and send us boilerplate that we could use, but the Secretary gave speeches, and we got copies of those speeches and plagiarized what he had said. And sometimes we would call the Desk and ask for guidance - mostly speeches, though, that we relied on, and we received enough of these that we could often tuck them in with the letters that we sent out, so that they could get the full grasp.

Q: You say most of the letters were opposed to what we were doing. Was it just people being sort of annoyed at the fact that it was government doing things, or were you able to pick up any of what one could call serious trends, where people were unhappy with what was happening?

SAMPAS: Well, from time to time, there was clearly an effort to lobby the Department of State. You may not have heard, for instance, of a man called Artukovic.

Q: Oh, very much so.

SAMPAS: Oh, you have.

Q: I served five years in Belgrade in the '60s.

SAMPAS: Yes, well, then you certainly would have. We had quite a writing campaign about him.

Q: He was a Croatian fascist.
SAMPAS: Yes, yes. And there was quite good evidence that he had participated personally in killing people in a sometimes particularly ugly way. And he had come into the United States, if I recall correctly.

Q: Oh, yes. He was in the United States illegally.

SAMPAS: Yes, and had acquired a wife and American children. And of course, it's always a little bit difficult for our government to think of deporting somebody who is related to American citizens. That muddies the waters.

Q: And particularly to a communist dictatorship. And as I recall it, it wasn't helped by the fact that his brother was a fairly wealthy contractor and contributor to the Republican cause in California.

SAMPAS: Well, you see, that was the side of things we didn't quite see. But it was clear that people were having a problem dealing with him.

Q: What about Israel? This was only shortly, with in a year, of the Arab-Israeli Suez War.

SAMPAS: Yes. We did not get as many letters about Israel as you might expect. From time to time there were some, but before the letter-writing was really a blip on our screen, there had to be some sort of an organized campaign, because we got so many letters that a single individual writing just wouldn't mean much. We did keep track of what issues were coming about and whether people were pro or con that particular issue.

Q: Well, you were doing this letter-writing, what, in 1957, and did that last?

SAMPAS: I came in in October, '57, and it seemed to me that I landed in the Public Correspondence Branch in January of '58.

Q: And how long did you stay there?

SAMPAS: I stayed until the spring of 1960, when I left for Germany and the consulate general at Hamburg.

Q: I would have thought that at a certain point you would have begun to feel rather rustic doing this. I mean, you came into the Foreign Service, and all of a sudden you're answering letters.

SAMPAS: Yes, it wasn't exactly what we think of when we think of Foreign Service work, but it was very convenient for me because I was in graduate school at the time, and the longer I could stay in graduate school to finish my oral exams, the better it was for me. So that's exactly how long I stayed. I took a short leave of absence in the spring of 1960 while I went through my orals, and then got on the boat and went to Germany.

Q: What degree did you get out of there?

SAMPAS: Well, it took a long time. Eventually, I got a Ph.D. in government from Georgetown, but it took me a long time to write a thesis. It was not just something one could go overseas and do consular work all day and come home and write at night. And Germany didn't have quite the documents available that would have been useful.

Q: Your thesis was on what?

SAMPAS: It was on mistakes that the French made in their foreign policy that led them into the disaster of June, 1940.
Q: You went to Germany in, what, the summer of 1960?

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: And you were in Hamburg from when to when?

SAMPAS: I was in Hamburg from June 1960, until late November 1962.

Q: What was your work?

SAMPAS: I was in visa work. Hamburg was a large visa issuing post at the time, and interesting because there were quite a lot of people from Eastern Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia, who made their way into Hamburg one way or another but thought of that as merely a way station. They really wanted to move on to the United States. And they had powerful stories to tell about what they had been through in the war, after the war, either at the mercy of the Germans or the Russians.

Q: Were they living in refugee camps mostly?

SAMPAS: Some of them certainly were, but not most of them. I think most of them had relatives one way or another that they had moved in with or had lived in a refugee camp for a period of time but then were able to use their skills to get out and have a small apartment someplace.

Q: Did you find that, particularly dealing with people who were refugees from Poland

and East Germany and all, was there a problem given our law, which was I guess the McCarran-Walter Act, which had a great many provisos that you couldn't give visas to people who were involved with communist affairs, and yet anybody who came out of one of these communist systems pretty well had to have had something.
SAMPAS: Yes, that was a frequent problem that we ran into. I remember the first time - I think it was the first time I had an immigrant applicant in front of me at all. We went over certain questions, and I was probably more repetitive than I needed to be, probably because I wanted to be certain that I understood it, and probably about the third question, the third time I came back to the question of "Are you now or were you ever a Communist?" she said, "Yes." And so then there was the question of trying to figure out whether she was an "involuntary member." And I really didn't think she was. I thought a lot of people had pressure to join the Communist Party, but not perhaps sufficient pressure to qualify under McCarran-Walter standards. But she eventually did get to the United States, and most of the others did, too.

Q: Well, would you say the attitude of the visa officers, yourself included, was one of sort of understanding where they were coming from and trying to be helpful, as opposed to being rather rigid about letting them get in?

SAMPAS: I think that's true. We certainly didn't see ourselves as first echelon of any police state that people confronted. I think we all felt that some of the questions that we had to ask were a little embarrassing and were as helpful as we could be.

Q: On prostitution, which is, of course, a very big factor... I was a consular officer in Frankfurt in '55 to '58, and many of the women, particularly we were dealing with wives of GIs, had started out... I mean, prostitution was - I won't say an "honored profession" - far from it - but it was in the postwar years, this was how you got along.

SAMPAS: It certainly was, and I frankly rather resented the military for putting all the burden of that on Foreign Service officers. If these women were considered good enough for our GIs and officers to marry - and these marriages had to be okayed by the military - then why was the burden on us when they wanted to go to the United States?

Q: It was a difficult law, I think particularly for those of us - we almost all came out of essentially the same rather liberal establishment and then all of a sudden to be put up against the nitty-gritty of people who had had to survive - particularly during the war years and the immediate postwar years - was really something that most Americans had no idea of.

SAMPAS: I think that's right, and clearly they had been through the most awful situations at the end of the war. We had bombed so much that there really weren't very many jobs left in certain areas. Hamburg had been quite a bit rebuilt by the time I got there in '60, but I had been in Berlin earlier - 1956 - and it was clearly just flattened.

Q: You mean in 1960.

SAMPAS: I was in Berlin in the mid-'50s.

Q: That's right, before - but when you came as a Foreign Service officer, you came in 1960, I think.

SAMPAS: Yes. I came to Germany as an FSO [Foreign Service officer] in 1960, but I had visited Berlin when I was a student in Paris. Two of my friends from Michigan and I had gone; one was a student at the Freie Universität in Berlin, the other visiting Europe prior to working in North Africa.

Q: Of course, Hamburg was the first city in Germany to have a thousand-plane raid, which was essentially firebombing.

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, and the bombs were apparently particularly awful because people had the choice between staying under water and drowning in one of their famous lakes in the middle of the city or coming out into the air and burning to death. The bombs - phosphorous, we were told - kept burning as long as there was air.

Q: Thermite, I think.

SAMPAS: - as long as there was air around them, and it was clearly a very painful memory for people.

Q: Oh, yes. How did you find the Germans? What was your impression at this particular time?

SAMPAS: Well, I think I was predisposed to like them. My mother's family hailed from Germany, and she had spoken German at home before she went to school in Minnesota. I found them a good deal more formal than I expected. I remember one little old lady who had come in, and she wanted to go to the United States, and in those days there wasn't a window, and you didn't have a five minute maximum to speak to people. You had an office and were there to help them. She wanted advice about how to come, how it would be most comfortable from her point of view to meet her relatives in the United States, and eventually we got through the visa questions as well, and then she said, "Well, now do I have to go and see the consul?" And I said, "Well, no, you've already seen the person you came to see, and everything is settled." And all of a sudden, it struck her that this young woman in front of her could be the official she came to see, and she was really quite embarrassed, and she said, "Oh, if I had known that, I would have said 'Good day' when I came in." That really was annoying to me because I'm enough of a small-D democrat that if she had been a polite person, I thought she would have said hello, good day, to anyone in any office she spoke to. But mostly they were nice people, pleasant people, middle-class people who, I think, probably shared many of the same values we did.

And sometimes it was a little hard. I know there was one German naval officer who had committed a war crime because when he had torpedoed ships he hadn't picked up everybody. And you know, none of our submarines picked up everybody either. It wasn't

possible to put them on a ship the size of a submarine in those days. That really rather hurts, as a person trying to carry American values of fairness oversees, that we couldn't live ourselves by the same standards we were insisting upon from others.

Q: Was it easy to get along? I mean, was there much social intermingling on your part with the Germans, or were you pretty much, you know, involved with the consulate general people?

SAMPAS: No, I think a number of us tried to seek out Germans for friendships, and if somebody came in or we met somebody at a party, we were perfectly happy to cultivate that friendship, have people over for dinner, go to their house for dinner, so that we could get a better sense of the country. It's not really much fun sticking entirely with other Foreign Service officers.

Q: Was there much feeling of tension these days with the Soviets, because this was the time when the Berlin Wall went up and Kennedy had come back from Vienna and Khrushchev had threatened him and we were calling up the reserves? I mean, it was not that peaceful a time in Europe.

SAMPAS: No, it wasn't. Interestingly, none of the political- (end of tape)

-that our government had at that time were really shoved in front of us, as you might think they would be for Foreign Service officers, and said, "Look, this is the problem. Things are getting tenser." But we could, of course, and did read the newspapers and figure things out for ourselves. We were always concerned about, I suppose you could call them, left-wing people who would try to get close to us as a group, but it was just interesting that the kind of questions that a professor would put before a class, calling for discussions and so forth, those were really not put on the table, and I think we were all somewhat sorry for that. I think we all - the young people who were there doing visa work, and there were five or six of us, including the consular side - I think we all expected that.

Q: To have more -

SAMPAS: More give and take.

Q: More give and take, yes.

SAMPAS: About the issues. More exposure, perhaps, to the cables that were coming in.

Q: Who was our consul general there when you were there?

SAMPAS: Well, I did like him very much. I must stop and say it was E. Tomlin Bailey, who had come there after being head of the Security Office in the Department of State, and he was certainly a very gentlemanly person, and I think, behaved as any typical senior officer might anywhere in the Service.

Q: Well, did he have, coming out of the security side, I was wondering whether that background would intrude on the visa officers and their interpretation of the law, or wasn't there much of a connect?

SAMPAS: No, I don't think there was much of a connect. We had one person who came in. He was from Poland, and introduced by some sort of a benevolent organization. He was a person that I thought would be good to have in the United States, but the question was had he been an unwilling member of the Communist Party, and I thought it was possible that he could qualify for that, but it was edgy. And I think we went in for an advisory opinion, and the Department turned him down. And then he did come back, again with the help of this benevolent organization, and at that time the consul general did the interview himself. I think he found the same thing: that the man was more eligible than ineligible, but I don't recall him getting involved in any other case.

Q: What was the social life like in those days?

SAMPAS: Well, the grand days of right after the war, when the Americans had the only food in town, had disappeared. Germans had become wealthy, and their inherent sophistication had come to the fore again. But still, they were happy, I think, to come to a house for a nice dinner, even if it was the house of a junior vice consul. And the consul general himself entertained quite a bit and tried to put a junior vice consul in here or there in the dinners so that they could meet people. One time I met a woman whose husband was a general involved in the German side of the Battle of the Bulge, and they invited me to dinner, and I certainly went. I was happy for the invitation. And he certainly said or did nothing that made me think that he was a secret Nazi hiding out in the new Bundesrepublik. The only time that I ran into - only twice did I run into - a feeling left over from the Nazis that made me shiver. One time was at the political officer's house for dinner. He had invited a German who was married to an Austrian woman. I was translating for the wife of the mayor and was distracted from some of the conversation - but I rather gather that this Austrian woman said something like, "The only problem with Hitler was that he didn't completely kill off all the Jews." And so there was a shocked silence, and I didn't quite hear what she had said, and I didn't want to guess and translate something that was wrong. I only realized later that the wife of the political officer happened herself to be Jewish, and was naturally terribly offended and hurt and angered. And the other time was a German who surprised me. Two American friends of mine who had served in Germany previously, and were both very interested in classical music, and that was something I related to quite a lot, introduced me to a German who also loved music. I was really quite shocked when this German started berating Jewish musicians. How can anyone like music and be anti-Semitic? And I said something on behalf of Mendelssohn, who was a young prodigy - he did his first symphony at the age of 12 - and really got quite lambasted from this German. I remain surprised that a person so cultivated in an area - music - where Jews have made such a tremendous contribution to civilization could maintain such a feeling.

Q: It takes training.

SAMPAS: Yes, I guess it does.

Q: Awful, awful.

SAMPAS: And I think we must not have had quite the public affairs programs in Austria that we did in Germany after the war.

Q: And also, well, I mean, the occupation was a somewhat different thing, and I think it was a secondary theater anyway. I mean, it wasn't strategic, and so-

SAMPAS: That's right. No one thought that Austria was going to attack the rest of Europe. So the USIA didn't have an equivalent amount of money for Austria as it had to democratize Germany after the war.

Q: Well, in 1962, by the time you were ready to leave, what did you think of the Foreign Service and all?

SAMPAS: Well, I thought it was really a wonderful profession, but that it could be much better if the people in the Foreign Service just put more thought to it, but that it was a grand profession and that I was happy to have been associated with it.
Q: Well, this is one of the things I think these oral histories, we hope, will over time permeate the system, so that people will think a little more about the history of our relations and all, make it fairly easy for them to maybe to think more about not just the next assignment or whether the maids are good in a place, but also to think what can be done to improve both the profession and how can the professional reading essay as the person gets ready for the next post.

SAMPAS: Yes, I think we should work on it more intellectually, and perhaps we already do. After all, in those first days when I went overseas, there wasn't an Overseas Briefing Center. There wasn't a course that you went to for a couple of weeks to delve into our foreign relations with the area you were going to. And those things may have already made a great difference.

Q: Well, there have been real efforts, and everything adds up.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Where did you go in 1962.

SAMPAS: I went to Canada after marrying my husband in December 1962 in Washington, DC. That's where my to-be husband was serving. He was a political officer in Ottawa. We were married here and then drove up to Ottawa.

Q: How did it work in those days? Did you have to resign?

SAMPAS: Yes. Well, I should take that back. There was no formal requirement in the regulations that you absolutely had to resign, but it's certainly true that they would never have sent you to the same country or the same post as your husband. In those days, men expected women to be homemakers after marriage. They were also concerned about favoritism that one might show another at the office. Even in the early 1970s, I don't know anyone other than a few spouses who really believed that it was going to work and should work to allow spouses to serve in the same post. And those who didn't believe it certainly had a majority prior to the early 1970s where they could see that the couple were assigned to the far side of the globe from each other.

Q: Yes, this, of course, was sort of the dilemma as it was seen in those days, and also an unwillingness to try to work the system out.

SAMPAS: Yes, there was that, and some of the spouses didn't make it easy for the people either. I think some of them did seek to benefit from the other spouse's relationship, and indeed, even, well, as late as when I was in China, '87 to '90, there were questions about who could be serving next to one another, writing efficiency reports and so forth, that were very difficult to work out. And some of the people involved who had benefited from this system didn't make any great effort to help work the problems out either.

Q: Well, how did you find being a wife in Canada was?

SAMPAS: Rather dull. I met people I thought were interesting and so forth, but I wasn't really ready to spend my life preparing to entertain. And all hail to those wives who do that and who have done that. They carried the foreign relations of our country on their backs for many decades. But I really wanted to finish my dissertation, and I soon became pregnant and was one of those who couldn't do very much during my pregnancy - not exercise or take long drives or anything. So I rather withdrew unto myself and tried to get writing done that had to be done and, fortunately, eventually did.

Q: When did you get your Ph.D.?

SAMPAS: 1970.

Q: 1970.

SAMPAS: So it took a long time.

Q: You were in Canada, and then where did you go?

SAMPAS: We went to Paris.

Q: Paris? Now that should have been handy for your dissertation.

SAMPAS: Yes, it was. I found a lovely small French library convenient Metro distance from where we lived that was specialized in international relations from the French

viewpoint, and that was very handy indeed.

Q: Did you find that by this time the French were uncomfortable about this period, because they certainly were about the time of the occupation? I mean, they still are today. But I was wondering whether that - I won't even say an attitude, just so many people were involved*, who really don't want too much to be displayed. Was that inhibiting what you were trying to do?*

SAMPAS: It wasn't really inhibiting, but it was certainly clear that it was a subject that it was difficult to bring up. And you could have people really clam up if you tried to raise it in a social setting. There were a lot of people involved in one way or another, as we've seen in the years since, as one Frenchman after another has been pulled before the courts. On the other hand, I guess I think it's also true that some of the French in 1940 got a bum rap for what they were doing as well. I think Pétain was, you know, in his dotage, and to blame him in World War II for some of the mistakes that he made I felt was rather sad.
Q: What was your husband doing at that time?

SAMPAS: Well, he was a political officer in Ottawa.

Q: But in Paris.

SAMPAS: In Paris he was at NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and worked NATO relations with the French.

Q: This would be '64 to when, you were in Paris?

SAMPAS: Let's see, it was '64 to '66.

Q: It's in that period. You were sort of going your own way, which in a way kept you, by doing your research and all - were you able to pick up the French view of how at least the people you were dealing with looked upon the United States at that time?

SAMPAS: Yes, I had a friend from my school days in Paris who was there at the time, and she was in the Foreign Ministry. And once in a while we were able to get together and talk about it, but I had sensed for quite some time that there was an echelon of French society people that really still looked upon Americans like backwoods people - and others who appreciated some of the developments that we had made, but still didn't think of us as a highly civilized people. But then, of course, came the moment when De Gaulle forced NATO out. I think it was hard for Americans really quite to believe that he was doing that. I guess we thought that the NATO establishments in France hired enough people and inserted enough cash into the French economy that we were worth something. Well, much to our surprise, NATO went, and the French, of course, got along very well without us. They hadn't needed our cash, they hadn't needed the bases, and Brussels, I think, was happy, by and large, to have these people. But the embassy in Brussels was certainly not prepared to take the enormous inundation of NATO people. They just weren't prepared for it.

Q: So you were in Brussels from when to when?

SAMPAS: '75 to '79.

Q: Wait a minute. You'd left Paris in '65, and then did you go -

SAMPAS: We went to Iceland.

Q: Oh, you went to Iceland.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: And you were in Iceland for how long?

SAMPAS: Three years, 1966-1969. Then back in Washington, DC from 1969-1975.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

SAMPAS: We had several different ambassadors. Our first ambassador, James K. Penfield, was an old-time Foreign Service officer and had been in Greenland during the war, so he knew the character of Icelanders really quite well.

Q: Penfield, yes.

SAMPAS: And his wife had been a USIA officer at one time. So he really knew the lay of the land quite well. But then he moved on, and we received ex-Governor Rolvaag, who had been governor in Minnesota and then fell afoul of the Democratic Party. He ran for office when they nominated somebody else. But he and his wife were really quite pleasant. They weren't very well and became ill shortly after their arrival. You may have read later on - it was in the newspapers later on - that he drank a great deal himself, and that was a little bit sad. But the Icelanders were friendly. They didn't all want the NATO base there. From time to time there were demonstrations against it, but for the most part, they were friendly.

Q: It was out at Keflavik, wasn't it?

SAMPAS: Yes, the base was out at Keflavik, quite far out from the main city of Reykjavik. And negotiations setting it up had arranged that, I believe, only five percent of the men could come off the base at any given moment, and the most generous amount of people could come off the base only on the day that Iceland was dry, so that they didn't get into too much trouble.

There was an argument from time to time about the runways out at the base, because where the base was at Keflavik was exactly where their international airport was as well, and a lot of talk about a crosswind runway and so forth. But it was pleasant, and our older

son went to nursery school there and became quite fluent in Icelandic. He could help us do our shopping, and that was quite useful. This friend of mine had helped me arrange to get our older boy in a nursery school quite near to our home, so I would take him and then go over and get him, and on the way home - I think the school was out at six, maybe it was two to six o'clock that he went - and we would often see the northern lights, usually a typical green streak fluttering down in the sky, and that was really quite special.

Q: Well, how did you find you and your husband's relations with Icelanders? I know they try to keep themselves apart to a certain extent, and how did that translate as far as you all were concerned?

SAMPAS: Well, we did have some friends there. That's one place where the fact that we had access to a military commissary made a difference. The roast beef and a variety of vegetables we were able to buy made a difference, because the Icelandic diet is so limited. It's, I would guess, fish every day and lamb on Sunday, so that there was something alluring for Icelanders about being able to go to a diplomatic home and get fresh vegetables and meats that you didn't ordinarily have access to. There were people who had been friends of the embassy for quite some time. There were some Brits who had lived there for many years who had a wide circle of friends and would from time to time include Americans, and that was very pleasant. So we probably did a little more entertaining there than we did most other places. We arranged for an *au pair* to come in from Scotland, and with that help it was a lot easier to entertain.

Q: You were there, what, from '66 until when, about?

SAMPAS: Until '69. We were there three years.

Q: With the Icelanders were there many discussions about the importance of it geographically, because this was a very important area as far as, you might say, containing the Soviets and particularly submarines and that, and the Iceland gap was an important one? Did that come up much, or was that just-

SAMPAS: I think it was something that on each side we understood. The Icelanders knew what our planes were going out searching for, seeing if they could find submarines that were coming down into the Atlantic. They knew, I think inherently, that it was for their protection as well that we were there. It wasn't just that we were some bully boy that said, We're coming in, and that's that. But they were quite independent members of NATO. They did have communist-leaning people in their own government, and you know that it was at the end of our time there that they got into the "cod war" with the Brits, and there was actually firing of guns, as to who would fish where.

We had an American vulcanologist who would come over from time to time, and I think they appreciated knowing that we were dealing with their geological phenomena on a scientific basis. We weren't trying to gather up all their fish and take them out. We were interested in Surtsey, the island that was formed from a new volcano, starting off shortly before we got there and still smoking at the time we left. They were concerned that they

would have volcanoes spouting off in the northeastern part of their country, and eventually they did - not while we were there, but later. And this vulcanologist, I think, was good for relations. He helped Iceland better understand some of their key issues - volcanoes and even fishing, which depends upon water temperatures.

Q: Was there much sort of cultural invasion by the United States - music, blue jeans, the whole thing, Coca-Cola and all that?

SAMPAS: Yes, more than I think we realize. I think that's true everywhere we go. We see the Marlboro man on a billboard, and it doesn't strike us - Oh, that's America's invasion - but yes, a number of American corporations, including cigarette companies, had relations with an Icelandic agent who got money every time that brand of cigarettes were sold in Iceland. I think our cultural influence struck me particularly with the youngsters. There was a television station at the base, and this is one thing that worried the Icelanders, because it showed cartoons, and the Icelandic children would listen on their day off from school and they would pick up Americanized English; they would pick up the story of these cartoons and so forth. There were Icelanders who were afraid that their own history, the history of the brave Vikings crossing the oceans, was going to be lost to them. One evening, I had a debate with a young man working in the U.S. embassy about the pros and cons of the TV station. It gave them a fluency in English from about nine or 10 and never belittled Iceland. It gave their teachers time to strengthen their history lessons and poetry. In the end, it could be a win-win situation. He just couldn't help but see it as an either/or question. It was rather sad to see how closed off they tended to be, even this one guy who had reached out and started working for Americans.

Q: Well, then, you left there in '69.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: It sounds like you're ready to go back to the Department of State. Did you?

SAMPAS: Yes, that's right. We came back, we bought a house here, and Jim went off to work - I think he was in Scandinavian affairs. In the early '70s, there was an article in the Department of State newsletter that I found intriguing. It said, more or less, "We're going to try to find couples, who were both Foreign Service, assignments together. We're not going to pressure anyone anymore to leave if they marry a colleague, *and* (This was the part that intrigued me most of all.) we'll even consider 'taking some of the old bags back,'" although they used more diplomatic words. And so I said to myself, They mean me! I just knew they meant me. And so in due course they set up an office of women's affairs, headed by Gladys Rogers. I didn't know Gladys Rogers directly, but I knew of her because a friend of mine, the very one who had introduced me to my husband, had argued a case before her, a case of a woman who was married and no longer in the Foreign Service, and Gladys Rogers had watched the whole development of that case, which could have become the Department's first class action case.

Q: What was her background? Do you know?

SAMPAS: She had been in the Agriculture Department for some time, but as a result of this case and the other things that she saw going on, eventually, I believe, went to law school. Anyway, some time passed, and I wrote Gladys Rogers, and asked, “Is there going to be any follow up to this? I hadn't seen any.” And she quickly asked Jim, because they were both in language class together, if we were related, and he said, “Yes,” and she said, "Well, have her come in and see me." So I went in and found, indeed, they were giving exams to some of the women who had left the Foreign Service, and I could arrange for an exam - so I did.

And it was an unusual sort of exam because they were all a little pussyfooting, being sure not to ask inappropriate questions, and I had passed beyond the point of thinking that these things were inappropriate, you know. I'd lived through it and that was that. But I remember one of them asked me how I would manage the family if we were overseas, and somebody else snapped, "You can't ask that! You can't ask that!" And I said, "I don't mind," that I'm not here to abandon my family, I can make arrangements now, and I'm quite sure that I can, and so I will when the time comes, if the time comes. But it was funny, and then they wondered what kind of track I would like to go on to. They did not have “tracks” when I left the Foreign Service. And, in all honesty, I thought I was better prepared in the political track than any other, but I had been told that they certainly wouldn't let me in, and they didn’t. It was “oversubscribed.” So thinking about it, I said, "Alright, I'll take the administrative track." And then that shocked them. They weren't sure I should be saying that or doing that. Apparently some people with advanced degrees had come in directly - men - into the administrative track, and had been eaten alive by some of the old administrative officers, who perhaps didn't have much education but had perhaps developed a rather bullying personality over the years.

Q: And know-how.

SAMPAS: Yes.
Q: They knew where the bodies were buried and how to get them from one place to another.

SAMPAS: That's right, that's right. So in any case, I said, well, you know, "I already know what administrative officers are like because I've had to work with some, and you're not telling me anything I don't know, but I suppose of all the areas in the Foreign Service that I think can be done better most easily, that's it, so I'd like to try." And eventually I did come into the administrative officers' track and was sent to the Foreign Service Institute for an administrative training class, I think a couple of months long.

Q: When was this?

SAMPAS: Well, I came back in '73. And they went through all of the angles of administration, and it was a good place to start because it was different from anything I had been exposed to previously. And indeed, even for those people who had been in administrative work for a long time, they had to bring them up to snuff so that they didn't

get sued, and that's what they tried to do. And then during that course, I had to take off a day or something, and when I got back the next day somebody said, "Well, [So-and-So] asked about you when he was here yesterday, and he's coming back." I was curious because this person didn't know me, and I didn't know him. He was a deputy assistant secretary. And so I was there the next day, and he came back and he said something - not isolating me from the others but just managing to say that I had a nice record and he'd like me to come over and talk to him. So I did, and that was John Thomas.

Q: Ah.

SAMPAS: Really quite a special administrator. And we talked about things, and I agreed certainly I'd like to work in part of his empire there, so I ended up in part of his empire. And I began to work a little bit with some computer people on developing a country data base. It was an idea of his that there were a lot of people dealing with a lot of countries that they didn't know much about and that somewhere we ought to have a computer on every desk that would quickly inform you of the highlights of that country. So I talked to some people who knew about computers - I didn't know much about computers then - and we tried to figure out how that could be done. The Department had developed some country information papers that they used for the people who went to the United Nations General Assembly each year, and that was all on paper, but it was stuff that could be converted to a computer file, so I tried to do that. And by the time I converted most of it to a computer file, people said, "That isn't what we needed to know then, and it isn't what we need to know now." So I think that the project was dropped. There was no thought at that time of putting a computer on everyone's desk anyway. It's a far cry from what we have in the Department now.

Q: And computers themselves had very little memory. I mean, it was at a very rudimentary stage at that point.

SAMPAS: That's right. They sent me off to a course in Bethesda someplace on a particular computer language that was designed to be very dense. It used, in other words, very little space on your computer, but you had to be a mathematician to know how to use it, and the idea that it was good for text was crazy. It just wasn't good for text at all. But anything that was good for text took a lot more space, but that was just one of the problems of the computer era that they were working in.

Q: Could you tell me a bit about John Thomas, about his background and how he's seen to operate within the Department of State, because he is one of these people whose name comes up quite often?

SAMPAS: I don't know that I could. I don't know that I know him well enough for that, but I would think he would be a wonderful person for you to interview. He doesn't have a great deal of academic background, but he is really quite brilliant, and here he came into the Department as an administrator, fighting his way through all the administrative potholes that we know about, and yet he saw the need for country data where our experts had never seen the need for that. Our experts, I guess, had thought that they had all so

much expertise they didn't bother. And he had developed a group of people around him, mostly bright young men, who I think were very devoted to him. He had that kind of military ability to inspire people, and he shared information. He told me, for instance, that he was going to put me into a part of the Department that was really for turkeys, but I would have kind of an independent role there and I could manage to achieve whatever I wanted. Whenever I got to a certain point that I was happy with, I could come and talk to him about it and show him what I'd done. And that's rather inspiring. You don't often get that much from senior Department people.

Q: No, certainly not.

SAMPAS: And so I think the people who worked for him were really rather devoted, and indeed, he knew how to operate. Most of our Foreign Service officers really don't, not in that kind of a setting.

Q: No. Prior to coming into the Foreign Service and even when you came in, did you get to use your Ph.D.?

SAMPAS: Not much. Not much, no. I suppose I thought of adding some things to the country data base that I thought would be useful from my own background, but except for John Thomas, there really wasn't anyone much interested in this project.

Q: Did William Macomber come across your orbit at all?

SAMPAS: Well, yes, but not in that way. Bill Macomber and my father rode horseback together. They were both members of a sort of do-it-yourself hunt club not too far from Laurel.

Q: Laurel, Maryland.

SAMPAS: Yes, and I think they liked one another very much indeed, and I think he knew that I had rejoined the Foreign Service at some time or other, but he and I met only once - at a colleague's dinner table. I met his wife, Phyllis, on a couple of occasions, and she, of course, was very charming.

Q: She had been John Foster Dulles's secretary-

SAMPAS: That's exactly right.

Q: -and a renowned secretary.

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, and a great protector. When Dulles died there were a number of people who wrote in to get autographed pictures, and indeed, the Department had a stack of machine-autographed pictures and machine-autographed cards in our possession, but she made quite a point of saying that those weren't going to be sent out to anybody after his death.

Q: Well, now, when you got into this computer thing, how did you find, sort of, on the administrative side, the Department's attitude toward computers, because this is really during the birth pangs of computers, not just in the Department but elsewhere?

SAMPAS: Yes, the Department, I think, had no idea at that time that they could be useful except in administrative minutiae.
They knew you could add up inventory and so forth, but they didn't have any vision of how it could be useful substantively. Some of the economists in the Department had a glimmer of vision. They knew that there were reports from the World Bank and so forth that they might be able to use, but no one had really suggested to them that they could bring these things into the Department. And the economic officers were not a lobby, that they were going to go out and say, "This is what we want, and we want it *now*." There were very few universities that had made a big deal of computers at this time. Ohio State University, I think, had. And they from time to time sent somebody into the Department because they were quite interested in this idea of a country database. But no matter where you had received your degree, even recently, you would not really in those days have been exposed to much analytical work with computers, so it was, I suppose, the blind leading the blind. I think Wally Francis, the head of the Computer Section, had an idea of what could be done, and he advised John Thomas and was quite close. And he was training a number of people in his section who then eventually went out into the budget and fiscal section and so forth and became important people elsewhere in the Department. But still, there was just a great gap. How on earth are we supposed to use these things? What are we supposed to do with them. And while John Thomas had foreseen the need for country information, he hadn't been able to sell the idea to the political and economic officers, who had never been part of the development of the idea. If universities are using them much more analytically now, I'm unaware of it.

Q: When one considers what had happened before and where we are today, I mean, the change is astounding; but at the time, it took quite a while for it to dawn. I was involved - I was in Korea in '76-77 about, when we were just trying, as an experiment, to use computers for consular work, visas - but this is being done sort of outside the working... We were working with the central computer people, and the consular people did not subscribe, and they were starting their own thing separately. It shows you about the "dukedoms."

SAMPAS: Yes, I'm aware of that, and that's certainly one of the problems, as you say, that our bureaus are really separate countries, for all practical purposes.

Q: Did you find yourself becoming a computer person? Was this more or less what they were doing with you, or how did this work out?

SAMPAS: I think they had hopes, but that just isn't where my mind goes. I have been impressed with some of the studies that I've heard about indirectly that the Agency has done-

Q: You're talking about the Central Intelligence Agency.

SAMPAS: Yes - using them analytically. In fact, I tried to get one of their studies. It had been mentioned in one of the news magazines - I forget whether it was *Newsweek* or *Time* or *U.S. News* - that they had done a study that showed that certain countries in Africa had become so unstable, while pushing for democracy, that it was really not what we should be using full force on, to try to convert them to democracies - because they would just fall apart. And I thought that that must be a quite interesting study. I tried to get my hands on it as ambassador - never could, never could. They had come up with a relationship, as I recall it, related to the standard of living of a country, the lack of democracy but the push toward it, and put it all together analytically so that they could project which countries might be the next to fall apart. Well, that would be very useful to have.

Q: Yes.

SAMPAS: But it took an enormous amount of database and people working at it all the time, and we've never had that.

Q: And, of course, nobody's going to share that with you. Well, did you find yourself... In the first place, how long were you and your husband in Washington? You got there in '69.

SAMPAS: '69.

Q: And you came back into the Foreign Service in '73, so what happened? How did this work out?

SAMPAS: While I was working in Washington, my career activities were completely separate from those of my husband. I was in one bureau; he in another. The only time we needed to coordinate was early in 1975 when we needed to bid on overseas jobs. Jobs in Brussels worked out well for both of us - he at NATO, I at the embassy.

Q: In Brussels, are you talking about '74-75, something like that? I don't have to be right on the button. I just want to sort of in general get an idea. But in the mid-'70s you went off to Brussels?

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, 1975.

Q: And then what happened? By that time were they able to accommodate you all?

SAMPAS: Yes, we were both well accommodated. I went to work in the Joint Administrative Section, which was most closely affiliated with the embassy, the bilateral embassy. Up the street a couple of blocks was USEC, our mission to the European Community, and then there was NATO. My husband was out working at NATO. So we were both busy in the same city, but our professional paths didn't really ever cross. So there was no thought of favoritism on either side. Somebody had asked for me - the head

of the administrative section, Bob Gershenson, another one of our genius administrators.
Q: Oh, yes.

SAMPAS: And he asked for me, and I was happy to go work for him. So I did. I went into housing, became the housing officer for the three missions in Brussels. They were still suffering from the influx of NATO years before.

Q: It's a small country, and a hell of a lot of people arrived, but relatively affluent.

SAMPAS: Yes, Belgium is relatively affluent. A number of people have made their living renting out houses or space, and they have some of the strictest rules in the world as to the control of that space, quite apart from what you can get away with in the United States when you rent space. Before a tenant moves in, an expert will measure every scratch on the wall, every spill on the rug, everything that is the slightest damage. When the tenant moves out, the differences (i.e., additional stains and scratches) are measured, and the tenant pays for all those. There is virtually no concept of "wear and tear." A coat of paint is supposed to last for nine years; a rug for 20. And, of course, Americans are by no means accustomed to that. We repaint on a moment's notice. But anyway, a number of Americans were getting hurt in the housing market, and we tried to apprize them of the dangers of renting so that they'd be aware before they moved into a place of what they'd be held accountable for.

Q: Were you, what, under the - although it was joint - you were part of the bilateral embassy - I mean, is that where your line of control went?

SAMPAS: Yes. It was joint in that we had responsibility for all three missions, but upwards, our responsibility was to the bilateral ambassador.

Q: What was your impression - because sometimes dealing in the housing area you catch an awful lot of the strife that goes on in this - how did these three missions - one to the European Community, one to Belgium, and one to NATO - how did they get along?

SAMPAS: Well, there was always a good deal of jealousy between them, and the people out at NATO were the furthest away, and they felt that they were the most neglected. Actually, which mission you came from didn't make the slightest difference in housing. You got the same treatment. You looked at the apartments that were of the right size for your family. You looked at all of those immediately available; you chose one; you were assigned to that one; end of report. But just the distance added to the psychology of neglect that the NATO felt. And I suppose that another part of the problem was that NATO was in a newer area, and they did not have all of the apartments for rent right close by that you had in the older parts of the city. So people never got quite as close.

Q: You were there, what, until towards the end of the '70s or so?

SAMPAS: Yes, that's right, 1975-1979. We left in '79.

Q: And then where did you go?

SAMPAS: We came back to Washington.

Q: Where did they put you, back into administrative, or you became part of a bureau, did you? I know at some point you were with NEA, weren't you?

SAMPAS: No.

Q: Maybe not. African Bureau?

SAMPAS: Well, eventually they assigned me to the African Bureau, but that was much later. I was assigned to the Office of Position and Pay Management in the Bureau of Personnel.

Q: Well, we can pick this up. Were you able to sort of brush up on your professional credentials as either... Obviously, with a Ph.D. in political science and, you know, where your interests lay and all that, were you able to sort of bring that up with you as you moved into the administrative field?

SAMPAS: You know, honestly, there really isn't a great opportunity for higher analytic work on a day-by-day basis in the administrative field. There are things that one can do, and I think if one had really glorious computer skills one could have helped the Department enormously. Setting up, for instance, something that would have routinized some of the administrative decisions that were being made with difficulty and often erroneously overseas. I think when they started to put inventory, for instance, on a worldwide computer database with the barcode labels, I think that was a tremendous step forward. And I say that even thought they often didn't get the barcode labels exactly there where they should have, and, you know, it was on the front of your chair instead of on the back of the chair, and I'm sure it looked funny to everybody who came to dinner. But still, there were things that they could do, and did do. They could have decided - you remember at one time the Department did a study of how bad upkeep was on government properties, whether in the United States or overseas - well, that could have been routinized as well. When was the last time this place got a paint job? Well, it will be painted at such and such a time. And it will be studied for plumbing leaks or whatever on a schedule. The furnace will be checked out and so forth. These things could be very much routinized, but they just never got to that point. And I think when I came back, that's when I went into position and pay management, which I had heard was a can of worms, and I kind of liked that description because it's the kind of thing that at least you can put some sort of intellect on - what made it a can of worms, and what would you do about it? Obviously, everyone in the Department wants jobs in *their* bureau to be graded higher than anyone else.

Q: Well, of course.

SAMPAS: That's right. So that they can then pull people from the rest of the Department.

And obviously, that 's not what a central organization wants. The whole idea of classification is that people should get paid roughly equal amounts of money for equal responsibilities; that's the law for the Civil Service. In State, you had people classified according to the strangest - *strangest* - sets of position descriptions you ever saw. And there were people in the Department who were known for being able to write position descriptions that were so grand and glorious they would get a higher grade.

Well, I was there. They had already come up with the idea that they would try to have standard position descriptions for Foreign Service positions overseas, and the Department was trying to finish that project. And as it happens, the gentleman who ran the office of Position and Pay Management had come in from private industry and, I think, really never quite understood the Department. I think he must have felt that he was in the middle of some strange country in Africa or someplace exotic because, although he had done similar work in private industry, it's done so much more efficiently in private industry. You have about three sentences that explain what a person does. That's that. And don't fight it because that's the way it is. If you don't like your pay, you leave the company. And he expected the Department to be that way, too. And of course, he was eaten alive, and that was rather unfortunate. But then, in due course, I left that office and went to the Human Resources Division in the Office of Management, also in the Bureau of Personnel. This was a rather interesting division, trying to plan ahead for the number of people that you needed to bring in to the Foreign Service, their advancement through the ranks of the Foreign Service to the point that you would need them at certain levels. So you took the end product that Position and Pay Management had come up with - in other words, what are all the Foreign Service jobs? What is their rank? What is their cone? How fast do people move up to those cones? How many people do you need to bring in at the bottom to assure yourself that in five years or 10 years you'll have enough to fill those jobs. And the Human Resources Division in the Office of Management, Bureau of Personnel does the promotion numbers each year, too. In all honesty, we had one computer whiz kid who worked those numbers out. He was a Civil Service employee, and I think he did his difficult task quite honestly and fairly. But it was difficult for managers to figure out exactly what was being done and why. And this gentleman had to separately brief the Foreign Service on what was happening and the managers in the Personnel Office and the undersecretary for management and so forth. So periodically, when the time came, we would all gather up our papers and go up and talk to people. But Bill Macomber had already left as undersecretary when I got to the point when I was in those briefings. We had Mr. Kennedy.

Q: Richard Kennedy. I've interviewed him. Well, were the times changing?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes. Yes, they were. The Department is not what it was. In some ways it's better, and in some ways, quite frankly, it's worse. I think there's less outright prejudice against certain kinds of people - at least people don't talk about it the way they used to - less games that people play to make certain that *X* and *Y* and *Z* will never work together or that they will work together. But I think there's a lot more concentration on "How much money am I getting," "What are my chances for promotion in this particular spot," "Did the last person get promoted," "What is my likelihood here?" And that puts

everything on an almost commercial platform that we didn't use to have, and I think that's harmed the whole service. And it's not only the young officers. You'll have people... Remember the time when more senior officers could choose whether they would get the pay of their position or the pay of their rank? There's sometimes a slight bit of difference between them. Well, people would call and try to get that figured out to say that they'd get $5.50 a week more, or whatever it was. Now that's shameful, absolutely shameful.
Q: Yes. When did you - I'm not sure of the time between when you were working on this pay and promotion and positions and moved to get involved before you went to become ambassador - where did you go?

SAMPAS: Oh, well, let's see. I was in the Human Resources Division, and then the head of the office, the Office of Management, was assigned away, so they asked me to take that job, and I did. And I was in that job when they asked me if I would go to the National War College [NWC], so I did. And I went to NWC in '86-87, just before I went to China.

Q: How did you like the War College?

SAMPAS: Oh, I thought it was really quite a fascinating place. I wish that I had had more direct experience on the way that the Foreign Service Institute was functioning in the years since I'd been there, because I thought the War College did quite a good job of training. They tried to make certain that, while they obviously must have had some sort of a quota of officers to take, that they got people to lecture who really knew their subjects, and I think they by and large did that. And they tried to put it on an academic footing. It's much more so now than when I was there. The Naval War College apparently started a program entering all its students in a master's degree program, and everyone had to be graded as you would in a university setting. So it upped the requirements, the factor of worry, I guess, and then the other war colleges didn't want to be left behind. So I think little by little their inspectors said, "Hey, don't you think you ought to do that?" But I think they did try pretty hard to give you an academic background in the subject that they were going to teach.

Q: Did you find yourself at all a fish out of water in a military environment, or had you picked up enough in your Foreign Service career so that you knew the jargon?

SAMPAS: Well, I picked up a good deal more while I was there. The military had enough of a majority that they didn't make fun of those who didn't understand their subject, and the professors were enough aware of those who didn't have the background that they tried to work them in. So that was very pleasant. They were clearly all trying to get, I think, what Eisenhower had wanted with NWC - a group of people who could work together. Sometimes, such as when we were discussing Congress, it was the military who had to be brought up to speed with the others.

Q: Yes.

SAMPAS: And I think we by and large did that. You know, in nearly every case, in

nearly every course, there would be something military that would come up that had to be clarified, I think. For instance, how strong can Japan be as a military power if it has no oil and no fleet that's run by atomic power? What can you do with that? And they would take time out and explain a little bit, maybe not always as well as you'd like them to, but still, it was enough that it gave everyone something to think about. And when they went into the Civil War things, the military were as much out of water as any of the civilians, and everyone had to learn together about factors that can help produce victory: industry, population, etc.

Q: From the War College you said you went to China.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Was this as an assignment, with your husband?

SAMPAS: Well, yes. My husband didn't have an assignment there. He had retired in 1980.

Q: Ah, well that made it comparatively easy for you to follow on.

SAMPAS: Yes, absolutely. He was going to be a non-working spouse. He decided he would come along and went to look for job opportunities. When he got there, he started working for USIS in their library and putting some speakers out for the Chinese audience. So I think he got some intellectual merit out of it.

Q: What were you doing, and you were in China - Beijing?

SAMPAS: Yes, I was in Beijing, and I was the administrative minister-counselor, so we had responsibility for communications, the GSO, the budget and fiscal personnel, and the information management section. So we had a lot of staff.

Q: I was going to say, this is quite an operation.

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, I think over 200 Chinese worked in administration, and they were not the elite of the embassy. The elite of the embassy would be your interpreter for this or that section, somebody who would introduce people to higher level people. Those in administration might be people who came right off the farm in China, if you will, and learned to drive - seldom spoke English, but we ran English language courses for them so that they could learn a little bit. And some were pretty good.

Q: You were there from, what, 1980 to - ?

SAMPAS: '87 to '90.

Q: '87 to '90. You were there for Tiananmen Square, too.

SAMPAS: Yes.
Q: How did that hit the embassy?

SAMPAS: Well, in a very interesting way. I'm going to sound as if I'm biased now, and you can say that I am - it's alright with me - but what surprised me about the lead-up to Tiananmen and Tiananmen itself was the difference between how, let's say, our U.S. administrative personnel handled it and the officers in the so-called substantive fields. Now, the political and economic officers had had two years of Chinese language training - two years - so presumably they could read the Chinese language newspapers every day, talk with people on the streets every day; but they were the ones, it seemed to me, who totally lost their cool about what was happening. Now, I didn't have years of Chinese language training, and I didn't speak Chinese, but I didn't have to have that kind of training to know that Chinese had a terrible government, that they weren't sensitive to human rights, that they exploited people maximally whenever they could, however it suited them, and that they got away with a lot. Yet it was our substantive officers who seemed to go haywire, if you can forgive the phrase, first. We had, for instance, one maid to one of our Chinese-speaking substantive officers. If I recall correctly, she was outside one day perhaps when she really shouldn't have been and fell back downwards on a stairway and hurt herself and had to go to a hospital. So off she goes to a hospital and in due course the Chinese presented her American employer with the bill for that hospitalization. Now, that isn't so very different from other countries. In Belgium, you were responsible for any injury of a maid or anyone else who works for you from the time they shut their front door to go to your housing unit to the time they're back inside their own front door again. And we all had to take out insurance. It was natural that we do it, and so when the Chinese came along and said, "Here's an insurance policy; buy it," I didn't look a second time at it - it was something you did. But not some of our elite staff. They didn't think that that should apply to them because they were diplomats and didn't trust the Chinese to pay anyway. So they had no outside funds to draw on for an injury when it happened, and they certainly didn't want to draw out of their pockets. Well, I'm afraid I deep down didn't have much patience with that kind of thinking. Yes, the Chinese exploited their people, and yes, I'm sure they charged foreigners more for the insurance than they ever thought of paying for the injuries that were turned in, but that really isn't the point. The point is that if you hire someone, you have a responsibility, just as we have in the U.S. for Social Security and Medicare and whatever. The attitude of some of our U.S. officers did surprise me. I can appreciate that they got much more excited about Tiananmen because they were the ones that went down to Tiananmen daily and reported on what was happening, or looked down from the window in the hotel room the embassy rented near Tiananmen onto the square and saw what was happening, so their hearts and souls were more united with these young Chinese, but who could ever go to China or read Chinese history and not realize what kind of a lousy, exploitative, cruel government it is? Now maybe we in administration negotiated more than the others - I think I personally spent more hours in negotiating with the Chinese officials for workers and conditions of employment and so forth than anyone else in the embassy - but even if I hadn't had that experience, my goodness, it only takes a glance in the newspapers on history books to know that the Chinese government is pretty darn evil.

Q: Yes. Well, who was ambassador when you were there, or ambassadors?

SAMPAS: The first one was Winston Lord, and I thought he was a very fine ambassador, and his wife-

Q: Betty Bao.

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: I'm interviewing him now, over a period of time.

SAMPAS: Oh, good. Well, I think he is super. I think he's a man of great integrity. I think his wife was very helpful to us all. She not only spoke the language perfectly but she knew the customs. If she held a spring festival party, she would do it the way the parents of the current Chinese leaders would have done it, and they would see that, and they would say to themselves, "Oh, I haven't seen that in a long time." But do you know that there were some people in the embassy who resented her having Chinese friends.

Q: Oh, yes, I'm sure. This happens.

SAMPAS: Yes, I know, but how stupid can it be? How utterly stupid can it be? And how powerless an ambassador is to respond to something that they're accusing his wife of that he knows perfectly well that he and the embassy benefit from.

Q: You always have these small-minded people.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: I mean, the books and plays and movies about the British in India during the time of the Raj - if you didn't have that attitude, it would have wiped out a whole set of themes for books and movies and plays.

SAMPAS: Yes, that's true, that's true. I shouldn't be surprised, but there were times when I really thought of putting up... You know how they have these big signs in Chinese factories, like: WORK HARD, and so forth, GO TO HEAVEN, or whatever it says. Well, I was tempted to put one up in the administration building saying THIS ISN'T KANSAS ANY MORE.

Q: Well, how did you find dealing with the Chinese? I'm told just communist, non-communist - they're very, very difficult negotiators and difficult to deal with.

SAMPAS: Yes, they are extremely difficult. They don't feel that they have to give an inch, and we don't have anything to offer them to persuade them to give an inch either, so you know, I think when you know that you're part of 1.2 billion people and you have this little group of foreign embassy people in your midst, and you've always been able to exploit them, you just go on doing it, and they really don't think anything of it. And

they'll stop and tell you, No, your people will have to do *X*, *Y*, or *Z*. It doesn't matter that that's unusual or that it seems unfair. The only time I think diplomats got angry enough to make the Chinese government back off of something was when the Chinese broached the idea that they wouldn't issue drivers licenses in China to go to anyone over 55 years old. Well, since many of the embassy people of all the embassies were 55 or older, there was really quite a to-do about that, and it never came to pass, at least not while I was there, and I don't think it has since.

But that was the kind of crazy notion that they would come up with. Sometimes you could reach out a little bit and find the person behind the mask, but that didn't mean that they changed their position. There was one, the head of the Chinese government's diplomatic housing unit, who had been with the Chinese Eighth Army marching into Beijing.

Q: Eighth Round Army, yes.

SAMPAS: And then later he and his wife were sent to grow cabbage in the south someplace. And I felt comfortable talking with him, knowing what his background had been. I felt happy for him that he and his wife managed to get out of the cabbage-growing incident - if you will. There was another man who dealt with Chinese staff questions, and he was equally firm. Just because you got behind this mask a little bit didn't mean at all that they weren't just as firm; but still, I found out that he had translated into Chinese some American film books. That was one of the things he liked to do. So one time I gave him a book. I guess it was the one about Katherine Hepburn making the film, *African Queen.*

Q: Yes, *The African Queen*, with Humphrey Bogart.

SAMPAS: And I thought he might enjoy that. Whether he translated it or not would be another thing.

Q: Oh, yes.

SAMPAS: But he was clearly a very intelligent man. And then one man who was their equivalent of under secretary for Management came to the United States for negotiations with Ambassador Salgo. This man seemed as if he really came right out of the cabbage patch himself. I'm sorry, but he did seem that way. And we were talking in Washington during property negotiations led by Ambassador Salgo when Beijing adopted martial law (during the Tiananmen incident), so we had a little bit of an interesting conversation, "What does martial law mean in a country that has never been a democracy anyway?" But in any case, one time this official started doing calligraphy on a piece of paper. It was when we were having dinner at the embassy. And he brought this paper out and started, you know, doodling all over it. And then somebody said that he was one of the foremost calligraphers of China. And that was just it. Oh? And so I picked up this scrap that he had doodled *Sampas* on and took it home. It's very nice, but I was really quite surprised. He was also apparently quite skilled in the tea-pouring art. Well, a person could be very

skilled in that art and not strike me as skilled generally. Just one of those things. Sometimes you find people with a lot more cultivation to them than you might at first imagine.

Q: Well, was there, after Tiananmen Square - I mean, we obviously were closing off all sorts of avenues to display our displeasure to the Chinese authorities. I was wondering whether you on the administrative side were getting some of this thrown back in your face?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, we were. As I sometimes explained my three years in China, it was two years with the opening outward, reaching more people, and one year in the deep-freeze, because they didn't even accept one of our ambassador's invitations after Tiananmen. And I was annoyed. The Lords had left before Tiananmen, and then James Lilley came over. He had risen up in the Agency-

Q: Yes.

SAMPAS: - and had been ambassador to Korea, and then he came into China. He had grown up partially in China. His father had been a businessman there. And so, in any case, he was ready to apply some pressure, no question about it. And at one time after Tiananmen, everyone got together for a Halloween party at the embassy, and of course there were people dressed as the Statue of Liberty and people dressed in all sorts of things. The Marines came with what looked like a coffin. And you have to understand, we had a prominent Chinese scientist hiding out in the embassy at this time. So across from the embassy the Chinese had massive klieg lights and more military circled round about the embassy. And I guess the Chinese though that this coffin contained the scientist, alive and well. And oh, my, the Chinese were all scared about his getting away.

Q: You were saying you thought they probably had-

SAMPAS: - Lucy in it. I don't know if you've ever done CPR training-

Q: No.

SAMPAS: -where you have a big doll that you can breathe into the mouth and push the chest and so forth. We called it "Lucy" during our CPR training.

Q: Oh, I see, it's a medical dummy.

SAMPAS: Yes, that's right. I think Lucy the doll was in the coffin. But in any case, we all survived, and at some point, just before the Halloween party, the Foreign Office had called in Ambassador Lilley and said they didn't want us to have this party, and he said something like - I don't know the precise words, obviously, but he said something like - "Of all the crazy ideas I've every heard, that takes the cake. Of course, I'm not going to call this off. You do what you have to do, and I'm going to do what I have to do." But in any case, he wasn't going to let them push him around.

Q: Did they give you problems on housing or anything else at that time, I mean during this time? Did life go on more or less on sort of the administrative side - you know, just the amenities of toilets working and things like that?

SAMPAS: We pretty much had our own staff to take care of things, but they didn't try to take apartments away from us. Little by little, we acquired all the apartments we needed. When I arrived in Beijing, we still had around 30 families living in hotels for months before they were able to be accommodated in an embassy-leased apartment unit. By the springtime before we departed, we were able to accommodate every employee in an embassy-leased unit immediately upon their arrival in Beijing. There was one driver who took an embassy car on his own, apparently to go to a family wedding, and for some reason - this happened after I left - he apparently didn't stop when he was asked to stop, and they shot him to death. Now whether they would have done that before Tiananmen, I don't know. I trust not, but... They showed certainly what kind of a nasty side they had.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that you were inundated by spies and that sort of thing?
SAMPAS: Oh, yes. No Chinese person could come to work for any embassy that had not been put through a spy course by the Chinese government and, of course, be a member of their Communist Party. We just took that for granted. That's why we had to watch things, take the ribbon out of the typewriter at night and so forth, lock everything up. And I think in the offices, we were pretty careful. The Marines checked nightly. In our homes, probably, we were less careful. There were probably items concerning our own background that they got, perhaps out of letters or financial statements or something that they really shouldn't have. But I didn't really see that side of it. And after the Tiananmen massacre, we let a number of U.S. embassy personnel leave the post early. We used the ambassador's authority to say it was time for So-and-So to leave; there was nothing much that some of our staff could do for the next umpteen weeks anyway while the Chinese were “deep-freezing” us. And so when people were particularly stressed out, they got to go back to the U.S. early.

Q: What about back to your own field of computers? Had the computer pretty well come of age by the time you were in China, as far as use and all?

SAMPAS: It was used heavily for word processing, and that's what I think it's still used primarily for. The requirements that the Department put on the use of computers were so rigid that it made it very difficult to use them effectively.

Q: These are security requirements.

SAMPAS: That's right. We got, after much, much fussing and fighting and fuming over it, we got the Department to finish one of these special rooms that is fixed so that the emanations from inside the room can't get out. But even then, everyone was supposed to turn their computers all the way off - sign off - every time someone opened the door to go in or out. Well, you know, that's... Can you imagine anyone being willing to do that? So it was difficult to do that, and it's hard to persuade people who don't know anything about

them that, you know, that 15 seconds or 30 seconds of exposure to emanations might give away all your secrets. I don't know myself if it's really as dangerous as the security staff said. After all, we only brought computers with low emanations.

Q: I'm dubious, but...

SAMPAS: Yes, I am, too, especially once they've bought the kind of machines that aren't supposed to have very many emanations. If they could actually show you what you could read off of these, I might be more persuaded, and others as well, but I'm not.

Q: Well, I take it in a way it was a difficult three years, wasn't it?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, oh, yes, definitely difficult - and a lot of pressure, I think, on people. You know, even when the Marines went for a run, they would be worried that they'd be followed by goons, and some of the American officer inside the embassy would be making jokes about them going for a run at lunch. Well, you know, it's hard to take such criticism, if you will, or treatment from both sides that way, day after day.

Q: Well, I would assume that - I mean, personnel came under your responsibility.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: You must have been doing quite a bit of almost monitoring people to say, you know, to be concerned that maybe this person or that person should be leaving soon because of the pressure.

SAMPAS: We didn't do as much probably as we should have, in all honesty. There's a certain American ideal that someone has to have some privacy, and frankly, at least on one occasion, we should have been doing much more. We found out about something that was going on too late.

Q: I've talked to people who've been involved in the Soviet Union, and there there were all sorts of provocations - knock-out drugs, using sex as an entrapment tool and all - were they playing these games, or was it just a different type of...?

SAMPAS: Well, at least with one they were using sex as a come-on. I am not sure myself that the Chinese do as much of this as the Russians were doing. In fact, we had some people who had been in Russia and then came to China, and they said they would never go back to Russia again to serve - they simply wouldn't do it - whereas these same people liked to serve in China, even with the pressures that they were subjected to.

You know, I think the American military do a better job of keeping up with their men, if you will, than we do.

Q: Yes, that's their resource, and I think they're trained to do that.

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: And we sort of assume everybody will get along.

SAMPAS: That's right, and I think we should train more to that as well - how do the military do it? - without, you know, causing the people to go haywire from having yet more of their privacy lost. Certainly, throughout eastern Europe we know we've had trouble and now certainly in China as well. Now that we've opened up in Mongolia we can expect it there.

Q: Oh, yes, that's difficult. Well, just to put at the end here, you left China when?
SAMPAS: '90, sometime in 1990.

Q: Yes, it would be after Tiananmen Square. And just so I can put it, where did you go? Did you come back to Washington?

SAMPAS: Yes, I did. I had already been indirectly in touch with USUN about a job there, and as it turns out, when I came back, before I even left China, I found that they were seriously interested in me, and so when I got back to Washington I was in a sort of waiting period until they could manage to get me into the administrative officer slot there.

Q: So we'll pick it up in 1990 when you go to be an administrative officer to our mission to the United Nations.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Great.

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In the first place, you were in the United Nations 1990 to when?

SAMPAS: 1991-1994.

Q: '94. You straddled administrations then, didn't you?

SAMPAS: That's right, that's right.

Q: Who was our ambassador to the United Nations, the major ambassador? You had, what, five ambassadors?
SAMPAS: Oh, there are five, yes, but three principal ones - chiefs of mission - when I was there. When I first arrived, the chief of mission was Ambassador Pickering, and of course he was a splendid person to work for, a prince of a person. Then the former director general, Ed Perkins, came in. He had a relatively brief period because it was clear when the new administration came in that they wanted their own person, so in due

course we got word that their person would be coming and that it would be Madeleine Albright. I met with her in Washington to see if I could assist in the exchange, you know, the finishing out of one person and starting of another, and she came in, I think, about the 1st of February, 1994.

Q: What are the responsibilities of the administrative officer at the UN?

SAMPAS: Well, it depends a good deal on who's in the top seat. When I first got there it was clear - and I don't mean to sound boastful or particularly condemnatory - that they had had a very weak administration. The person who had been there moved to another job of equal level, but the entire office had been in revolution against her, and at one time, I gather that the senior counselors had met with Ambassador Pickering and said, "It's going to be that person or it's going to be us. We can't manage with this." Slots were going vacant. The typical little administrative things that are done weren't getting done properly.

Q: So it wasn't personality, or was personality a problem, too?

SAMPAS: Yes, very much so.

Q: And not getting the job done.

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: Had you been warned about this?

SAMPAS: Yes, I was, but not in great detail. It was only when I got there that I realized the great depth of the discontent and the fears on the part of many people who had been in the office for some time that the person who had been there had placed moles to destroy any successor.

Q: Was that paranoia, or was there a real problem?

SAMPAS: Well, there was a real problem. Some of the people had been put in jobs for which they didn't have training - I mean really couldn't do the jobs - and yet these people, I think, were quite fearful that if somebody looked at what they were doing they would determine the incapacity and lower them in rank or get rid of them. So in due course I think we ironed a good deal of that out, but at one time the person used an action even against Ambassador Pickering which had no foundation at all. I was unacquainted with anything other than the general principles of the whistle-blower act, so I learned to my surprise and dismay that if you say you suspect somebody of misdeeds, even if that person is totally cleared by a really stiff inspection of having done any misdeeds, the whistle-blower condition still stays in effect, and the "blower" is moved or in any way disciplined, that whistle blower status still exists against the previously alleged perpetrator. So it was interesting, and I found out, I guess, how much the United States had, in some ways, changed from the country I had known beforehand.

Q: Well, how does one deal with this, because it would strike me that under this an incompetent would almost automatically launch a suit just in order to stay in the job?

SAMPAS: Oh, I think that's quite right, and I think that has happened in different places - perhaps not so much in the State Department as in other departments, but I think it is used by the incompetent and the vicious, for one reason or another.
Q: Is there a countersuit that can be made?

SAMPAS: Not really, no, because any action that anyone takes in response looks like confirmation of the whistle blowing - i.e., retaliation against the whistle-blower.

The USUN had been - "awarded" I think is the right word - a special housing program, for one thing, over the years. It was hard at one point to get Foreign Service officers to go to New York. The housing was extraordinarily expensive, and there was no help of any kind for people who had a hard time paying the rent. So it was hard to fill the positions there. But at one point the Congress had come in and said, yes, we'll give a benefit in housing and we'll make it available just to Foreign Service or temporary appointees. So the first thing that had to be done was to straighten out the housing program and make it conform as much as possible to the housing program that Foreign Service officers have overseas, where somebody looks at your housing and decides whether it's too much or too little in terms of square feet, whether the government is paying for a superb view or whether it's just something that an ordinary person in that income bracket might rent. And we did that. The inspectors agreed on the new regulations that we had suggested, and they were soon incorporated in the FAM [Foreign Affairs Manual].

Q: That's the Foreign Affairs Manual, our set of instructions.

SAMPAS: That's right. And although I had to go back to Washington at one time and argue the point with the inspectors, who had thought that perhaps the proposed regulations were still too generous, they began to see the point, that once there is a determined world-wide standard for space, it makes sense to conform to that, because then people over a period of time are likely not to start transporting more furniture than they're going to be able to put in that square-foot-size unit, whatever it might be, house or apartment. So they came around.
Q: Did you find, I mean, having the problem of administration, I can see how over a period of time that if you have an administrative organization in New York that was not really very efficient, that you'd find the wrong people in the wrong houses, all sorts of, you know, you-scratch-my-back-and-I'll-give-you-a-good-apartment and that sort of thing. And I would have thought that there would have been a lot of that.

SAMPAS: There had been at some time, I think, that kind of an organization, but the previous set of inspectors, when they had come up to New York, had asked somebody how did he happen to have such a large apartment, and he started talking about need for representation space. And then they looked at the representation that the person did in that apartment. It was virtually nil. So you could imagine what they stormed away with.

And there was, in fact, one apartment that the inspectors were particularly concerned about as I went up to New York. A single man was living in an apartment overlooking the corner of Central Park and Fifth Avenue, not too far from the ice rink. It was a very expensive apartment, very expensive indeed. The individual had gained the apartment by means of the old mathematical calculation that was done between your salary and monthly rent, and it fit in those categories, but once the Foreign Service Act of 1980 came in and you had a considerable raise in Foreign Service salaries, it meant that from a layman's point of view, that let senior officers have much too much apartment. This person was not a difficult person to work with. He did not insist upon staying in that particular unit - although it would have been obviously more convenient for him - but we did move him out into quite a small unit closer to the UN.

And the people with children found that they were able to get apartments in which they could have a second or even third bedroom, depending upon the number of children they had. So I think that the new formula, while it was stricter and, some people felt, sterner, that anyone who looked at the various calculations could not walk away saying it was terribly unfair. The mission had argued for quite some time that it was essential to have all of the officers near the UN because UN meetings went on sometimes until very, very late at night. I remember many of the people simply got into the practice of taking a cab home, and that, of course, can also get very expensive if you live outside the city limits, but we had to work out not only an apartment policy but then a "going home late" policy, specifying when you could get a cab, where you could take it, and so forth. And we did that, too. And Ambassador Pickering, always a kind person, said - if I can remember his notation on this paper I called “More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Taxicab Policy” - he said something about he didn't like the premise on which it was based, the hours of work and perhaps the distance, and he was very kind when I sent him a little note back saying, "I don't particularly care for that either, but that's what's in the basic government regulations that we have to copy, or should at least conform to if we're going to try to eradicate this distance between Foreign Service and Civil Service. And when he looked over it a second time, he didn't fuss about it at all. It was just an honest question by an honest man.

Q: What were some of the particular problems of administering the U.S. mission to the UN? You spoke the language - or almost, New Yorkese...

SAMPAS: Well, certainly, five ambassadors is not an easy group to hold onto. They're not all equal in stature. Obviously the chief of mission is senior to everyone, and the deputy is senior to the others, but then you have three others that are more or less on the same level. And sometimes they would want to rent apartments too, which worked out very well unless they were already New Yorkers with apartments in the city. But the rules that we had adopted were that if you already had an apartment in New York, the government was not going to rent you another one, any more than it would rent you a different house if you already owned a house in the Washington area when you came to the State Department. So once again, it was stern and perhaps somewhat rigid, but I think it was hard to argue that it was absolutely unfair.

Q: No. Well, how did you find dealing with the New York City administration - the police, the various people running codes and things of this nature?

SAMPAS: That was much easier than I had imagined. We left a lot of it in the hands of the security officer, but New York had been dealing with USUN for many years, and had a procedure already developed. I went down to the meeting of police and others when the first presidential visit was coming through, and they were really quite organized. They had it down quite properly - who was going to be where, how many people atop how many buildings, how many people in the river on a boat. They wanted to make absolutely certain that nothing untoward happened. The major difficulty of the time was that such a visit tied up traffic, and the more security controls they put on, the more traffic was tied up. One time - I think it was Clinton's first time up there - he came out of his hotel suite and must have forgotten something because he went back in the suite and waited another 15 or 20 minutes before he came out again. What he didn't realize, I think, was that the minute he first came out, when the first policeman saw him, New York's East Side shut down. Traffic stopped moving. And even though it's not a great distance between the Waldorf, where he was staying, and the U.S. mission, if you wanted to get anywhere in the East Side of Manhattan, it was very, very difficult. You could walk up to 45th Street, the street that the U.S. mission was on, but at that point police would hold you back, and there was one person, a relative of one of our ambassadors, who wanted to come into the mission, and right then and there. I went around the corner to get her. She was in the lobby of one of the hotels. And we walked around on Second Avenue and then down 45th, but even with my credentials, we had a hard time getting in, and I think this relative was extremely unhappy, not realizing that without these controls probably a president or even a chief of mission could be in serious, serious danger.

Q: Did you have much interaction with the other missions to the UN, or were you pretty much, from your perspective - you were dealing with your mission, the police, the other people, and all of that?

SAMPAS: Yes, I was perhaps the most separate of the people in the mission from the other missions in town. I had a friend or two here or there, but almost no time when I had to ask them for something. There was one mission that didn't like the security controls that were going in when the presidential visit was coming, and they were a little bit upset about it. But there wasn't much I could do about that either. The police had their system, and I was not in a position to change the police system - nor would I have wanted to do so. And the other mission got over it.

Q: I would think that you would have people from particularly the smaller foreign missions there coming to you and saying, How do you do this thing? and we're confused and all that.

SAMPAS: Yes, there certainly was some of that, absolutely. And we have so much more organization in everything we do, partly because we have so many more people. There was one mission that asked about our pay policy, and was completely surprised that we graded jobs according to what we thought responsibility was and paid accordingly. They

hadn't ever considered doing that for their own mission. And I think we were much more computerized than the other missions, although when I left in '94 we certainly weren't using them as much as we would have liked. I had always hoped that we could put the making of chief-of-mission invitations on a computer because getting the cards was not a problem - you got a plain white card with a white seal on the top - but you wanted something really nice-looking to invite all these others, and that meant, at the time that I was there, going out to a printer for each and every large event, waiting to get the invitation forms back, and then sending them out. And even the distribution of invitations in New York was difficult. We didn't have our own private FedEx service that would take them around town; our drivers had to do it. But it would have been much quicker - between the time that an event was decided upon by the ambassador and his or her chief of protocol and the time you actually got the invitations out - we probably could have mailed them - if we could have done them in-house by computer. And you know, this never ceased to amaze me: you have the same problem, in essence, of invitations all over the world. You now have a computer system that could print that nice script. What you would need was a computer that didn't roll the invitation card around - because it gets stuck - a printer that would print flat. That's the same problem, presumably, in 185 different countries. But the Department never worked a system out where you could say, "Buy this equipment, print out the invitation form this way, here's your spacing, save your money." Those are the things that, you know, you find surprising.

Q: Yes it is. Well, how did you find your support from Washington?

SAMPAS: Washington always had to pay attention when the chief of the UN mission asked for something, so they did the best they could. Where they were slow sometimes was if we went to them for personnel positions. If we asked for a new position, it had to go through all the steps - not that any one person was at fault, but the system that had been designed by State was very slow. But people were of good will, and I think the chief of mission of the UN will always have a very senior voice in the administration.

Q: Well, Tom Pickering had been running bureaus and been ambassador. He's probably had more jobs than anyone ever had in the Foreign Service. I mean, was he pretty good on the, sort of, giving you the support you needed on the administrative side?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, absolutely. I couldn't have asked for any more than I had from him. He explained where he was coming from and why and what I could do to help him, and it made, I think, for a very good partnership, at least from my perspective. I hope it did from his as well.

Q: Well, did you find this sort of hectic schedule - what is it, October-September or something like that when the General Assembly is meeting? - it seems like the mission goes on a 24-hour binge for day after day or something like this, General Assembly time - how did that impact on what you were doing?

SAMPAS: Well, we had a whole list of things that had to be done before the General Assembly got underway, trying to find out from Washington how many people would be

coming to New York on TDY [temporary duty], trying to find places for these people to sit, because we didn't have a lot of vacant offices except for, occasionally, an ambassador's securing their accreditation and credentials from the UN. They would all have to come in and jumble up for a while. Some people took that pretty well, and some people always were crabbing. We had to know what the additional representation budget from the Department was going to be. The Department was not quite as organized in giving us all of this information as we had become in using it. And they seemed to change around often, year by year, the person who was most directly in charge, so that you didn't gain experience in Washington; you were always, it seemed to me, dealing with newcomers. But as I say, they tried to be people of good will, and we tried as well.

Q: I would have thought that many of these special delegations that were put together to be special representatives and all - I mean sometimes just looking at them you realize that these are sort of payoffs for one thing or another - and when you get into that category, you end up with a rather high proportion of people who are both demanding and probably aren't very effective. Did you find yourself having to deal with a problem clientele?

SAMPAS: Sometimes, but one of the good things about it was when they came to the UN mission, and during the General Assembly, Ambassador Pickering and the subsequent ambassadors to the U.S. mission tended to have all of the substantive staff, if you could call it that, and the administrative staff together for a brief meeting every morning. And when they realized how many people there were to deal with and the problems that each group presented and had to deal with, they began to realize that they weren't the prima donnas and would have to behave as, shall we say, normal people getting normal assignments.

Q: How about parking? You know, I one time went and did a paper with the Senior Seminar on the foreign consuls in the United States, and I asked them - I went to a whole series of consulates in different cities - what was your biggest problem, expecting to get terrorism or having to deal with counties and another state; and oh, no, no - it was parking. And New York, I would think that parking would be engraved on your tombstone.

SAMPAS: That was more a problem for our security officer because, indeed, each foreign consulate got a certain number of parking spaces near their mission, and it was never enough for them. And some of them acquired literally hundreds of parking tickets because they wouldn't conform. But since everyone of a certain level at USUN - I believe it was GS-9 - was accredited to the United Nations while they were at the U.S. mission, it meant that they could park in the United Nations garage across the street from the mission, and that was so convenient that many people, since they lived near USUN anyway, left their car in the UN garage most of the time and only took it out only on weekends. So that was, as I say, much more a problem for the other missions, who hadn't quite figured out how to do it, than it was for our mission.

Q: How about when Madeleine Albright came on board? She had been in the academic

world and really hadn't... Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think she'd had much experience in dealing with... I mean, she was sort of a very intelligent person in foreign affairs, but of sort of the academic type and all, and not much administrative experience or how to deal with large organizations. How did she plug in, from your perspective, to the mission? She's now Secretary of State, I might add. But you're retired, and so am I. I'm not after anything, but I'm just curious.

SAMPAS: Well, I think from the very beginning - this is just my impression - I think when she came to USUN she saw it as a stepping-stone and wanted to do the very best she could so that it would redound to her favor. She had been in the National Security Council for a while, so she had seen how people worked issues. But it was clear she came with a real agenda for working up there, and I think one of the agenda items would have to be that the State Department should be the "America Desk," not just representing other countries, which it was accused of sometimes.

At one point, we had been given some very lovely photographs from around the world, taken by a woman who is, I think, still a political appointee ambassador in an overseas embassy. She was an extremely wealthy person and could travel anywhere and must have had some formal training in photography as well; her pictures of foreigners - colorful, quaint, tender - were outstanding. Since we were given these for free, framed, it seemed like a good idea to hang them around the mission, but it turned out not to be a good idea because it didn't "represent America," so that idea was dropped, at least in part.

It was also difficult sometimes to train somebody who you thought was already trained. She was the third chief of mission who was there in my time, and I assumed that the young woman who was doing our travel was pretty cognizant of what needed to be done. Obviously we couldn't use first-class travel. That was out of the question. But to get a trip without stops, without changes - and sometimes this young woman didn't look at it from that perspective. She thought just getting from A to B was sufficient. And when I found out that that was the case, obviously I sat down and had a little chat with her.

Ambassador Albright brought in a personal aide, as she was, of course, fully entitled to do. This aide had worked on Capitol Hill and did not understand at the outset how important it was to learn what the rules and regulations of the Department of State were and whether there was a way of getting around them legally, calmly, or whether there were things you had better adhere strictly to. And that caused sometimes a bit of a-
Q: This is always a problem of the staff aide, particularly if somebody comes from outside, takes on the authority of their principal and it's not just a matter of throwing one's weight around but wanting to demonstrate to the principal that they can get things done-

SAMPAS: Absolutely.

Q: -and they don't often understand how to work - you can do it, but you've got to work within the system; otherwise-

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: How were you able to deal with something like this?

SAMPAS: Well, I guess twice it led to some hard feelings. One time, a protocol officer had been not happy with the speed or whatever that alcohol was delivered to the mission for its representation. And of course it has to be there at the proper time. There's no question about that. But I said, alright, the problem was that people were trying to do it in two different offices, and that really didn't work. Well, I said we'd take over the job in administration, and we would do it, but we would need her list of what she needed at a certain time. Well, we got a list, and indeed, I had the General Services people call around to learn what the best price would be, and whether the store would deliver it, both to the ambassador's residence or to the mission, at the drop of a hat, do it very quickly, politely, and so forth. And we found - I didn't find, but this General Services person found - a company that was nearby and would supply it quickly and at better cost than the protocol officer had been getting. So we got the list, we ordered, we had delivered. And then, to my surprise and dismay, I found out that the protocol officer had gone ahead and duplicated the order without, of course, any obligated funds. And I was upset, and wrote a memo with a copy to her supervisor, the ambassador, saying that that practice really wouldn't do. That was against the law, and we weren't about to be involved in that, that they had told us what needed to be done, we found out what needed to be done, and we had the correct order delivered on time. So that worked.

On another case, there was a travel case that went amok and one of the ambassadors was very unhappy, but the staff aide had made quite a mess of it and could have gotten us all in deep trouble.

Q: Now this is the problem. How did you find Madeleine Albright? Did she accept the importance of administration, rules, regulations, and how to work with it? Was she fighting it, or did she pick this up?

SAMPAS: She did. She did, particularly when she saw in writing how dangerous it could be not to, I think she realized it.

Q: During this time, including both, 1990 to '94, where there any particular occasions, problems? I mean, I always think of presidents coming and the high and mighty all flocking in there, but were there other things that you can think of that caused particular difficulty?

SAMPAS: No, I don't think so.

Q: Well, then '94 - what happened?

SAMPAS: Well, in December '93, I knew that I was going to be nominated for an ambassadorship, and in June, I was going to leave. And I think it was just early in July that I left, but I bundled myself off to Washington and got ready for the next assignment.

Q: Well, how did your ambassadorial appointment come about?
SAMPAS: Well, you know I really don't know all of the ins and outs of it. I wasn't campaigning for an ambassadorship. Like most administrators, I assumed that an ambassadorial position was not in my cards. Somebody called in December and asked me if I would accept an appointment to such and such a country, and I said, well, yes, certainly I would. And then it seemed to drag. I didn't have details, but it seemed to drag a bit. And then somebody said, in the course of a visit to New York, to USUN, but not on my behalf or anything, that the White House had somebody particular in mind for this one post, a political appointee, and I took it that perhaps the State Department didn't quite go along with him. So I didn't say anything, just went along about my business, and then in due course somebody called and asked me, if I was nominated to be ambassador to Mauritania, would I accept? And I said, well, yes I would, but I think there may be this other conflict. And they said, "No, no, that post is going to be filled another way." So I said, "Well, that's fine; yes, I would." And I must say, I didn't know a great deal about Mauritania at the time, except that one time my husband had a boss who was nominated for Mauritania and chose to retire instead - but I didn't. I didn't feel that way. And I got a book or two - it's not easy finding books on that place-

Q: I was going to say, Mauritania is not on the top of the reading list.

SAMPAS: No, somehow or other, my husband found this book that was commissioned by the government and, I think, done by people at American University. It was in a series. I didn't know that at the time. But anyway, it turned out to be sort of a textbook that they gave people when they went off to Mauritania, and for the most part it was accurate. There were some little details that weren't accurate, but it was a pretty good book.

Q: Well, were you able to talk to any of former ambassadors? I'm thinking about a couple of friends of mine, Ed Peck, Holsey Handyside, Dick Murphy, any of these people? Were you able to get to them and find out what this place was like?
SAMPAS: No, not there. Remember, I was in New York, and it wasn't easy to leave New York and just buzz down to Washington. But there was an ambassador who came up for the General Assembly who had been ambassador to Mali, and he was a very helpful man.

Q: Who was that?

SAMPAS: Ambassador Gelber.

Q: Well, at least you know, we'll... How about did you sort of sidle up to the ambassador from Mauritania and sort of say, Hey, what's your place like?

SAMPAS: Oh, no! Oh, no, I knew enough about Congress not to do that. And indeed, later on, the committee sent somebody to ask me a series of questions, and he sort of slipped in very gently, "Well, I suppose you've seen the ambassador" - from Mauritania, and I said, "No, certainly not." And I think if I had said that I had gone off to see him before my confirmation, I would have been scratched right there. The committee is so

jealous of its privileges. But you know, there were a lot of questions to get ready for and so forth.

Q: Well, I'm told that the paperwork to be an ambassador is horrendous.

SAMPAS: Yes, over the years, every time something has gone wrong, they have added more questions. "Have you ever hired somebody who was illegal?" "Have you ever not paid Social Security taxes for a household employee?" I suppose they have to do it this way. And fortunately, I guess, I had seen enough people misfire on Capitol Hill that I was pretty cautious. But it is sort of strange, I think, you know, things that we were always so protective of - from the time I joined the Foreign Service until very recently, if a man said he was a homosexual, he would be scratched from a list of potential ambassadors immediately. But now, there is this desire, of course, to nominate someone who not only is, but very openly is. It's part of the agenda.

Q: Your husband at this point - what was he doing?

SAMPAS: Well, he had retired in 1980, and he is a great reader, and spent most of his time reading. And that was interesting, because sometimes he would get books that I would have found of interest, too, and we could talk about that a little bit.

Q: Well, you had time, after... In the first place, did you have any problems when the nomination came up?

SAMPAS: Well, yes, indeed, yes. I had - how can I explain it? A personnel officer had been assigned to USUN approximately the same time I had. This person was a member of the Foreign Service and had served at a couple of posts in Africa. I had never been a personnel officer, but I had been closely associated with the Bureau of Personnel for quite some time and had a sense of what the worldwide problems were. Over a period of many months it became my conclusion that this person not only did not know how to do personnel work but wasn't particularly interested in the fine points. We had sent the person to quite a number of courses at the beginning of her stint at USUN so that she would become familiar with personnel requirements, and indeed, I considered it a very important job, parallel, if you will, with the senior General Services and the senior budget and the senior communications person - all of these people were sent by me to courses in their specialty so that they would update their skills. Some of them were a little frightened to go; some of them were challenged. But over a period of time, I believed that I saw that the work in this one area simply was not being done correctly. When it came time for efficiency reports, I tried to be as gentle as I could but nevertheless say something about what I thought that I had seen. That made the incumbent of this job very unhappy, and on the day that I was to give my testimony for the Foreign Relations Committee, she had a package delivered to the committee saying that I was a bigot.

Q: Was she African-American?

SAMPAS: Yes. And so forth. So the committee naturally asked me about this. What is

going on here, lady, and have you seen this? And I said, "No, I haven't seen the actual complaint, but I can rather imagine the kind of thing it says, because I have heard that for some months now." In the long run, this person presented a grievance, and I answered that grievance and never heard anything more about it.

Q: Well, you know, from what you've said and what others have said, there has built up with whistle-blowing and all this something that probably doesn't help racial relations, in that accusations sometimes can be used to protect people who are of marginal worth in their jobs. You know, when in doubt, scream racial bias-

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: -which, again, is in a way counterproductive because it creates an atmosphere of unwillingness to be very legalistic in dealing with somebody you feel may be marginal.

SAMPAS: Yes, I think that atmosphere has been provoked by some of the laws, and it's difficult. I wouldn't know quite how to design a law that would take care of all of the abuses of the past, of which there were many, without creating opportunities for abuses of the future. But I think, fortunately, there were people knew quite a bit about what was going on at USUN, and probably some of those people called the committee and said something. And as I say, I didn't hear anything more about it from the committee. I had a long spate of correspondence with the Grievance Board - or the staff of the grievance operation - and sent them what I thought was a thorough documentation and even testified before Board members, with a recording secretary present, and never heard more about it from them either.

Q: Well, tell me, at the time, you were approved by the Senate. How about getting ready to go? Did you take the ambassadorial course?

SAMPAS: Yes, I did.

Q: How did you find that?

SAMPAS: I thought it was pretty good. They were certainly trying to do their best. In retrospect, I think there are things that can be improved upon, but it wasn't bad. It was useful.

Q: When you were getting ready to go out to Mauritania, where did you go and whom did you talk to to find out what this place was all about and what were American interests and all?

SAMPAS: Well, fortunately, the people on the Desk gave me a whole list of people to see. There were people in AID, even though we had dropped our AID mission; people in USIA, even though we had dropped the USIA operation; people who dealt with the Marine Corps, even though the Marines were being pulled out.

Q: The CIA, I imagine.

SAMPAS: Yes, yes, yes. So I imagine there were about 15, 18 people that I went around to see. None of them seemed to have a very clear idea saying, "This is why we want to be in Mauritania." After all, strangely enough, we had gone to bat for this country two or three times in history. In 1960, the Russians had opposed the entry of Mauritania to the United Nations. They wanted a group of "their" countries; we wanted a group of "our" countries, including Mauritania. We fought for the group including Mauritania and won. In 1981, I think - I'm not too clear, but I think it was '81 - the Moroccans tried to stage a coup in Mauritania, and we apparently shook our finger at them and said, "You'd better wise up and stop this." In the late '80s, when Senegal and Mauritania had a dust-up and it appeared, certainly to many Mauritanians across the Senegal River from Senegal, that Senegal wanted to expand its boundary northward and take in most or all of the arable land in Mauritania - and at that point Hank Cohen, the assistant secretary - and I think on his own - said, "No, the river is going to remain the boundary." And Senegal pulled back. Senegal did expel all of the Moors that they could, and while Mauritania had not wanted to do any mutual expulsions, they couldn't get the Senegalese to stop the idea, so they expelled many people who looked like Senegalese as well, many of whom were Mauritanians. Other countries in the area provided airplanes so that this massive joint expulsion could be effected. It was pretty nasty on both sides. And interestingly enough, there was violence on both sides of the river, and a cultural difference in the violence shown on each side of the river. In Mauritania, where every adult male keeps a knife in his pocket to slay sheep or carve them up, as the case may be, there was knifing. In Senegal, there was burning of live Moors. So it was a very nasty situation. But in the long run, peace was restored. The same two presidents have been in power since, but they seem to get along personally and through the force of their personal agreement have been able to keep their countries calm since 1990. But since Mauritania borders on the Western Sahara, which is in dispute, Algeria, where you have quite a lot of violence, Mali, where you did have violence and expulsions - quite a lot of Malians landed in Mauritania and remained for years in refugee camps there - and Senegal, which had had this flare-up with its desire to oust the Moors, who were thought to control most of their retail trade, Mauritania remains in a touchy neighborhood. Should it ever break apart or be dominated by one of its neighbors, the whole region would be affected.

Q: The term Moor *means a Mauritanian? Is that what they use?*

SAMPAS: Yes, they do. As you hear in *Maur*-itania. Maur is the French word for Moor. But of course, the other ethnic groups - Halpulaars, Soninke, and Wolof - are not Moors.

Q: Ah.

SAMPAS: In any case, there fortunately hasn't been violence since 1990. But there has not been a strong of U.S. foreign policy that it behooves us to be proactive with the countries in the region to make certain that such outbreaks of violence don't get started again. Many know all the evil things about Mauritania. There was scarcely a person dealing with the area who didn't know Mauritania has *slavery* and Mauritania *attacked*

people who looked like Senegalese in 1989-90, and so forth. Strangely, in all the time that people briefed me about how awful Mauritania was and how it was a gross violator of human rights, no one said anything about the slaves in Mali, and it is not just one little ambassador telling you that there are slaves in Mali. When the Malian refugees fled from violence in Mali and entered Mauritania and went into refugee camps, if my recollection is correct, 15 percent of the Malians in the refugee camps in Mauritania were *Bellah*, Malian slaves, although during my years of service, their existence was never mentioned in the annual Human Rights Report prepared by the Department of State. If you tell me that our embassy in Mali has never seen them, that none of our embassy people could ever have seen slaves in Mali, I would have to express some amazement, because the area where these refugees that fled into Mauritania came from was largely the area around Timbuktu. Now Timbuktu is a tourist center. It's where tourists - and presumably U.S. diplomats in Mali - go on occasion. And Malian slaves, the *Bellah* women, wear a very typical dress, a black dress with white rickrack, so they're easy to spot. But why is it, do you suppose, that we have never heard anyone say anything about slaves in Mali? Or why do you think no one has ever said anything about slaves in Senegal? Why do you suppose that in the wake of this terrible dust-up between Senegal and Mauritania, people criticize Mauritania for what it did but never criticize Senegal? It's as if Senegal was, you know, Little Boy Blue or some such thing.

Q: Well, was this "localitis" on the part of our reporting embassies in those places, do you think?

SAMPAS: I wish I knew. I don't think it's just that, because the international human rights organizations had the same viewpoint. They would publish reams of paper about how awful Mauritania was but never comment on its neighbors. I don't know. I never really succeeded in explaining it to myself.

Q: When you arrived there, what did you sort of carry in your attaché case insofar as what you though you could do when you were there?

SAMPAS: Well, I knew that I had to raise the question of slavery and human rights right away, and I did so. I am sure there has never been any ambassador from any country ever to go to Mauritania who talked more about slavery and human rights than I did - with the president, with his ministers, and with people that I was having dinner or lunch with - and human rights generally in the wake of this attack on people who looked like Senegalese. And about attacks on people who looked Senegalese in the military in Mauritania in the same period of time, the late '80s and early '90s. So I knew that I had to protest about that. It was not clear what anyone in the United States expected anyone there to do about it. I had some ideas that I had gained, either from my own thoughts or from talking to Assistant Secretary Moose about naming some sort of a board or committee - the kind of thing we would do here - and let somebody there do a good study of it and see what could be done. And indeed, in due course, I suggested such a thing - obviously turned down flat on all of these suggestions. The Mauritanian government had its own reasons for not doing any of the things that we would have done. Other than Assistant Secretary Moose, there really wasn't anyone that followed it very closely.

And it's interesting what the end of all this seems to have been. Little by little, Americans came into Mauritania and started saying nice things about it - not tourists - but Africare came in, and of course, Africare has been active in Africa for many years and has a great reputation, and they sent first a young African-American man - actually, he was from Philadelphia, I think, but he was active in their Senegal office - and he came in and talked with people and toured around. We got him all the appointments that he wanted. And before he left he wrote a very nice letter to the president of Mauritania saying, you know, "I came expecting to see one thing and found something else entirely, and your country is certainly not what" - he didn't use the exact words - "it's been cracked up in my country to be" - but more or less that. And then the head of Anti-Slavery International from England came. He came after a human rights conference in Central Africa. But he, too, said, when people asked him about slavery and he was still in Mauritania replied something like, "Well, I haven't actually seen that phenomenon here." So we felt that those remarks by people other than the embassy ought to carry some weight in Washington. For some years, the Human Rights Bureau had failed to send out any officer to see Mauritania directly; they would freely edit the Human Rights Reports we sent in, but never set foot in the country to observe directly. But then shortly after my departure, a deputy assistant secretary from the Human Rights Bureau came out. I repeat, we had never been able to get anyone from Human Rights Bureau out during my stay there. He came out and he looked around and he saw, and he went back and said something like, "We've seen the wrong thing, apparently." And I would think, from what I've heard since his visit, that the Department has changed about 180 degrees in its view of Mauritania.

Q: Well, it sounds like, from what you were saying before, that AID was pulling out, the Marines were pulling out, USIA was pulling out - did you feel that you were on not a sinking ship but a stranded ship or something like that?

SAMPAS: Oh, absolutely. It's not easy to run an embassy with six officers, and there are certain things that just will not get done properly with that sort of a staff. They had pulled out the security officer and the Marines just before I got there. One day, one of our humorous communicators came into the embassy, and decided to test the embassy's guards (placed at the front gate of the driveway into our compound). The local staff was required to look under the hood of each entering vehicle and look underneath the car with a mirror to see what was there. This communicator had packed some firecracker-like material under the hood of the car - nice red, round firecrackers - and waited for reaction from the guards. He got out of his car and watched while the guards were doing an inspection. And these firecracker-like things were perfectly visible, near the engine, but no one remarked anything special about it. So he went up a little closer to his car and started screaming, "Oh, oh!" The local guards still didn't see that there was anything wrong. And you see, that's what happens when people just aren't trained. They know they're supposed to open the hood. They have no idea what they're supposed to look for under the hood. And I'm sure the same thing would have happened if he had put the firecrackers under the frame of his car. And unfortunately, even when the Marines were there and the security officer was there, I don't believe they spoke French or Arabic. Almost no Americans in the embassy ever spoke Hassaniya Arabic. So, it was difficult to train the local guards and periodically to evaluate their understanding of their duties.

Q: Was it Berber or was it Arabic?

SAMPAS: It was Mauritania's own special variety of Arabic, called Hassaniya. When I got there, the DCM who was there had been there for some time, and he had learned quite a bit of Hassaniya, and so when I needed to go and talk with a minister who spoke only Arabic or the Mauritanian variety of Arabic, he could do a very good job of translating in both directions. He had been trained in Arabic by the Department, and he was very helpful indeed. Nearly all ministers spoke French, so I could handle them by myself, but one simply refused to speak French. So I had no alternative but to look for a U.S. officer to take along.

Q: Who was your DCM?

SAMPAS: Joe Stafford. More recently he's been DCM in Algeria, and he's just off to someplace else, but I'm sorry I don't remember where he's been sent now. His successor in Nouakchott had a much more difficult time understanding Hassaniya Arabic. If she found somebody who spoke classic Arabic, it went alright, but if it was one of the younger people who hadn't been trained classically and just spoke Hassaniya, it didn't go very well. One of the things that I think FSI could do better - and I have unfortunately a tic that makes me, as an administrative officer, think in quantitative terms - but I do believe that talking with individuals and learning as much about them as possible is one of the most important things that anyone can do in the Foreign Service. And I'm not sure that FSI really gives training in getting acquainted with somebody relatively quickly - to the point that you can ask them sensitive questions and be given what seems to be a truthful response. So I had some officers who could do that very, very well. One of the young women there was a whiz-bang on making friends, and I would often be asked about her by people that I knew because they had known her very well as well. But others didn't seem to go out very much.

Q: Well, I would imagine it was a relatively difficult society to penetrate, wasn't it, or not?

SAMPAS: Less so, I think, than probably most other Arabic-speaking countries. We had a big U.S.-Mauritanian women's group that got together on a monthly basis and was friendly enough that I think anyone who really chatted up one of the women in that group - a woman chatting up a woman in that group - could have invited that woman and her family over. But I'm willing to give the benefit of the doubt that it was harder for anyone else than it was for me. The embassy had never developed a good contact list. That was one thing I tried to get them started on.

Q: Where did Mauritania fit into the Washington apparatus? I mean, in a way, a lot of its problems were within what we would call the black African part, yet it was an Arab state - I would think it would be neither-

SAMPAS: -fish nor fowl?

Q: -fish nor fowl.

SAMPAS: Yes, I think that's probably one of the problems. Mauritania had at one time tried very hard to get into the Arab League. Morocco was fighting it all the way. Morocco sometimes, high-flying guys there, will say something about "Morocco should extend to the Senegal River." But when Mauritania was kind of snubbed by Arabic states, it kind of closed in a little bit more upon itself. But with the dust-up with Senegal, which was highly regarded as a sign of great prejudice toward blacks on the part of Mauritania but not great prejudice toward Moors, some of whom are equally black in color, on the part of Senegal, the black Africans were not enthusiastic about setting up embassies there. The Senegalese had one. The Zaireans had one. The Nigerians had one. The Sudanese *did* have one, but they closed their embassy while I was there. Egypt was there; Libya was there; Algeria and Morocco were there. But there's a whole host of black African countries that haven't set up embassies, and the Department had decided that French was the language of Mauritania, and, of course, it's easier to teach French, easier to find people who speak French. But it wasn't the language of the country. With French, you could get along with most of the people in government - or just about all the senior people in government - but people on the street? Uh-uh. So that was another thing that created this divide. Almost no one there speaks English, although I understand they're soon going to open up a school that will teach English. The problem is even though culturally and linguistically it's an Arab country, Senegal is the best place for administrative support, because it has a real road to Mauritania, and you can get across the Senegal River by ferry very easily. And then you have a nice road up to Nouakchott, so for the administrative staff, if a piece in your communications equipment breaks down or you need a communicator to run your communications equipment, you have to call Senegal and get them to come and help out. And that really wouldn't work with Morocco or Algeria. There is a road down along the coast through Morocco, but with the Western Sahara as ticklish a place as it is, you wouldn't be certain of getting near. And Algeria is a long, long way from Nouakchott in terms of transportation.

Q: You'll end up in Fort Zinderneuf or something like that (the old P. C. Wren story). What about dealing with the government there?

SAMPAS: Well, that was a pleasant surprise for me. I mean, here I was, a woman, French-speaking but not Arabic-speaking, not an African specialist, who had to go and talk to these people about human rights, their attitude toward their own black citizens, slavery, and female genital mutilation.

Q: Oh, yes. That's a great subject to [tackle]. There isn't much sensitivity training that they can give you to do that.

SAMPAS: Certainly not. And if you think it's easy for a sweet little Washington girl to talk to male ministers and others about female genital mutilation, you've got another thought coming. That took quite a bit of courage, but I got there. I got there. But it was clear that the Mauritanians wanted to be nice to me, and I had the feeling that it came

directly from the president's orders. In my statement to the Senate, which was then published (They put those things in the Congressional Record.), I had not bullied Mauritania; I had said there were problems, serious problems, but progress had been made and there was no reason progress could not continue. And the Mauritanians were so pleased at that kind of an attitude that I had the feeling that they were really trying to flatter me.

Q: This is the Human Rights Report.

SAMPAS: That's right (The statement to which I was referring, though, was the statement I made in connection with my appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.). And I don't think that I was, you know, going to fall flat on my face with their flattery, but I recognized it for what it was, and I felt that they needed a lot of help, quite frankly.

Q: You were the first female ambassador they'd dealt with?

SAMPAS: Yes, first female ever. But Mauritanian women are not like other Arab women.

Q: More like the Tuareg, where the women are more open.

SAMPAS: Oh, very much. They have never worn a veil, unless the sand is blowing. There was an Arabic visitor back in the 13th or 14th century who was utterly shocked to find women sitting with men in the tent unveiled. But the women of Mauritania make a special point of wearing dresses that are unique. It's mostly just a long piece of cloth colored in a very different way - each one different. Any idea that they would get into some black garb like the Saudi women do or the Afghani women or Iraqi women is just a non-starter. I don't think they'll ever do that. And the Mauritanian men are quite happy when they have daughters as well. There's nothing of the "Sorry for your troubles, lady" business when a female child is born. They're very fond of their daughters. So they heard me out. They didn't get angry. They gave me their point of view on everything that I was fussing about. I never had a moment's feeling - whether it was the president or one of the ministers or one of the others - that they would have told a male something, in my position, that they weren't telling me. And they couldn't get angry at me because in their culture men don't get angry; they don't raise their voice to women. And the women there, unlike women, I think, in any other African country I've heard of or any other Arabic country I've heard of, will often initiate divorce and feel that the more divorces they have, the better off they are. In a sense, they are, since they get to keep some of the riches of the household. But it's rather like collecting men like beads on a string. So men are very gentle with women and very kind. And, oh, I would often throw back in their face kind words that "I know that that's flattery, and I think it's nice, but don't expect me to believe it." And they would understand. They would understand.

Q: What about UN votes? Did you find yourself, as an old UN hand, running down with the yearly shopping list of UN votes?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes. Please do this and this and this for us. And often they did what we would want. What I was surprised at was the number of times our own position seemed to change, so even though we had geared up and ginned up this vote on behalf of *X*, our own people wouldn't vote that way when the time came. The one thing that we could never get Mauritania to do in the UN was vote against China for human rights abuses because China and Mauritania were in many ways very similar. Obviously one is overpopulated and one is - I won't say underpopulated, but has few people, two million something. But the standard of living is remarkably similar. I used to laugh at the idea of barefoot doctors before I went to China and looked around. And barefoot doctors there are not a bad idea. You go in and explain, you know, you've got to wash your hands and you've got to boil drinking water - very simple things - and I believe that the Chinese may already have achieved a longer life span than men in the Bronx. That's not a bad record, and that's the kind of thing that Mauritania can do as well. They've trained a number of doctors, but they have to get them out to the villages, and they're trying. The Chinese had at one point, a minister explained to me, come in and tried to proselytize with some of their magazines. You know, they put out these fancy magazines sometimes. And the Mauritanians called them in and said, "We don't want that. It's your philosophy, that's fine, let it be your philosophy, but we don't want you going around trying to make communists of our people. So we're going to stop this, aren't we?" And the Chinese did. But because China has helped them with foreign aid so much, they're not about to vote against China on any human rights issue. They feel we're unfair with Mauritania on the human rights question, so they certainly carry that over and think that we're unfair with China as well. The Chinese built Nouakchott's deep port. It didn't have a deep port before then. They have built a very glitzy international conference center, really quite remarkable, and a sports stadium - some of the things that they're doing in other African countries as well. But you know, we're about the only industrialized country which doesn't give Mauritania foreign aid. The French and the European Community are competing as to which one's going to give more, and they make little statements to the press: "We give more" - "No, we give more." The Germans are big donors; the Japanese are big donors; the other industrialized countries are there.

Q: Did you feel that you and your mission were sort of marginalized because you were not a donor?

SAMPAS: Oh, yes, to a certain extent, I did feel that way, but I don't believe that you can buy votes with aid either. These other countries had a long period of time when they consistently looked after Mauritania's interests. We weren't doing that. We came in at particular incidents, but other than that we kind of distanced ourselves from the country. But it was hard to convince them to change because if there were an aid project that might make some difference, you had no ability to give it. If there were something that you could do with a cultural program, you couldn't do it. We didn't have the Agency any more, either. They left. So in a sense you were without a certain number of eyes and ears as well, particularly when most of your own staff couldn't deal with the local people in their own language.

Q: What about with Morocco? I mean, one of the things I've heard about our embassies

neighboring Morocco used to get mad as hell because they felt our ambassador, whoever it was there, had sort of got in bed with the King, practically. There seems to be a virulent form of localitis that hits particularly political ambassadors to Morocco. Did you see any manifestation of this?

SAMPAS: Well, not really, although I know one of the political ambassadors rather well. The problem there is, I think, Morocco and its intentions. You know, in a way, it seems to me, the Cold War was fought, if you will, between those who were trying to expand their area and those who were pleased with their area and just trying to hold on. Morocco seems to be the kind of country that is expansionist, but our government as a whole doesn't want to say anything about it. Our government as a whole wants everyone to remember that Morocco is our oldest ally, and even when the King came here for a visit, I don't think anyone gave him anything but praise. I'm sure no one even mentioned Mauritania to the King on his last visit - 1995, I think. That's, I don't think, advisable; but if your president sets that tone, what on earth is the local ambassador going to do? If you couldn't get Clinton to say anything about Morocco's expansionism, then you know you'd better be quiet and sweet.

Q: What about the Libyans? Were they fishing in troubled waters there at all? Did you feel any Libyan manifestations?

SAMPAS: Yes, the Libyans were there, and they were, I think, making a lot of contacts around. But at one point they were PNGed out of there by the government of Mauritania. The suggestion in one of the newspapers, which doesn't mean anything for its validity, but the suggestion in one of the newspapers was that they were passing fraudulent currency. That might have been so. I wouldn't put anything past the Libyans, but they certainly were there and watched very carefully by the government. I think we were all watched carefully, but I think they more so than the others. I think the Sudanese were watched very carefully, too, because the Sudanese have certain reputation in West Africa of wanting to get involved in internal affairs on the side of non-democrats as well. Eventually, the Sudanese pulled out of Mauritania.

Q: Did you feel under any security threat, not so much from the Mauritanians but from people like the Sudanese or other groups at that particular time?

SAMPAS: No, I didn't. Fortunately, our embassy was right next door to the Presidential Palace, and we had a few local contract guards in front of our embassy, usually three out in front, and the president's forces were standing right at the corner. So with them keeping their eye on things as well as our guards, I really never thought anyone would try anything. And the equivalent of, I suppose, the FBI was down the street, and they certainly would follow people around any time they wanted.

Q: You were there from '94 to when?

SAMPAS: July '97.

Q: Were there any sort of major outcroppings of problems that came up while you were there?

SAMPAS: No, things really went pretty consistently in the other direction. We were able to start a small program between our military and their military. And I was happy to have the help of our military. We didn't have any locally; the military attaché was based in Senegal. And the NATO group, the American group based in Stuttgart, which has responsibility for all of Africa, except for a couple of countries on the eastern seaboard, took an interest in Africa. They wanted to be on the scene, and they sent people down twice, an admiral and a general, and helped us get underway again. They saw the advantage of this. Now there are people here in Washington who thought that the Mauritanian military was really quite awful because the military had been involved in serious human rights abuses in the late ‘80s, ‘89, up to ‘91, and they weren't being punished by their government. But when I spoke to other Western embassies that had been in Nouakchott throughout the period, they insisted that the Mauritanian amnesty law, which protected the military from prosecution for the human rights abuses that had been committed in this period of the late '80s up to '91, that that law had to be passed if Mauritania was going to be allowed to adopt a constitution and try to form a democratic government at all. And I don’t know of any country where the military has been involved in that kind of abuse that hasn't followed up by some sort of amnesty law.

Q: Oh, absolutely. I mean, this is-

SAMPAS: So it's not unusual. It's a normal course of events. And indeed, we got close enough to the military to realize that they themselves were not as happy with the president as they would like to be, and I had never expected to get close enough to them that they would complain about the president to me. I thought that was a marker of sorts.

Q: Well, the president the whole time you were there was the same person?

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Who was that?

SAMPAS: Taya, President Maaouya Ould Sid’Ahmed Taya.

Q: Were you sort of off the beaten track, or were you able to get high-level visitors or congressional visitors, that sort of thing?

SAMPAS: No congressional visitor. High-level? We had a deputy assistant secretary for African affairs once. As I say, no one from Human Rights and Democracy. The inspectors came through, but they didn't do a great deal, because they had been there not long before. It was much closer than the normal three-year tour. I can't think of any other high-level visitor that we had.

Q: Well, you left there in '97. What did you do?

SAMPAS: Well, I was carried out on a stretcher and went by medevac plane directly to London and stayed in London for about a month in a hospital there.

Q: What was the problem?

SAMPAS: I had a brain aneurysm which broke.

Q: Did you have any warning, or it just-

SAMPAS: I should have had a warning, but I didn't know it. I had fallen when I got out of the tub once, perhaps a month earlier, but I had no notion that such a thing as that imbalance might be associated with an aneurysm. I learned later that it could have been.

Q: So then you were footnote to be able to get out of there and get-

SAMPAS: Absolutely, we had a wonderful nurse at the embassy, a Canadian woman who was married to a Moor, and she got a medevac plane in there. Med okayed it right away, and I got out that night. It was really quite remarkable, and apparently very important because what they're afraid of most of all in those cases is that some sort of pressure will build up in your brain and cause much, much worse damage. From time to time, I think that the operation might have caused additional damage. But anyway, my rehabilitation people think that I'm well on my way to being rehabilitated.

Q: Well, I mean, the very fact that we have on tape here a considerable amount of recollection shows that it's happened.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Well, I assume, then, that you retired at that point.

SAMPAS: Later. I had hoped that perhaps I might come back for a little bit, but when I realized that even though I was rehabilitating and everyone said, "That's going very well, very well," nevertheless, the time frame that the doctors were suggesting for my being able to come back to work kept moving forward as fast as I was going in rehabilitation. So I figured I might as well-

Q: Also you were reaching sort of the end of a normal tour anyway by this time.

SAMPAS: That's right.

Q: Well, since you've retired, what have you been up to?

SAMPAS: Well, not a great deal. One of the things about a problem with the frontal lobe of your brain is that you lose all sense of initiating something. You know, you could stay for years, I think, with a blanket pulled up over your head in bed and think that was just

grand. But I have been working on trying to get this sense of energy back again, and I'm sure I'm better than I was - not as good, perhaps, as I hope I will be one day. But that's the worst part of it, and I had never realized that that would be in any way -

Q: Do you sort of post notes to yourself saying do this and to that?

SAMPAS: Well, in a sense I try to put everything down on the calendar, because it isn't so much forgetting as this lack of initiative.

Q: Very obviously you're a lady who in normal circumstances was not a passive onlooker on the parade of life.

SAMPAS: No, certainly not. But, you know, you work at everything, and little by little maybe it gets better.

Q: Alright, well, why don't we stop at this point? One last question: while you were there, thinking back on it, whither Mauritania, from your perspective?

SAMPAS: Oh, I think if the right kind of attention is paid to Mauritania, I think Mauritania can be helpful to us as contributing to the stability of Africa, particularly, of course, northwest Africa. Through religious groups, Mauritania has significant influence in Senegal, in Mali, and in Algeria, even in the Ivory Coast. They have these brotherhoods that mean a great deal to them, as their religion means a great deal to them. I think it's important to maintain Mauritania as a stable country, which means a country where the economic pie is expanding, little bit by little bit, that people feel that if they're not getting rich they're at least doing as well as they did yesterday, maybe a little bit better. I think we should step in when it's threatened, the way we have at certain significant moments in the past, and keep its neighbors from moving in on it. Its neighbors see a weak country with a very small army, and so it's a tempting target for expansionist powers. A little bit of foreign aid would help, but I'm not one who believes in great, huge foreign aid projects. I think we've done harm as well as good with those, even on the Senegal River. The river has diseases in it now that are endemic that never were there before the Great Manantali Dam in Mali was built and the smaller dam at the mouth of the river that prevents the tidal washing which used to occur. I'm very much in favor of small loans to poor people. World Vision has been doing that, and you've probably read about it going on in Asia as well. It turns out that the poor are very good repayers of loans, and if you follow them through this loan, you can teach them as well - teach them how to keep their accounts, teach them how to improve their product. Those are things that do help the life of very ordinary or poor citizens, and I wish we had thought of that idea back in the '60s, instead of starting with these huge big dam projects and other things. I think we should try to push Mauritania into adopting a universal education standard. They've done remarkably well at building schools all over. Unbelievable to go to a place where there's almost nothing around - almost no people around - and the kids will say, "Yes, we're in school." And I think we ought to help them as we're now willing to help other African countries. I think we ought to help the Mauritanians devise a curriculum that will help their children go forward in a way that

we would find acceptable - something about equality of mankind would be good. And they're already giving elementary education in three different languages - four, I guess: Soninke, Wolof, Halpular, and Arabic - French, of course, too. I think if we helped build up their education system through junior highs, we could also do something important about female genital mutilation. Their girls marry much too young, but it's the grandmothers that insist upon the mutilation. But if every girl finished junior high school and knew by then the harm genital mutilation was going to do her daughters, it might be wiped out in a generation or two.

Q: AIDS?

SAMPAS: You know, one never knows in Mauritania how much AIDS there is. At one time there was a study of pregnant women at the hospital, and apparently it found that maybe five percent were HIV-positive. However, AIDS is a great danger because of Mauritania's connections with other countries. For instance, Ivory Coast - Côte d'Ivoire - has a huge number of Mauritanians who go there for business, and they go without their families, so you have these men all over the place, and I'm certain that many come back with AIDS, and I'm certain that it will spread increasingly quickly in Mauritania.

Q: Even five percent is not an insignificant figure, and you realize it moves up almost geometrically.

SAMPAS: Yes, exactly.

Q: We're talking about acquired - what is it?

SAMPAS: Immuno-deficiency disease.

Q: Yes. Basically, it's a sexually transmitted disease which is just devastating Africa at this point, and it's very scary.

SAMPAS: While the Mauritanians are religious, and while they do take their religion seriously, they do have, I think, a good deal more adultery than they do in most other Arab countries.

Q: Yes, that gives you some control there - really more the black African pattern rather than the Islamic pattern.

SAMPAS: Yes. And I've read, or heard since I've been back, that AIDS can pass through mother's milk for a nursing mother as well, and of course, everyone's trying to get mothers in Africa to nurse because it's normally so much healthier than using formulas. But there they are passing it on.

Q: Alright, well, we'll stop at this point, then.

SAMPAS: Yes.

Q: Great.

End of Interview