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

# RUSSELL SVEDA

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Secretary Cyrus Vance
Boycott of Moscow Olympics
Afghanistan

State Department, FSI; Russian language training 1981-1982

Garmish – Partenkirechen, Germany; Russian language training 1982
Working with the military

Moscow, USSR; Science Officer 1982-1984
Soviet Stagnation
Relations
Afghanistan
Succession issue
Brezhnev
Andropov
Ambassador and Mrs. Hartman
Soviet Scientists
KGB capabilities and antics
Embassy radiation
"Bugging" of the Embassy
Science reporting
Soviet economy
Soviet military hardware

State Department; China Desk Officer 1984-1986
President Reagan's view of China
President Li Xiannian visit
China – Soviet Union relations
U.S. – China relations
Peace Corps issue
Relations with the American Institute in Taiwan
Chinese students to the US

Personal security issue 1986-1987

Seconded to the National Science Foundation 1987-1989
Central and Eastern European programs
Communication with the Soviet Scientists
International Science foundation
National research Council
State/Foundation relations

Gay-Lesbian organization issues 1992-1993
Clinton election

Grievance appeals

State Department; Dulles Airport Unclassified Pouch mail 1993-1995
Sherman Funk
Blocked Promotion
Legal issues
Legal statement

Retirement 1995
American Foreign Service Association
Gay-Lesbians organization
Gay Lesbian issues

## INTERVIEW

*Q: Today is June 28, 2000. This is an interview with Russell Sveda. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Russ and I are old friends. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?*

SVEDA: I was born on December 27, 1945 in Passaic, New Jersey. My mother and father were both born in the United States but were of immigrant parents. My father's family was from a small area called Papapelrusse. They actually have an Internet web site, the nation of Papapelrusse. It is a small nation that is really very obscure. It's between Slovakia, Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary in the Carpathian Mountains. It is a place that has been exchanged between one or the other for a while. My father's family is originally Swedish and they somehow got dropped off here. One of my cousins who invented artificial sweeteners did some research on this. He said that it was in the 17th century. So, my mother's family is absolutely Polish, no question. My father died when I was just shy of my fourth birthday, so my mother's family and that influence was really strong on me. My mother's family is Polish and therefore very Catholic. My father's family is Russian Orthodox. I had one foot in each tradition.

I went to Catholic schools from third grade on. My mother was a public school teacher. My father was a high school teacher. My mother thought it would be better for me to go to Catholic school, but specifically to a Catholic boarding school, a Catholic military boarding school, in Upstate New York run by Italian nuns on the West Point reservation. It was a completely Felliniesque experience. Fellini had films with many bizarre characters and, believe, me, that was my growing up.

*Q: Did you have brothers or sisters?*

SVEDA: No, I was an only child.

*Q: In Passaic, was there a fairly large Polish community?*

SVEDA: There was a very large Polish community in the northern New Jersey area – Passaic, Patterson, Garfield, what have you. In fact, Lodi is where my mother lived until her death. She lived across the street from a very large Polish convent run by sisters. The reason I mention this is because when I met the Pope in 1978 at a large audience with everybody yelling, "Papa! Papa! Papa!" as he came into the audience hall, I yelled the three words that I knew would rivet the Pope to the floor. The three words were, "Lodi, New Jersey." The Pope stopped and said, "Who's from Lodi" and I said, "I'm from Lodi." It seems that he had spent two summers there as Archbishop of Krakow across the street from my mother's home, playing tennis in the tennis courts cattycornered from my mother's house, and living in the rectory that was for priests who were attached to this convent of several hundred nuns. So, he knew the place very well. He knew all the Polish parishes of the region, but he didn't ask me about my mother's parish. He asked me about all their rival parishes.

*Q: At home and with your relatives, were you getting a good dose of Polish nationalism?*

SVEDA: Oh, yes, absolutely. My mother's family was largely absent in that regard. They were very Americanized and they didn't really want to discuss anything about the old world. In fact, I once asked one of my aunts what village her mother was from. She said that she had asked her mother once and her mother had refused to answer because she said she never wanted to hear the name of that place again. She knew if she told her daughter, she would hear it again. So, they were absolutely adamantly turning their back on Central and Eastern Europe and wanted to be American.

My mother's family, on the other hand, was very different. My grandfather was a very successful businessman. In 1927 on his 25th wedding anniversary, he made a triumphal visit back to his home village. He had worked on the estate of a great noble, as he kept telling my grandmother, and the family had been trusted administrators of this great noble up until that visit. After that visit, my grandmother told with great delight how the estate was really a rundown place. This great noble, who was wearing a fur jacket, was smelling from not having bathed and he asked for a handout from my grandfather. He had contributed as a very patriotic Pole a lot to the resuscitation of the Polish state after 1919 and before 1939. One of the things I've inherited is a gold medal from the Polish state which says in Polish, "For the rebirth of the nation" and honors him for his contributions.

My grandmother's family was a bit unusual. Her father had been a soldier fighting with France in the Franco-Prussian War. He was a Polish soldier who, like many Poles, was a mercenary. He lived in France for a while. To our horror in recent years, we have found that he fathered a family in France. Then he went back to Poland and started my grandmother's family. There were several girls. My grandmother decided to come to America after she became a schoolteacher at about age 16 or 17. She said this was because she hated lentils. She had lentils in the morning, lentils in the afternoon, lentils in

the evening. She hated lentils and she wanted to go to a place where nobody knew what lentils were. She had read about Odysseus, who settled ultimately in a place where nobody knew what a war was. So, she carried in her pocket a little purse filled with lentils. If people knew what they were, she moved on. She first landed in Boston. They knew what lentils were. She got to Passaic, New Jersey, eventually. They did not know what lentils were. She stayed.

*Q: One always thinks of the Orthodox Church as sticking to lentils all the time.*

SVEDA: Well, she wasn't Orthodox. She was Catholic. Her brother was supposed to have come over to New York for the New York World's Fair in 1939. Because of the brewing possibility of Poland getting involved in the war that year, he decided to forego this trip and come the following year. It was a bad decision in personal terms, although in national terms maybe not. He was a major general in the Polish army and a cavalry commander – and I don't mean mechanized cavalry – I mean horse cavalry. He has the distinction of having led one of the last cavalry charges in history. People mock this not knowing that in 1939 German tanks – any tanks for that matter – were not very good. They got stuck in the mud. Horses did not. He survived the charge. Unfortunately, he was executed later at Katyn Forest by Stalin's people. My mother's other uncle on her father's side was killed by Stalin's troops when he refused to give up a cow which was the mainstay of his family's survival. He was bludgeoned to death by the Soviet troops. So, there is a feeling in the family, a rather personal feeling, of anti-communism.

*Q: I would imagine that at least at the home at this time, before 1945, you were getting very strong anti-communist and anti-Russian strains and also a very strong Catholic upbringing.*

SVEDA: Actually, Russian. As far as my grandfather was concerned, my mother had married a Russian. He was Russian Orthodox and not Catholic. Yet he grew to like my father very much. My father was a naval officer in World War II. In fact, I was conceived at the naval station in San Diego. When I learned that my family could have lived in San Diego instead of New Jersey as a young child, I was very upset.

*Q: Did you go to Catholic parochial schools before you went to the school near West Point?*

SVEDA: I went to public schools in Garfield, New Jersey, but the problem was that my mother after my father's death had to start working again as a schoolteacher. She really didn't want me untended. My grandparents were there, but she didn't want to have them as a day care facility and I don't think they were very interested in it. So, she came up with this solution of a boarding school.

*Q: At what age did you go to boarding school?*

SVEDA: It was at the beginning of third grade, so it was the age of seven. It was really too young.

Q: Tell me about the school.

SVEDA: The school had 120 students, all male, except for the day students. There were about 20 females that came in from the surrounding areas. We had a few day students. But the boarding students were all male. It was run by Italian nuns, the Halotines, which is an obscure order from Rome. The food was always of the highest quality. The Italian nuns who cooked had no idea how to cook badly. So, I developed a very fine appreciation at a very early age for food. They tried to vary it. It wasn't all southern Italian. We had southern Italian food maybe three days of the week. The other days was northern Italian food, which is closer to German, which is what they thought American food was. The teaching was done partly by nuns, partly by laypeople. It was a very good education. When I graduated in eighth grade, I won a gold medal from Cardinal Spellman in theology. That was a pleasant opportunity to meet the Cardinal.

*Q: Were you getting a pretty good education on the United States there, American history, that sort of thing?*

SVEDA: Absolutely superb. Mary McCracken [an author] noted somewhere that growing up Catholic, if one has a Catholic education, one seems to take the persecution of the Christians personally and one goes through the Middle Ages personally and the Renaissance personally and associates with history in a much more personal way than one might otherwise in public school. World history was always a very big consideration for us. I remember in sixth grade, my world history book had a lovely two-page rendition of Notre Dame Cathedral viewed from the south. I spent a number of happy hours learning every window and every buttress of that cathedral, drawing it until I got it right. I've always appreciated that aspect of my education, the exposure to art, the exposure to music. We had music, of course, as it was an Italian school. We learned how to read musical notation. We learned all the Italian terms. We had courses in art. It was really very, very good.

*Q: It sounds like a very thorough education. Did West Point enter into the picture at all?*

SVEDA: Yes, our military instructors were from West Point. They were people who advised on how to drill in those peculiar 18th century forms that our military likes to use on the drill field. The marching really was something that was necessary in 18th century combat. You had to have people turn on a dime, follow unspoken orders because you couldn't be heard. However, this is wildly anachronistic in the time of trench warfare and indeed electronic warfare, but we like to maintain that.

*Q: It makes a nice show.*

SVEDA: When I was in Air Force ROTC in college – and Bill Clinton was also in the Air Force ROTC in my unit – we learned to march. At the time, there was some discussion as to why the Air Force ever needed to learn to march. What? Across the tarmac to the airplane?

*Q: It's a good way to get people from point A to point B.*

SVEDA: Yes. Without embarrassing everybody. Even so, the French, when the Americans marched into Paris, observed "These Americans march like cats."

*Q: Eighth grade would have put you in mid-high school?*

SVEDA: Yes. I was always a little bit younger than my class because I had started school at four and a half because my mother had friends who overlooked New Jersey state law which required all students to be at least five. This way, I was able to get in school at that earlier time. It was actually probably better for me. I entered competition for high schools in the New York area. There was no possibility of my going to a public high school in the New York area. That is considered by Catholic people as being a lack of interest in their children to send them to public schools because the public school is usually not as good as the private schools. I got into a number of private schools in New York state but my mother didn't really want me to commute to New York each day, to the Bronx, or to Xavier in Manhattan. I had also gotten into a place called Seton Hall Prep, which was then in South Orange, New Jersey. It was affiliated with Seton Hall University. I spent four years there.

*Q: What was Seton Hall Prep like?*

SVEDA: Seton Hall Prep is run by diocesan priests, the Archdiocese of Newark, not run by an order like the Jesuits or the Franciscans. It was as good an education as most students receive in college. I received a very thorough education. I think the most important thing I learned there was how to write, how to write in proper academic form with all footnotes, understanding all the abbreviations, and not only the form but the content as well.

*Q: One doesn't major, but one does concentrate in high school. Was there any area of your concentration?*

SVEDA: Our concentration was in getting into a good university. That was the sole reason for our existence as far as we were told. One of my teachers remarked that the only two things you really need to know in college probably are shorthand and typing and those are the two subjects which the school did not teach because it was academic and they taught Latin, Greek, and foreign languages. I took Russian, French, in addition to Latin. We also had arts courses and music courses.

*Q: What about social? Were you restricted in society at the time? Catholics went with Catholics…*

SVEDA: Everybody in the New York area who was non-Jewish becomes to some degree Jewish. There was a lot of interchange with Jewish people, our friends and neighbors, people who ran shops, people we saw all the time. So, socially, there was that interaction. Generally speaking, aside from family interactions, we kept to people we knew in school. Generally, we inevitably socialized with other Catholics. In fact, to show you how isolated this was, when I went to college at Georgetown, my first class happened to be taught by a man named Professor Miller, teaching history. At the end of the class, I went up to him and said that I had a very good friend in high school whose name was Miller, from South Orange, New Jersey, and I wondered if per chance he was related to the Millers of South Orange, New Jersey. He looked at me and said, "No, why do you ask?" I said, "Because Miller is such an uncommon name." He laughed. I didn't know why he laughed because in my school of 1,000 students, there was only one kid named Miller and there was one kid named Smith. Smith was Irish. Miller was originally German. Those were unusual names.

*Q: By the time you were in high school, this would have been what period?*

SVEDA: The major events for us were the Kennedy presidency. I was very interested in politics at an early age. In 1960, I spent a lot of time volunteering for Nixon's headquarters in Newark, New Jersey, doing gofer, campaign type work, and was very disappointed when Kennedy won. I had some ambiguous feelings because after all, Kennedy was Catholic and he was very attractive. My views on Kennedy changed rather much after the inaugural address.

*Q: What would attract you as a Catholic from New Jersey to Nixon?*

SVEDA: My mother's family was very Republican. They considered the Republicans to be more "American." I guess they saw this as part of their assimilation that they would support the Republicans, who were the party of business - my grandfather was a major businessman – as opposed to the Democrats, although they had an affection for Franklin Roosevelt, who basically considered himself a Republican.

*Q: Did you get trotted off to the Polish hall when you went to high school?*

SVEDA: There was such a thing, but it was considered a little bit déclassé, so we didn't do it, although there was one wedding that I attended which was really in two parts. The first part was a formal dinner with a formal polonaise which entered the place where the formal dinner was. There was dancing afterwards. Everybody was very well dressed. Then the second party, which ran all night, was at a Polish people's home, and that had a polka band and people were much more casually dressed. There were huge tables flowing with kielbasa and other foods. This was something that… The contrast struck me. I really preferred the second one. My mother said that she was very sorry for me and my

generation growing up because her generation had so much more fun. I asked her what she meant and she said, "You know, when we were growing up as kids, there was a wedding every Saturday and every Sunday at the Polish people's home, and not just one Polish people's home, but several. We would float as preteens and teenagers from one to another and we were always welcome. Of course, our crowd was always there. So, we had parties every weekend while we were growing up and we had a very close grouping of people who stayed together." I think the reason why my father and mother didn't stay in California when the war ended was because they had such a full and rich assortment of friends and relatives. I was never able to sort out who were the friends and who were the relatives. I remember once asking my mother how I was related to my Aunt May's niece. I was somewhat interested in her. Would it be possible someday to get married? I must have been 12 years old. She said, "You're not related to them at all. Aunt May is not your aunt. We went to school together." I just didn't know that.

*Q: What about world events? Were you following the politics of the day?*

SVEDA: Goodness yes. We certainly couldn't escape watching television. We would all gather for the evening news wherever we were – the evening news with Walter Cronkite or with the two who were on NBC, David Brinkley and Huntley. This was a sacred time. To watch the news was considered a matter of great responsibility. I remember, for example, watching with my grandfather the coverage of the death of Stalin in 1953. I knew that it was important. It was obviously a matter of intense interest to my grandparents, so I watched with a certain amount of attention. The year before, at the age of six, I watched the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with a certain fascination. In 1958 when we were on vacation in Florida, I remember when the President sent troops abroad to Lebanon. I remember seeing some transport ships off the coast of Hollywood, Florida, and wondering whether they were going to Lebanon, unlikely as it seems. They were probably barges, not transport ships. So, 1960 came around and I became intensely interested in what the Kennedy administration was doing and the formulation of the Peace Corps. When I was in high school, I decided when I was a senior that I would have to map out the next 10 years of my life. The next 10 years of my life I thought would include four years in college (That was a given). three years getting a law degree, two years in Peace Corps. That didn't quite add up to 10, but it was close enough, so I just thought, "Well, one year, who knows what?" More or less, that's what I wound up doing.

*Q: You went to Georgetown. Why Georgetown?*

SVEDA: Georgetown because it was the center of political activity. The Kennedy administration had greatly increased interest in government as a worthwhile pursuit. Even though I still had some feelings that I might be a Republican, I thought that this was the place to be. I wanted to have a career in politics, so Georgetown was the place to go. At about the same time, Bill Clinton was there getting advice from his career counselor in Arkansas that Georgetown was the place to go because it was the major university in the nation's capital and if he was interested in a career in diplomacy, as he said he was, that was the place to go.

*Q: You were at Georgetown from when to when?*

SVEDA: From September of 1963 to June of 1967.

*Q: What was the educational setup at that time? What were you taking as a freshman?*

SVEDA: Georgetown had different colleges. I was in the College of Arts and Sciences. Someone like Bill Clinton would have been in the School of Foreign Service. Then there was a School of Linguistics, a nursing school, and a business school. The College of Arts and Sciences had a classical liberal arts program, what the Jesuits called the tribuum and the quadrennium based on the medieval divisions of the sciences and the arts. Don't ask me which is which. The school required science, required math (even though I had no interest in science or math). We also had, whether you liked it or not, a minor in theology and a minor in philosophy. We studied foreign languages, history (History is my major and government was my official minor). So, I studied a lot of history.

*Q: While you were at Georgetown, did the greater Washington penetrate?*

SVEDA: Goodness gracious, yes. I think it was the first week that I was at Georgetown that one of my new friends from New Jersey, Wayne Citron, boasted to me that his father, who was an official in Union County, New Jersey, was a very close friend of our senator at the time, Senator Harrison Williams, Jr., and would I care to go with him to the Senate to meet the Senator because Wayne's father had wanted him to say hello to the Senator. So, I thought, well, why not, I'm happy to meet a senator. So, I went down to the Capitol with him and we met with the Senator very briefly. Right after that, one of the senator's aides, a guy named Steve Weinstein, asked us if we wanted to volunteer for the Senator's office; it would be a great opportunity for us to volunteer. Wayne thought, no, he had to devote attention to his studies, which was probably the wiser course. But I thought, well, why not? When does an opportunity like this come back? So, I started volunteering. I was so diligent about showing up that they wound up giving me a paying position. I kept that for two years until I began to devote more attention to my studies.

*Q: Wasn't it rather difficult to have an academic career while doing this?*

SVEDA: Yes, and I failed to do so. I did not do well in my first year. I did a little bit better in my second year. By that point, however, Kennedy had been assassinated and I had gone through a kind of conversion experience. Senator Williams was an active Democrat. At first, I worked with a certain detachment, but then in November of that year, my freshmen year, when Kennedy was assassinated, my views changed rather abruptly. I realized that some ideas that had been in my mind the previous months that I had been working in the Senator's office really precipitated. Ever since then, I've been a very loyal and enthusiastic Democrat, although I don't usually talk about it very much.

*Q: What were you doing in the Senator's office?*

SVEDA: The first thing was to help with the opening and sorting of mail, the distribution of mail to the relevant people. When there were canned replies to a lot of the incoming mail, to arrange for them to get that. Also, the first day or so that I was there, one of the secretaries with her teeth gleaming at me, said, "Wouldn't you love to learn how to run a mimeograph machine?" I said, "Yes, of course, I'd love to learn how to run a mimeograph machine." The other secretaries were all very happy about this. Their teeth were gleaming, too. I didn't catch on until I ruined a couple of shirts with a mimeograph machine. This is a copying machine that used a gel. You had to type without a ribbon without a gel and the metal type would cut little holes through the gel and then you'd put this on an ink drum and the ink drum would run off copies. This was very fine except for the fact that the letter 'o' and the letter 'a' and the numeral '0' and several others had little holes that would fall out and the holes would drip ink. So, you'd get this peculiar dripping. It was almost inevitable. Those first months there were quite an experience for me because President Kennedy gave weekly press conferences and they were broadcast live. We would watch him in the office. The feeling of interest was quite electric. The secretaries and the staff people and the administrative aides, including Gerry Studds, who was later a congressman from Massachusetts and since has retired, we would all stand around and watch this highly entertaining exchange between the President and the press.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the workings of Congress, particularly of how the staff works?*

SVEDA: Oh, yes. How a congressional office divides up its tasks. You have the administrative people, the legislative people, the case people. The case people are probably the most important people as far as the member was concerned because they handled things such as immigration, labor benefits, social security, veteran's benefits. These are the only things that their constituents really care about intensely. So, these were the hot button issues as far as the member was concerned. They had to be handled well. In fact, for a while, I worked with one of the case workers in the Senator's office. Her job was to send buck slips with the Senator's name on correspondence to the various federal agencies and wait for the replies and also to badger the federal agencies in the Senator's name and to reply to the constituents either by mail or by telephone whenever they communicated with us. So, I learned about the importance of that. As anybody who has been in the Foreign Service knows, this is a major function of any federal agency.

*Q: In a way, it makes the process work much more than almost anything else.*

*Did you get any feel on the policy matters, domestic or foreign, for how, were there people within the staff who were touting particular policies or was the senator pretty much in control of it?*

SVEDA: Senator Williams of New Jersey was an unusual member. He was very shy, shy to the point of retiring. He was so shy that other senators realized he would never grandstand for attention. The result of this, ironically, was that at the time, he had more

major bills under his sponsorship than any other senator, something that he used in his reelection. For example, he was chairman of the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee and chairman of Banking and Currency. So, you can imagine the legislation we went through. Mass transit legislation was the thing he was most proud of – that and Medicare. This was part of the Johnson revolution. Lyndon Johnson liked Senator Williams because he did not grab headlines and he got work done. In fact, one of the rewards was having the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, which was a very bad decision in retrospect. It really was not able to handle that. But it didn't seem to matter to anybody at the time.

But in terms of the question you asked, in terms of any interchange with the staff, this was something I never saw. I never saw any disagreement, any frank discussion (those were always behind closed doors and I was always excluded).

*Q: How about at Georgetown? Had the Kennedy arousal of interest in government hit the campus?*

SVEDA: Yes. Every third or fourth person was a potential president of the United States. The way this really affected us in practical terms was the civil rights struggle which was going on at about the time I entered – the march on Selma, but also the free speech movement at Berkeley was something that we were very aware of in 1962. I think the march on Selma was 1964. The whole civil rights movement, the effort to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and '65, I don't remember which year it was – whether it was '64 or '65 – I think it was '64 – but the southern senators opposed the civil rights act that was being proposed and it went to a filibuster. Students got together and mounted a counter filibuster at the Washington Monument grounds. There is a stage there. We were going to be on the stage giving our speeches against the senators who were blocking the civil rights legislation for as long as the senators would be doing that. My public speaking career in Washington began there. They knew I could speak for a while without stopping, so I got a two hours slot with an audience of one, an African American gentleman, an older man, who sat there and nodded and said "Amen" to everything I said. So, I just kept going.

*Q: Georgetown at that time was all male, wasn't it?*

SVEDA: The College of Arts and Sciences was all male. The School of Foreign Service and the other schools – Business School, the School of Linguistics – were mixed or all female.

*Q: Was there a strong Jesuit influence at that time? It's changed considerably.*

SVEDA: Oh, yes, there was a very strong Jesuit influence. The theology and philosophy courses were almost exclusively taught by Jesuits, but they taught a lot of other courses as well. They taught, for example, rhetoric. No one teaches rhetoric. They taught literature. Their presence was very strong. The presence of the Jesuits, however, usually is more of

an aura or an attitude than it is an actual direct influence. They create an atmosphere, which is one of absolute totally free intellectual input. They do not care really what you think about any given topic. They might have their preferences privately, but they're more interested that you're able to defend your position or another position with equal ease. There were a number of times when arguments in class would get heated between two students, one on one side and one on the other side. The Jesuit might snap his fingers and say, "Okay, I want you to calm down now and I want you to take the other person's position and defend the position that you were just now angrily attacking." There would be protests and then the priest would say, "Well, you either do this or you don't get a grade," so they would calm down. Then there would be a defense of the other position. We had weekly debates at our debating society, parliamentary debates. You had to know how to hold the floor.

This meant that you could get up and debate any question and hold the floor as long as you could hold the floor. People could interpolate with questions – rude questions. But it was very interesting training for us in public speaking. Sometimes the questions were silly like "Resolve that tomato is a fruit and not a vegetable." But other times, they involved the civil rights, Vietnam…

*Q: What about the free speech movement that came out of Berkeley? What was the issue?*

SVEDA: This was in the fall of 1963. The issue at Berkeley as I understand it was whether people who had tables on Sproul Plaza at Berkeley could use foul language. I forget exactly why this was an issue, but the issue became a serious one where Governor Ronald Reagan sent troops to put down the demonstrations which became increasingly loud and violent. It was a very interesting moment. I think what was happening was, a generation, the baby boomer generation, was beginning to feel its power of numbers and yet did not have a legitimate issue to champion. This later became the Vietnam War issue. But at that time, it was an angry group of younger people looking for something to pick a fight about.

*Q: It struck me that being able to curse in public didn't seem like something to go to the barricades about.*

SVEDA: They just wanted to go to the barricades and they would have gone to the barricades over anything. This was a trivial issue.

*Q: Were there any issues that were really…*

SVEDA: At the time, I remember, the only African American member of my class, who is now a politician here in Washington, DC, before he dropped out of our freshman class because he thought that the whole school was racist, argued with me that I could be the Mario Savio of Georgetown if I wanted to be. Mario Savio was the leader of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. I looked at him blankly because I didn't have any interest

in that kind of publicity or notoriety. I just didn't understand what he was talking about at all.

*Q: Were there any issues such as birth control and that sort of thing? This would strike me as being a very good thing to challenge the university establishment with.*

SVEDA: No. There were other issues.

*Q: Women weren't raising their voices.*

SVEDA: It was not something that was on our radar screen. But on a personal level, I was beginning to come to terms with the fact that I'm gay. The way that it expressed itself was a profound discomfort over the Catholic Church's position on masturbation, a profound discomfort because technically whenever we did this, we had to confess it before going to Communion. This became increasingly difficult for me to accept. I couldn't understand why this was an issue. By the end of my junior year, the beginning of my senior year, I had pretty much cut any connection with the Catholic Church. I felt that if this was such a big issue, obviously, it was not for me. If it was such a big issue, then obviously there was something wrong with my affiliation. So, I just basically convinced myself that I was an atheist and changed my mind, but that's part of a longer story.

*Q: Was there an equivalent to a gay movement in Georgetown?*

SVEDA: Oh, good heavens, no. There was nothing even remotely like that. The 31st anniversary of the Stonewall uprising was celebrated this year. In 1969, on the death of Judy Garland, who is admired by many gays, especially those who are transvestites, there was a crowd that formed mourning her death at the Stonewall Inn, which is at Sheridan Square just off 7th Avenue in Greenwich Village where Christopher Street meets that avenue. Police went to raid this because gay bars were illegal. To the astonishment of everybody, these drag queens, mostly Puerto Ricans, fought back. It led to four days of rioting which were put down ultimately by the police. But it is for gays and lesbians the beginning of political activity. At the time that occurred, I was teaching Peace Corps volunteers in Hawaii. I really was completely unaware of what was going on. I was in Hawaii and it might have been reported, but I didn't think it related to me in any way. You see, prior to Stonewall, which is a major turning point in gay consciousness, gays were very closeted. To admit to yourself that you were gay was to inflict upon yourself a double life, a life where you could not admit to anybody in the outside world that you were gay but you had to live in this kind of underworld, this secret world, where you were always afraid of being disclosed. The society was so hostile to gays. Myself, I had these gay feelings, but I thought it was a phase I was passing through. I thought that if this was indeed, as people said, "a choice," that I certainly didn't choose to be abnormal, so I couldn't possibly be gay because to be gay was to be horrendously abnormal. So, there was a very heavy amount of denial. In terms of my college years, I never acted on anything sexually. I had very intense friendships which I now realize were obviously gay

friendships, but nobody ever, ever acted on anything like that to my knowledge. Maybe they were, but I certainly didn't know about it.

*Q: When you were moving up towards '67, when you were in high school you had your 10 year plan – were you following it?*

SVEDA: Pretty much. By the time I came to the end of college, the Vietnam War was very active. I had already organized teach-ins against the war. At Dumbarton College (It no longer exists), there was the first public teach-in against the war in Vietnam. That was a 24 hour affair where we had professors and noted publicists, journalists, come and basically instruct us about what was going on in Vietnam. Obviously, it was all from the anti-war point of view, but it was gave us a body of information and a little bit of publicity.

In 1967 when I graduated (I graduated the very day that the Arab-Israeli War had broken out, which is another thing I remember), the concern was being drafted. Several of my friends had decided to go for Air Corps ROTC commissions. They would be officers and would perhaps be able to go to graduate school or law school and put off service two to four years, by which time we all believed that the war in Vietnam would be over. We could not imagine that the war in Vietnam would last beyond the 1968 election. The war was so unpopular. So, the idea was to find a place to avoid being drafted because we didn't want to be put in a position of fighting a war that we didn't believe in. My choice was to go into the Peace Corps, even though the PC did not guarantee a draft deferment. I was assigned to Korea. I taught English there in middle school, high school, and then later university.

*Q: This would be 1967-1969.*

SVEDA: Correct.

*Q: How did you get trained to go to Korea?*

SVEDA: In the summer of '67 just after I graduated college, they took us to a mountain top in Pennsylvania. The Westinghouse Corporation had gotten a contract to train us in Korean. This was only the third PC group that was going over. It was only the second year that they had been in Korea. Nobody knew how to teach Korean. It was never taught to foreigners. So, we had an interesting time learning Korean from instructors who were just trying to figure out how to teach their language, their very different language, to foreigners. One of the ideas that the organizer of that project had was to gather Korean children from graduate students, doctorates, people who were living in America, and bring them to this mountain top, which was Blue Knob, a ski resort in the winter but largely abandoned in the summer, and train these little Korean kids in English. Our object was to learn how to teach English, so what better way to learn it than to do it? Problem was, when these kids got off the bus, maybe there were 80-100 of them, only two kids did not speak English and those two kids learned English in one to two weeks. So, we wound

up being camp counselors for a lot of cute kids who spoke English and we couldn't teach anything to.

*Q: When you went out, did you have any feel for Korean or for training?*

SVEDA: They taught us the wrong language. Korean is a language with many different levels. So, you were taught the language that professors might use to the president of the university or you might use appropriately to the grandmother of an emperor, but not what we needed to know on the street. So, we wound up speaking the equivalent of King James Bible English on streetcars and were getting what you might expect to be the reaction. That changed very quickly when we got in country and began to speak the more common speech.

*Q: You arrived there in 1967. Where were you assigned?*

SVEDA: I was assigned to a school that was run by Korean Presbyterians called Shinil High School on the outskirts of Seoul. It was endowed by a very wealthy Korean Presbyterian. It was a very modern school. I was their show foreigner.

*Q: What was Korea like when you arrived there?*

SVEDA: It's hard for me to imagine now that we're on the 50th anniversary of the start of the Korean War (That was this Sunday). The thing that's hard for me to imagine now at age 54 is that I went there at age 21 only 13 years after the Korean War. Thirteen years ago was 1987. That doesn't seem very long ago for me. In fact, it's just a blink. The longer I got, the more the blinks seem to cover. But it's hard for me to imagine how as a 21 year old, thinking the Korean War was pretty much ancient history how alive it must have been in the minds of the people I encountered every day. I saw war damage still around. Korea when I arrived was a very poor country. Korea was so poor that whenever we turned on the electric hotplate, we threatened to brown out the neighborhood. Korea manufactured hotplates. Korea manufactured Gold Star radios that looked like they had been made in the 1940s. No doubt, these were factories that had been brought over. Korea did not have a decent chocolate bar. I mention those three things because in 1967, that was Korea. In 1969 when I left PC, already things were changing. They began to make transistor radios and they had a very good chocolate bar. Later when I arrived at the embassy in 1975, I asked casually of one of the Foreign Service officers coming in from the airport, "And what does Korea now manufacture?" He replied, "You know the Sears catalogue?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Everything in it. I don't mean something like what is found in the Sears catalogue. I mean everything in the Sears catalogue." I thought, "Well, that's interesting." Then a couple of years after that, I bought my first computer and it was, to my great delight, made in Korea. So, in a period of 15-20 years, they went from a country that couldn't make a hotplate to a country that was making leading edge computers.

*Q: When you went there, did you have any feel for Korea or Koreans or was this a pretty exotic place?*

SVEDA: I remember in PC training before we really met the Korean instructors, the first night, we were going to have a Korean cultural evening. They were going to sing and dance and show us Korean costumes. Having studied some East Asian history but knowing very little about Korea, I was curious as to whether this culture and this language would be more Chinese or more Japanese. Korea was between the two. I was surprised and remarked upon it to my fellow PC volunteers that it was neither. It was something of its own. It was neither Japanese nor Korean. It had as many elements from China as Japan did and as many elements from… Well, nobody has as many elements from Japan as Korea does. But it was a very different thing than I expected. One thing I should say about PC training is that if you've ever seen the film "Hair," for me, that summer of training was like the experience of the army recruit who gets in with a group of hippies and basically has his life transformed. I came to PC training a very uptight and narrow, closeted person. I was very ambitious, very career oriented. Most of the people who were there in PC training with me, it seems were from California and had entirely different attitudes. They had been harbingers of the summer of love. 1967, in fact, was the summer of love.

*Q: Woodstock and all that.*

SVEDA: Yes. I went that summer on the way out after my PC training, in October, through San Francisco for the first time. I stayed in Haight Ashbury with another PC volunteer who has since become a Foreign Service officer. I had never experienced jet lag before, so I, attending a party in Haight Ashbury fell asleep on a bed where some people had put their jackets, and I guess they assumed I had overdosed on something, but I never had any drugs at all; I just had jet lag.

*Q: Now there are Koreans just about everywhere in the U.S. You and I had contributed to this when we were doing immigrant visas. But had you ever run across any Koreans in the U.S.? Had they crossed your radar at all?*

SVEDA: Absolutely not. I had never met a Korean in my life. I had known about them. They crossed my radar because my uncle, Mike, who was a CIA agent, had served in Korea in the early 1960s. He specialized, I think, in overthrowing governments. Whenever Mike was sent to one country or another, there was always a new government. He arrived there in '60 and by the time he left there in '62, there had been a coup and Park Chung Hee had taken over. Then he went on to Laos and Vietnam and bigger and better things. He had lived in Korea and gave me my first impressions of the Koreans just from the letters that he had sent back. I got the impression that they were very engaging people. He was Polish by ethnicity and he said that they were very close to the Poles but they were sometimes called the Italians or specifically the Sicilians or the Irish. So, ultimately, he said they were the Poles, the Sicilians, the Irish, the Orient, by which he

meant that they were effusive, very friendly, very quick to tell you honestly whether they liked you or disliked you, and were probably very volatile. Also they were romantic.

When I got my invitation to the PC and it happened to be an invitation to a PC training project for Korea, the first person I called was my uncle, Mike. I said, "What should I do" and he just said, "Take it. Don't hesitate."

*Q: I went there at the worst of times. I was in the Air Force as an enlisted man and I was sent to Yonsei University in Seoul. There weren't any students there. This was '52. The place was absolutely flat. We shared it with Korean Air Force enlisted men. I liked them immensely. You shoved them, they shoved you. They loved our dehydrated potatoes in the mess hall, which I couldn't stand. I think most Americans really adapt to the Koreans, much more than to the Japanese.*

SVEDA: They're very different.

*Q: At least on the surface anyway, they seemed to be more interesting.*

SVEDA: The Koreans were definitely an extroverted culture. The Japanese are a very introverted culture, so there is that distinction right there. The Japanese I understand from a missionary I met there… He had lived there for 22 years with his family. He was leaving Japan. I asked him casually how many Japanese friends he had. He said, "I'm not sure." You could never say that about Koreans.

*Q: On the PC thing, this was '67. The anti-war movement was picking up. Did you have the feeling that PC was an anti-American government establishment as far as student ranks?*

SVEDA: We had a particular problem, those of us who were against the war in Vietnam, with comparisons between Korea and Vietnam. For many of us, Korea was a justifiable war, much more justifiable than the Vietnam War. This was in part because it had indeed been successful and the Vietnam War was not perceived as something that could be successful. It's much different fighting a war on a peninsula which you could cut off by your own navy versus fighting a war in a country with a porous border. There was a great hostility toward the American military.

*Q: In your group, was there hostility towards the American government, the State Department and what have you?*

SVEDA: Yes, there was. The U.S. government, both civilian and military, were perceived by us as propping up the Park Chung Hee dictatorship and working hand and glove with the Park Chung Hee dictatorship. One instance of that which angered us was when the Park Chung Hee government decided to build a road, a modern, interstate highway-type road, between Seoul and Pusan, the northernmost city and the southernmost city, with trunk lines going out to other cities. We thought, those of us in the PC, that this was

absolutely insane. Korea had a wonderful train system which had been left it by the Japanese. Why go into building roads for a country where there were no cars, when only the military and their rich friends had cars, and this road would disrupt village life, cutting off one village from another, it would disrupt natural means of getting goods to market, and would destroy the fabric of Korean life. We were wrong. We were gloriously wrong. By the time I got back to the embassy in 1975, the economy of the country had been transformed largely because of this excellent road system.

*Q: Park Chung Hee represented a quandary for many of us.*

SVEDA: He was a nasty person but he was a necessary person in retrospect. Park Chung Hee was a military dictator who knew that his military had to have the wherewithal to meet the North Korean threat. At that time, North Korea was perceived as being a much stronger military power. Park Chung Hee did not want Korea to be dependent upon the United States. Frankly, he did not trust the United States. He thought we would sell Korea down the river if it became inconvenient the way we were, in his view, selling Vietnam down the river. So, he embarked on a program of building military industries where they would have proper optics manufacturing, jet engine manufacturing. They actually produced titanium, so titanium was there in Korea and was useful for military purposes. There is a man named Samuel Huntington who has argued that the military is not necessarily a bad thing to have running a country when they want to modernize quickly because the military, of all the parts of society, are the ones who are most aware of what's going on in the outside world technologically and the ones who realize they cannot fool around. If they perceive they have a real threat from a more advanced country, they are going to do their best to have a modern logistics system, modern weaponry, and whatever else they need. South Korea always had this threat hanging over it. It was an obsession. We could not forget the fact that Seoul was as far away from North Koreans as Washington, DC is from Baltimore, which is to say a good 35-40 minute drive with traffic. I don't know how the traffic would be because if the North Koreans had attacked, all the traffic would have been moving south.

*Q: You arrived in Seoul-*

SVEDA: With a death threat, by the way, announced at Panmunjom over the loudspeakers by the North Koreans. They had learned that there was a group of American spies who were coming in and they announced that these spies would all be found and shot to death.

*Q: Did that encourage you?*

SVEDA: It didn't really affect us very much. We just realized how serious the whole business was. The one thing that did really scare us – the only thing that happened while we were there – was, in February of 1968 we happened to have a conference in Seoul in a kind of hotel retreat house. While we were having our conference, we were up on the roof one afternoon or evening because we heard popping sounds in the distance. We later

learned that this was an attack by commandos who got as far as Park Chung Hee's mansion in an effort to assassinate him. This was something that scared everybody because it was very real.

*Q: Did you have any contact later on with the embassy?*

SVEDA: The only contact between the PC and the embassy was the PC director, Kevin O'Donnell, who would go over to the embassy to meetings every so often. But the PC office was quite separate and we really tried to keep as separate as possible from the embassy in order to establish our credibility. I was at the PC office quite often because, after hours, I edited the PC's magazine. It had been a newsletter but I turned it into a monthly magazine, a glossy magazine with photographs and articles for the PC volunteers. My position as an editor was that I would never reject any copy or any photographs. I never guaranteed that I would publish them the same month they were received, but I always had material. I felt it was a very worthwhile thing to do for morale purposes and also for communicating what we were doing to Korean officials and American officials.

*Q: Did you feel you'd better make damn well sure not just for the credibility but just for your own minds that you're not going to have contact with the embassy or the military?*

SVEDA: We distinguished ourselves from the military the way St. Johns University students distinguished themselves from Annapolis students in Annapolis, Maryland. We had different hair length. Some of us had facial hair. We had a different way of dressing. The only times that I was on a military base in my two years in PC was once when we were invited for a Thanksgiving dinner by one of the local bases. I was struck by how people who eat meat regularly smelled different from people like us who did not. The second time I was on a military base was Workabee City, our most forward base, where I had an evening where I talked to soldiers about what PC did. I was surprised at how friendly the reception was. I was on my best behavior and I didn't indicate any hostility. I was trying to be friendly and make them friendly toward us.

*Q: Let's talk about the teaching. What was your impression when you got started and how did you operate?*

SVEDA: I was the show foreigner teaching English in this model school the first year. The first semester, I had about 9 classes of 50-60 students in the middle school and 9 or so classes in the high school of equal numbers. Now that I think about it, I had an 18 hour teaching schedule. I was befuddled at how I could possibly teach English… I also had a very difficult time with the very strong religious orientation of the school. They wanted me to attend weekly church services somewhere, visibly, on Sunday. They wanted me to attend services for the faculty at the school on Wednesday morning. I found this a little bit too pressing. At the time, I considered myself an atheist. I found myself drifting over to the PC volunteers who were teaching at Sogong, a Jesuit school on the other side of the city. The school was started by Jesuits from Marquette University and they had a number

of what they called Jesuit volunteers there. There were four or five people who had come from Marquette to teach at Sogong for a year or two. They were given housing and the same kind of minimal salary that PC volunteers had. I found this a very, very congenial group of people. We also had a couple of PC volunteers teaching there. The person who had helped set up the English teaching program for PC Korea was a Jesuit from Marquette University, Father Jerry Brunick. He was a very fine man who had a very good friend, a Korean dissident under house arrest, a man named Kim Dae Jung, now the president of Korea. Kim Dae Jung was taught English by two of our PC volunteers, Dave Garwin and Doug Reed. Kim Dae Jung asked that Doug be given a job at the Korean embassy here in Washington when he became president and Doug has been working at the Korean embassy. So, our PC effort taught Kim Dae Jung English. It also gave a certain amount of U.S. government attention to Kim Dae Jung's plight because PC volunteers were visiting him on a daily basis. I think he appreciated that attention. The Korean government did not know that we were not working hand in glove with the military and with the embassy. They assumed we were. Later on, when I was a graduate student at Columbia when Kim Dae Jung was exiled, he taught at Columbia and I had him as a teacher in my Korean political science class.

*Q: Did you find that this was all show?*

SVEDA: In the middle school and the high school, I thought it was all show. They had good teaching there, but there was no way that you could teach 1500 students a week anything. I did have problems with that. At Sogong, it was a very different story. The students were all learning English. Classes were never larger than 15-20 students and instead of having 45 minute sessions, they divided the hour into two sections. The first section was a 20-25 minute language lab, which you had to attend if you were a student before you had the 20-25 minute session in a smaller class with the native instructor. So, native instructors like myself never saw a student who was not prepared via the language lab. We made the narrow assumption that the students would not study outside of class. So, we figured out how we could force them to study before class. So, instead of having a 50 minute period with 30 students, I had a 15-20 minute period with 15 students and it was very effective. Sogong very quickly gained the reputation as the only school in Korea which actually taught people how to speak English.

*Q: As editor of this magazine, what were the reactions in the earlier days of the PC in Korea that you were getting from the volunteers, particularly away from Seoul?*

SVEDA: We had two kinds of volunteers. We had health volunteers and we had English teacher volunteers. The health volunteers worked on TB control projects. The education volunteers were there to teach Korea how to teach English effectively. This was not something that we saw as a colonializing mission. Of course, there was an argument that could be raised that we were trying to colonize the country. There was that criticism, but we dealt with that because we said very simply that Korean is a very difficult language, Korea is not a very rich country, and if Korean medical researchers are to have access to the latest medical research, they would have to know English or another world language.

The same went for Korean technology, Korean business, what have you. No one was going to bother to learn Korean, or very few, and Korea was never going to be able to translate into Korean and publish in Korean everything that they needed to have. The other reason that we gave was that Koreans did not like to speak with the Japanese in Japanese nor with the Chinese in Chinese. In East Asia, the Chinese speak with the Japanese in English and the Koreans speak with the Japanese or the Chinese in English. The language of business in East Asia, like it or not, is English. So, that was access for the Koreans to be in the business world in East Asia.

*Q: Were there demonstrations on dissidents or PC volunteers in your group particularly involved in that?*

SVEDA: No, not to my knowledge.

*Q: Was there a difference between those who taught in a large institution such as your college or middle school and those who were more out in the field?*

SVEDA: We all heard that from them. The ones who were in the big cities like Seoul especially always heard, "Oh, well, we're Seoul volunteers." We have running water. We could go to a movie theater and actually see a movie. We could go to a shop and buy food or whatever, whereas people who were in the smaller villages were more isolated. We heard that but it didn't really make very much of an impression on us. There were some very funny cases of people who were put in truly out of the way places. One of them, who now teaches English at the University of Las Vegas in Nevada and won the Penn Prize for a novel he wrote about his PC experiences, Dick Wiler, found he was in a fishing village off the southeastern coast of Korea teaching English to fisherfolk who had no perceivable interest in using it. So, to amuse himself, he taught them Chaucerian English, a very strange sounding language. But he figured, well, they weren't going to use it anyway and if per chance a traveler came through that island and heard Chaucerian English spoke by the locals, it would be an interesting article in some paper.

*Q: Did you run across any problem of… We have the Park Chung Hee dictatorship. We acknowledge that it probably was good for the country at the time, but it certainly would run counter to any good PC volunteer coming out of an American university. Were you having to mind your manners or anything like that? Did you feel constrained?*

SVEDA: Oh, yes, and we knew that we were being watched and reported upon, but nobody really bothered us overtly that I can recall. I can't recall any PC volunteers who had political problems who were thrown out of the country at that time. Later, yes. Later when I came back with the embassy in 1975-1977, you did have problems. In fact, Doug Reed was thrown out of the country because of his contacts with Kim Dae Jung. There were others in that period.

*Q: Did you note any instances of how the Korean government or Koreans treated students or others that you were dealing with?*

SVEDA: Not on an individual level, but on a group level certainly. The Korean students at this middle school and high school that I was at were given military instruction, drills, physical education. The whole thing was a very militarized system. I found it repugnant in some aspects. For example, one day I was told there would be no classes because these students had to do their field exercises, literally exercises. They had to do running, pushups, pull-ups… They were going to be graded on them. Unless a student could do a certain number of pushups, the student would flunk physical education, which was part of military training, which was a very serious matter because they could get thrown out of the school perhaps. It turns out that there were a couple of students at the 1,000 student school who were physically handicapped. They didn't have wheelchairs, but they got around on crutches. The school prided itself on the fact that it was the only school in Korea that allowed cripples in. I thought that was a very good thing. They had their religious mission. But these students were required to do the 100 yard dash and the other physical things that they were absolutely incapable of doing. I protested this but to no avail. The principal of the school said, "Well, the law requires us to test them and they will fail. They will be in danger of expulsion. But we will take into consideration their special circumstances and ask for a reprieve from the Ministry officials." I thought this was a terribly demeaning and cruel thing to have to do, but there were many instances like that. It was part of the general Korean attitude of discipline. One day when I was in my teachers' room (and I have to explain that in the Japanese and Korean system, all employees share one long office with desks arrayed in rows in the rank order of precedence to the boss, who sits at the top), I was reading something at my desk. Only a few teachers were in the teachers' room. One of the teachers had come in with a couple of students and paid no attention to the middle school students. I heard a bonking sound and suppressed screams. I looked over and this teacher was hitting these kids on the head with a rod that was at least ¾ of an inch thick. The old rule of thumb in English law was that people were allowed to beat their wives with a stick no thicker than the thumb. That is where the term "rule of thumb" comes from. The kids were being bonked on the head. They could have sustained serious damage. I jumped up out of my chair and I ran to the teacher. I am 6'2" and the teacher was considerably shorter. I stood between him and the students. He raised his rod and was about to hit them, but I was there, so he dropped the rod in surprise. I picked it up and broke it over my knee and slammed the two parts of the rod on my desk and went out to the little shed where we had a hot stove, which was the only place that had heating in that whole school. They had a coal stove where tea was brewed and where we kept warm when we were really turning blue with cold. I sat there and a delegation came out to talk to me about 20 minutes later. One of the English teachers who had been my friend asked me, "Is there something wrong?" I said, "Yes, you know very well there is something wrong." He said, "That's okay, you can apologize to the teacher later and he will forgive you." I said, "Pardon me. Why would I apologize to the teacher who was beating the students?" He said, "Well, nobody, even the principal, was allowed to interfere in a teacher's relationship to his students. You interfered." Then I thought about the Korean cultural context and said, "Oh, but this man interfered with my kieun." Kieun is a Korean concept of mental harmony, happiness, placidity, outward control. Nobody really is allowed under their system of etiquette to intentionally disturb

your equanimity. I said, "Well, this man had disturbed my equanimity. I think that he should apologize to me for having done that." "Oh," they said. Then the delegation went back and another delegation came. This went back and forth for a while.

Then I decided I really did have to change schools. I went to Sogong University, which had a much more liberal attitude. Certainly nobody was ever beaten. It was really basically a branch of Marquette University in Seoul.

*Q: Let's stop at this point. We've come to 1969 when you left Seoul.*

SVEDA: I went on my trip across the Soviet Union by the Trans-Siberian and other means.

*Q: We'll talk about that and keep going.*

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*Today is July 6, 200. Russ, you took off across on the Trans-Siberian Railroad. How did you get there?*

SVEDA: In 1969, I went from Seoul, Korea, where I was a PC volunteer to Japan and traveled around Japan a bit. In fact, that was the summer that the Americans landed on the Moon. I remember watching that with astonishment from a Japanese inn. I really marveled at being able to watch this at all, and being able to watch it in Japan.

I went by boat from Yokohama to Malkwuka, on a Soviet ship. My father was a naval officer. I should never have called that a "boat." I went by a Soviet ship and my little odyssey began. I landed in Malkwuka and got off the ship and went to a little waiting area where they had a little souvenir stand. I was waiting to get on to the Trans-Siberian. I leaned over one of the display cases and as I leaned back, I noticed to my horror that my arm was bleeding. I had brushed against the unsmoothed surface of cut glass. The women who were there began yelling at me like "What did you think you were doing leaning against that glass case?" Of course, American that I was, it would never have occurred to me that anybody would put sharp glass as a glass case in a tourist area. That is where the whole thing began.

Basically, I went across the Soviet Union. The interesting thing was not so much where I was but how the Soviets reacted to a PC volunteer who spoke Korean going across. At a certain point, I got the general idea of the Trans-Siberian. I took a plane from near Kutz to Samarkand. When I landed in Alma Ata on the way over, I had this strange sense that I had a number of Koreans on the plane. They looked Korean. I thought, "Well, maybe it's one of the minority people of Central Asia." But I didn't think they could be Koreans. I got to Tashkent and saw more people who had that absolute distinctive Korean look. So, I asked the Intourist guide and she said, "Oh, yes, 11% of the population of Tashkent is Korean, 7% is this, 5% is this." I said, "Whoa, let's go back to the Koreans. What are they

doing here?" She said, "Well, they have huge collective farms near Samarkand." I said, "Well, I'm going there on my next stop." She said, 'Why are you interested?" I said, "Well, I just lived in Korea for two years." So, still doubting this, I went to the department store in Tashkent and in the ladies garment section, I saw unmistakable Korean traditional women's clothing and underwear. Having lived with a Korean family, I certainly knew what the stuff looked like on the line. I just was astonished. I got to Samarkand and found out that they were there, too. I asked the guide when I came in from the airport, "The Koreans, where do they live?" She said, "Oh, there are two very large collective farms." I said, "I don't really know if I'll be able to get out there." She said, "Well, probably not, but they're also selling rice in the farmers market." I went down to the farmers market and I saw this Korean, an older lady sitting on a donkey smoking a cigarette. I went up to her and asked her in Korean, "How much is this rice?" She answered me in Russian. I said to her in Korean, "I don't speak Russian. I speak English. I'm an American. And I speak your language." We got into a little conversation. It turns out that she and her people were from Mokpo in southern Korea, in the southwestern part, a very small and rough town. I said, "Well, I've been to Mokpo." She said, "No, you haven't." I said, "Well, I've climbed Yudalsan," which is a mountain in the town. She was astonished that someone actually knew the name of this town. She told me her story. They had been brought as slave laborers to Manchukuo by the Japanese in the 1930s. In 1937, they had escaped from Manchukuo across the border into Soviet Central Asia. Stalin, noticing these people who he probably thought looked Japanese moving into his territory, moved them as far away as he could think, which was Soviet Central Asia. They arrived in Uzbekistan and places like that at a historically propitious moment. They were probably asked by the locals, "What can you do? Do you know how to grow rice?" It seems that the Central Asian peoples, whose main dish is rice pilaf (or as they call it, "rice po"), didn't really know how to grow rice but had gathered it from swamps historically where they got it in trade with China or with India. But all that trade had been cut off. The population was rising. They really didn't have any good supply of rice. The Koreans built these huge electric lines and even colleges and some of them became quite well off in the Soviet Union.

Well, talking to Koreans in Korean excited the interest of the Soviet authorities. So, in my next stop in Volgograd (the old Stalingrad), as I got off the airplane, I noticed that there was not the usual Intourist guide, the usual woman, but there was a man who spoke flawless English with her and claimed to be a journalist and there were two other men who didn't seem to speak any language whatsoever who just watched him and her and just sort of hung around. The four of them took me on a tour of the battlefield but also brought me through a TV studio and wanted to interrogate me in a TV studio about my attitudes toward the Vietnam War. I sensed that there was something strange. I was only 23 years old. So, I began to talk about the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 as having been just as bad in my view as the war that was going on then in Vietnam. They didn't seem to like this very much.

In my next town, which was Moscow, actually nothing happened. But I got to Leningrad after Moscow and outside of the Hermitage, a strawberry blonde woman came up to me

and asked me if I was a foreigner and if I would marry her. I asked her how she knew I was a foreigner. She said, “Well, you’re wearing jeans.” I said, “Well, a lot of Soviets are wearing jeans.” She said, “Well, you’re writing in a notebook.” I said, “It’s a Soviet notebook.” She said, “Why would you be writing in a notebook if you were a Soviet? You’re a foreigner.” We paled around for three or four days and she became really importuning on marrying me. I more or less said, “No, I don’t have the time to do that. I’m only going to be here for two or three days. I don’t have the money to come back to the Soviet Union.” So, my next stop, my final stop in the Soviet Union, was Kiev. I get to Kiev and I am picked up at the railway, as usual, by an Intourist guide, direct to the hotel. As soon as I get into my hotel room, the phone rings. Who knows me in Kiev? So, I just let the phone ring. But as the phone was ringing and ringing and ringing and ringing, I decided that maybe I ought to just pick it up to stop it from ringing. There was a voice on the other end, somebody speaking very good English asking me if I would stay in my room because a reporter wished to interview me about my impressions of Kiev. I said, “Well, I’ve only been here about half an hour. To tell you the truth, I don’t have any impressions. Why don’t we talk tomorrow?” “Well, nevertheless, you will wait in your room and the reporter will be there.” So, the reporter came in wearing a trench coat (It was summer) and was probably in his mid-30s and was smoking one of those Soviet cigarettes that stinks. He sat down and began asking me about my trip in the Soviet Union. He already knew my itinerary, of course. He was particularly interested in my trip to Central Asia and my discussions with the Koreans there. Well, it was obvious that I was being interrogated. I guess it began around four in the afternoon and by around seven in the evening, I had told him everything I could about PC. He was convinced that the PC was a CIA organization. I looked at my watch and being the young American, I said, “Look, I have brought coupons for dinner and I must rush down to the restaurant because it opens at seven at closes at eight. If I don’t get there right away, I wont get fed. It takes a half hour to get the lady’s attention, a half hour to get the food. You’re lucky to do it before closing time.” He said, “Oh, well, no problem. We’ll stay here in the room and continue talking. We’ll just order up room service.” I said, “Wait. I can’t get food in a Soviet hotel restaurant and you’re going to be ordering room service?” He said, “What do you think? This is a normal and modern country.” He picked up the phone. He asked me what kind of food I wanted. I figured I’d better make points at this point, so I said, “Ukrainian food, of course.” He said something on the phone and about five minutes later came this cart laden with food and bottles of cognac. He signed for it and turned to me for a tip. I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “A tip. 50 kopeks is enough.” This really is a minimal amount of money. I realized that this guy was a government employee because he could sign the tab, but he couldn’t put on a tip. So, we talked the whole evening. Then around midnight or so, he said, “Well, we’ll continue tomorrow morning.” I said, “No, we won’t.” He said, “What do you mean, we won’t?” I said, “Because I will only be in Kiev for most of tomorrow and I really don’t want to miss Kiev.” He said, “Oh, well, I have a friend who has a car and he can drive you around and save a lot of time.” I said, “Fine.” It was a grey car, which was a distinctive color that was used only by the KGB. His friend had a two grunt vocabulary and seemed to be interested only in driving this grey car. We sat in the back and while we went through Kiev - it was a pleasant enough visit – he asked me a lot of questions, more about PC and Korea. He showed me a book

which he said proved that PC was a CIA prop. It was a book in Russian, but I could read the Cyrillic a bit. It said that PC had been expelled from Mozambique for CIA activities and PC had been expelled from another left leaning country in Africa for CIA activities. I said, "That's ridiculous. It would never work, not in this generation of PC volunteers. The unrest on the campus… If anybody ever thought for a second that PC was being used as a spy organization…" When he came back to the hotel room, he repeated all the questions that he had asked me in the car in a kind of a summary fashion. So, obviously, the car wasn't bugged but the hotel room was wired for sound. Then I left the Soviet Union.

Later on in my career, this interview was to be used against me by State Department security. They claimed that as a former PC volunteer and a perspective member of the Foreign Service, I put myself in a position that could have led to my being compromised. This was one of the things that they used against me. The way they knew about this was because I told them about this interview during the Foreign Service and they went through my file and found this and used it against me. My response was very simple, that I was a former PC volunteer and was not a U.S. government employee at that point, and I did not know… Maybe it was in the mind of God, but I didn't know that I would be a Foreign Service officer some six years later. But it was something that later wound up used against me.

*Q: The spirit of people of all nations, their own way of doing it. There is a certain almost cooperation between them.*

SVEDA: After the fall of the Soviet Union, they didn't have the name of this guy who interrogated me. Actually, I think I had given them a name, but they were able to check it up with the KBG (or whatever the KGB is now) and it turned out he was a KGB officer and not an unknown person. It was interesting. I went next to Budapest by train. When I got there, there was this woman in the train station with a young son, who was about 15 or 16. She was Romanian. She asked me if I spoke French and I did speak French. She wanted to change money. I was intensely suspicious at this point because I thought, "Well, I just got off the train and I don't have a place to stay in Budapest and here is this woman asking to change money, which I knew was illegal." But her story was that she was a Romanian dentist and she had studied in France and desperately wanted to get her son to France to study before he reached draft age in the Romanian army. She really didn't want him to be drafted. She would offer me a place to stay, but she needed the hard currency in order to buy a railroad ticket to Vienna. The Hungarians would only sell her, a Romanian, a ticket if she were to give them hard currency. So, I said, "Fine, I'll do it." The next day or the day after, she met me as I went to the train and she said that she decided not to get on the train because somebody had told her that the Hungarian authorities would arrest any Romanians or anybody else from the Soviet Bloc who were trying to leave Hungary illegally to Austria. I thought it was very, very sad but very real that people at that time could not travel the way I was traveling, freely.

*Q: When you got out of the PC, what were you up to?*

SVEDA: I really was up to nothing. I was very draftable. I didn't have any deferment from the PC, but my draft board decided not to draft me, which was very nice of them. I didn't really have anything to do. At that point, if you were classified 1A, if you were draftable. Nobody would hire you because nobody would know how long you would be around. So, not knowing what to do, I went to the PC office in Washington and just by luck got a job at the PC training center at the University of Hawaii training PC volunteers for Korea. That gave me a nice bridge back into the world of work. I went to Hawaii, to the Big Island, and to Oahu, and to the PC training program.

*Q: For how long did you do that?*

SVEDA: That was only really from August/September of 1969 until February of 1970.

*Q: And then what?*

SVEDA: Then I went back to New York. I couldn't imagine why my ancestors had decided to live in that climate. It was February and I had just come from Hawaii. I enrolled at the Columbia University School of General Studies. I had been trying to get into Columbia Law School, but I had been rejected a couple of times. So, I really didn't know what to do. I just thought, "Well, I might as well enroll in the School of General Studies and be drafted out of that" because it seemed to me that that was what was going to happen and it seemed to me also that I would be in a better position if I had been drafted out of graduate school than if I had just been drafted off the street in terms of getting back into graduate school. So, I drifted from that… I got a job at the dean's office at the law school in order to get my foot in the door there, a work study job. I also entered the School of International Affairs, now called the School of International Public Affairs, got my master's, eventually got into the law school and got my law degree. In 1975, I entered the Foreign Service.

I took the Foreign Service exam while I was at the School of International Affairs and while I was at the law school, passing each time but deferring entry into the Foreign Service. The third time I did that, the main question that the interviewers had during my oral exam was, "Mr. Sveda, do you ever really intend to enter the Foreign Service?" I said, "Yes, after law school." I wanted to finish my law degree and then go on into the Foreign Service, which is what I did.

*Q: By this time, the draft thing… I think there was a lottery and then they stopped the whole thing.*

SVEDA: The lottery was actually in the fall of 1969 when I was in Hawaii and my lottery number was disastrous. It was 60, which meant that of 365 possible days, probably everybody to 100 would be drafted. They did try to draft me the following year. I did have my draft physical, which I passed. Then I made an appeal to the draft board for a deferment on the basis of conscientious objector status. I objected to the war in Vietnam. When I sat before the board, they handed me this form that I had filled out and asked me

to sign it. They said, "We have the form here that you submitted, but you forgot to sign it. So, would you please sign it?" I said, "No, I will not sign it." They said, "What do you mean?" This was Bergen County, New Jersey. I said, "Look, the application says that 'I oppose war because of religious or deeply held philosophical principles. I oppose war in all forms.' I don't oppose war in all forms. In point of fact, I oppose only this war because it's an unjust war and in my religious tradition, the Catholic one, we have what's called the 'just war theory,' which was annunciated by St. Thomas Aquinas, a senior theologian, and I don't need to oppose all wars. I merely need to oppose what I consider an unjust war. So, your form by requiring me to oppose all forms is setting up a test of religion in contravention of the First Amendment of the Constitution." I got all these blank looks from these probably real estate agents or whoever served on the board. I made my argument at length and I never heard from the draft board again. They never reclassified me. But they never drafted me. I think somebody just took my forms and my file and just threw it in the garbage. I never heard from them.

*Q: Also, things were beginning to run down by then.*

SVEDA: Things were beginning to run down. In fact, the big surprise for me was leaving the United States in 1967 where the war in Vietnam was a hot issue and coming back to the United States in 1969 and finding that there was practically no disagreement on the war. Everybody thought it was a bad idea, it was a losing proposition – almost everybody. It was just a question of when we would get out, not whether we would get out.

*Q: The election of Nixon was going to end the war and essentially started withdrawing troops in 1969.*

SVEDA: Nixon had a secret plan, he said, to end the war in Vietnam. Forty years after the end of World War II, ABC TV had a series of interviews not about WW II (They said every other network was doing that), but about the 40 years since WW II. This was back in 1985. One of the people they interviewed was Richard Nixon. It was his first interview since leaving office, since resigning. The reporter who interviewed him, Ted Koppel, said, "Mr. President, I've always wanted to ask you this. In 1968 when you ran for President, you said that you had a secret plan to end the war in Vietnam. The election was a very close one. You may very well have won on the basis of that secret plan. I covered your presidency and I don't recall you ever pointing to anything after you became President and indicating that this had been your secret plan. Tell me just for my own satisfaction and my own historical interest, what was your secret plan?" Nixon smiled that funny smile of his and said, 'There was none." Koppel looked at him, astonished, and said, "You mean to say you lied to the American people?" Nixon just smiled and shook his head and said, "Well, political puffery. There was no plan."

*Q: Talk about your oral examination. Can you recall any of the questions?*

SVEDA: Oh, absolutely. The oral exam was very different than it has since become. Essentially, you were asked questions by three Foreign Service officers. In one of my

exams, they asked me about arms control. "Could you explain arms control issues for us?" I sat there and said, "No, I cannot. I know what I read in the newspapers. I know arms control perhaps at the level of Time Magazine, but I know enough to know that it's an extremely complicated topic which I am not competent to discuss." "Oh," they said, "Well, can you tell us about Brazil?" I said, "No, I cannot. I don't know anything about Brazil. It's a big country in Latin America. It speaks Portuguese. It's about the size of the United States in land area (and I gave them the population), but I don't know anything about Brazil." "Oh," they said, "Well, what do you know about?" I said, "I know about Korea." So, they said, "Tell us about Korea." I began babbling on about Korea. At a certain point, they said, "Okay, fine, we know you know about Korea." Then they asked me the cultural questions. The question was, "The governor of Tokyo has come to you. You're the cultural affairs officer in Tokyo. He has said that Americans have a very bad image in Japan. It's all chewing gum and grade B movies as far as the Japanese are concerned. Would it be possible for the American embassy to sponsor a cultural event where three symphony orchestras and conductors would be brought over, two sculptors, three painters to be exhibited. Just tell us what you would respond." I said, "Well, first of all, the governor of Tokyo happens to be a communist, so this is a very unlikely conversation, but accepting that this is the situation, I would send over Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, the very famous conductor with a very famous orchestra." While I was answering this, I realized I only knew one other conductor. I had just read an article about him in the New York Times Magazine. So, I said, "There is a young conductor named Michael Tilson Thomas, who would represent the younger generation of conductors and he's now at the Rochester Symphony, so we could send a lesser known symphony over. As for the third one, I think that we should go to some small town or university campus. I really don't know which, but some symphony that would be completely unknown to the Japanese, something that would show that we have culture down to our toes." They looked at me and they knew that I was just making things up, but they seemed to like it. They passed me. At the end of the exam, they said that I was unusually poised and unflappable for a candidate. I smiled at them and said, "Well, we're sitting in Rosslyn, Virginia and I went to Georgetown University. No Georgetown graduate could ever be intimidated in Rosslyn." They smiled. That was the interview.

*Q: You came in when?*

SVEDA: Vietnam had just fallen. There were no places to put us because all the people who had just fled Vietnam (literally) had been given all the openings that they had.

*Q: You took the A-100 course. What was it like?*

SVEDA: The A-100 course was in Rosslyn, Virginia. The A-100 course was essentially a holding pattern while they figured out what to do with us. They had lectures by people who came over from various divisions of the State Department. One person really bothered me. I treated him with perhaps shocking rudeness as far as my fellow A-100 class people were concerned. This was a man from the Consular Bureau who was in visas. He was going to talk to us about how to deal with Foreign Service nationals. His

way of doing this was to imitate the accents of people from India, Spain, China, what have you, as he went through this panel discussion where we each took the role of an Indian Foreign Service national or someone from Latin America or wherever else this man had served. I thought that this national stereotyping was completely out of balance for the State Department. I found it profoundly offensive. He thought it was very funny. He probably had a minor reputation in his circle as a standup comic. What I did as a protest was simply to sit in the back and I opened up the New York Times to its full width and I began reading it. At least one member of the audience at one point commented on that and I got into a sharp argument with him. I probably should have left the Foreign Service at that point because to my surprise, my A-100 colleagues thought I was wrong and that, while being out of bounds, I shouldn't have confronted him. I realized that I was joining a very non-confrontational group of people. I am somewhat confrontational. I had just come out of law school. I was very confrontational. So, I probably in retrospect should have just folded my mistake and wandered off at that point.

*Q: There is something to say about this… The Foreign Service is the business of diplomacy, which has the idea of smoothing down the edges and trying to come up to a compromise instead of a confrontation. One can argue both ways.*

SVEDA: My mother always taught me that a gentleman is never rude except on purpose and I was quite intentionally rude at that point with that one person. Looking back on my Foreign Service career, 25 years, I don't think I've ever had a confrontation like that ever with any colleagues, certainly with no foreigners. I have never really had any problems with any of the people I worked with.

*Q: Do you think this is a little bit coming out of law school where you're designed to be challenging? They train you to be an attack dog.*

SVEDA: They do.

*Q: Particularly at Columbia or someplace like that.*

SVEDA: Wall Street preparation.

*Q: You have to learn how to deal with New York taxi cab drivers. You had probably come under a somewhat different attitude than if you had come from the University of Nashville or something like that.*

SVEDA: Absolutely. One thing I should say about the law school experience is that I had my background security check when I was at the law school. I left the law school and went directly to the Foreign Service. This security person interviewed my law school roommates and asked specifically whether I was a homosexual. At that point, I was very positive, certainly to my roommates. My roommates just basically laughed in his face. They thought the question was absurd. The same person asked one of my mother's neighbors if I was a homosexual and he at the time, according to her, was sitting in her

kitchen, and when he asked the question, she got a broom out of her closet and threatened him with the broom if he would ever ask such a question about such nice people who live next door and she threw him out of her house. That seems to have settled the question as far as security was concerned on that point.

*Q: I haven't asked why law school and then the Foreign Service?*

SVEDA: Because I wanted to go to law school. I didn't really want to go to the Foreign Service. What I always wanted to do was to practice international law, whatever that was. I thought that the way to do that was to go to a school like Columbia that had a very good international program. My view of the Foreign Service was that it was a way to get international experience. I never intended to spend more than five years in the Foreign Service. But I told myself that after five years I would look at the landscape and see what it was like and maybe I would go into private practice or maybe I would stay with the Foreign Service. I wouldn't prejudge it. I would give it at least five years. At the five year point, I was in the Operations Center and had just been offered a position in Moscow after language training in Rosslyn, Virginia, and Garmisch, Germany. That seemed like a pretty good deal to me, so I put the question off.

*Q: The Foreign Service is seductive. I'm stating my prejudice, but I've always felt that as essentially a professional consular officer dealing with law, the worst thing in the world is to have a young Foreign Service officer coming in with a law degree. They begin to see the ins and outs of law rather than a rough and ready way of dealing with it and solve the problems of Africans coming up to you and that kind of thing.*

SVEDA: That's an interesting question. It's something I hadn't thought of. I'll tell you how I actually used my legal education as a consular officer working for you in the consulate general in Seoul. I can think of two instances. One involved a woman who came to me with two Eurasian children. She was Korean. She was applying for a visa. The problem was this. She had been married to an American officer who had been killed on the DMZ. About 20 American soldiers are killed on the DMZ each year. We don't talk about it, but it happens. She had two children by this American military officer, who were both American citizens. She was applying for an immigrant visa. The problem was that her children could not petition for her until they were 21. She was applying for maybe third preference or something. She was not applying as the mother of these children, as an immediate relative, or indeed as the immediate relative of anybody in the United States. I realized that she couldn't get the visa in all probability. Whatever she was applying for, she wasn't really eligible, but I thought about it and said, "What I'm going to do is write the Department and ask them to overlook a fact in your application. I am going to ask them to do this on equitable grounds." The Department had just sent us a cable saying that it would do this in proper cases. The fact that I was asking the Department to overlook was the fact of her husband's death. If they would overlook the fact that he had died and treat her as the wife of an American citizen, then we could get her an immediate visa to go to the United States. The Department after a few weeks came back and approved this. I saw her again and said, "What are you going to do?" She said, "Well, I'm

really happy to get the visa because my kids are getting to the age where they're looking Eurasian and not looking Korean and they're beginning to be beaten up on the street. They could go to the American school here on the base because they are American citizens, but they just can't live on the base because I'm not. So, we have the money from my husband's estate and we're going to go to Louisiana." I said, "Louisiana? Why Louisiana?" She said, "Well, he was from Louisiana and the grandparents are there, but the grandparents have refused to talk with me ever since I married him because they opposed this interracial marriage and they don't want to have anything to do with the grandchildren. I'm going to Louisiana anyway. You've met the kids. Could you imagine any grandparent not loving these kids?" I said, "No." I said, "What is your fallback plan if it turns out that they don't receive you?" She said, "Well, it's no problem. I have enough money to start a grocery in Los Angeles." Who knows where they wound up.

In another case, I had an immediate relative (in this case, an American soldier who was African-American) petitioning for his wife, who was seven months pregnant and sitting there in my office. I said, "Well, this is just a routine set of questions, but there are really only two things that could prevent you from getting a visa." I looked at the forms and sure enough, there was one of the two things. One of the two things was that she had had a drug conviction. I said, "Oh, for heaven's sake." Here she is, sitting here seven months pregnant and it's going to be an interracial baby and he was getting orders to leave Korea and I thought, "God, what do I do?" I asked her about this. "What were the circumstances?" It turns out that she was like 17 years old and she had had another boyfriend, who was an American soldier. He had put her up in an apartment off base which was raided by the military police, both Korean and American. Among his possessions was a cigar box and in the cigar box was $10 American money, which she could not possess legally and, I think, a joint of marijuana, which she said she really didn't know anything about because she didn't use that kind of stuff. Well, she was brought to juvenile court and they remanded her to the custody of her parents, meaning that the court said, well, they bought her story and that was that. But the police had put this on the police report. So, I got one of my locals to call the police department and say, "Look, guys, this is a juvenile record. The case was dismissed and it should not be on the police report." We got back the same police report. I did it two or three times. At one point, the baby was born and the guy had gotten extended but he really had to leave shortly and we didn't know what to do. I just said, "I'm going to appeal to the police again and we'll see what happens." So, we got the police report back, I think, the third time. One of the translators comes in and says, "Mr. Sveda, this is very odd. The police seem to have made a typographical error in the Korean." I said, "What is the error?" He said, "Look here. It says that she was arrested as a minor under the Drug Control Act and they left out the word 'Drug.'" So, the way it read in Korean was, "She was arrested as a minor under the Control Act." I said, "Mr. Kim, translate that exactly as it is written." He said, "But I know what it should say." I said, "No, you don't know what it should say. Translate it exactly as it's written." So, he translated it and I gave her the visa and she went off.

*Q: Your first assignment was to Korea?*

SVEDA: Yes.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

SVEDA: I was there from 1975-1977.

*Q: How was it going back to Korea this time in an official capacity? You started in the Consular Section?*

SVEDA: Yes. I was supposed to be a rotational officer, but there is a story there. I resisted the assignment to Korea. I did not want to go to Korea. I had been a PC volunteer there. They wanted me to go to the Consular Section in Seoul, quite reasonably, because I spoke Korean. I now realize what they were doing. There was a man named David Dean who was an ambassador who was in charge of our assignments. Basically, he said, "Well, for you, the alternative is Cameroon." It was a particularly unattractive job in Cameroon. So, I said, "Really, there is nothing available aside from Korea?" He said, "Well, you speak French." I said, "Well, yes." He said, "Well, you speak Korean, so this is quite logical. All the other posts are in places…"

*Q: And as you say, it was a difficult time because there were all these Vietnam types that they had to put.*

SVEDA: And he had explained that. He said, "We really don't have all that many positions that we could assign people to." So, I agreed to go to Korea. When I got into Kimpo Airport and drove in from the airport in an embassy car, I was talking to one of the officers who had picked me up. Just to make conversation, I said, "Korea seems to have burgeoned economically since 1969. I was there in 1969 with PC. When I was last in Korea, they could manufacture a radio with old fashioned tubes or a hot plate, but nothing much more sophisticated than that." He said, "Now they're making everything that is in the Sears catalogue." So, they really had changed a lot.

My first night in the housing on Compound 2 was interesting. My friend Dick Christianson picked me up at the airport. He was my control officer. He was assigned to the Consular Section. He was a friend of mine from PC in Korea. He had insisted on being my control officer. I got to my apartment. There was absolutely no food there, no soap, nothing in the way of bedding. I had an absolutely miserable night. I showed up the next morning to go to the Consular Section. Lois Day, who was the consul general, asked me how things were in my apartment. I said, "Well, gee, do you know where I could find some soap? I didn't bring any with me." She said, "You don't have soap in your apartment?" I said, "No." It seems that Dick had decided that he didn't want me to have things that I didn't like, so his idea was to take me to the PX so I could choose the things I liked, but he had forgotten totally that I needed something that night. So, I didn't have a towel or soap. I didn't even have a shower curtain. I somehow showered.

*Q: How did you find the visa work? Were you doing immigrant visas?*

SVEDA: I was supposed to be a rotational officer, by the way, which means I would have been rotated from the consular office after six to eight months to the Political Section and maybe to another section of the embassy. It turns out, however, that when I arrived, a new officer had just been assigned named Don Halperin, who everybody was bowing and scraping to. I don't know why. I understand that his father was a high administration appointee in the Department of Agriculture and for some reason this impressed people.

*Q: I knew Don. Somebody had told me, but it didn't ring any bells. I see Don around.*

SVEDA: He was a nice guy, but he got the job of ambassador's staff aide that I was supposed to have and he basically pulled strings in order to have me bumped from that, which did not make me happy. I heard though that it didn't work out too well for him. He was smoking his pipe in the ambassador's office. The secretary to the ambassador was a woman who had been secretary to 17 ambassadors before that. She was a very formidable person. She was a very nice person.

*Q: She ran things.*

SVEDA: Yes. She did not like pipe smoking. One day, he made the mistake of puffing on his pipe, walking over to her desk, dropping something on her desk, some notes, and he said, "I am going to lunch. Type these up and I hope to have them back when I come back." I got this story from Roz Fishman, who was the DCM's secretary, who watched in absolute astonishment that anybody would have the temerity to do this to this other woman. The other woman just watched with a quiet smile Don go out the door and then she took the paper that he had put on her desk as though it were a soiled diaper and she lifted it and she put it in the garbage. A few days after that, she had arranged things in such a way that Ambassador Sneider was heard yelling, "Get this goddamned idiot out of my office!" He no longer was the ambassador's staff aide and I was quickly moved in.

*Q: We overlapped a bit when I came in in 1976 as consul general and then you went up to the ambassador's office. Let's talk a bit about how you found dealing with the Koreans on immigration process, which I always found fascinating. The Koreans want to go to the United States and if a Korean wants to go somewhere or do something, they do it, that's all, one way or the other. We were just a minor impediment to them.*

SVEDA: I did both immigrant and non-immigrant visas and I also did the citizenship services. Each of those has their wonderful war stories. Dealing with the Koreans… They were the most persistent people imaginable and at a certain point, you just had to eyeball them and figure that you might as well give some of these people the visa because they really were just going to be there. There was one woman who came in. She had a file that was at least two inches thick. She was a P3, which meant that she was a nurse who was going over because she had… She had been refused. It was perfectly obvious when I met her why she had been refused. She couldn't speak a word of English, not at all. A sweet

person. Eight children. She brought them all to the interview. The story was given to me by the oldest child, who was the man of the family (Her husband had died), who was about 17. He walks into my office with the other seven children and I say, "Wait just a second." I knew this was going to be embarrassing scene, the mother refused again. "Get the small kids out. You can stay with your mother." So, he gets them out and then he goes to the flag in my office. He takes the flag and kisses the hem of the flag and he begins to say some patriotic speech about how good America was. He had gone to the dictionary and he had found the longest words that were the synonyms of the words that he wanted to use. It was funny. It was all nonsense. It was all I could do to keep from biting my tongue. I said, "Look, we know you speak English, but you're not applying for the visa; your mother is applying for the visa. I want you to watch as I do this." I asked her questions and she just giggled and really didn't know anything. I turned to him and said, "Look, I cannot give her the visa because she doesn't know any English. If I did give her the visa, she would be turned back by the immigration officers at the airport. So, there is no point to my giving her the visa. She doesn't qualify for the visa." He said, "Oh, but she is a very good woman and she is raising eight children and she'd be a very good citizen of the United States." I said, "Yes, I know that, but I have to know that she speaks English. Here is a piece of paper. I am going to do something I'm not supposed to do. I am going to give you the standard questions that we ask and the standard answers. I want you to show up in six months. Train your mother like a parrot to know these questions and answers. I may not be the one interviewing her. Maybe somebody else will be interviewing her." As luck would have it, I was still around when he comes back. He had trained her exactly like a parrot. She knew the answers, so I was able to give them the visa. They were just very persistent people.

Sometimes when you're tired, you give somebody the visa just out of sheer maliciousness. I had one guy come in with 11 children, all of which were girls. I looked at his P3 application. He claimed to be a population control expert. He had 11 daughters. I thought about this and thought, "This man is a blithering idiot and a total hypocrite. The worst thing I could do to him, this man who obviously was trying for a son 11 times, would be to give him 11 American daughters." So, I gave him the visa.

*Q: How about documents?*

SVEDA: For heaven's sakes. If you told Koreans that you would be giving visas to people who were wearing purple beanies with yellow propellers on them, if you mentioned this casually at 5:00 pm on a given day, the next morning, there would be 4,000 people outside of your office wearing purple beanies with yellow propellers. It was amazing. They were asked to prove things. In Korean law, you were able to have a proxy marriage. In American law, you actually have to have met the person you're marrying. So, we insisted on proof that they had actually met. The Koreans would show up with these doctored photographs, these people with totally disproportionate heads on bodies from some generic wedding photo (Now, I guess, they can do it by computer and it would be very elegant). That was a constant battle. They were quite shameless.

One day when I was working in the Citizenship Services Office, I had a case, the ultimate case. It seems that a soldier had just left the Army and a day later, riding in a car with a friend, was killed in a car accident. Not a mark on the body, but he was quite dead. He was not of interest to the Army because he had just left literally the day before. They somehow managed to get the Korean morgue to take his body. There were no embalming facilities in Korea. They could fix up the body a little bit, but they would send it to Japan for embalming if you wanted that. Meanwhile, we had to find the next of kin. Also, I had to go through his effects in his apartment. Well, the apartment was cleaned absolutely spotless by the woman he had been living with, a Korean. She had disappeared. We found that he had two living relatives. One was a mother in a nursing home in Indiana. The other was technically a wife, a Japanese wife. I say "technically a wife" because she had filed divorce papers and he had the papers with him in his possession when he was killed. He was on the way to mailing them. If he had mailed them, the divorce would have become final and we wouldn't have had the problem of her interest in his estate. But then there was another complication. It turns out that this Korean girlfriend had had a baby. The grandmother of the baby, in Indiana, wanted her granddaughter by the son who had just died. We didn't know where that kid was. We needed to know because she had written to Betty Ford, who was then the First Lady of the United States, and Betty Ford had sent us a letter asking if we could do everything possible to reunite this grandmother with her grandchild. Meanwhile, the body was still in the morgue and the people in the morgue were very unhappy with us because they could keep it on ice only so long. This was one of those cases where you explain patiently to people that it would cost $4,000 to have the body moved to Japan, embalmed, and taken to the United States, whereas it would cost $4 to have it cremated and have the ashes postmarked to whoever wanted to receive them. You hear these relatives on the other end of the line thinking, "Well, $4,000 versus… What did you say it cost for cremation?" I said, "Well, $4 and that includes postage." You could hear people on the other end of the line trying to sound as though they really were respectful for the remains, but the difference in cost was so absolutely overwhelming… There were very few people who opted for the full treatment. In any event, I had an Army guy working for me as an assistant in the Citizenship Services Office. I asked him to sort of root around and find out what he could about this girl. He had a Korean girlfriend. He came to me one day and said, "Look, I can't tell you this officially, but my girlfriend happens to know the woman in question. She sold her baby to an interracial couple, an African American and a Korean (It turns out that the man who had died was African American), and you have given that baby a passport based on a false birth certificate. I can't tell you anything more." I said, "Well, thank you." I thought maybe I could teach maybe the whole consular course in this one case. False documentation, selling of a baby. So, we still had Betty Ford to deal with. I wrote her a letter saying that under Korean law, the mother has full rights over the child and she chose to give her child up for adoption to an American and Korean couple and that the child would be raised in a happy environment, which it probably was. In any event, that kept Betty Ford quiet.

*Q: How did you find the non-immigrant side of things?*

SVEDA: It was really interesting because it was incredibly difficult. You had to do at least 100 interviews a day on the immigrant side. And the numbers were even worse on the non-immigrant side. I don't remember what the non-immigrant numbers were, but it was absurd. I had sometimes joked about myself being not a visa issuing officer but a visa refusal officer. There were times when it became really absurd. One woman came in wanting a renewal of her visa. She handed me the visa and I looked at it. The visa had been issued in Winnipeg, Canada, where we had a consulate. I recognized the name of the person who had issued it because he had been my predecessor in that job. I'd never met him but he had been my predecessor and I knew that he was very favorably inclined to Koreans. The word had gotten around that they should go to Winnipeg to get this kind of visa because he would give any Korean a visa, no questions asked, because he loved Korea so much. Well, he was not following the rules. The rules were that you were supposed to cable us, the country of origin, to find out whether we had anything on these people. So, she said that she wanted an extension of the visa and I said, "Well, this visa should not have been issued." She said, "Well, it was issued and you can't do anything about it." I said, "Really?" I took my "canceled" stamp and I put it right on her visa on her passport. She said, "That's illegal!" I said, "No, it's not. I've just done it. Now you have to reapply, but you're going to have to reapply with that canceled visa in your passport." So, there were times that were fairly rough.

There was one time when I used the power of that office quite shamelessly. One of my friends worked for USDA in Japan and her husband was a lawyer in Japan. In fact, they are right now coming back from Beijing. He wrote me a letter saying that his household effects had been shipped on a Korean ship but had never arrived. They were supposed to have gone to Washington, but they had disappeared. Could I do anything to find out what had happened to this? He had written letters to the Korean company and they just simply were not responding. He was just at his wit's end. He didn't know what to do. So, I picked up the phone and asked to speak to the president of that company. Well, if the American consular visa office calls your company, you get to talk to the president. I told him that this particular couple had lost their household effects on one of their ships and I had the documentation. I said that I would cease to issue crew visas without interviews for any crews from his company until that shipment was found and sent to this particular couple in Washington. He said, "You can't do that." I said, "I can do that. As a courtesy, we do not insist on crew interviews, but that is a courtesy and the law allows me to make my decision. Until it's found, I'm not going to be allowing any crew visas from your company." I got a letter from this guy within a day or two saying, "I don't know what the hell you did, but there was an air shipment of our household effects to Washington, DC from Korea. How did you do it?" I said, "I can't tell you."

*Q: Was there a problem of attempts to use girls, boys, gifts, what have you? This is something that always concerned me about the pressures on the visa…*

SVEDA: There were never any sexual pressures on me at all, but there was one time when I helped somebody from the President's House, the Blue House, on some visa matter. It was really routine. I don't remember what the problem was. But I got back to

my apartment and found a very large package, obviously a Korean painting wrapped in brown paper. It was a thank you and it was from this person at the Blue House. I immediately went to the security guards at the embassy compound and I demanded to know why somebody had been let in without my say-so. Somebody had been let in to my apartment. They said, "Well, they were from the Blue House." I said, "I don't care where they were from." I immediately insisted that they call this guy back and they take it back immediately, within the next half hour. But that was the only effort to give me something to influence my decisions. I can't think of anything else.

One of the deputies in the Consular Section of your predecessor, I believe, was taking gifts of furniture and gifts of paintings and all sorts of things.

*Q: I was disturbed. He died later of a heart attack. But I was disturbed. I had this procession of people who came to see me. I'm not a shopper. My wife's not a shopper. All of a sudden, these people who ran antique shops and all would appear and expect special treatment. I was always polite to them. They were always asking me to go to their place. I'd say, "Thank you. Maybe sometime later" and avoid it. I wasn't even tempted, but there was enough there that I was concerned.*

SVEDA: I was concerned because when I visited your predecessor and her deputy for social occasions, I just saw an astonishing array of very fine quality Korean antiques, porcelain and paintings and I just didn't know how they could afford it, honestly. I must say that I had my doubts about your predecessor. I had no doubts whatsoever about her deputy. It was so obvious to me that he had "friends" all over the place. Koreans didn't make friends.

*Q: No. I was getting the residue and having to turn it off.*

*Were you noticing problems with the local staff, the Foreign Service nationals?*

SVEDA: No, actually, I was not. I understand that after I left, there was an investigation and a whole lot of them were basically fired because they were taking money. I never saw any indication of that. I was looking and I never saw it. But there is no way to tell.

*Q: I called for an investigation because I got nervous. The thing was that we sort of broke up one crew and I learned later that a whole new thing of forged petitions was coming through just after I thought I had things cleaned up. It turned out that that was the next set of investigations because one bright eyed consular officer noticed that petitions that came supposedly from INS San Francisco and Boston offices seemed to be done in the same type.*

*How about your PC contacts? You had been in Seoul. Did you find that they were playing on you?*

SVEDA: Never. Not in any way related to my job, but I found that the only person who ever took advantage of me was a reporter for a British publication. I think it was the Economist. He stayed in my apartment. I had known him earlier when he was studying Korean and I was in PC. It turns out that he wound up being a reporter. He happened to be visiting Korea. This was when I was in the Political Section. Unfortunately, he broke a story that I had just mentioned to him over dinner and the ambassador did not want out. It seems that there was a congressman who was big time on the take from the Koreans who was visiting Korea on the invitation of the Korean government and who was having hot and cold running girls in his apartment, in his hotel suite, and all sorts of gifts. The problem was that he didn't want the American embassy to know he was in town. That even made it more strange. I think he had some major position on the Appropriations Committee or one of the major committees in Congress. It just so happened that he showed up one day to marry one of these people he was being entertained with and the word got around the embassy that he had shown up. I mentioned that he was in town to this guy and that he had shown up to get married. That got into the New York Daily News somehow. The congressman was upset that an embassy source had been the one to betray his secret trip to Korea and the ambassador wanted to find out who it was. They figured out pretty quickly who it was. It was the byline that I knew this person. They were going to ship me out of Korea on the next plane. Then someone said, "Ambassador Sneider after a burst of temper that this had embarrassed the embassy began laughing and he was perfectly content that this story had gotten out upon reflection." So, the ambassador gave me a stern talk to be very careful with the media. As he was giving me the stern talk, he smiled and said, "In this particular instance, I was very happy that the news had gotten out, but just be careful in the future" and I have been very careful with the press.

*Q: This was certainly a period with a real problem of corruption. You have Koreagate.*

SVEDA: Tongsun Park.

*Q: Corruption with the rice industry and with Congress.*

SVEDA: I remember the joke when Jimmy Carter became President after the Ford administration while we were there. The joke in Washington, which was already mired in this scandal with Korea and Koreagate, that Jimmy Carter knew so little about foreign policy when he came into Washington that he thought Rock Creek Park was a Korean lobbyist.

But in any event, you asked about the PC. I did not have anybody ever importune me for a visa who was a PC volunteer. I never had anything like that. PC volunteers who were still in Korea, however, did use my apartment as a kind of a crash pad. I had a large apartment and allowed whoever happened to be in town to stay. My Korean maid would sometimes come in in the morning and have to pick her way across bodies who were on futons in the living room all over the place.

*Q: Did you go directly up to Sneider's office from the Consular Section?*

SVEDA: Actually, I was rotated to the Political Section and then rather abruptly rotated to the ambassador's office.

*Q: Talk a little bit about Ambassador Dick Sneider and your dealings with him.*

SVEDA: Ambassador Sneider was one of the finest people I've ever met in my life. Ambassador Sneider was a thorough professional. He was a Japan Foreign Service officer. He was part of the Japan club. His wife, Lea Sneider, was a wonderful ambassador's wife and a very, very, very classy lady. I remember once when we went on a trip, I opened the door of the ambassador's limousine for her to get in and she got in and she said, "Oh, don't get on the other side. I'll just scoot over." I said, "Really, I should get in on the other side because there are Korean officials watching." She said, "Well, as long as we know that you know the rules, you can break them." One day when they were dedicating the new ambassador's residence, a very strange building which looks like a major Korean temple, a very strange building with a very strange arrangement of rooms-

*Q: You had to be on display if you went to the bathroom.*

SVEDA: Oh, yes. In fact, it was almost impossible to open the bathroom door in the ambassador's bedroom because the door didn't give enough clearance to the bed. There was no basement. Here is a place where you had air raids and you need a lot of space for beer, wine, whatever. It's absolutely insane. We were standing in the courtyard at the inauguration of this house and there is Lea Sneider barefoot. I guess we took our shoes off. I dropped my flask. I had a glass of wine. Then I watched this glass fall on the ground and by the grade of God, it didn't break; it bounced up in the air. Other people who were watching it (There were 20-30 people around) and then it fell and shattered right at the feet of Mrs. Sneider, who, thank goodness, wasn't hurt. She looked at that. There was a hush, an embarrassed silence led by me. Lea Sneider said, "Ah, what a wonderful idea. I think we should christen this house. Let's all throw our glasses down." They threw the glasses down into one area where they wouldn't hurt anybody. But she just was a woman who would pick up like that. Once when we had a visa applicant who was a child prodigy, a girl of the age of eight who was supposed to play the piano, Marianne Newman, who was a wonderful Foreign Service officer, thought that this was something that she couldn't show, whether the child was indeed a prodigy. Some American protestant minister had found the child and heard her play and absolutely thought that she had to come to America, with her family, of course, who happened to be another minister. Well, Lea Sneider was a concert pianist. Marianne Newman decided to ask Lea whether it was probable that this child was another Mozart. Lea Sneider refused to even hear her. She said, "It is absolutely impossible for somebody at that age to have the depth to be a good pianist. It is just absurd." Then she said, "Tell them that if the girl really is that good a pianist, let them think on where she leaned to play the piano. Obviously, she learned to play the piano in Korea, so there is no need to go to the United States."

Tom Stern was a wonderful man. His predecessor, a guy named Ericson, was a complete jerk, but Tom Stern was a wonderful deputy chief of mission. In fact, he and I went on trips when I was ambassador's staff aide. He and his wife were wonderful people to travel with. Tom Stern was acting ambassador at the time that the Panmunjom chopping incident occurred. I was the ambassador's staff aide. This happened in August of 1976. It happened just a week before President Ford was to go to the Republican Convention and face off against Governor Ronald Reagan for the nomination. So, President Ford had to look strong. One day in early August, the North Korean guards at Panmunjom, the treaty village that was between North and South Korea, had killed two of our officers. They had hatcheted them to death, axed them to death, for trimming a tree that blocked the view of one of our guard posts from another guard post. They just trimmed some leaves. The North Koreans took the ax that they were using to trim the tree with and axed them to death. We had that on camera because of a number of incidents that had occurred already. All the soldiers there, just for their own safety, carried cameras so that any incidents would be recorded. So, we had it all on camera. There was no way the North Koreans could deny that. It was really marvelous from my standpoint as a staff aide to see how the American government deals with a major crisis like that. Obviously, from the Thursday on which it began to the Saturday on which it ended, this crisis was primarily a military crisis. We had a lot of meetings with the commander of the 8th U.S. Army, who was a very fine commander. We knew of all the military plans that existed in case this incident got out of hand. But I also watched what the State Department could do in a crisis like this. It's never obvious, but what the State Department does and did in this case was to consult with the Soviet Union, with China, with Japan, with the other powers that might be interested in the region - European powers such as Great Britain - and find out whether they had backed the North Koreans (the Chinese or the Soviets) and whether they would object to a stern military action. The Chinese and the Soviets both said they would not, they had no interest in this whatsoever and they really wanted to stay clear and they had no interest whatsoever in anything that the United States would do. So, knowing that our coast was clear, the plan was, on Saturday morning, if approved, to go in and chop down the tree with 200 commandos. If the North Koreans had objected, we had 2,000 more commandos who had been flown in from the Pacific Fleet, which was off the coast of Korea, and there were a number of bombers that were ready to bomb their harbors if the North Koreans started anything. Of course, we had the 40,000 American soldiers who were stationed in Korea on full alert and we also had the millions of South Korean soldiers in full battle mode. As it turns out, thank God, nothing happened. But the tree was chopped down. I guess we got that trophy and President Ford was able to get the nomination instead of Ronald Reagan in 1976 at the Kansas City convention. So, my role in that as staff aide was to do briefing books. Ambassador Sneider, who was in New York on home leave, I guess, would be coming soon and I needed to brief him on everything. I had to do briefing books for him and briefing books for everybody. I was up for 48 or 72 hours straight. When I was finally finishing the final briefing book, which must have been about 2:00 am, I got a message from the communicator that was "eyes only" for the acting ambassador. I could either call in Tom Stern or I could go with an armed guard to his residence to deliver the envelope to him. I called Tom and he said, "Oh, don't bother with the armed guard. I'll come in." He comes in and I hand him the envelope. I simply

asked, “Is it what I think it is?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “What I meant was, is it an order to go to war?” I didn’t state that and he didn’t state anything, but he said, “Yes, it is what you think it is.” I said, “Well, goodness, should I bother to go to bed if we’re going to start this at dawn?” He said, “Well, if something happens, I can assure you, you will hear it. So, why don’t you go to bed? You need the sleep and there is nothing you can do beyond this anyway.” So, that morning, I woke up late. I knew that the action was to begin at dawn. It was 11:00 am and I was very, very happy that I didn’t hear firing in the distance or anything.

*Q: Why don’t we stop at this point? We’ll pick this up next time. Is there anything else we should cover about being ambassador’s aide?*

SVEDA: One little funny thing. One day around Christmas time, Roz Fishman, who worked for the DCM, was addressing Christmas cards. She was using a red pen for some and she was using a green pen for others. I walked over to her desk and said, “Roz, I really hate to tell you this, but we’re going to have to take all these red envelopes, all the red lettered envelopes, and throw them out and do them again.” She said, “Why?” I said, “Well, because you cannot write the name of a Korean in red ink. Koreans or Japanese or Chinese only use red for the names of the dead or for people who have been ordered to be executed.” She said, “I’ve never heard anything like that. These are just Christmas envelopes.” I said, “We’ll see.” So, we called in Miss Kim, who was not far away. I said, “Miss Kim, if you saw your name or the name of your family written in red, what would you think?” Miss Kim burst out in tears and she said, “Oh, no, no, no!” Roz looked up to me and said, “How did you know that?” I said, “Hey, that’s what I do. I’m a Foreign Service officer.”

*Q: You went from the ambassador’s office to where?*

SVEDA: I think I went to the Consular Section.

*Q: Is there anything else we should talk about about Seoul or should we move on?*

SVEDA: Well, we could move on.

*Q: We’ll pick this up when you left Seoul.*

SVEDA: I left Seoul in October of 1977. I extended for two months because my next assignment was to the Sinai Field Mission. That would begin in December and I needed to go to Washington for consultation, so I extended for a few months in Korea.

*Q: We’ll pick this up in 1977.*

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*Today is July 13, 2000. Russ, what got you to the Sinai? Was this just an assignment or did you ask for it?*

SVEDA: I joined the Foreign Service essentially to serve in Europe. Because I spoke Korean coming in, they wanted me to go to Korea for a first assignment. I knew that once a bureau had you in its clutches, they were unlikely to let you go. I could see the rest of my life playing out. I had already studied Chinese in graduate school. I could see myself bouncing from Korea and Japan to China, but I really didn't want that. So, I thought that this would be a good way of breaking the mold and getting to a new bureau. The Sinai Field mission also promised a degree of interest and excitement that I could probably never find except on the visa line in Seoul. The Sinai Field Mission just seemed like a very good of breaking the mold.

*Q: So you were a volunteer.*

SVEDA: Oh, absolutely. Everybody had to be a volunteer. The State Department brought me back for a month of consultations, but not knowing whether to teach me Hebrew or Arabic, either of which would have helped, even a few weeks of the language would have helped in either case, they decided to teach me nothing. So, after some consultations, I went out.

One of my consultations was with a distinguished former diplomat. I confided to him that I really knew nothing about the Middle East at all and I really felt unsure of myself. He said, "Young man, whenever anybody says anything about the Middle East, listen carefully, nod gravely, and say 'Yes, but the situation is more complicated than that.' You will never be wrong and you will get a reputation for wisdom far beyond your years."

*Q: So, you were with the Sinai from when to when?*

SVEDA: From December of 1977 through January/February of 1979. On my way to the Sinai, I stopped in Athens and was mugged. When I got to Tel Aviv, my first post, I informed the regional security officer of this, that I had lost my Department pass and everything and had to have it replaced. I gave her the details. Later on, that was to come and haunt me because anything you tell the security officers they will use against you at some time. I was mugged in the Plaka. I had been sitting and drinking Retsina, listening to a woman who reminded me very much of a Greek Joan Baez as she sang in the Plaka. I took what I thought was a taxi, but it turned out to be a way of divesting me of my money and also my pass for the State Department.

So, I got to the Sinai in late December of 1977.

*Q: Could you explain just what the Sinai Mission was at that time and a little about the origin? This was sort of an odd Foreign Service assignment.*

SVEDA: Yes, it was odd. You really have to look to the Yom Kippur War, which Israel fought with Egypt in 1973. What happened was that the Egyptians practiced crossing over the Nile and crossing the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal at that point was half held by Israel. The idea was to cross over the Suez Canal, establish a beachhead. They repeatedly practiced crossing the Suez Canal and establishing a beachhead. So, when Israel let its guard down at Yom Kippur in 1973, the Egyptians, having practiced, crossed over the Suez Canal and got to the other side. They were so triumphant that they forgot that they had never practiced anything beyond crossing the Suez Canal. So, they found themselves on the other side of the Suez Canal not knowing at all what to do. But they just stayed there. The Israelis suddenly awakened from their inattention, crossed south of them, and encircled them on the other side of the Suez Canal. Then Kissinger, who was then Secretary of State, intervened and told the Israelis that they should come to an agreement with the Egyptians because the Egyptians had successfully crossed to the other side of the Suez Canal. As the Israelis would say to me later, "The Egyptians had us surrounded from within." But this gave the pretext for recognizing some Egyptian gain since the Six Day War in 1967. Kissinger negotiated the Sinai Agreement, which was very interesting. The Israelis would not give up their position at the Gidi Pass. I have to explain a bit about the geography of the Sinai. The Sinai is this huge triangle of desert which separates Suez from Israel and from the port of Aqaba. The northern part, there is a sea road, a traditional road, that goes along the Mediterranean Sea. Below that, there are huge sand dunes, and I mean huge. We're talking 600-700 foot tall sand dunes. Their location shifts from time to time because they are sand dunes, very much like on the beach. You go to the beach one day and you see them. You go to the beach the next day, they're in a totally different location. So, for all practical purposes, that area is impassable. In the southern part of the peninsula, you have very rocky desert leading up to the heights of Mount Sinai, where St. Catherine's monastery is. But this is also impassable. As a practical matter, there is, aside from the sea road, only one way through the Sinai. That is through two passes called the Gidi and the Mitla passes. The Gidi and the Mitla Passes are on the eastern end of a large plateau like a sheet-cake with 150-200 foot cliffs. It's as if some giant had cut a piece of cake out of it which was 10 miles wide and 20 miles deep, a perfect rectangle. At the corner of one rectangle, you had the Gidi Pass. At the corner of the other, the Mitla Pass. As a practical matter, the Gidi Pass was the more important one because that was the direct connection between Tel Aviv and Cairo, depending on which way your army chose to start and which way your army was going to fish. So, at the edge of this plateau, at the northwestern corner of this cut into the sheet-cake, the Israelis had erected a station which we called the Death Star, after the movie "Star Wars." The Death Star was absolutely the ne plus ultra of electronic command centers. The Israelis had a perfect electronic view of all of the Sinai from there. They directed all of their flight training there in the Sinai, which was a very important place because it was empty and there was a lot of room for their fighter planes to go and play games. It also monitored the Suez Canal. You could actually see the Suez Canal some distance away in the clear desert air and obviously also Cairo, which was not that far from the Suez Canal. So, the Israelis did not want to give up this place.

Kissinger fashioned on the rather brilliant idea of keeping the Israelis at the western end of these cliffs that oversaw this big staging ground for battles and put the Egyptians at a new base on the eastern end right near the Gidi Pass, right between the Gidi and the Mitla Passes. The Egyptians would therefore have to cross the Israeli lines in order to get to their camp and the Israelis would have to cross the Egyptian lines - theoretically at least - to get to their camp. In the middle would be the Americans. We were there to monitor the passage of troops, weapons, and vehicles from one army to their camp in the Sinai and back. So, our job as monitors (There were about 30 government personnel, of whom about 20 of us were liaison officers), our job as liaison officers was to monitor the number of personnel, weapons, and vehicles that were going into the Israeli camp on the one end or the Egyptian camp on the other end. We had a little cabin outside of each camp and we stayed there with an Israeli or an Egyptian counterpart. The cabins themselves were really a hoot. I'll get to that in a minute. What we did was, we would stand at the gate and count the number of vehicles and the number of vehicles that were in the camp, count the number of personnel, asked to see any weapons that were hidden. We had a right of peremptory refusal on any of these convoys at any given time. I'll get back to that in a minute. We also were in a zone that was patrolled by the UN. Theoretically, it was a UN truce zone. The UN truce zone had Finnish, Ghanaian, Indonesian, Polish, and Swedish soldiers. The Swedes and the Poles were working on logistics. Poland at that point was a communist country. The Finnish, Ghanaian, and Indonesian battalions were manning posts above the Gidi Pass, above the Mitla Pass, entry to the zone, and all that. It was totally bizarre to see these Indonesians who had never been in an area where it didn't rain an hour or two a day in lush Indonesian islands finding themselves in, of all places, the absolute antithesis to their whole world, the Sinai desert. It was funny to see their reaction. They just didn't know what to make of it. There were little anomalies like that all over the place. The camp itself was maintained by a contract with a company called E Systems from Dallas, Texas, which had a reputation for putting state of the art electronics on airplanes or anywhere. They were able to set up a monitoring system so we could tell at our little posts whether or not a movement that was detected was that of a camel or the Bedouin or the jeep or the rabbit. These were very a sophisticated measuring devices. I noticed when I got to the White House later on that the Secret Service has a very similar system for monitoring whether any motion of the squirrels or tourists on the White House grounds were terrorists. We had 130 contractors from E Systems, almost all of whom were from the vicinity of Greenville, Texas, which made for a very interesting life there.

The Egyptians and the Israelis had agreed to this camp being set up in the middle of the Sinai desert and the Americans had said that we wanted to set it up within a timeframe of 90 days. The Egyptians and the Israelis were used to a different timeframe in terms of construction. The Egyptians since the Pyramids haven't done anything in less than 20 years. They Egyptians and the Israelis were amused that the Americans would make this proposal. But we insisted on it. It turns out that the State Department knew of a Holiday Inn that was supposed to have been built in the vicinity of El Paso, Texas, which was a prefab construction. It was to have been built, but for some odd reason, it wasn't built in the desert near El Paso, so all that the State Department needed to do was load these things on flatbed trucks, set up some sort of water system and electricity system and,

bingo, there we were. So, off the ships in the Sinai and the trucks which took these modular units and put the Holiday Inn right in the middle of the Sinai desert. It was bizarre. It was totally bizarre. We created the little world, a big fantasy world right there in the middle.

*Q: Did it have a swimming pool?*

SVEDA: No, of course, being government property, it could not have a swimming pool. Nothing under the contract would allow that. But we were talking about having an emergency water supply cistern with a retractable top.

*Q: We had a number of these emergency water systems throughout the world.*

SVEDA: It's critical. The one luxury that we did have... One day, the commander of the Finnish battalion came over and said, "Well, gentlemen, it's been very interesting having dinner. I will take my sauna and go to sleep." Our commander said, "Well, you can go to sleep if you wish, but you may not take your sauna because we don't have one." "Oh," said the Finnish commander. The next day, Finnish soldiers showed up and built a very large sauna, which became a coed sauna, which led to all sorts of interesting developments. We had about 10% women in this group of 150. It was extremely important because experience has shown that all male groups and all female groups are more apt to be contentious with all sorts of petty power struggles than with some mixture of men and women. For some odd reason, it doesn't even matter who the women are or what they're like. It's just having the women there that raises the politeness level among men and perhaps vice versa. But the women who were there were essential. The contractors had a very odd schedule which resembled more the way on oil rig contract operates. You worked in a two week period. In the two week period, you had four days weekend and 10 days of work. Now, if you agreed to pool several two week periods, you could have two weeks off every two months. The contractor gave these people free tickets anywhere in the world plus vacation pay with the suggestion that they not go to the United States because they've already got 30 days paid leave in the United States and according to American tax law, if you spend more than 30 days in the United States, you have to pay American taxes. These people all made very good salaries. Besides the trip benefits every two weeks and going off to Thailand to get massage or off to Germany to ski or to the Greek islands to do some boating, they also received a very unusual arrangement whereby for the first six months of their year and a half contact, they would receive a bonus for re-upping or for being around, in the second six months, another bonus, and for the third six months, a final bonus for completing their contract and a bonus if they would re-up for another contract. Also, for every dollar that they saved in a special account, the company would match them a dollar. This was an encouragement to save money and had a very good psychological benefit. Furthermore, all of their housing and all of their food was provided. All of our food and all of our housing was provided, but we didn't get anything like the benefits that they got. The 20 or so people who were with the government were Foreign Service officers and some USIA people and USAID people. We had besides the liaison duty in the desert one week of desk duty in either Tel

Aviv or in Cairo. We could mix or match and we could switch off Cairo for Tel Aviv if that's what we wanted. I preferred Tel Aviv greatly myself, even though I wanted to be an Egyptologist as a child. You get the idea of the Pyramids fairly quickly and you also get the idea of the Egyptian museum fairly quickly. There are only so many visits one can make to the King Tut collection before it gets a little bit boring, even though there are 5,000 objects there and a lot of other things of interest. We stayed at the Mina House. We were housed within Cairo at the Mina House in Giza, which is right next to the main pyramid. It's in an oasis next to the main pyramid. It was fun to stay there, but it was sort of bizarre. On the internal TV system that the Mina House had, they only played two films. One was "Bonnie and Clyde" and the other one was "Return of the Pink Panther." They rotated these two films permanently. You could turn on the TV at any moment and either see "Bonnie and Clyde" or "Return of the Pink Panther." I got to like "Return of the Pink Panther" very much. I got to detest "Bonnie and Clyde" quite heartily.

*Q: Who was the head of-*

SVEDA: Ray Hunt. He was the director general of the Sinai Field Mission. He was actually the director and later on was headquartered in Rome when they moved location after the Camp David Agreements. That happened while I was there, when they moved to a slightly different location and set up a more international operation, a newer operation, Ray Hunt became the director general of this operation. He chose to headquarter in Rome. Poor Ray, the Red Brigade at that time was running around killing people. One day when he was being driven through Rome in his official car with bulletproof glass, some Red Brigade terrorists began shooting a machinegun at his car. The bullet that killed him wound up going through the rubber separation between the window and the door. Had that bullet not gone through, he would have been alive. He was killed. Then this Red Brigade group announced that they had killed a NATO general. Well, he wasn't a general. His title was "director general." He was a civilian. It's really unfortunate. The whole thing was just stupid. That was in Rome a couple of years after I left the Sinai Field Mission.

*Q: Talk a bit about the actual situation. I think by this time, in a way, neither the Egyptians nor the Israelis wanted to go at each other. Were you just there to make everybody feel good or was there a problem?*

SVEDA: There was an attempt to build on your perception, which was really true. The Egyptians really didn't want to fight the Israelis again. They had fought them in 1948, in 1967, in 1973, and they were quite tired of it.

*Q: They had been beaten really every time.*

SVEDA: Yes. They had been beaten every time and they were just tired of it. Half the population of the Arab world is in Egypt and the Arab world was depending on Egypt to provide the manpower to fight against Israel. They were really, really, really tired. When we were in the Gidi and Mitla Passes, every time we entered there, we saw dozens of Egyptian tanks, dozens of Egyptian busses and jeeps riddled with aircraft bullets and with

rockets. They were just like sieves. I have a photograph of myself sitting in one jeep which looks very much like a colander. Right next to it was an Israeli sign saying "Drive safely." This was in the Sinai. All of the vehicles that were destroyed in the '67 war and then the '73 war were Egyptian vehicles, all of them. They were all, each and every one of them, going westward. They were going back to Cairo. They were fleeing. The Israeli command of the skies was lethal for the Egyptians. Two of the great tank battles of history occurred in the Gidi and the Mitla Passes and you saw the litter of it all over the place. Part of the problem that the Egyptians had was that their material was taken from the Soviets. The Soviets gave them tanks, jeeps, and trucks. The jeeps and trucks worked with an odd anomaly, the anomaly being that in order to prevent their vehicles from freezing and their engine blocks from freezing, the Soviets had built little kerosene lamps inside each engine block. I asked the Egyptians every so often when I opened up one of their engine trunks to look for weapons - and I was really looking for this little kerosene heater - and I said, "What do you suppose this is for?" The Egyptians would smile and say, "Oh, this is for making tea." They would put on the kerosene lamps and they would put their teapots on it.

But the problem with the Soviet ordinance really was that the tanks were built for the planes of Central Europe and Eastern Europe. They were very flat, low slung, and they felt that this was a better way for avoiding detection by NATO tanks. The NATO tanks were very high, which is much better when you're behind a sand dune or a hill because you can shoot over the sand dune or the hill whereas the Egyptian tanks, the Soviet tanks, had to go up on top of the hill in order to aim their guns. This put them in a far more vulnerable position. The Egyptians had definitely lost the will to fight. When I was with the Israeli army one night before the Camp David Accords were announced, we fully expected that the Camp David talks would fail. I was talking with the soldiers who were my guards theoretically, about 15-20 of them, and the Israelis were reminiscing about their other fights with the Egyptians. You have to know that in the Israeli defense force, the Israeli defense force has a practice of never changing a soldier's unit. The unit is always the same. It's like the British regimental system. There is a tremendous amount of regimental comradery and pride that develops in this system. Because the Israeli adult males and unmarried females are required to have military service up to age 50, you always had these people showing up in their unit for a month of duty who had been in that unit 20-30 years before as a young soldier. So, there was a tremendous continuity. Everybody was telling stories, the younger soldiers sitting back and listening as the older reservists were telling what they knew. So, this was one such night. I had made some kosher Chinese food, my specialty when I was with the Israelis, and we were eating together and I asked them what they thought about the prospect of war with Egypt. They were very sad about it because they really liked the Egyptians. One of the soldiers told about what had happened in the previous war, in the '73 war. He said, "They had a platoon which captured an Egyptian emplacement and basically they killed everybody except for one captain and his batman." Egyptian officers all have butlers or valets, which they call a "batman." The captain, who was very well educated, and his batman were captured. The Israeli commander of that platoon said, "Look, we could just shoot you here and you could join your companions who are dead or we can send you back to the

place where we're keeping prisoners. Because there are two of you, I would need four of my soldiers and we don't have that many to spare. So, the third alternative is for you to come with us and don't make any trouble." "Oh, no, no trouble at all," said the Egyptian. So, they are moving forward against the Egyptian lines and this Egyptian captain and his batman are following. The Egyptian captain is so happy to be alive that he insists that the batman do the washing and the cooking for all of the soldiers in this unit of about 12. The Israelis at first are wary about this. There are some sort of Geneva protocols which perhaps prevent POWs from darning their socks and cooking their kosher food, but they thought, "Well, who's to know?" So, this went on for a couple of days and the Egyptian captain when they came upon one emplacement said, 'You know, I know the people who are commanders of this emplacement. If they knew how decent the Israelis are to prisoners, I'm sure that they would surrender without a fight. I can go over there under a white flag and talk with them." The Israelis were a bit wary of this. Who knows, he could have double crossed them. But they figured, well, we keep the batman and let the captain go and if he double crosses us we shoot him but we keep the batman because he is really good at cleaning underwear. So, they watched the guy go over to the Egyptian side. He was wearing an Egyptian uniform, so he is not shot at. You hear a lot of commotion on the other side and then you see dozens of white flags go up. They're putting their underwear up as a white flag. The Israelis insist that they throw their weapons down and they advance. They do that. The Egyptian commander is just laughing and saying, "This is the least I could do for you. You were so hospitable to me. You were so wonderful. This is the very least I could do to repay your hospitality." He said that's what fighting the Egyptians is like. They really didn't want to fight the Egyptians. They were just too nice.

*Q: I've talked to some people who have been involved in this and were saying that there are almost caricatures, that the Egyptians were sort of the "Inshallah, something will happen." They weren't very efficient more or less. But the Israelis were always challenging, trying to push weapons in and all. There was no great particular reason except it was just trying to see what they could get away with.*

SVEDA: Absolutely. There was one time we had an Israeli commander there and we had to make a representation at the end of this report that we had for a given period which said that we had found 80 Israeli violations of the truce in this period and only two Egyptian violations and we were absolutely convinced that the Egyptians had just misunderstood what the instructions were. Most of these were airplane violations of the space, but there were also other violations in taking weapons. The Israeli commander just smiled. He was a general. He said, "There are two kinds of people in the world. There is one kind of person who when they see a park bench that is labeled 'Wet Paint,' they respect it. Occasionally, by accident, they may sit on it and get themselves covered with paint. Those are the Egyptians. There are others who when they see a sign that says 'Wet Paint,' have to touch. That's the Israelis. We have to touch because you're telling us that you're monitoring the truce and we have to see that you are monitoring the truce because we're a country which is the size of your state of New Jersey and only half as much population. We don't have the time to wait. We don't have the time to trust you. By the way, you missed a lot of violations."

*Q: How were the Camp David Accords? You said before that you didn't have high expectations.*

SVEDA: We had entirely low expectations. Of course, you probably know the story of the Camp David Accords better than I do. But the story that I heard was that after 10 or more days of negotiations, Jimmy Carter spent perhaps 15 minutes alone with Sadat and most of the rest of the time with Menachem Begin trying to convince him to give up territory for peace. The breaking point of opportunity came when Menachem Begin asked Jimmy Carter if Jimmy Carter could autograph some pictures of himself for Menachem Begin's grandchildren. Jimmy Carter spent a lot of time picking out the right photographs with Menachem Begin present and getting the right kind of pen because not all kinds of pens write on photographs and getting the names of the children and asking questions about the children and asking questions about their parents and asking Menachem Begin what kind of a world did he want his grandchildren to grow up in? He basically wore him down with that. We had very low expectations. Myself personally, I think that the Israelis could have - perhaps should have - given up less of the Sinai than they did. There is an historical argument that could be made that under the Ottoman administration, the eastern half of the Sinai was regarded as Palestine and the western half of the Sinai was regarded as Egypt. In other words, not the whole of the Sinai. But the Israelis chose to do this and it was a very big gamble. I think it paid off because the Egyptians under no circumstances were joining in a war against Israel at this point. I really cannot imagine-

*Q: Were you picking up any feelings from either side about Sadat?*

SVEDA: The Egyptians, of course, were practically worshiping Sadat. There were pictures of Sadat all over the place and they regarded him with great pride and justifiable pride as a great leader with a very big heart. They were willing to follow him, whatever he did. The Israelis had remarkable trust in Sadat. I cannot recall ever hearing a word against Sadat from anybody. Believe me, I had contact with soldiers of all backgrounds, all degrees of orthodoxy or secularism or adherence to one party or another. I never heard a word against Sadat. Never a word.

*Q: As we're talking today, Camp David II is going on with very low expectations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.*

SVEDA: The central problem is Jerusalem. As the Israelis told me, they would happily give up Haifa and Tel Aviv, but they're not giving up one square centimeter of Jerusalem and especially not anything before the western wall of the temple. That is absolutely impossible. Any solution that has to be fashioned has to work around that. Maybe an idea of condominium is possible, but I don't know.

*Q: During the time you were there, did the situation ever turn ugly on any particular thing?*

SVEDA: Between us and the Israelis? Yes. We had a number of altercations between ourselves and the Israelis almost all the time. Once, for example, our director, Ray Hunt, was calling a "surprise" inspection of the base at the Gidi Pass, the Israeli base, a surprise inspection which we had a right to do. A surprise inspection which had a luncheon guest list of maybe 12 people from Tel Aviv and from our camp, including one general who was late arriving. When our director arrived for his official inspection, the gates of the camp were to be closed for any entries or exits and I was to be in charge of making any exceptions to that rule. So, what happened that particular day was, the Israeli general was late and he wanted permission from the UN battalion to enter the zone so he could go to the Gidi camp and have lunch with our director and the commander and other people who were there. My Israeli counterpart made the mistake of saying to me, "Well, you have to let him through because he's very important." I said, "No, I don't have to let him through because I don't have to." He said, "Well, we'll go over your head." I said, "What? Your general is not going to lunch if that's the case." So, this Israeli counterpart said, "Well, we'll see about that" and he started making calls. He tried to call the commander of the base. The commander of the base called Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv called Jerusalem. Jerusalem called back. Everything was going back and forth, but they couldn't do anything. After about 15-20 minutes of this, he came to me and said, "They say it's your call." I said, "I told you that 15 or 20 minutes ago." He said, "Well, why are you objecting?" I said, "Because you haven't said 'please.'" This was the most impossible thing I could have asked from an Israeli to say "Please." He finally said, "Well, please, will you do it?" I said, "Fine" and made the call to the UN. But the point had to be made - and I talked to our director later about this and he laughed about it and said that the general was the commander of the camp - that as he said, our decision was absolute. He would yell at us and scream at us if we made a bad decision, but only back at the camp and never before anybody else. Our authority to withhold a convoy or to refuse it was absolute. As soon as that authority was shown to be soft in any way, then the whole system would crumble. So, he actually said, "Thank you for being impossible."

*Q: Did you find that in this testing period there was a problem that certain of the officers like yourself were softer than others and that all of a sudden more convoys came during so and so's turn on duty or was it pretty standard?*

SVEDA: It was pretty standard. Our schedule was so fluid that we never knew for sure more than a day or two in advance whether we were going to be there or somebody else was going to be there. In fact, actually, before your question, it never occurred to me that that's one of the reasons why we couldn't plan anything more than a week or so in advance.

*Q: It's a good idea. You've got a system that depends on personality as well as orders. You don't want to say, "Well, good old Joe, we can always get around him."*

SVEDA: Everybody was always negotiating leave. Some people wanted to go to Cairo as opposed to going to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. I always wanted to go to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. Some people liked going to Cairo because they could go to Khan el-Khalili,

the big market for antiques and silver. One person wanted to go there and another person wanted to go to the gambling casino. Other people thought that Cairo was more attractive. I was happy to trade. I really loved Israel very, very much, especially Jerusalem. I could not keep away. I don't think I had any bias toward the Israelis or toward the Egyptians, not that I can discern. Even when I was fighting with the Israelis, it was always understood to be just on the job and had nothing to do with the personal level. There were some funny things that happened. One funny thing that I learned about the Israeli army is that they are very democratic. A counterpart of mine who was a captain would yell at and embarrass the commander of the base, who was a general, if he made a mistake on something. The general at one point came over and chatted with me about how he had been to New York and how he liked going to some location and the counterpart said, "You're absolutely wrong. That's not true at all. It's not there" and they began talking to each other in a tone of voice that I would have never imagined a superior would be hearing from an inferior.

*Q: How about probably even more than the Egyptians and the Israelis, how did you deal with the Texans?*

SVEDA: This was very funny. One day when I was in Cairo, I had to go to the airport to fetch one of our new U.S. government personnel. I noticed without much trouble that he was from Texas because he had this very distinctive style of speech that they have around Greenville, Texas. I asked him if per chance he was from Texas and he said, "Yes." He said, "How did you know that?" I said, "I'm pretty good at hearing a Texas accent." I began to talk with him as we came in from the airport about his life. He told me how much he had hated Greenville, Texas, and how he just couldn't wait to get away and he joined the Foreign Service as a communicator just to get away from Greenville, Texas. I said, "Oh, where have you been recently?" He was in Finland. He had gotten married. His wife would be living in Israel when he was in the Sinai. Fine. The next day, we went to our camp in the Sinai. I watched his eyes as we got to the camp because the gate guard was from Greenville. He said, "My god, I think I know that person." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, I went to high school with him I didn't know that you had people from Greenville here." I said, "Yes, we do." We got to the camp where we had this big cafeteria and his whole life began showing before his eyes. He saw men who had dated his sister. He saw people who he hated in football in that particular town. Later on that night at the little bar that we had, he said to me, "Why didn't you tell me about this? Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Simply because I knew you'd never come." I must say that the Texans were really a lot of fun to be with. I like to tell people that the atmosphere at the Egyptian base was like Lawrence of Arabia. A very British army, disciplined. You could hear the music of "Lawrence of Arabia" playing in the background. The Israeli camp was a bit like a mix between "Star Wars" and "Fiddler on the Roof." If you can imagine "Star Wars" with the cast of "Fiddler on the Roof," it would have been probably very accurate. The camp that we had was basically like reruns of "Hee Haw," which was a kind of a musical comedy vaudeville show of the 1970s which was very popular, something like "Nashville Grand Ole Opry" except that there was a little bit more of a

Texas flavor to it. It was very interesting. The Texans were always very polite. We had fights occasionally - not me, but they. They were very polite folks.

*Q: Did the Foreign Service intrude at all? Did you ever feel you were a member of the Foreign Service?*

SVEDA: We were always meant to feel that we were intruders. They were always saying "Good enough for government work" and other things to bug us, but we were just smiling blandly in all directions in the typical Foreign Service way. One of the mottos of the Foreign Service is "Where there are no alternatives, there are no problems." So, if your embassy is burning around you, there is really nothing to do but smile blandly. You can't do anything else. We were very pleasant. I don't think there were any real conflicts between ourselves and the others. They were earning so much more money than we were. One third of them were on leave at any given time. Their leaves were to exotic locations. So, they realized that we were there and they couldn't understand why we were there because we weren't being paid anything near what they were being paid. We got along very well.

There was a man named Frederick Wiseman, who made a film called "Sinai Field Mission." Wiseman is one of those directors who just does anthropological films. He just starts the cameras and-

*Q: He did one on Belfast.*

SVEDA: Every so often at the American Film Institute, they have this film. I saw it once. As luck would have it, it was filmed the month before I arrived, so I know all the people who were in the film but I'm not there. It is a truly surreal experience for me. It's also a lousy film.

*Q: You had this interlude.*

SVEDA: I'd like to say something about the Israeli end of things. One of the things that I learned from my counterparts was how the Israelis organize their military. It's really quite unexpected and it's an important thing to understand. I found this out one day when the Israelis crossed over the Litani River in Lebanon and established the protection zone that they just recently (about a week or two ago) evacuated after 20 years. I was going to be my little spy for a day and find out what I could about this event from the perspective of within the Israeli defense forces. I just thought it would be fun to do and maybe I could find out something of use for our government. As I was sitting there, both he and I, my counterpart in this little cabin and I, were listening to BBC, he without any emotion beyond general interest. This was driving me crazy because I wanted to know more and I began asking him questions. He smiled because he really didn't know anything. He explained to me that the idea of the Israeli defense forces are divided into three corps, one for the northern part of the country, one for the middle of the country, and one for the south of the country. When you join you are sent to one of the three. It's random. You

could be living in the south and sent to the north or be in the south or in the middle; it doesn't matter. You'd stay with that corps. He said, "The important thing to understand is that not one person, not one bullet, is allowed to be given from one army to the other. The name of the game is survival. If one of the armies collapses, too bad. If the middle of one collapses, the first and the third have to keep on fighting. It's all about survival. If we dilute our own strength to help one or maybe two thirds that are failing, we will fail. It's all about survival. Here we are in the Sinai. We're in the southern sector. I know nothing about what's going on in the first sector, which is in the north." At that point, we heard a radio report from BBC which still is the best report that I've ever heard in my life. The BBC reporter noted that the Israeli commander had forbidden him to give any military information. Of course, as a radio correspondent, he knew the necessity of this and he expected it. However, sitting on the Israeli border in the town right on the border, Medulla, he said, "I am at liberty to report that two busloads of American Jewish tourists have had their reservations honored at the hotel in Litani." Both my Israeli counterpart and I began to laugh at this because we knew what the significance was. What that report meant was that the Israeli forces were far, far north of the Israeli border - in fact, we later learned, at the Litani River. I still think that's one of the finest reports I've ever heard.

*Q: In 1979, you had gotten yourself out of the East Asia-*

SVEDA: One more thing. In 1978, the current Pope, John Paul II, was elected. He is Polish and this was a matter of big surprise to me because I am Polish-American. He was in fact a big surprise as a choice in the world news. I happened to receive the news when I was with my Egyptian counterparts in the little cabin outside the Egyptian camp. They expressed great surprise, too, that a Pole had been elected Pope because, they said, all Poles are Jews. I looked at them blankly and said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Golda Meir is Polish. Ezer Weizman is Polish. Rabin is Polish." I said, "Well, excuse me, they are Polish Jews and they're not in Poland because they didn't find it a very hospitable place to live and they moved to Israel." This was news to the Egyptians. I just looked at them blankly. I couldn't believe that they didn't understand the first thing about Israel or Poland for that matter.

*Q: In 1979, were you a member of the Near East Bureau or were you just a loose body? Where did you go?*

SVEDA: Well, I was now, thank goodness, a member of the Near East Bureau of the State Department. The Near East Bureau of the State Department, which is always dealing with crisis after crisis, is also the bureau that runs an organization called S/S and S/SO. S/S is the Secretary's staff. They do all the paper flow for the principal officers of the Department. S/SO is the Operations Center, the State Department's 24 hour watch on the world. So, I was able to get a Washington assignment, which is desirable after a big embassy, a small post, and then a Washington posting. That is the holy trinity in the State Department career. So, I got an assignment as a watch officer in the Operations Center. My job was to draft the Secretary's morning intelligence summary and other things. I was an editor and a watch officer, but primarily an editor.

*Q: You did that from 1979 to when?*

SVEDA: 1981. At that point, I was able to get an assignment to Russia (then the Soviet Union), the embassy in Moscow, as science officer. That would have included a year of language training.

*Q: Let's go back to the 1979-1981 period. How did you find the Operations Center?*

SVEDA: The very first night I was on duty was February 14, 1979. I remember this date because the New York Times had a headline about the Operations Center on the front page the next day. They referred to the St. Valentines Night massacre. The first night, my first night duty, was unquestionably the most hectic night that I've ever experienced. I should explain something about the way the schedules were structured. As a watch officer, I was on a rotating shift, meaning that I would show up at 7:00 am for two days. I would work from 7:00 am until 4:00 pm, at which time I would leave. Then I would have two days from 3:00 pm until midnight. Then I would have two days 11:00 pm until 7:00 am. So, there was always this overlap. Then I would collapse for the rest of that day and I had two days off and began the schedule again. So, my first midnight shift was the night that I was going to be writing the President's morning intelligence summary for the first time. A few days earlier, I began my shift with the day shift and with trembling hands opened up the morning intelligence summary, something that I thought contained all the secrets of the universe and which I'd be writing in a couple of days. I also with trembling hands got to see the CIA's product, which was called the National Intelligence Daily (or at least it was then). I opened it and I just couldn't believe I was actually looking at these things, that this was what President Jimmy Carter himself was seeing. I don't think I read anything with comprehension because I was just so amazed at what I was actually supposedly seeing. In a few days, I was writing it. The first night, I was looking through the cable traffic to see what I could put before the President. It was 11:00 pm. I served with a senior watch officer, another junior watch officer like myself, and a couple of office assistants. It was around 11:00 pm and the major focus for the other people was what would be on TV that night because nothing was going on. I was fumbling through the cable traffic looking for items that I might put before the Secretary of State, Vance, and President Carter.

Around 11:30, all hell broke loose. We had our embassy in Teheran seized by militants, the first time. They only kept it for a day or so and then they let it go and then later on in November of '79, they seized the embassy a second time and that time for about 400 days. Our embassy in Chad was caught in crossfire between government troops and rebel troops. Most sadly, our ambassador, Spike Dubs, in Afghanistan was seized by rebels or militants and held in a hotel room as a hostage. From that moment on (they all happened at about the same time, I guess because of the difference in time and they were mostly in the Middle Eastern time zone), literally all hell broke loose. Of course, the Operations Center would need to get the desk officers and in this case the assistant secretaries to be present immediately and would have to brief the President and the Vice President. As it

turns out, Jimmy Carter was extremely conscientious and was about to depart for a trip to Mexico the next day. He really wanted to know whether he should take the trip to Mexico or perhaps postpone it. Secretary Vance announced to us that he was coming and he would just spend the time with us. Of course, as soon as we got the word to the assistant secretaries and the deputy assistant secretaries that the Secretary himself was going to be with us in the Ops Center that evening, we had big problems of crowd control. They all wanted to be in there at that particular moment. Secretary Vance spent most of his time that day negotiating with the Soviets, who were in control of Afghanistan, and trying to get them not to attack the rebels and shoot the rebels dead and incidentally, our ambassador, Spike Dubs. This went on for about 5 or 6 hours. At one point, President Carter, a very conscientious person, calls. It was about 3:00 am. The head of the desk, a guy named Bill Rowe, gets the call. Very crisp former naval officer to former naval officer, he said, "Yes, Mr. President. No, Mr. President. Secretary Vance is right now on the line to Kabul. I will see if I can patch you in. I'm going to go to the other room (where he was on the line)." The Secretary was there with any number of assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries trying to negotiate this through. So, Bill Rowe hands the phone to one of the office assistants and says, "This is the President on the line. I'm going to go to the other room. I want you to listen and when I connect, we'll connect." "About an hour or two later, Bill Rowe comes through, has a cup of coffee. He is talking to the OA and says, "Well, what did you say to the President?" "Nothing." Of course, he wouldn't initiate a conversation with the President. "Well, what did the President say to you?" "Nothing." "What? It took him eight or 10 minutes to put this call through. You just were silent on the line with the President of the United States?" "I put him on hold." "At which point Bill Rowe practically fainted dead away, seeing his Foreign Service career absolutely going down in flames. He actually did have a very good career after that. I think he was ambassador to Turkey at some point. But it was a fun place to work because all things were happening all the time.

One thing that happened shortly after the big Iran hostage crisis began, I was the editor and an agency of the U.S. government which is across the river from us - the CIA - the people who were our Intelligence and Research people came to me and said that the CIA absolutely had to get an item in to the President in the morning intelligence summary. This was about three or four days after the Iran hostage crisis had begun, the big one. Basically, it was an intelligence report, an intercepted communication of a Latin American embassy of a very large country in Latin America that doesn't speak Spanish reporting on what the American reaction to the hostage crisis was. I looked at this and I said, "Why are we getting this to the President?" "Well, this is really good stuff. We got this from an intercepted communication." I said, "Well, excuse me, but you could walk out on the street at random, speak to four Americans at random, and get firsthand report on what Americans think about the Iran hostage crisis. What do we care what this embassy says?" "Well, this is really good material. It's really hot stuff." I was able to block it for two days and then my successor, I told her in the next shift, "Block this stupid item. She was able to do it, but she forgot to tell the person who followed on the next shift and it got in.

*Q: I think this points up a real problem, a bigger one. That is, intelligence caught by clandestine methods - intercepts or paying an agent or something - seem to have a value greater than just normal intelligence. If you pay so much or you have such and such a method of getting something, it's worth more than just plain information.*

SVEDA: Yes. I mentioned earlier that when I first touched the NID ["National Intelligence Daily"], my hands were trembling. Later on, I was able to go to Langley and I met the 20-30 editors who wrote this product. The one question that the Foreign Service officers who worked in the Ops Center with me always had in the back of our minds is, when we leave all of this sexy classified material, supposedly the word from Mount Sinai, how are we going to find a substitute for it in our daily reading? What are good and open sources? As Foreign Service officers, we believed, and I still believe, that open source material by and large can substitute for classified materials. There will always be state to state communications like the president to the president, which will be unique and of great value. But by and large, I think that if you read the Economist magazine, you get as good as can be gotten from open sources. The Wall Street Journal's daily summary, the little items that they have, is a very good summary. The New York Times does a very good job. But then you get to the level of the "Periscope" that's done by U.S. News and World Report. That was the level of the NID. The flavor of reading the NID was so sanitized that it had no flavor at all. These were like chicken McNuggets versus free range chicken, which is what the State Department serves up, so to speak. This was the difference in flavor between what we produced as editors based on State Department cables and what the CIA produced.

The problem is, once I had a CIA cable about a French businessman in North Korea who had learned something very sizzling about the leader of North Korea or his son at the time, who is now the leader of North Korea. It's not important what the item was. I expressed mild surprise that a French businessman would be privy to such information. My CIA counterpart said, "Oh, well, it's not necessarily a Frenchman. It's not necessarily a businessman. We changed the identity to protect the source." I said, "Oh, well, in State Department cables, you don't do that. You'd put the name of the person and you'd say 'Protect' or you give a reason why you can't identify the source, but you don't play games like that. You leave it to the intelligent reader to figure out what is going on with the best information you can provide. You don't digest it. You don't predigest it. You don't pulp it and make it into a little chicken McNugget," which is what they do. That's my problem with their product. The Defense Department products are basically... I guess they read State Department cables, it seems, and rewrite them, I don't know, changing all the active constructions to passive constructions. They just read badly.

*Q: With the hostage crisis, did that generate almost a separate office within Operations? That was 444 days.*

SVEDA: The Operations Center has two or three office suites that are ready to be used as a full functioning office in five minutes. In other words, you have the business machines that you need, furniture, etc. At that particular moment, we already had a crisis going. We

set up two crisis centers, one for Chad and one for Iran. But we used the Secretary's conference room (that's the only place we could) for the Secretary's phone calls to Kabul. This was an unfortunate precedent. When the Kabul business was over, the families of the hostages, the State Department Washington-based relatives of the people in Teheran, insisted on being kept apprised. A very bad decision was made to have the families basically set up shop in the Secretary's conference room for 444 days and nights. They were basically privy to almost everything that we did. It was government transparency run amuck.

One thing I should say about the hostage crisis is, looking back on it now, it was all done for the media. We had two reports, the best intelligence reports I have ever read, from another country, a small county in the Middle East which is about the size of New Jersey that I will not identify. This particular country had what I think were the greatest reports, probably from the same person. In one report, this person entered Teheran airport and left Teheran airport. Part a was arriving in Teheran and part b departing Teheran. This person had an absolute photographic and phonographic memory. It just seemed like a very bland report on everything you saw, everyone you talked to, all the officials you had to pass through, and what the security arrangements were in those airports. The second one simply walked around the embassy compound in Teheran at 8:00 am, 10:00 am, noon, two or three hour periods throughout the day for about three days. I don't know when this person slept. But he noticed something, that all the crowds were in the front of the embassy where the TV cameras were. Indeed, all the guards were at the front of the embassy where the TV cameras were. On the sides and back of the embassy compound, nobody. This is a very important report. It later probably served as the basis for the Iran hostage rescue mission, which I can discuss if you want. I only saw it from the worm's eye view in the Operations Center.

*Q: Talk about that and how that played itself out at the Operations Center.*

SVEDA: Secretary of State Vance was a workaholic. He worked round the clock, was a very conscientious man. He had a very good deputy secretary, Warren Christopher, who was later Secretary of State under Clinton. One day, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was national security advisor, came up and said, "Gee, Cy, you work real hard. Why don't you take a few days off? Not that much is happening right now and you have been really working yourself 24 hours a day. You really ought to go to your home in Middleburg and just take a few days off. Go Thursday, come back Sunday, the rest will be good." "You know, Zbig," he said, "Good idea." So, he goes off to Middleburg, Virginia. Warren Christopher, the deputy, is in charge. He comes back Sunday evening. Christopher and he had a telephone conversation. "What's happening? Anything I need to know about?" "Oh, not much. We had our National Security Council meeting on Friday and we gave final approval to the Iran hostage rescue mission." "The what?" "You don't know about that?" "No. What is that about?" Warren Christopher and Cy Vance realized that they had been snookered, that basically Brzezinski wanted to have Vance out of the room when they took final approval of this. Vance insisted on seeing the plans that evening. He had been deputy secretary of Defense. He did know defense matters. He looked at the plans

and the next morning, he went to President Carter with a sealed envelope and he said, "Mr. President, this is the last straw. Zbigniew Brzezinski and others have been forever acting as though they're Secretary of State (Andy Young, for example, said something that he had not cleared with the Secretary of State when he was the UN ambassador at one point)-"

*Q: It was dealing with the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization]. He had contact with them when he was told not to.*

SVEDA: And Cy Vance threatened to resign over that unless he had full control over foreign policy. Then this thing happened with Zbigniew Brzezinski now planning this hostage rescue mission without telling Cyrus Vance at all about this and trying to get it approved when he was out of town. So, he said, "Mr. President, I've put up with this a lot, but this is my letter of resignation in this envelope. It takes effect seven days after the Iran hostage mission takes place. It is my letter of resignation whether or not this mission succeeds or fails. I've looked at the plans and it will fail." "Well, Cy," said the President, "I'm sorry that you feel that way, but" and he accepted the envelope. Then the Secretary of State resigned, only the second Secretary of State to resign in protest in the 20th century. The first one was William Jennings Bryan back at the time of World War I.

*Q: Were you on the watch during the rescue attempt or the aftermath of it?*

SVEDA: Oh, definitely during the aftermath. I was and I wasn't on at the time that it occurred because it was over a couple of days really. The one thing I remember very distinctly about that period also is how President Carter came to develop an animus against the Soviet Union. He said he learned more about the Soviet Union in the previous 48 hours of time when they invaded Afghanistan and other things than he had in all the previous years of his presidency. He fixed on this idea of an American boycott of the Moscow Olympics because that would hurt the Soviets at the place that they were most vulnerable, their pride. Dr. Marshal Schulman, who was one of his advisors on Soviet policy, advised that course of action. He also went for a wheat embargo to the Soviet Union. We were sending vast quantities of wheat - 800 million tons or something like that - to the Soviet Union. The one thing that I do recall reading is something that I've thought about since, that Brezhnev had told some of his intimates that he intended to make Afghanistan the 16th republic of the Soviet Union. That had been something that was on the President's mind. I don't know if he noticed that particularly.

*Q: I think the December '79 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which was already essentially a communist state, was the beginning of almost the end of the Soviet Union. It didn't work and showed the failing leadership. But at that time you were in the Ops Center. Were you getting any instant appraisals of people who were sitting around the Operations Center of what this was about and why they were doing this, the Soviets?*

SVEDA: Soviet policy was largely in the control of Dr. Marshal Schulman, who was from Columbia University. He advised Secretary of State Vance on policy. He had a

couple of very bright people in his office, one of whom later was my boss in Moscow, Mike Joyce, and another whose name I forget right now. He had a direct line to Vance. I don't know what he was advising him. I don't think that the Soviet desk necessarily knew.

*Q: It was bizarre because it didn't make any sense. But all one can feel is a bunch of doddering old men in the Politburo who decided this would be kind of fun to do. It was peculiar.*

SVEDA: Your question can be answered two ways. Your question was really what I saw and heard in the Operations Center versus what I thought as a result of studying the Soviet Union for two years and then going to Embassy Moscow for two years. But at the time, I think there was real shock. The feeling was that the Afghan business, including the killing of Spike Dubs, was part of a premeditated plan and yet nobody really connected it to history at the time. If anybody had studied the history of the 19th century, they would have come across the term "the great game," which was between the British empire and the Russian empire and to some subsidiary degree, China, for who would dominate the roof of the world. Afghanistan, Tibet, and Central Asia were part of that. There could have been an outcome of that game very easily whereby Tibet would be now a kingdom very much like Nepal or part of India. There was nothing preordained about this, that Tibet would be part of China. And the same thing goes with Afghanistan. The Brits wanted Afghanistan as a way of getting into western China because there is this very critical pass that goes from Afghanistan east into Tibet. If they could have gotten into that, they could have gotten into Central Asia. I don't think they ever really thought about why they wanted to do it. They just did it because it was there.

*Q: This was one of those critical decisions that was made by the Soviet Union that has repercussions as of today.*

SVEDA: When you come right down to it, that thing that I mentioned, that Brezhnev wanted in a way, as his monument, to be the man who made Afghanistan the 16th republic of the Soviet Union, somebody had convinced him of that wacky idea.

*Q: Let's talk a bit about your training. How did you get assigned to the Soviet Union and then the training for that?*

SVEDA: I was in the Operations Center, I was very slow and naïve about these things. I saw a lot of my colleagues leave after six, seven, or 10 months to wonderful assignments. It dawned on me that they were asking for reassignment the very day they arrived in the Operations Center. It was one of those assignments that could be easily broken. Myself, I had a year and a half assignment and it never occurred to me that I could break that assignment. I guess my catholic grade school made a very deep impression on me. When you're supposed to do something, you're supposed to do it and that's that. Toward the end of my assignment, I began talking about going places. Of course, I had this obsession about getting to Europe. At that point, I wasn't entirely sure I wanted to stay with the

Foreign Service. While I was at the Ops Center, I had finally taken the bar exam. I had graduated from law school some years earlier and never bothered to take the bar exam. I took the bar exam for DC and I passed it. While I was at the Ops Center also, I had two weeks off in the summer of 1980 working with NBC, CBS, and ABC on the network pool of the Republican and the Democratic National Conventions. The State Department had no problem with that as long as it had nothing to do with foreign policy, which it didn't. So, I served as the person on the podium at each convention for the network pool. At that time, there were such things as political conventions. Now they're just week-long infomercials. But I was considering various options. I had made a promise to myself that I would join the Foreign Service for five years, at which time I would take a look at the landscape and see what it looked like. This was a little bit beyond five years and I wanted to see what my next assignment would be. When my career development officer said that there was a chance to work in Moscow, I thought, wow, after language training, I'd learn Russian; I would be in Moscow for two years; and I would assume my value on the market would be that much higher. Who knows, maybe I would stay in the Foreign Service.

So, yes, I took it. It was one year of language training here in Rosslyn, Virginia. At the end of language training, I got a telephone call from the desk.

*Q: That would be '81-'82?*

SVEDA: Actually, '80-'81. In April of '81 just as I was finishing my Russian language training, I got a telephone call from the Soviet desk from a nice woman who worked there, one of my colleagues, who said, "Russell, I have some bad news for you and I have some good news for you. The bad news is that your position in Moscow as science officer, two science officers working with a counselor, has been abolished. So, the position to which you were going to go no longer exists. We can have you go to Moscow a year from now to replace the remaining Foreign Service officer who is there, but then we have the problem of what to do with you in that year. We would like to send you to Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany to the U.S. Army Russian Language Institute there to study for a year." I said, "What's the alternative?" She said, "The alternative is for you to go into the assignment pool and just take whatever happens to come up." I began kissing the phone because Garmisch is perhaps the closest to paradise that one can find on this planet. So, I spent a year of additional language training with one of my Foreign Service colleagues, John Fogerty, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

*Q: How did you find the Garmisch time?*

SVEDA: Maybe 50-60 students there who were Army for the most part. There were also Air Force and one or two Marines. I don't think we had any Navy. The people had already studied language at Monterrey at the language school that the Army ran. They had a year of language study. But the language study was very different than the one that the Foreign Service Institute taught. The method was very different. The method of the Foreign Service Institute is to have you speaking the language from the first day. They teach you

the language basically the way a mother teaches her child a native language – stimulus response. You say the right thing and there's a smile. You say the wrong thing… basically, it's a very laborious method, but it works. The Monterrey method was more traditional. These are verbs; this is how you conjugate a verb; these are nouns, this is how you decline a noun, and so forth. It was more grammatical. The result was, when I got to Garish, I didn't know any grammar, but I could speak Russian. The Army officers knew grammar but they couldn't speak Russian. So, one of our teachers one day said to me, "What is the dative plural of this?" I looked at her blankly. I had no idea what the dative plural was. She turned to one of the soldiers and said, "What is the dative plural?" Very proudly, he gave her the dative plural. Then she turned to me and asked me something which required the use of the dative plural and I responded and she said, "Do you realize that you just gave met he dative plural of such a verb?" I said, "No." Then she turned to the Army officer and said, "He knows no grammar, but he can speak. You know grammar. You can't speak." The same teacher, who was a marvelous teacher, taught us how to read an article in the Soviet press, in Pravda, for example. She said, "When you're writing a cable, ignore everything until the word 'however." There will be a statement of garbage which shows that the writer knows what the Soviet policy on such and such is. And then they say 'however.'" Read that and begin reading there." I thought that was very sage advice. I had to smile about that.

Generally speaking, my relations with the soldiers was not good. They resented me because I had… One of the first questions they asked was, "What did you do during the war in Vietnam?" these were all Vietnam War veterans. I told them that I protested the war in Vietnam and I joined the Peace Corps and served in Korea in Peace Corps and I protested the war after that. This didn't sit very well with them. I wasn't being very diplomatic. I was being very honest, but they didn't like that. Some of them liked me, but most of them didn't. What I found about the Army culture is that it's extremely competitive. All of these officers who were captains and majors were desperate to become lieutenant colonels or colonels and they knew that very few of them would. They were competing viciously among each other, but they also were very much identified with their particular specialty, their branch of service (combat arms, intelligence, or whatever). So, their idea was to denigrate the Air Force people who were there, to denigrate the Marine who was there, which wasn't very wise because he was a lot stronger than they were and, frankly, a lot smarter. But they also denigrated each other's units and of course the civilians. We had people from NSA [National Security Agency] there who basically kept to themselves. The NSA is sometimes called "Never Say Anything." They were people who were getting special Russian language training so they cold sit in darkened rooms with earphones and listen to intercepted telephone calls or other interceptions and do their translations. A miserable life, but there were people there who really loved the Russian language and they felt that they had to do that in order to eat. But there were two of us other people and we were given a lot of grief. My other colleague, John Fogerty, is very much the Gemini. A Gemini will always tell someone what he thinks they want to hear. So, he was very non-threatening. I am not at all like that.

*Q: I think we'll stop at this point. We'll pick it up the next time-*

SVEDA: When I finally get to the Soviet Union, which is 1982.

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*Q: Today is July 26, 2000. But we're moving back to 1982. You were in the Soviet Union from 1982 to when?*

SVEDA: 1982-1984. I was science officer. I was assigned as one of three people in the Science Office. The science Office itself was being kept alive by the ambassador because he believed that we needed to have scientific cooperation with the Soviet Union as a way of building a bridge to their very large science community from our very large science community and hopefully working on things that would lead to peaceful cooperation. Our ambassador at the time, Arthur Hartman, and his wife, Donna Hartman, were probably the best possible ambassadorial couple imaginable. Arthur Hartman had been ambassador in Paris prior to that. He had been Jimmy Carter's ambassador in Paris. He had also been Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. When he was asked to be ambassador for the Reagan administration to the Soviet Union, he balked at it because he really didn't have the linguistic or cultural background to do that. They repeated the offer and he said, "No, I really don't think that I'm your man. Why don't you find somebody who knows more about Russia and the Soviets? This is far too important to give to an amateur." They insisted again that he was absolutely the right person. They were absolutely right. He was the right person.

He did make an effort to study Russian as the new ambassador. One of our language teachers from the FSI, Nina de la Cruz, went over there and taught him. Nina was the head of the Russian program, a redoubtable 70 year old woman who had been born in St. Petersburg. Her mother had been the lady in waiting to the czarina. The family had escaped across Siberia to China. She had made her way somehow to Sao Paulo, where she and her sisters were taxi dancers to raise money for the first Russian Orthodox cathedral in Sao Paulo. This woman has had a very interesting life. She married a Brazilian diplomat. Hence the name "de la Cruz" and she wound up in Washington somehow teaching at the FSI. When Nina was teaching the Hartmans, she made a visit to her old home in Leningrad. She rapped on the door with her cane and they came and she said, "The Schotskys are back." In other words, that was the original name. These people started tugging their forelocks and bowing. She looked around and said, "Look, I can understand why they had to divide this into a communal apartment. It was really too big for one family. I would certainly agree with that. But the condition of these windows, the condition of these walls, can't you take a mop to that floor over there?" They began to do a little cleanup project there under the stern gaze of this Russian language teacher from FSI. Anyway, the Hartmans were just an idea1 couple. They are Quaker from New Jersey. Donna was Quaker and I think basically he turned Quaker, if you can convert to Quakerism. I once asked him how they met in college and he said, "Oh, people thought we should date each other because we kind of looked like each other." I looked at them and said, "Oh, yes, I can see that."

*Q: What was the state of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1982 when you got there?*

SVEDA: Brezhnev was the leader of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was in what is now called the period of stagnation, a very good term. Brezhnev had taken over from Khrushchev in 1964 in order to do two things. He wanted to out-produce the United States in steel and he wanted to have more weapons than the United States. Well, he did out-produce the United States in steel but it was a very low grade of steel, which is not really useful even for railroad ties. He also out produced the United States in missiles, but that coupled with the effort to out produce the United States in steel, led to an impending collapse of the Soviet economy. It was perfectly obvious to us there that the whole thing was jerry rigged and about to collapse, though hopefully not on our watch. Nobody could see their way to devising any scenario that would not have led to a nuclear war or at least a very severe civil war within the Soviet Union as to what the successor regime would be. If you had asked any of us at the embassy there when we thought the whole thing might come apart, I think the day that I heard was like 2010. We'd be long out of the Foreign Service by then. That was a safe date to use.

So, I think that we all knew that there was a very bad situation there and we tried to explain this to Washington. Washington was being run by the new Reagan administration and they had an ideological view of the Soviet Union which was that it was a very large and powerful and looming enemy of the United States and apt to take advantage of any of our missteps in order to destroy us. There was a different way of thinking there. The way of thinking really had an important investment in making the Soviet Union as big a threat as possible. I think that CIA reports on Soviet power which were published in open sources and other reports by the military or others always built up the Soviet Union beyond what we really thought was going on or could see was going on from the Moscow standpoint.

Relations were bad. Relations were very bad at that point. 1982-1984 was a time when the President of the United States not only had not met with the head of the Soviet Union, as his predecessors had, but called them an "evil empire" in a speech which really hurt the Soviets self-esteem. It's a very hard thing to explain, but Ronald Reagan, as much as he was hated and feared by the Soviets, really was still the President of the United States and spoke with a certain authority which they respected, so when he called them an "evil empire," it really cut them to the quick.

*Q: That got a big play there.*

SVEDA: Oh, yes.

*Q: It was almost a joke in professional circles here in the United States. The damn thing was an evil empire. The President was speaking straight, but you don't call an evil empire an "evil empire."*

SVEDA: After he had made that statement, I adjusted a world map that I had in my office. I cut out a piece of red empire and I labeled it "evil" and put it over the Soviet Union. I had little green pieced of paper labeled "good" and I put them over our NATO allies, Japan, and the U.S. When people came into my office and said what's that, I said, "I just wanted to remember the parameters of our foreign policy." I also had a little label over the Pacific "mare nostrum [our sea]."

*Q: One of the puzzling things… I'm going on the assumption that you all, although maybe you were bugged all the time, officers would talk about whither the Soviet Union. One of the great questions is, what was it that prompted the Soviets to occupy a communist country that was having an internal coup – Afghanistan – and getting involved in that can of worms in 1979? Was there a consensus at the embassy at that time of why the hell these people did that?*

SVEDA: I wasn't in the embassy at that time, but I was in the Ops Center at that time. I was privy to discussions and papers that were flying back and forth to Secretary Vance and President Carter. My understanding was that Brezhnev wanted to make Afghanistan "the 16th republic of the Soviet Union." Why? I think you have to go back to looking at who these people were and where they had come from. When I was in graduate school, I had to do a paper for a course on futurology, which was then popular. It was 1974 or '75 and I was doing a paper for Roger Hilsman, who had been the former Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs under John Kennedy and under Lyndon Johnson. He was teaching a course on futurology. I decided to do a paper on the future of the Soviet Union. I thought the year 2000 might be a useful point to focus on. But I really didn't know what to do. I had a book by a man named Andrei Amalrik. It was a little paperback called Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?. A rather arch title referring to the book "1984." Amalrik was a dissident who wrote the book in 1966 and died mysteriously in a car accident in Spain in 1968 or so. It was long thought that the KGB had a hand in his death. Amalrik's book was dead on the money. He was off by a five years, but he got it right. He said that the Soviet Union would come to grief on two points. One was the economy, which was in shambles. In fact, arguably, it was not an economy at all. I can get into that. And on the nationalities question. He thought that this was basically insoluble. Later on, Murray Feshbach, who was a professor at Georgetown University, came and made much the same point. But Andrei Amalrik's point about the nationalities was that once you began to satisfy these people with some participation, there was no end to it. The Russians were not in a position that they could negotiate or give away anything to the various subject peoples because once they began to do it, the whole thing would fall apart. So, this is a roundabout way of saying that I think in Afghanistan, they were afraid that a people that they dominated were getting out of control and they had to exert control just to show that they could do it. We see the same thing in Chechnya today.

*Q: I'm talking about you at the embassy. Was there any type of consensus? This was probably a key decision that helped bury the Soviet Union. But it would also show how decisions were made and who was behind it within the Politburo. What were people*

*thinking? Was it the consensus that even though they were attacking a government which nobody else… Afghanistan was one communist group against another communist group.*

SVEDA: Let me go back a little bit. I was doing this paper on futurology. I talked to Carl Deutsch, who was a professor sometime at Harvard, sometime at Yale. He is a very leading light in the field of international relations. I had dinner with him once at Columbia and said, "Gee, Professor Deutsch, how do I talk about the future of the Soviet Union in the year 2000? I have a book, but I really don't have anything else." He said, "Well, when you don't know anything about anybody, it's a general rule to try to find out what was going on in the world when they were the age of 15-25 or 30. It's called 'age cohort analysis.' You'll find out something about their world view" and he gave me an example. Berthold Brecht and Hitler were born in different decades. Berthold Brecht came to the age of 15 and was 15-25 when his ideas were formed in a different era than Hitler's. Hitler was about 10 years later and his ideas really came as a result of watching Germany in 1910-1914 be a great power, in 1914-1918 the war, and by the time he was 30 in 1920 or so, his ideas had been pretty much formed. Khrushchev was 15 about 1910. Khrushchev was 25 in 1925 and 30 in 1930 roughly. What did he see? He saw the collapse of the old czarist regime. He saw the horrors of World War I. He saw the rise of this enthusiastic young communist movement under the leadership of Lenin. Lenin dies when Khrushchev is roughly 25. From 25-30, he sees this all unravel as Stalin comes in. so, the first thing that Khrushchev does when he takes power is, he literally buries Stalin. He takes him out of Lenin's tomb and he puts him in the ground behind him. Take Brezhnev – and this is the answer to your question. Brezhnev is 15 in 1930 roughly. He's 30 in 1945 roughly. What's going on in the world? Stalin is going through this period of forced collectivization, Stalinization. By the time he's 25 or so, World War II has broken out and he rises to prominence by the end of World War II. Why? Because there is a whole crop of people who were shot in 1936-1939 in the purges prior to WW II. Brezhnev, Grimy, Ustinov, all the people who were in the Politburo at the time of Brezhnev were 25-30 about the time WW II occurred. They had positions of great responsibility. Why? There wasn't anybody senior to them. They had all been killed. So, this crowd remained together through the 1950s, through the 1960s, and here it was, the 1970s. These guys were getting old and they were all determined to hold on to power as long as they could. So, we see Brezhnev dying and being replaced by Andropov, who is actually trying to change the system. Andropov dies and is replaced in the last gasp of the old Politburo by Chernenko for a year. Then he dies after a year and in comes the protégé of Andropov, Gorbachev, who tries to change things around. So, if you see things in the long view of history, there was an effort by an aging Politburo to hold on to the reins of power as long as they could.

Within the embassy, we had the Brezhnev succession that we were concerned about – and I'll get into that in a second – and then the succession to Andropov we were concerned about. We were totally wrong about the succession to Andropov. We thought that Gorbachev would take over right away. We were surprised that the Politburo was able to have a last gasp. But the succession to Brezhnev was clear because prior to his death, which occurred in November of 1982, the KGB, which was under the thumb of

Andropov, was giving us all manner of signals that they were really almost in charge and they were doing things to indicate their disrespect of Brezhnev in ways that I found astonishing.

*Q: Was this a new generation KGB? Was there the feeling at the time that these old guys had really screwed up in Afghanistan and also the economy and all this… that there was a feeling within the next generation coming up and also discontent with the people, of let's get rid of these guys and we've got to do something? Was there a feeling that we were really getting ready for a different line of policy? Is that what we were expecting when you arrived?*

SVEDA: When I arrived there, I don't think there was any expectation that there would be anything different. We saw each of the members of the Politburo as being the head of the faction almost in the Japanese sense of a faction and that these factions were united in choosing Brezhnev to be the head of their faction, but when he left that somebody else from that coterie would be the head. So, we didn't expect any real change. At least, I don't sense that.

This was until the summer and the fall just before Brezhnev's death. We began to get signals that the KGB was being real rambunctious. Example. I was invited to a play. Moscow has many wonderful theaters. They tend to be repertory theater companies. In other words, a little company will do three or four plays in a season – the same actors. This particular company was the Theater of the Southwest, referring to a section of Moscow, a workers section. It was a theater that was in the large basement of an apartment house which was large enough for a theater in the round. They performed a play called "Dragon." The play first was performed in 1940 roughly. It had been performed in 1956 roughly. This was the third performance that had been give in the Soviet Union. This was 1982. "Dragon" is about St. George coming to a village to rid them of their dragon. But you see George in modern attire. He's not wearing an armored suit. St. George is sort of as a pest exterminator. He comes to this village where the dragon is really taking the role of a mayor. He falls in love with the daughter of the mayor, who is the daughter of the dragon, and there are some comic complications that ensue. In 1940 when the play was performed under Stalin, the dragon was clearly Hitler. In the 1950s when the play was performed under Khrushchev, the dragon was clearly Hitler. In the 1950s when the play was performed under Khrushchev right after the death of Stalin, the dragon was dressed to look like Stalin with a big handlebar moustache. In the performance I saw, there were three actors taking the place of the dragon and there was really wonderful stage changes where somebody would begin to light up a cigarette and there would be a flash of light and then you would see the second actor lighting the cigarette and after a couple of lines, there would be a flash of light and the third actor would be there holding the cigarette in exactly the same position that the second actor had it. It was really magnificent stagecraft. But one of the actors playing the dragon looked exactly like Brezhnev, who wasn't dead yet. I was just astonished. I was taken there by some "interpreters" and Russian-English interpreters and all interpreters in the Soviet Union were all KGB. Period. So, I knew exactly who was inviting me to this. There was

somebody else from the embassy, of course. I can't remember who. Then later on, we went to the apartment of these women and there were a couple of other Russians there, men, and there were a couple of embassy people there. I was just astonished at the play I was seeing. It lampooned Brezhnev in the most insulting terms, but I was discussing it in an apartment that was filled with czarist memorabilia, a KGB apartment, and it was filled with pictures of the czar and the czarina. This woman's name was Goncharova, which means that she was of a family of the woman who was married to Pushkin who was one of the court ladies. She had the bed of Pushkin and Goncharova there in her apartment. I was looking at this thing and thinking, "What kind of a world is this?" But basically we were getting signals like that that something else was coming and changing.

The other signal we got – and you'll have to pardon me because this is the way we looked at it at the embassy – was watching what would be performed by the Bolshoi at their premier each year.

*Q: Talk about Kremlinology. This was Bolshoiology or something.*

SVEDA: This was very important because this was the way we looked at these things. It turned out that the first performance that year of the Bolshoi that season – Brezhnev not dead yet – was of a thing called "Zolatoivyek [Golden Age]," which was by Shostakovich – one of the more charming aspects is "Tea for Two" was appropriated by Shostakovich as part of the ballet. The ballet of this Golden Age is set in the period under Lenin before the Stalinist economic program was put in. The Soviet Union didn't begin in 1918. It begin in 1928/1929 when Stalin enunciated his first five year plan. So, the period of the 1920s was kind of wild and people thought that maybe they could have elements of capitalism and elements of socialism. The new economic program. So, basically, we're sitting there in our seats – the ambassador is there, I'm there, a few other people are there – and trying to figure out what is the significance of the Golden Age being the Bolshoi's premier presentation of the year. It was perfectly clear that somebody somewhere was saying, "Brezhnev is about to die. Brezhnev is on the way out and we're on the way in and we're going to resurrect the new economic program of Lenin." There were signals like that all over the place. This is what we did in Moscow, we looked for signals like that. We literally looked at smoke signals above the Kremlin. We watched the lights on the Kremlin. We had some poor devil standing there watching the lights in the Kremlin. If all the lights went on suddenly in the middle of the night, we knew Brezhnev was about to die. In fact, when Brezhnev did die, it was right after the October Revolution celebration, which was in November because of the difference in the Julian calendar and the modern calendar. Brezhnev had attended the ceremonies. The poor devil had been up there in the cold reviewing these troops for hours and then he had to go to the Great Common Hall, the great Kremlin hall, and greet all these dignitaries and diplomats. Donna Hartman shook hands with him and she told me later, "I saw a dead man walking. I saw a dead man standing and shaking hands. There was no Brezhnev." Somehow, they had managed to keep him appearing to be alive. In the previous months, the KGB had embarrassed him by, for example, shuffling the papers of the long speech he was about to give. He read the first four pages or so of the speech and then noticed that page 17 was

the next page and there he was on the podium and there was this long, long silence while he was trying to figure out what to do. He said in the microphone, "Comrades, believe me, this is not my fault." The poor old man was being mocked and shown in the worst possible light and frankly tortured to death in the sense of putting him up on that… Two days later, he was dead. Ed Stephens, who was an American journalist who was thought to have KGB connections and who write for "The Long Island Daily" newspaper, came to the embassy to tell the ambassador that Brezhnev had died before it was publicly announced. We got the message to Washington.

The new leader turned out to be this man, Andropov. We knew practically nothing about Andropov. We were beginning to get all sorts of disinformation about him, that he liked Benny Goodman records, that he liked to drink scotch, that he liked to read certain English novels. But we didn't really know very much about Andropov. We never go to meet Andropov while he was in power. Once, there was a frisson of excitement when his daughter showed up at an American embassy reception. I believe it was his daughter and his son in law. It might have been his son and his daughter in law. But we really didn't have any direct connection with this man.

*Q: Was it because of ill health or was it because he just wasn't seeing people?*

SVEDA: At first, we thought it was because he just wasn't seeing people and then it became evident that he had kidney problems, was on dialysis. The thing about Andropov was, it was totally a KGB operation. Let's understand this about the KGB. It comes up with the new leader of Russia, Vladimir Putin. Who joined the KGB? The people who joined the KGB are essentially the same people who would go for a Harvard MBA or a Wharton School MBA now. These were people who were opportunists primarily. They wanted to do well in the system and they did well in the system. So, they're not necessarily evil people. They saw themselves as doing good. It was also a way of getting a very good education and having a very responsible position in a society. They were Plato's guardians of the republic.

*Q: Were they given an extra doze of Marxism or had Marxism died by this time among the educated people?*

SVEDA: It had died among the educated people. During the Korean Airlines incident, I went downstairs to our interpreters in our basement in the embassy. We knew they were KGB. We had interpreters there who did translations for us. I had one who worked with me who basically went through newspapers, scientific journals, engineering publications, to ferret out anything that might be interesting. There was one who worked with the Political Section and one who worked with the Economic Section. The one who worked for me was an engineer and he didn't really give a hoot about politics. The woman who worked with the USIA section was absolutely Greta Garbo playing Ninotchka in that film. This woman was Stalinist. Her name was Asia. Her family had named her, I thought, after one of the continents, but actually it was a nickname for Anastasia. The third person had been the head of the Young Communist League of Moscow State

University and he was working for the Political Section. My guy's name was Igor. I think this guy's name was Yuri. I go down there after the Korean Airlines incident and we had this huge argument about what was really going on. The guy, Yuri, who worked in the Political Section, was absolutely refusing to believe that the Soviet Union could have shot that plane down. He was throwing out any logical grounds. Sometime before or after that, we had one of our usual political discussions. I used to like to give them grief. I went down there one day and said, "You know, I was walking near the Kremlin and I saw this big power plant. The big power plant across the river had a sign above it which said in huge letters – it was a quotation from Lenin – 'Communism. That is socialism plus the electrification of the country.'" So, I turned to my engineer and I said, "Let's see, communism equals socialism plus the electrification of the country. Well, we're scientists. That means that socialism equals communism minus the electrification of the country." The engineer fell off his chair laughing because he had never seen it that way. The other two began to say, "Oh, no, you're misunderstanding what Lenin said." They tried to give the defense of Lenin. Then I thought, "Well, okay," and turned to my engineer and I said, "Are engineers members of the exploiting class or the exploited class?" I knew damn well what the answer was. They were members of the exploited class because they were not members of the producing class. This guy, the engineer, just fell off his chair laughing. But the other two became very upset. This guy who had been the head of the Young Communist League with great seriousness said, "Well, that depends on their attitude toward the revolution." The trap sprung. I said, "Ah? Subjective factors and not objective factors?" His face turned red because I had just sprung a Marxist trap on him. Then, of course, the engineer fell of his seat laughing. But there was that sort of discussion. I never got the sense that anybody actually believed in Marxism, Leninism.

In the Chernenko period, I think what they were trying to do – and I think what Gorbachev was trying to do – was rationalize the economy using computers, which they called cybernetics. Their belief was that they could find a substitute for the market mechanism in computers and very detailed surveys of the populous – how much toilet paper they make each year, for example.

*Q: Was there concern if Brezhnev went that there might be turmoil in the succession and were we concerned that turmoil meant that the danger to the United States might go up?*

SVEDA: No. it was all personalities. I remember listening to the people in the Political Section. Some people thought that Aliyev, who now is the leader of Azerbaijan, might come to the fore or that somebody else might come to the fore. They were all playing this little game. But I don't remember anybody expressing any concern. I don't think that there was any belief at all that there would have been any danger in a succession to Brezhnev.

*Q: When you got there, how was what was happening in Afghanistan playing from our embassy point of view and what we were picking up in the press and from our contacts?*

SVEDA: When I got there, the Soviets had already been in Afghanistan for three years. We had already had a boycott of the Moscow Olympics, which bothered the Russians to no end. We just saw them putting their hand further into the wheat grinder. I think the Reagan administration was probably very happy about that.

*Q: Was there any reaction within the Soviet Union about what was happening in Afghanistan?*

SVEDA: Zero. I think that there were reports from time to time about how the U.S.-armed rebels were causing a lot of fatalities, but basically the Afghan government supposedly was in control and the rebels were being defeated. It was all very upbeat commentary. It was extremely reminiscent of the sort of commentary that we had in Vietnam prior to Vietnam being an issue.

*Q: Back to when Andropov came, was the embassy spreading out trying to figure out who was this guy, what was he after, or were we looking for signs of this or that? Was this a time of heightened activity at the embassy?*

SVEDA: The ambassador and Mrs. Hartman were absolutely wonderful in trying to keep contact with Soviet society in whatever way, shape, and form we could. This took some rather interesting turns. Newsweek magazine once discussed hot tub diplomacy that they had embarked upon when they had invited some Russian figures, Russian officials, over to the Esalen Institute in Big Sur for hot tubs and golfing. I was in the Science Office and as the science officer I was also the parapsychology officer. I involved myself in this. One of the things about the Soviet Union which you really have to understand was that it was organized like the military is organized elsewhere. There is always a chain of command. You worked in school as a student. If you worked there, you were under the teachers, who were somehow under the minister of education. School contact was not encouraged. Principal to principal contact was not encouraged. That could go up and down. It was like in the United States, if a sailor is working on a project for the Office of Naval Research and wants to contact a colleague in the Army, they really have to go through channels. They have to go up to the admiral and then the Pentagon and then down to whoever. They should not really pick up the phone and talk to each other. It may or may not happen, but they're not supposed to. So , this was the way the Soviet Union worked. Because of this in the area of the sciences and almost everything else, people stayed within their little area of competence and went up and down the line, but once you got outside of that, they were very open to almost anything. So, astrology was very big. Parapsychology was very big. Zen meditation was very big. All these things that did not fit in the Soviet scheme of things were very big because they allowed you to have contact with people outside of your own little specialty. So, while you were discussing astrology with somebody, you might happen to mention that you were working on some project and they might happen to mention that they were working on a very similar project. You might trade ideas. But the official pretext for your meeting was so frivolous in the view of the authorities that it didn't compute. So, a lot of things were like that. You would think that they were not

important things, but they were in a funny sort of way. They allowed people to cross boundaries and contact each other where otherwise they were not allowed to do that.

At the embassy itself, unfortunately, we also had these boundaries. If I had something in the science section which I thought was of interest to the political section, I would give it to them, but they more often than not would sit on it because it had not originated with them. They would not send it out. So, there was a lot of very good intelligence which was never communicated and died with us. My colleague across the hall, John Fogerty, who was in the Economic Section, and I in the Science Section every morning would usually try to outdo each other with some "gee whiz" observation on the Soviet Union. For example, the Soviet Union doesn't have any hardware stores. Or the Soviet Union doesn't have any female hygienic napkins. Or the Soviet Union doesn't have any carrot peelers. Just strange things that we discovered that they didn't have. They didn't have any place to buy windshield wipers. Well, everybody knew that because when you parked your car, you would take off your windshield wipers lest they be stolen. You only put the windshield wipers on when it was raining.

*Q: I discovered that in Yugoslavia. I had a Mercedes and, boy, when you parked… In fact, you didn't put your windshield wipers on until it started to rain. All the windshield wipers were very easily removed. I wondered at first and learned very quickly why they were that way.*

SVEDA: I think that there were problems in the embassy. The ambassador had terrible problems getting us out on the street. We had a problem… His attitude toward things was that it was terribly important that the Soviets know we were not plotting a nuclear first strike against them. The way we would do that would be to be almost transparent to them. As he said, "If they find out 90% of what we're doing in the embassy, that's okay." It's the 10% that needed to be kept secret, the 10% that he didn't want them to find out, that we respected and there were ways of doing that. But 90% of what we did he wanted to be open and show them that we really were not plotting a war against them. It would be very obvious watching an embassy if suddenly the women and children were being rounded up and ferried out or if there was a degree of tension or if the lights were on after a certain hour. He was trying to get people out of the embassy. He had a program which he called the "Subutnik." Subutnik means "Saturday" and it's something that the Soviets did. Every so often, they would declare that for the good of communism, everybody would work a free Saturday. Well, his idea was that you could take a day off from work and go and do something in Moscow. Anybody could do that. Of course, it was very hard to pry people away from their tables and pry people away from their newspapers. I had a secretary who was probably the best secretary in the Foreign Service. Her name was Tony Desk. She was absolutely unbelievable. She was preternatural she was so good. When somebody telephoned, Tony would say, "Well, I'll see if he's in." She would tell you that So and So was on the phone, but before she told you that, she had already been to the file, she opened it to what she knew would be of interest to the person on the phone, and put it out in front of you. She'd open it, put it in front of you, you'd nod or not, and then she'd go back and say, "Yes, I'll connect you right now." You had the file in front of you. You'd

say, “Ah, yes, you’re probably calling about such and such.” “Well, yes, you have a very good memory.” “Well, I try to do my best.” We were afraid of losing Tony because Tony was absolutely miserable. She really hated Moscow. She hated the Soviets. Her husband was there as a communicator. That was the only thing that made life bearable for her. I noticed that Tony had pictures of horses all over her work area and a horse calendar, etc. I could not help but notice and asked her, “Do you like horses?” She said, yes, she loved horses; I said, “Do you ride?” She said, “Oh, no, I’ve never had a chance to learn how to ride, but I really would love to someday. It’s my big dream.” I quickly figured out from UPDK – which was the agency that did everything for us – where Tony could get lessons from the Olympic horse riding team. She was able to go out on Saturdays and get her horse riding lessons and she was about as happy as anybody could conceivably be and we had a secretary.

*Q: In the Science Office, what were your priorities? You mentioned parapsychology. What were the things we thought we should know about but you could get something?*

SVEDA: The message that the ambassador wanted to give the Reagan administration was that the scientists of the Soviet Union were fully on a par with the scientists in the United States in many areas and in some areas ahead. We wanted this message to be clear so that we could have scientific cooperation for mutual benefit. An example. At the time of the Korean Airlines incident, we froze all cooperation with the Soviet Union in science and technology. However, we did keep one of our projects at least going, which was a cooperation between NASA and the Soviet space agency. Here was the deal. The Soviets would send up a rocket. Say it would cost five million dollars to send up. The Soviets would provide two rhesus monkeys. We would provide 20 pregnant rats and computerized cuffs so we could measure the pressure on the carotid arteries on the monkeys and other computerized medical measuring devices. Our exposure was about $50,000. Their exposure was about $5 million. We shared the results of this research on space medicine equally. Every so often, every month or two, I would stop on a street corner and get a hard drive of data from a man. It was in a brown paper bag. I would bring it back to the embassy and send it back to NASA. Well, what was this? It was more cooperation on space medicine. Why was this important? The Soviets were sending people up for months at a time. We were sending people up for days at a time. We knew that all tissues of the body, including blood and bones, decay and sort of melt like Jell-O melts in conditions of weightlessness. There is this tendency toward entropy in weightlessness. Now, our findings showed that after a few days, this would sort of plateau. What the Soviet data showed that after a few days, it would plateau and then it would begin to disintegrate again and there was nothing stopping it. The problem was how to maintain the health of the tissues. One thing that either the Americans or the Soviets discovered was that one of the reasons why our tissues remain healthy in a gravity environment is because when we walk around, the bones jar each other and it’s that odd jarring, that vibration, that sends a signal to the tissues to tone up and get their act together. Without that signal, they tend to dissipate. Intuitively, any nurse noticed this because when somebody is bedridden, if they can conceivably get out of bed and just walk to the chair, nurses insist that they do that because nurses have observed that if you

just stay in bed, no matter what kind of exercises you do in bed, you just atrophy. So, one of the things that we did as a result was include these jogging exercises for our astronauts and their cosmonauts in space. Whatever the aerobic benefits may be, the actual benefit comes from the jarring motion of the bones and the other tissues, which helps them stay healthy.

There were a number of other areas. In medicine, for example, right now, there is a very popular medical procedure to cure nearsightedness. This procedure was invented by a man named Fedorov, who unfortunately died about a month ago in a helicopter accident in Russia. I visited Dr. Fedorov with Ambassador Hartman. Dr. Fedorov was a wonderful man, very liberal in his thinking, really desperately wanted some sort of contact with the outside world. He explained to us that he had been watching a Woody Allen film called "Sleeper" when he got the idea for his procedure. Woody Allen is supposed to wake up in the 25th century and there Woody Allen is wearing glasses. He thought, "Wow, why do we need these prosthetic devices in the 25th century" so he experimented on pigs and developed a procedure called radial keratotomy. He would be able to cure nearsightedness. When I went to his lab when he was going to operate on me, or was encouraging me to have the operation and in fact I was considering it. They first had to measure the degree of my nearsightedness. To the great amusement of the doctors who were there, especially one woman who was helping me, I had to take out my contact lenses first. They just thought this was totally barbaric because none of them wore glasses and none of them wore contact lenses and they couldn't imagine sticking these things in my eye every day. There were a lot of areas where they were ahead of us.

Parapsychology is one where Senator Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island visited one day. When a congressional delegation comes – a CODEL as we call it – the embassy snaps into commando-like discipline. The staffers for a senator – in this case, the senator was the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee – were pushy. Here I am in my apartment in Moscow on a Friday evening and I get a telephone call at 9:00 pm from this very important Senate staffer. The staffer says that the senator has a great interest in parapsychology and that there is a window on the senator's schedule the next morning from about 10:30 to about 11:30. He wants to meet with Soviet experts on parapsychology. I said, "Okay, first of all, we're on an open line. My line is being bugged and our conversation is being bugged. I hope you understand this. Anything that we talk about is being heard by the KGB. Second, I can get into contact with people who are interested in this possibly – I don't guarantee anything – but the senator will have to bend his schedule to what I can do and not what is convenient for the senator after his inspection of the embassy site before lunch. We'll just see how it goes. I can't guarantee anything. I'll be in contact with people over a secure line tomorrow morning. I certainly cannot telephone people now. The tapes are running." The next morning, I just happened as a result of what the ambassador and Mrs. Hartman had been doing in a positive way – the Hartmans had a regular Saturday afternoon American film. They would get classic films and occasionally new films and they would show them to whoever wanted to come to the ambassador's residence. The ambassador's residence, by the way, Spaso House, makes the White House look like public housing. There was a very large ballroom where

we showed the films and we also had a very large reception room that was much bigger than the East Room of the White House. We served pizza afterwards. Some people came for the pizza. Most people came for the films. I knew that one of the regulars was my contact for Soviet parapsychology. His son, who was about 12 years old, liked to watch American films. I prayed that he would show up that day. As it happens, he showed up. So, I took this friend of mine aside and explained what the situation was. He said, fine, he would be happy to talk about it. I immediately directed a couple of my Russian friends who were very good at interpreting and that I could trust to bring certain chairs out to the lawn of the ambassador's residence. I told the staffer to bring the senator in and the senator came. We sat on chairs on the ambassador's lawn discussing parapsychology. The senator was curious why I wanted to do it outside. I said, "Well, Senator, because the house is entirely wired for sound and while the KGB has directional mikes that could follow our conversation, it will take them at least an hour on a Saturday morning to find them and get them into position. So, we have about an hour where we can talk freely." He smiled. We went out and talked about parapsychology. This friend of mine was a psychology and he explained. He said one thing that I love to repeat. He said, "Senator, I hope you know and appreciate that when we're talking about parapsychology, we are trying to measure things that are very subtle with instruments that are ill suited for the purpose. We are trying to measure the cry of a baby with a bathroom scale." I thought that was a wonderful analogy for what they were trying to do. The senator wanted to know if the mind can operate outside of the body and indeed affect objects outside of the body? Yes. He had repeatable evidence of that? Yes. They went into that. Then the senator smiled and asked, "Does the mind require a body to operate?" The Soviet researcher smiled and said, "No." We got into that.

To give you an example of how segmented the embassy operation was when I wrote up this conversation, I was told by Mark Parris, who since has become ambassador and was in the Political Section, that we didn't dare send this cable to Washington because no matter what classification we put on it, it would be leaked to the press and the senator and ourselves would be a laughing stock in Washington. So, that report was never sent out.

*Q: At the time, we had both the CIA and Duke University playing with parapsychology. In fact, one of the astronauts was doing that up on the Moon. So, the CIA was concerned about mind control. Of course, our scientists were more concerned about what was out there.*

SVEDA: This is a very good example of how the American government is so segmented. When I was in Moscow, I was never privy to anything that the CIA did on this subject or that the Defense Department did on this subject. While a report and a contact like mine would have been of great interest to either the Defense Department or the CIA because of this research that they were doing, the embassy's own internal controls made it impossible for us to communicate that to them. In fact, to tell you the truth, it never would have occurred to me to communicate this to the CIA.

*Q: What about the straight science? What about laser research and all this?*

SVEDA: At one dinner, I was sitting in between the two gentlemen who received the Nobel Prize for inventing the laser, one American and one Soviet scientist. I was supposed to be there as interpreter, but it turns out that the Soviet spoke adequate English and the American spoke adequate Russian. So, yes, there were a lot of things like this.

*Q: Was what you were doing fairly straightforward, reading the newspapers, talking to people? Anybody who's dealing in almost any field is dealing with matters, particularly in the Soviet Union, everything of concern would be considered secret. How did you handle this?*

SVEDA: What I was doing was – at least as far as the Soviets were concerned – totally open. Much of what I wrote was classified. My analysis was classified. For example, this analysis of the Soviet nuclear industry, where if anybody bothers to look it up, we talked about the problems at Chernobyl. An Italian science counselor had visited Chernobyl and she had noticed that there were big severe cracks in the foundation. It was in part because the facility was built on the preopti marshes and the preopti marshes were being used because nobody needed the land for anything else. It was sort of a stupid place to put a nuclear reactor. That sort of thing was fairly open. We would mention that to Washington. What they did with it we don't know. Most of the time, we were reading newspapers or doing analysis of this, that, or the other thing.

But the main thing… I had a complication in my job. The complication was that the KGB was absolutely convinced that I was CIA. Why? Two reasons. One, I later learned that I had succeeded somebody who while he was not CIA in my position had been at one point in his life a member of the CIA and he had left the CIA and joined the State Department. When he was in the position that I succeeded him in, I guess the Soviets somehow knew that he was a CIA guy at one point in his life and assumed he still was. The second reason was, back in 1969, I took a trip to the Soviet Union. They came out with the conclusion that I was a CIA agent in training and maybe even a young CIA agent. So, here, sure enough, their records showed that this guy they suspected to be CIA pops up in a position which was held by someone they believed to be CIA. So, I know that in my case, they prevented me from traveling to certain places, probably because of that. They gave me all sorts of harassment on travel. Sometimes they allowed me to travel; sometimes they didn't. But when I traveled, I was approached by KGB agents. A lot of this we know in hindsight because the KGB archives have been opened up or because of other factors. So, yes, it was difficult to operate. They were convinced I was CIA. They couldn't see any reason for a science office in the embassy because we didn't have any exchanges. So, that was a third reason for supposing that I was just a CIA operative.

*Q: I think sometimes the Soviet security apparatus get hoisted by their own petard because one of these things was in the '70s when the East Germans put out a book called "Who's Who in the CIA." It was a Soviet KGB job, but I saw that thing. It was on sale. An East German put it out. I picked it up and, lo and behold, there I was. The thing I found very interesting was that they had me going to the army language school in 1950-*

*1951, which I did, taking Russian as an enlisted man. They had picked this up. I thought at first it was a padding just to show people. I think they really believed this.*

SVEDA: I'm sure they did. That's the way they would have organized this.

*Q: Yes. So, when you're operating under that, you're really doing a poor job because you're operating under false assumptions.*

SVEDA: Yes. They had a lot of weaknesses there. For example, I mentioned earlier that I am homosexual. The security people in our embassy were very concerned that I might be blackmailed somehow, though against whom I don't know. I could only be blackmailed against the U.S. embassy and our ambassador and DCM knew and didn't care. But the KGB kept on throwing women at me. In fact, there was one very funny incident that occurred prior to my leaving the Soviet Union. I mentioned earlier that English-Russian interpreters were assumed to be KGB. They would always show up at embassy functions. One day, this woman comes up to me at a reception. She has dark hair and is attractive, probably Central Asian. She speaks to me in not very good English and wants to know if I will come to Verdima to visit Vima on Friday. Well, five minutes earlier, I had been invited to a party by someone named Rita. She was going to have a birthday party for herself. It's the Russian custom to give your own birthday party and your friends bring food or wine or whatever. Rita was this blonde, vivacious. She was the woman who was a descendent of Pushkin's widow. She invited me to her birthday party and asked if I would be able to come. Well, l would, but I didn't have a car. Then I turned to Jocelyn Greene and her husband, who were both embassy officers, and I said, "Are you going to Rita's on Saturday?" "Yes." "Can I hop a ride with you guys?" "Yes, sure." "Okay." Five minutes later, this woman comes up to me and says, "Are you coming to Vima on Friday?" I said, "Friday? You mean Saturday." I thought she had said "Rita." It was "Rima." She said, "No, Friday." I said, "Friday?" So, I turned to Jonathan and Elfie Bemus, another embassy couple, who just happened to be standing next to me at the reception, and I said, "Are you going to Rita's party?" They said, "Yes." I said, "It's on Saturday, isn't it?" They said, "Yes." Then Rima says, "No, Friday." So, I said, "Are you sure?" Rima looks at me strangely and says, "Yes, Friday, I'm sure. Vima. Friday." So, John and Elfie said, "Gee, that's great because we were kind of busy on Saturday. We thought it was going to be on Saturday." I said, "Can you guys give me a ride" and they said, "Yes, sure." I got direction to this party. Friday night, I show up and Rima is there waiting for us in the parking lot. I had called beforehand. This was standard Soviet procedure that somebody would lead you to the apartment because they didn't want foreigners wandering around unescorted because it would lead to problems. So, "Hi, we're here." All three of us get out of the car. Rima looks a little bit surprised. So, she's walking in silence as she leads us to her apartment. She opens the apartment and it wasn't the place I had been to before. I knew that this was somehow wrong. She opened the apartment. It's a little studio apartment with a day bed and a card table at the end of the day bed and a chair for one person to sit on the bed and one person to sit on the chair. A single flower and a single candle. And two place settings. I look at Elfie and John and we look at each other like "Oh…" Rima says, "Excuse me, I have to go into the kitchen. I have to make a telephone

call." She goes into the kitchen and John and Elfie and I are looking at each other and sort of biting our hands because this was obviously a KGB setup. We hear her talking in the kitchen. She was going off in Russia and very excitedly talking about something. So, she comes back a few minutes later and sets up two more places and finds another chair or two and we somehow had a wonderful evening. I think she seemed to be very relieved.

The next night, we go over to Rita's party. We told people this story and they were very amused. But it was obviously a KGB setup.

*Q: We'd better stop at this point. We want to talk about more of the life. You're talked about Rita and Rima and about being a science attaché, but I would like to talk about some other things – for example, the advent of Gorbachev onto the scene and how that played; and Chernenko, whether he was another walking dead man. Also the Korean Air shootdown. Travel in the Soviet Union and the KGB.*

*The fact that you were a homosexual, did they throw men at you? Also talk about the security problems at the embassy which came back to haunt Arthur Hartman and your impression at that time and what happened about the microwaving of people.*

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*Today is August 3, 2000. Russ, you said there was something on the security side that came back to haunt you. Was that at this time or was it later on?*

SVEDA: The whole question of my homosexuality and security really is sort of complex. I would have to go back a bit to the time I was assigned to the Sinai Field Mission. I was mugged in Athens before I came over to the Sinai Field Mission. I told people that I had lost my State Department ID because it had been in my wallet. Some months thereafter, I was questioned by the regional security officer [FSO] in Tel Aviv about whether I was homosexual or not. This mugging report by me led to a question about that. Apparently, the area I had been mugged in was one that the State Department believed was frequented by homosexuals. This concern was in the back of the minds of the people in security. When I was in Moscow, I was questioned about this again. In fact, they wanted me to not go back to Moscow. I came back to the U.S. from Moscow soon after I arrived in Moscow in the summer of 1982. Around Thanksgiving time, I went home to visit my mother and was summoned to Washington for three days of interrogation on this subject of my homosexuality. They didn't want me to go back to Moscow. They wanted me to stay away because they were afraid that I might be subjected to entrapment by the KGB. The one thing that went through all of these interrogations was the fairly open person that I am. I don't hide very much. Everything that I told the security people they used against me, the mugging in Athens, for example, or in Moscow… Prior to leaving Moscow for my visit home, I had attended a fashion show at the ambassador's residence. The ambassador had arranged for a Soviet fashion show, if you can imagine such a thing. There were a number of models there and there were one or two male models who I was introduced to by a man named Ed Stephens, who was a journalist in Moscow at the time.

Ed Stephens was believed by the embassy to have KGB connections. There was a long story about that dating back to Stalin. He was living with one of these models and his wife and daughter. It was a very weird situation.

*Q: It's Moscow.*

SVEDA: It's Moscow. The whole thing was really bizarre. But the model was introduced to me for maybe about a minute at this reception. In the interrogation, they asked me, "Have you ever met anybody who you thought was a Soviet and who was gay?" Well, I knew that this model was living with this particular journalist and he was a male model and I guessed maybe, yes, that was all. I offered that as a possibility as the only person I could think of. But later they used that as evidence that the KGB had tried to entrap me with this person, which really is completely contrary to all reason because I never saw this person again. But that was the whole flavor of the thing. I can get into it much later when we get into my case.

But basically, my feeling was that the KGB had assigned a scientist to be my handler as it were. He was a psychologist. I guess he must have been in his late 50s or was 60. He was a very genial man, white, with two kids. I met his wife and children. He introduced me to a lot of people in parapsychology. He was my contact with them. I had met him really through friends of Donna Hartman and Arthur Hartman. They had wanted me to keep up with this crowd because it was something that they were very interested in. These were Soviet scientists who were interested in wider questions than just their own disciplines. So, I think that that person was probably my KGB handler as it were. But I don't think there were any efforts by the KGB to entrap me with a man. I know that there were at least one or two efforts to entrap me with a woman. I think that the KGB basically didn't know or think of it in those terms. I think this was an obsession on the part of Diplomatic Security.

*Q: Talking to security people, did they know what they were talking about?*

SVEDA: At that time, it seemed to me as though it was like a wagon train in the Old West. There were people who were there to keep the wagon train in order. They were very suspicious of any of us who left the wagon train as scouts, which is what our job was to be. They knew nothing about our dealings with the Indians, so to speak, and they suspected the worst. But that was our job. Our job was to find out what the terrain looked like, to leave the wagon train and get as much information as we could to those in the wagon train. But all of the investigations were internal. They really didn't know how to deal with things outside of the embassy. There was a rule that we were supposed to report any contacts with Soviets which were outside of official contacts unless we had another westerner present, another American embassy person or one of the western embassies. This is a rule which at first I worried very greatly about because the Soviets would not talk with you if there were two people present as readily as they would if you were alone. While I normally was with another Foreign Service officer just because we were paling around, I was not always with another Foreign Service officer. So, I went to our DCM,

Warren Zimmermann, and I asked him about this. I said, "Gee, I really can't do my job if I have to be with another Foreign Service officer or report all contacts. I can't remember all contacts." He said to me, "Russell, are you a Russian language officer?" I said, "Yes." He said, "As a Russian language officer, you have a duty to keep up your Russian language. Well, whenever you are speaking in Russian, you are on official business. Go." He is a wonderful man. But it really took a load off of my mind. I know embassy officers who are couples and the husband or wife would come back after having been out with Soviets that evening and then would ask each other, "Well, who were 'we' out with tonight," the implication being that they had been together, but were not.

*Q: Let's talk about the security side on a broader scale. I assume you made trips around the Soviet Union.*

SVEDA: Yes.

*Q: Was the hand of the KGB fairly heavy?*

SVEDA: Yes. It was very heavy. The pattern was that when we went to a town, we would always somehow be in the same hotel room that previous embassy visitors had occupied. Obviously, it was the one wired for sound. I'll tell you one instance which later came back to haunt me.

I went to what was then called the Kyrgyz Republic [now Kyrgyzstan] to a town called Frunze, which is now called Bishkek, the capital of the republic, with another Foreign Service officer. We arrived there late at night in February. It was maybe 10:00 pm local time. As soon as we get to the hotel, we check into our room. I could sense the surveillance around us. I am thinking, "Gee, thank goodness we're in the room now." This guy, who I thought might be working for the CIA, takes out his radio and wants to test radio reception. I later figured out he was doing this for USSIA. He liked this G-man approach to things. So, I'm sitting there in the room and he puts on his jacket and says, "Well, I'm going out for a walk." I said, "What?" This is like 11:00 pm in Frunze in February. We're in a desolate area. He's going to go out for a walk. I said, "Why are you doing this?" He said, "I just want to see if we're going to be followed." I thought, "Well, I have two options. I could either remain in the hotel room and this guy disappears and I have all sorts of problems because he doesn't speak Russian and I do or I could go with him and we could both be followed by the KGB." So, I thought, "Well, I'll follow this idiot." So, I walked out. The person at the concierge was an old Russian lady who was surprised that anybody would be going out at that hour.

*Q: This was the lady who sits on each floor.*

SVEDA: Each floor of hotels. They run everything.

*Q: This is where you get your laundry done, too.*

SVEDA: Yes. Nothing happens by accident. This guy and I walk out of the hotel and the hotel was on this large block, so we turned left and we go down this very long street. About halfway down, maybe as much as half a mile, he turns and says, "I think we're being followed." I turn around and sure enough, there is a figure on the street who seems to be following us at about the distance of $1/10^{th}$ of a mile. I said, "Oh, how can you be sure?" He said, "Well, we'll turn the corner." We turn the corner and sure enough, this person is following us. A very long walk. We turn the corner a third time, thankfully going back in the direction of the hotel. Then this guy says to me, "Let's duck in this alley because I want to be sure he's following us. If he is following us, he'll stop if we duck in the alley and if he isn't following us, he'll continue walking." I said, "Oh, yes, good thinking. Why would we go into an alley?" He said, "Oh, to take a whiz or something." I said, "Oh, great." So, we go into the alley briefly and we hung out and this man had stopped and was sort of watching. Sure enough, he is following us. So, we go back to the hotel room. All I can tell you is that the man was very tall. That's the only impression I had. The next day, we go around Frunze. The following day, we go out to Osh, one of the provincial towns there. On the airplane out, the seats that we are given are in the front of the airplane, as was usually the case with foreigners and there was usually a little card table between four facing seats. This guy and I are in one pair of seats and there are two women in the other pair of seats. One is a rather attractive woman who is reading a book of Omar Khayyam's poetry in Russian, which surprised me because she looked Central Asian. I thought she might be reading it in Persian or one of the local languages. The other woman sitting next to her was one of these very uncomfortable and angry looking grannies who was obviously in the wrong seat but dare anybody to get her out. She just had that look in her eyes that she was going to sit there and she was just angry in all directions. So, I turned to my companion and said, "These two women are probably our KGB tails." He laughed and said, "Well, I'll take the one opposite me and you take the one opposite you." The one opposite me was the granny. We had a laugh about that. But I began a conversation with the woman who was reading the book. It turned out that she was a doctor. She was from Osh and she traveled frequently to Moscow. We had a pleasant conversation about Osh and that was that. We get to the airport. We are not met by our Intourist guide, who was supposed to have met us with a car. It turns out that there is only one taxi to be had and we had to share it with this woman, the doctor. Would we be so kind as to drop her off at her office? Yes, of course, no problem. So, in the car, we start chatting again. We agreed to meet because she can show us around town. Now, my companion, Ed, says to me later, "Well, isn't that great that she would offer to show us around town?" I looked at him, naïve that he was. He didn't read that this was a setup. She did show us around the next day. I learned some interesting things from her. I asked her whether she was a Muslim. Yes, she was. Does she practice Islam strictly? Does she pray five times a day? Well, no. She said it was really something she hoped to do when she retired, but during the working day, it was really hard for her to do that. However, she did go to mosque occasionally and she did value the time that she spent there. I said, "Are most of your patients Muslims?" She said, "Yes, I think they are." I said, "Well, are the men circumcised?" She had a good laugh about that and said, "Yes, I can assure you, they are all circumcised." So, that told me an awful lot about the practice of Islam here.

When we went back to the capital, to Frunze, we were assigned to the same hotel and the same hotel room. We got to the dining room and every seat was taken in the hotel dining room except for two seats at a table that seated four at which one man was sitting and there was a place setting for another person, who never arrived. In a European manner, we were seated at that person's table, those being the only two seats. As we developed a conversation with this man, it occurred to me that it was really quite fortunate that Ed, my colleague, was interested in basketball and had a job of covering the Jewish community and this guy was Jewish and he played basketball and that my job was to do science reporting and this man's job in Moscow was translating scientific articles from Russian into English and from English into Russian. What a lucky hit! So, we talked to this man. He was an amiable man and this guy, Ed, who was with me, wanted to meet with him later on in Moscow. We did. But when he stood up to go to the men's room, I realized that this was the tall person who had been following us. I told Ed, who said, "Oh, do you really think that?" I said, "Yes, I really think that." Later on in Moscow a couple of weeks later, we met this guy at the Prague Restaurant and we sat at the table which was normally reserved for Russians meeting a foreigner. It was probably wired for sound. Ed was much more interested in keeping up contacts with this guy, who seemed to know an awful lot about the Jewish community. I was not so interested. I had my own scientific contacts and didn't really need this guy. But that was a typical event.

Later on, years later, I think maybe two years ago, I was called in by Counterintelligence and was interviewed about this. It seems that this person had applied for a job with the U.S. embassy in Bishkek, the newly named capital of Kyrgyzstan. He admitted that he had been working for the KGB as an informer. When they asked him who he had informed upon, my name came up. Indeed, there was another person who had been seeking a job at our embassy in Ukraine. This other person had tailed me on another trip. He had been told to ignore the other person traveling with me, but that I was to be watched very carefully because the KGB knew that I was an undercover CIA agent. The same story that they had told this man in Kyrgyzstan. DS wanted to block these two people being hired, but they also wanted to know why my name kept coming up. So, we had a conversation about that. I could only suppose that they had interrogated me back in 1969 and somehow I had gotten on the rolls as a potential CIA person. Then when I went back to the embassy in a job which had been held by somebody who had worked for the CIA, although he was not working for the CIA, they thought this was confirmation that I was the CIA person at the embassy, or one of them. So, the whole thing was very much like Mad Magazine's "Spy Versus Spy." It was very absurd.

*Q: What about the long-term radiation of the embassy? Could you explain what I'm talking about? How did you all feel about it? What happened?*

SVEDA: The ambassador's office was on the top floor of the embassy and he knew through sensing devices that had been put there that the Soviets had been beaming microwaves to his office. I don't believe that it was really to the rest of the embassy, but I'm not quite sure of that. The problem with microwave radiations is that they're really rather focused and they drop off rather quickly. If you have a leak in your microwave

oven, you would be in danger within six inches, but you'd be quite safe two feet away from the microwave. Microwave radiation really is rather focused. It was focused on his office and he was concerned about that.

However, what I can speak to was an incident that occurred when I was in the Science Office. We had a negotiation going on with a Soviet institute to return a large an MHD [magetohydrodynamic] magnet. It was owned by the Fermi lab in Illinois. In the first flush of détente, the Fermi lab had lent it to this high energy physics institute in Moscow. This magnet was used to test superconductivity and the Reagan administration wanted it back. It had been lent to the Soviets under the Ford or Carter administration (I guess it was Ford who had arranged it, but it actually went over under Carter) and the Reagan administration wanted it back because it was wanting to embarrass the Soviets that this huge five ton magnet the size of a room would have to be returned very publicly. My job was to get the thing back

During these negotiations with a team from the Department of Energy and Fermi lab, I would accompany them for the negotiations and then we'd go back to the embassy and write up what we had concluded, send it to Washington and get Washington's advice for the next day of negotiations. I wrote up what had happened one particular day and I wrote down my own suppositions as to what the Soviets really wanted in these negotiations and sent it off to Washington. The next morning as we were getting coffee before the negotiation began, the interpreter for the other side, who was, of course, KGB, whom I had known casually in other contexts, came to me and said, "Mr. Sveda, if you believe that such and such is the case (essentially what I had told Washington), you are very greatly mistaken." I thought, "Well, that's a very interesting synchronicity that they would know that." I mentioned that to the delegation when we went back to the embassy and I mentioned it to the ambassador, who reacted in a way that I was really surprised to see. He had my office swept by the security people because he believed that that communication had been somehow intercepted and he really was concerned about that because that was one of the kinds of communications we did not want intercepted. He wanted to know what happened. They couldn't find anything in my office – my office because that is where I had typed the report. We now know that the typewriters themselves had bugging devices, the IBM Selectric typewriters that we used. They had been installed when the GSO people had shipped something through a Soviet warehouse – I guess to save a few dollars. These bugging devices had been installed in our IBM Selectric typewriters. So, now we know what it was, but at the time we didn't. We didn't find the bug then. We were looking for something else. We never thought of looking at the typewriters.

*Q: Were there concerns about the microwaving and all? If I recall, this had come up quite a bit earlier. Everybody who had served in the Eastern European posts… I was in Yugoslavia and they sent forms around. This must have been in the '70s. Was this a health concern at that time or not?*

SVEDA: It wasn't a health concern on my part. I tend not to worry about those things I have no control over. But there were people at the embassy who believed it was going on. At the time I was at the embassy, we knew it could go on, we knew it had gone on in the past, and there was a concern that it would begin again. I think that when the ambassador was told that there was microwave radiation aimed at his office he was less concerned about himself as he was about the people working in the embassy. He told the Soviets in no uncertain terms to stop that. I believe that they did. My understanding was that we knew that such microwave radiation had gone on in the past. We did not believe it was going on while I was there, although some people believed the worst. When the ambassador had evidence that the microwave radiation was directed at his office, he did talk to the Soviets and told them to stop it; I believe they did stop it. So, he was very concerned about the health effects of this. I think while Arthur Hartman was ambassador, with the exception of that one beaming of microwaves to his office, there was none that was going on.

*Q: Were you there during the Sergeant Lonetree incident?*

SVEDA: No, it came up immediately after I left. I really did not know these people. I don't believe I knew these people. So, I really don't know what went on there other than what I read in the newspaper and especially the article by Strobe Talbot in "Time" magazine that showed what really was going on, which is to say nothing or almost nothing. I do know the effect that it had on ambassador Hartman's career, which was really terrible. I personally believe that Jack Matlock wanted Hartman's job and was happy to see Hartman hung out to dry.

*Q: Matlock at that time was what?*

SVEDA: He was on the National Security Council [NSC] advising the Reagan administration on Soviet matters. I had encountered Matlock a few times when he was on temporary duty at the embassy. He struck me as I termed it to some people, as a black hole of a personality. When he entered the room, all human warmth and feeling was somehow absorbed and disappeared. He was not a very nice person.

*Q: One of the things that they went after the embassy for was the fact that we were employing Soviets who were obviously assigned to the embassy by this bureau, the PDK. My experience in Belgrade was, we knew our people had to go and report. They would tell us this. But at the same time, we were getting such a feedback and contact with what was going on in Yugoslavia from our local employees that in the long run we were coming out far ahead because we certainly knew what we could and couldn't do in front of our local employees. How did you feel about the Soviet employees and the security angle?*

SVEDA: The concern about the Soviet employees was partly because of the building site where they had been putting bugging devices in the concrete. That was just because the Foreign Buildings Office [FBO] wanted to save money and hire local working people and

not hire foreigners to do the building. That is where the whole thing really blew up. But the employees that worked at the embassy, as you said, were extremely valuable contacts. We knew very well that they were reporting, at the very least, on everything that we did and might well have been employed directly by the KGB, but so what? We knew that and we didn't say anything in front of them that we didn't want the Soviet government to know. They were being used as transmitters to the Soviet government as well as reporting on what they overheard. It's a very funny thing. The level of paranoia at the embassy was really very high, but higher the lower down you went. I think it's the technicians or the military attaches or the people who really didn't completely understand what Soviet society is about and were afraid to find out what it was about who were the most fearful and fretful. They were concerned that… One military couple when they had arguments, they wrote their angry sentences on these children's magic slates where they could erase them immediately. So, you could imagine this couple having this knock-down drag-out fight with their magic slate and writing angry things to each other. The whole thing was cuckoo. It was very easy for the Soviets to play with our heads if they wanted to. They would just simply use the toilet in our apartment and not bother to flush or throw a cigar somewhere and not bother to put it out immediately. So, you'd come back to your apartment and realize that somebody had been there. But so what? That was part of the game. That was part of what was to be expected. I wasn't bothered very much, except for once when they knocked over a bookcase of mine, probably by accident. It wasn't very well made.

*Q: Let's talk about reporting. How does one report on Soviet science during the early '80s?*

SVEDA: There are many ways of doing this. One way, the most obvious way, was to read the newspapers and the journals. Another way was to talk with Soviet scientists. I did get to talk with the man who headed the Soviet space program, for example, who is now here at the University of Maryland. He married Dwight Eisenhower's granddaughter, Barbara, and is living quite happily in Maryland now. Since then, I've seen him. I reminded him of the time that I had interviewed him. He at the time seemed to be pushing the envelope as to what he could say, what he could get away with talking to the American embassy. I asked him, "What that what you were doing? Were you pushing the envelope?" He said, "Oh, yes, absolutely. I wanted to see how much I could get away with." I was being used as an instrument in that fashion. I accompanied the ambassador on visits to institutes. One was a very large biological research place, an institute at Pushkino, which is about an hour outside of Moscow. I also accompanied an American expert, Murray Feshbach, when he came from Georgetown to do demographic studies of the Soviet Union. I have to explain that the month I spent with Murray Feshbach was one of the most illuminating months that I have ever spent anywhere. Murray worked for the Bureau of the Census and then later went to Georgetown. Murray is a demographer and he believes you could find the most amazing things in open source materials. He found out, for example, that by the time the year 2000 would roll around, the Soviet army, assuming there was a Soviet army, would be 60% non-Russian. This was an absolutely startling figure, but he said, "This is not a difficult figure to arrive at. The soldiers by the year 2000 have already been born.

We know who they are." He just was pointing out the demographic imbalances about to hit the Soviet Union. Or for example that most women in the Soviet Union have abortions. On the average, 7-10 abortions during their fertile years, although people in the Central Asian republics had 7-10 children during their childbearing years. He said, "These are all very simple statistics to come by. The number of births is a recorded figure. The number of abortions is a recorded figure. By the way, it turns out that if you compare the two numbers, half of all pregnancies apparently result in abortions because the number of abortions and the number of births are equal." We went around to the various Soviet institutes that he wanted to get information from and he would give them a 10-15 spiel on what his findings were and they were usually astonished and would open up all sorts of information to them. There was a very nice article about him in the "Atlantic Monthly" right after he came back from Moscow, a cover article about the work he did. We learned an awful lot from that.

*Q: As a science officer, you're obviously looking at the crown jewel of the Soviet economy. What was your impression of Soviet science at that time?*

SVEDA: We had the very highest opinion of Soviet science. The Soviets were quite capable of doing remarkable things, but as a rule, they were much better at what we called the "blackboard sciences" than they were in the experimental sciences because they just didn't have the experimental wherewithal. A physicist like Sakharov could come up with the idea of tokomak cyclotron to split atoms, but they really didn't have the means to build one. So, it was built at Princeton according to his ideas. But generally speaking, Soviets were excellent in math, physics, in theoretical anything, but not very good in experimental.

*Q: What was your impression looking at the economy about the Soviet economy?*

SVEDA: This interfaced with my work in the Science Office because under Andropov and especially under Chernenko, the Soviets were very interested in what they called "cybernetics." Cybernetics is what we would know today as the information society or the computerization of the economy. Under Chernenko, there was an effort to find a substitute for the market mechanism. They recognized that the market mechanism was this wonderful and to them completely mysterious way that the capitalist societies had of allocating resources and production. They believed that if they did surveys of Soviet citizens and found out what they needed and if the surveys were good enough, they would never have any shortages of toilet paper or of food because they would produce exactly what they needed to produce. They believed that with computerization, they would arrive at this happy state. They thought that this was the way to achieve communism. Well, it wasn't. The reporting that we did on the economy – and I worked very closely with the Economic Section across the hall… Well, I was always trying to figure out whether there was a Soviet economy, but we couldn't figure out how the whole thing held together. I worked on some tactical aspects like the nuclear power industry and Chernobyl, but we couldn't figure out how the economy functioned. If it was a command economy… The

military side of things worked quite nicely, but the civilian side didn't work at all. There were no hardware stores.

*Q: At the time, were you or others saying, "This damn place doesn't work. It works, but this is not the giant that's going to swamp the rest of the world?"*

SVEDA: Oh, yes, we said that constantly. That was perfectly obvious to us that there was no way that they could swamp us. I was continually amazed at the self-deception and denial that the Soviets engaged in when they looked at our economy. For example, when Soviets went abroad and they saw stores stocked with goods, the reaction was, "Well, yes, of course. Have you seen the prices? The stores are stocked with goods because people can't afford to buy them." That was their way of interpreting that.

*Q: Was anybody putting this together to say "The military looks like it's really delivering the goods, but at the same time, there has to be some very serious flaws in the Soviet military," which it turns out there are. The sophistication turned out to be basically a second or third-rate military force, which has been proved in combat against this type of equipment that they had. Were we seeing this or were going through a certain amount of deception, too?*

SVEDA: I think there was a lot of willful self-deception. The American military had a very strong interest in portraying the Soviet military as something that threatened our very existence. Of course, we needed to have more and better and more expensive weapons all the time. I think that a certain amount of credit has to be given to President Reagan's Star Wars proposal. The proposal was made at the time I was there. As strange as it was scientifically and as hard as it was for scientists to actually believe that it would work, when I talked with Soviet scientists, they would say, "Yes, we know. It's probably impossible, but if anybody can do it, you Americans can." They had a greater faith in our technology than we did. So, it did scare them because it did up the ante considerably and it threatened to bankrupt them even further. One thing that you have to appreciate about the Soviet military economy as opposed to the civilian economy was that every factory in the Soviet Union, every food production organization, every economic anything, had a military section as well as a civilian section. So, a company that would make toothpaste would make toothpaste for the military and they would get the best materials and the best toothpaste. Then the civilian section would make do with what was left over. This was true of everything in the whole country. So, the military was getting the best – and even then it wasn't really very good

The one thing that impressed me about Soviet military hardware was that they would use a simple mechanical solution for something that we would always go for an electronic solution to. Example: when I was training to come out here, I went to Andrews Air Force Base and saw their collection of Soviet military hardware. Sitting in a Soviet fighter for the first time, I asked the colonel who was with me, the Air Force colonel, what I was looking at. I did not know what I was seeing. He asked me to look down at the floor. I looked at the floor and there was a little window about the size of a silver dollar, maybe a

little bit larger. I said, "I see a little window." He said, "Yes, do you know what that's for?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, when you're parking an airplane, the Soviets have decided that putting a little window there allows them to see the dotted lines where they have to park." I said, "Very interesting. How do we solve that problem?" He said, "Oh, we have all sorts of electronic things to allow us to see through." Another example would be that we spent thousands of dollars to develop a ballpoint pen that would write in space, whereas the Soviets just gave their people pencils. So, they were always looking for the simpler and, to my eyes, more elegant solution, and we were always going for the big bucks solution.

*Q: What were the years you were there?*

SVEDA: 1982-1984. Yes, we did celebrate New Year's 1984 in an Orwellian way. It was one of the better parties I've attended. It was at the ambassador's residence.

*Q: The environment. Were the Soviet scientists getting concerned about the environment? I gather that because of production quotas and bureaucratic demands, the Soviet Union was an environmental mess. Were we picking this up?*

SVEDA: Yes, we were, but not really sufficiently. I don't know how much of our reporting was dedicated to it. The basic problem there was the labor theory of value. It's hard to believe that an idea would have such ramifications, but when the only cost of goods is the labor that has gone into producing them and not the raw materials, you become very casual about raw materials. The labor theory of value would say that the sand that is used to make glass, the energy that is used to make glass, the gold that is used for teeth fillings, has no value except the cost of the labor to produce it, that gold and oil and silver are the free gifts of nature the way air and water are. Well, it's a lovely idea but what it means is that they spent 75 years skimming off the top of their resources, always going for the easier deposits, always going for the easier ores to extract, leaving themselves after 75 years with nothing but deeper ores or ores or deposits that were farther out and also leaving them with an environment that is unbelievably ecologically toxified. Murray Feshbach, whom I mentioned earlier, wrote a book called "Ecocide in the Soviet Union." He wrote it with Alfred Friendly who worked for Newsweek. It's a very good book and details how badly the whole system was ecologically.

*Q: Were you looking at science in the Soviet Union at oil fields in Baku and other places, how they were dealing with that?*

SVEDA: We were trying to. It was very difficult for us to travel. It was very difficult for me to travel. Probably because the KGB thought I was a CIA agent, they blocked my travel almost whenever I requested it. I was trying to go out for two years to Novosibirsk to an academic city, Akademgorodok, which was the headquarters of the Siberian branch of the Academy of Sciences, and I could never get permission to do that. They always said there was never a hotel room to be had in Novosibirsk. So, that was that.

*Q: You mentioned the CIA. This was the time when the CIA was under William Casey. Did you sense that the CIA was working hard to portray the Soviet Union in bigger, brighter, and nastier colors than before? Did you have any feel or the CIA reporting on the Soviet Union?*

SVEDA: I didn't get to see very much of it. In fact, I don't think I got to see… I won't say I didn't see any of it, but I really didn't see very much of it at all. This is very strange when you stop and think about it. Here we were, sitting in Embassy Moscow and we had the CIA there and there I was in the Science Office and you would think that a certain amount of cross-fertilization would have made sense, but, no, very little.

*Q: This is a story I get quite a bit when you get to it that it all goes back to the headquarters and there it's digested and spat out and edited… It often doesn't even get back to the post.*

SVEDA: Yes. In fact, this is true also of the military reporting. There was a lot of redundancy, a lot of unnecessary redundancy, and just a great lack of communication. That was also true of the various parts of the State Department. The Science Office, the Political Office, the Economic Office, not to mention USIA, they really didn't communicate very well with each other. I guess all the communication was supposed to occur at the ambassador's weekly staff meeting, but it never really seemed to work very well as far as I'm concerned.

*Q: There were a couple of things that caused the collapse of the Soviet Union. We talked about the economy. What about communist belief? By this time, was the feeling that belief in communism and all the attributes thereof was pretty well dead or were there a lot of true believers still running things?*

SVEDA: There were some true believers. You ran into them every so often, but not very often. Most people just didn't care to talk about it. I did not meet anybody who fit my stereotypical image of the communist ideologue. A couple of times, now that I think about it… There was one college student who seemed to believe everything that the textbooks had told him, but he was slightly mentally deranged and regarded as such by his friends. Not very often.

*Q: You mentioned Feshbach and the demography of the Soviet Union. Were we looking at the various components of this, which was a union of the Soviet empire, call it what you want. But it had all these republics. Were we looking at it and seeing this as a weak point in the structure that was called the Soviet Union?*

SVEDA: Yes and no. I think the tendency at the embassy was to accept the Soviet Union as it was structured and think about the central government and think that everything came from the central government and report accordingly. We did our best to report on dissent in Ukraine or elsewhere, but we were very Moscow centered. We tended to watch the government, the way it was structured, and accepted the way it was structured. I

remember some years later when the Baltics were going through their independence of the Soviet Union. One of my former colleagues who was in Moscow was at a reception in Moscow where he asked one of these government people, "You know, we have to plan for next year's budget. How many embassies should we plan for in the Soviet Union?" The Soviet smiled and said, "Five" meaning the one in Moscow, the three Baltic republics, and I would assume one other, but I don't remember which one he meant – maybe Georgia or Armenia. I don't think anybody really anticipated that Ukraine really would become independent and certainly not Belarus. What happened was a real big surprise.

You have to remember that when Stalin set up the Soviet Union, he carved these 11 other republics out of the Russian empire and all of the republics that were set up by Stalin have one characteristic. They all border on a foreign country. So, Tatarstan, which could easily have had its own republic, was not a republic of the Soviet Union because it didn't border any foreign territory. So, the whole point was to defend Russia in depth as it were.

*Q: You left there in '84. What was your opinion about whither the Soviet Union?*

SVEDA: We were anticipating the death of Chernenko any moment. I had expected that Gorbachev would succeed Andropov. I was in Finland on a pouch run when Andropov did die. I was very upset to find out from the taxi driver when I arrived in Helsinki that Andropov had died and quickly rushed to the hotel to watch TV and find out who the successor was, expecting it to be Gorbachev and really being astonished that it was Chernenko. But it was pretty obvious that after Chernenko died, which was going to be very soon after I left the US, that Gorbachev would take over and that there would be changes. We just didn't know what changes there would be. But we did know that Gorbachev was a protégé of Andropov and that Andropov had seen a lot of the weaknesses of the communist system and wanted to reform it. So, Gorbachev when he was to come in was expected to be a reformer.

*Q: In 1984, whither?*

SVEDA: In the Foreign Service, and I think increasingly so, the question is always, what is your next assignment? That will be the way you will get promoted. The only thing people seem to care about really is whether they're going to get promoted and what their next assignment will be. In Moscow, I was hoping to be assigned to Western Europe somewhere or Eastern Europe somewhere. I had made a big effort to get into the European Bureau. But then the announcement came from Personnel that there were too many back to back European assignments and there would be none in this particular year. Of course, there would be none except for their friends and there would be none even though Eastern Europe/Russia was really not Western Europe/Italy. So, it was a source of some annoyance.

But my career counselor, who was a friend of mine, suggested that I might be well to come back to Washington at this point in my career. He suggested the China desk. Well,

the China Desk was a wonderful place to be assigned, I recognized that. But it was not the European Bureau. I was really quite crestfallen that I would never get to serve in Europe because it would take me a long time to crawl there from East Asia again. But I went to the China Desk and I enjoyed the two years there very much.

*Q: So, 1984-1986, you were on the China Desk.*

SVEDA: Yes. I was monitoring China's external relations with the focus on China's relationship with the Soviet Union. So, I was forever going back and forth with the Soviet Desk.

*Q: Who was the head of the China Desk and who was the head of East Asian Affairs during this 1984-'86 period?*

SVEDA: East Asian Affair's assistant secretary was Paul Wolfowitz. He had been in the Department of Defense and had been one of the protégés of Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson. Richard Perle was another protégé of Senator Jackson. Wolfowitz was an amiable man, very conservative, unfortunately sometimes he presented problems that we had to get around, but was altogether a nice person.

There were two heads of the China Desk that I worked with. One was a man named Anderson. Oddly enough, I can't remember his first name right now. A very nice man. Then the second year was a very good friend of mine, Ambassador Dick Williams. He is currently our non-resident ambassador to Mongolia.

I greatly enjoyed working on the China Desk. We had important visits that had to be managed. Ronald Reagan thought that China was potentially the most important relationship that the United States had or could have. He was extremely interested in anything that we did on the China Desk or with China. One of the trips that I managed was a visit of the president of China, President Li Xiannian. Li Xiannian was about to visit when we learned that the President was going to have an operation on his colon for cancer. We simply did not know whether the visit would come off or not. These visits are planned meticulously. The rule that we had for China was Washington plus four cities. We did that for the biggies like him. Li Xiannian first touched down in Canada and the question was whether he would get to meet with Reagan because while he was in Canada, Reagan was literally being operated on. So, the Saturday before Li Xiannian was to arrive and the Saturday that President Reagan was being operated on, I was in the Protocol Office at State with a woman who was deputy chief of Protocol, Bonnie Murdock, a very lovely person and we were making our final arrangements with the Chinese embassy. There were two Chinese embassy people there. It was early Saturday morning. It must have been 8:00 am. I arrived at the State Department. Bonnie has a portable TV at her feet and it's on. The two Chinese arrive and she explains to the Chinese that normally she does not work with a portable TV at her feet but her president was having surgery and she was very concerned not only on a personal level because she wanted the surgery to go well, as we all did, but because we had the visit of President Li Xiannian coming and we

didn't know honestly whether it would be possible to do this or not. So, we would go on and make the final preparations as though the visit was coming off. While we're doing this, at around 10:00 that morning, Bonnie gets a call and she is saying to the phone, "Yes, yes. Oh, yes, yes. Absolutely. Yes." She puts down the phone and turns to the Chinese and says, "That was the White House. The White House called to tell us that the operation was a success and that as soon as the President came out of the anesthetic, he wanted us to tell the Chinese embassy that the trip was on, although the White House requested that we reduce the amount of standing at ceremonies and maybe have a lot more sitting because the President would be recovering. If you will watch the TV, the doctors are about to come on and announce this publicly, announce the results publicly." So, the Chinese who were looking at her rather surprised looked down at her feet and "We interrupt this program to bring you a special announcement." There were these doctors and they're saying that the operation was a success and so forth. The Chinese, their jaws had just dropped down to their knees. When the announcement was over, Bonnie turned off the TV and said, "Now, I'm sure you would like to call your embassy and you would like to call Canada and if you wish to call Beijing, this is how you can do it. The phones are over there." They happily went up.

The visit was a great success. President Li Xiannian, who was a few years Reagan's senior, was so touched that the President would be so solicitous about this visit – first of all, not to cancel it, but second, the moment he came out of the anesthetic, at least according to our story, he had asked that the Chinese be assured that the visit was on – he just was so bowled over by this that the visit went extremely well.

One of the things about the President which people don't appreciate is that, contrary to popular belief, he really did make key decisions. So, after the welcoming ceremony at 10:30 am, the President and the president of China went to the Oval Office at 11:00 for an hour's discussion, after which there would be the formal lunch at the State Department. Here I was, in charge of the visit, not knowing whether we would have a treaty to sign with the Chinese later that afternoon. We were talking about a treaty on energy cooperation and everything was ready except for the final approval, but we had no idea. This was one of the topics that the President wanted to raise with the Chinese at that meeting at 11:00. At about 11:50, we find out that the meeting had ended and that President Reagan had decided to sign the treaty. We honestly did not know which way he would decide. He did decide to sign that. Then it was left up to me to scrounge around for a room at the State Department where we could have a treaty signing. We managed to convince the Vice President, Bush, to show up. I say "managed to convince him" because I found the only room that we could use was on the 8$^{th}$ floor and it was one of the rooms attached to the big dining room there. The big dining room we couldn't use because there would be a swearing in of our new ambassador to France, a big cocktail party, which the Vice President would attend at 4:00 pm. So, I had the treaty signing for 3:00 or 3:30 so I could get the Vice President to be there. We used one of the side rooms, the Franklin Room or something, with a lot of furniture, the desk that the Declaration of Independence was signed on. So, Secretary Shultz agreed to show up, thank goodness, and the Vice President was there, and the president of China. We decided to use one of those desks. I

forget which desk we were using, but it wasn't the Declaration of Independence desk because at one point, Secretary Shultz was explaining to the Chinese president that there were many important artifacts in this room and one of them is the desk on which Thomas Jefferson composed the Declaration of Independence. He indicated where it was in the room and then Shultz, who had a very sharp temper, suddenly yelled out an expletive because the media people who were there were sitting on the desk, the photographers, and he just suddenly lost it for a second. But we managed to get to the treaty signing and everything went well. I had nothing better to do, so I decided to crash the reception for the new ambassador to France. What fascinated me was that he was some sort of major contributor from Tennessee. I think he owned some kind of chicken farm. I think his name was Brown and he owned Kentucky Fried Chicken. The minister at the beginning of the ceremony asked everybody to bow our heads. People from the China Desk were there. We did as well. The minister prayed and he asked God to bring peace to the people of America and the Republic of France. Of course, the State Department people sort of darted eyes at each other, wondering if we had missed something, that perhaps we were at war with France and didn't know it.

I also had a visit of a vice premier of China, Yao Yilin. I took him to San Francisco, Dallas, New York, and Washington. We were able to get the Vice President's plane and on that trip to Dallas – and this was really an amazing thing – we set up a visit with H. Ross Perot at H. Ross Perot's request. I only had the vaguest idea of who H. Ross Perot was. One of the White House people said, no, no, we absolutely had to do this because he was a major figure in EDS, which was a major company doing computer software and he sprung his people out of prison in Iran when the Shah fell and had I not read the book and seen the movie? Well, no, I had not read the book and I had not seen the movie. I vaguely knew who this person was. We go there and H. Ross Perot has this little ceremony where he presents this box about the size of a very large cigar box to the Chinese vice premier and he says, "This is a token of appreciation from the American people for the help that the Chinese gave us in the past at a time when we desperately needed it and in the hopes that China might help America again." That was the gist of the speech. The China crowd from the State Department were looking at each other wondering what was this help that China had given us in the past. Then Ross Perot opens up the box replica of the golden spike that joined the Union Pacific and the other railroad together in Utah in 1869. It was in Provo, Utah, where the golden spike was driven. Basically, he was referring to the Chinese coolie labor that had come over and built the first transcontinental railroad. Luckily, the Chinese vice premier didn't have the faintest idea of what this man was talking about and accepted this with gratitude. Then Ross Perot wanted to go and talk to the man separately. We insisted that there had to be a State Department official present because it was an official visit. Ross pert objected, but he agreed to this condition. He asked the Chinese vice premier for China's help on finding POWs and MIAs in Vietnam. The Chinese vice premier listened politely and basically was non-committal. When we heard about this later, we were upset because if anybody had been reading the newspapers, China at that time was fighting Vietnam in a border dispute. China was not at all likely to help anybody with Vietnam simply because they were at war with it. So, it was one of those examples of interference in American foreign policy with the best of

motives by somebody who really would have done better to have asked somebody what the situation was, but he just went off on his own.

*Q: You say your prime concern was relations with the Soviet Union.*

SVEDA: Yes.

*Q: This was the beginning of Gorbachev's coming on the scene.*

SVEDA: Yes.

*Q: When you got there in '84 and through '86, how would you characterize the relations between the Soviet Union and the Republic of China?*

SVEDA: Not good. They were not good but they were not particularly bad. The Chinese were trying to develop a better relationship with Russia because they didn't want to be on the short end of the triangular relationship with the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union. There really wasn't that much we could say about the relationship because the Chinese themselves were watching the changes within the Soviet Union with some interest and maybe even a little bit of consternation. They weren't quite sure what was going on at the time.

*Q: There are mixed feelings. They were a strong communist state and the Soviet Union was a strong communist state. Watching one communist state – i.e., the Soviet Union – beginning to start on a course of relaxation would not have sat well with the Chinese, but at the same time, the Chinese would have seen this menacing power from the north maybe getting pretty self-absorbed.*

SVEDA: I think that's more or less what was going on there. The Chinese at the time were under the leadership of Deng Xiao-ping. He was intent on changing China economically, loosening things up economically, though not politically. The Russians took exactly the opposite path, which was to loosen things up politically in the hopes that this would improve things economically. In retrospect, probably the Chinese were right, but at the time, it seemed as though Gorbachev in unleashing the political liberty and creativity would perhaps turn things around economically. It was seen by some to be a possibility, but not by us.

*Q: Were you able to talk to people at the Chinese embassy and say, "Hey, what do you think is going on in the Soviet Union?"*

SVEDA: No. In fact, there were very few worthwhile contacts at my level with the Chinese embassy. They were all relatively formal contacts. I guess the head of the desk had more to say with the ambassador, but not at my level.

*Q: As you were working with China, did you feel that there was a cooler relationship with China at the bureaucratic State Department/embassy level than there was with the Soviets at this point?*

SVEDA: Our relationship with China was very good. It was really excellent. In fact, we took our cue from the Reagan administration. The President personally wanted good relations with China and so we were very intent on having good relations with China. The problems that we had were more from people within his administration who were wary of the Chinese than from any other forces because the American people were very enthusiastic about better relations with China as far as we could see. One example of this is on the day that the President was reelected, our political counselor in Beijing was approached at an election night party at the Great Wall Hotel by a Chinese official who said that the Chinese government would be interested in receiving Peace Corps volunteers. Well, this was really rather revolutionary, the idea of a communist country having Peace Corps volunteers. I saw the cable that morning come in. Having been a former Peace Corps volunteer, I grabbed the cable from the cable traffic and went to the head of the desk, Dick Williams. I said, "Dick, if we ever have Peace Corps in China, could I be in charge of that?" He said with a smile, "Yes, of course. Why not?" Then I handed him the cable. He said, "Okay, good. You're in charge of that." What I also got later in the day was something that was a very valuable piece of paper. Secretary of State Shultz had been a professor at Stanford and he had a professorial habit of making marks on papers that were given to him. He would make little marginal comments, question marks, exclamation points, underlinings, sometimes he would write a word. Whenever he did and it seemed to be at all meaningful, then his staff was under instructions to Xerox this and give it to the office in question. So, Secretary Shultz saw the same cable that I grabbed. On his copy, he had underlined certain things and written in the margin "Good" or "Great" or "Wonderful" or something like that. He was very happy about this. It was extremely valuable to know what the Secretary's thinking was on something like this, especially because Paul Wolfowitz, the assistant secretary, was deadset against the idea. But when I went to Paul Wolfowitz and I showed him the Xerox of the cable with the Secretary's comments, all of his objections to Peace Corps in China evaporated. So, we worked on a project. I worked with a friend of mine, John Keeton. He had been a Peace Corps official in Thailand and Korea, which is where I first knew him when I was at the embassy there, and then he became a deputy director of the Peace Corps, a regional director of the Peace Corps, and he worked with me on getting Peace Corps into China. We worked on a lot of other things as well. A very good person. But we worked very closely with Sergeant Shriver, who was very interested in this. Paulette Ruppe, who has since died, was the head of Peace Corps at that time and was very excited by this. We decided that the Peace Corps volunteers who would go to China would be the best trained and the most carefully selected in the history of Peace Corps because they would be in such a sensitive position, being the first Peace Corps volunteers in a communist country. Since then, we've had Peace Corps in all the former countries of the Soviet Union and I think we may even have them in China now.

*Q: Did the Peace Corps go into China?*

SVEDA: What happened was that just as the first group was finishing their training, the Tiananmen Square incident occurred. This was June of '89. No Peace Corps group ever actually went there at that time. I don't know if they went later.

*Q: How did our relations with Taiwan affect what you were doing?*

SVEDA: We had an office that dealt with Taiwan affairs but not in Washington. It was in Rosslyn, Virginia, just across the river. The American Institute on Taiwan had an office that was very pointedly not in the capital. The people, the government on Taiwan, had an office actually in Washington, although they really shouldn't have. So, we didn't have very much to do with them. The one thing that I found a bit annoying was that Taiwan newspaper people would try to ingratiate themselves with me and talk with me, mostly about staffing patterns within the State Department. To them, it was extremely important who was going to be the head of this desk and who was going to this position and where people were going after serving on the China Desk and so forth. I found it annoying because I didn't think it was very important. The level of detail that they were interested in was not the level of detail that I either was in command of or cared about.

*Q: At one time when Kissinger and Nixon opened up relations with China, there was a so-called "China card" as a counter to the Soviet Union. Did you have a feeling that by this time things had developed so our relations with China no longer really were as a counter… This was a relation that stood on its own merits as opposed to being just a counter to the Soviets.*

SVEDA: Oh, absolutely, the relationship stood on its own merits. It was not seen by us as a counter to the Soviet Union. It was really quite important to us in a number of other respects. It was important to us in part because China is a very big country with 1.1 billion people and it had at that point already a large amount of trade with the U.S. and since then the trade has become far larger. So, the interest of the United States in the good relations with China was very strong. The arguments that we advanced for the importance of China are equally applicable to India, but we don't advance those arguments. India has as many people as China almost. India is a regional power of some importance and we have a lot of trade with India, but for some reason, we do as a people have a greater interest in our relationship with China than we do with India. That's just the way things are.

*Q: I've done some historical research and written a book about our consular relations. It's interesting. Right from the beginning of the Republic, after the actual confederation, we made special arrangements to open up relations with China. China has always had almost a mystique in American foreign relations.*

SVEDA: Yes, very much so. President Reagan was very much affected by this mystique that China had. He really thought that China was an extremely important country to the

United States. Of course, having been the governor of California, he had a certain Pacific perspective on things.

*Q: How were we seeing the mass arrival of Chinese graduate students to the U.S.?*

SVEDA: At the time on the China Desk, we were encouraging all kinds of contacts with China. Our belief was that the more contact with China, the better. I think that that really summed that up. Later on when the Tiananmen incident occurred and I was on detail to the National Science Foundation, it was my job to figure out for the U.S. government how many students there were in the U.S. because we wanted to give them some kind of special visa status which would allow them to stay in the U.S. and not have to go back to China. We didn't know how many there were in the U.S. because the U.S. visa system can tell you how many people have entered the U.S. but it cannot tell you how many have stayed or have left. We have no idea. I think we came up with the number of 4,000, but that seems rather low. I will have to think about that. It was a time of great change, a time when being Chinese was something of a novelty and you sort of expected them to be somewhat and to dress in a Maoist way. When I went to Beijing in 1985, I saw people swishing down the main avenues on their bicycles by the thousands. There were very few cars. People were not wearing Mao jackets. The older people were but some of the younger people were, but not very many. You could see changes occurring in China rather rapidly. To look back on that world of 15 years ago from the perspective of China today, it's an entirely different country. I had a houseguest for about a week, a young Chinese student who I had met on the Internet, who would be starting at GW getting a master's. His family is very highly placed in the government, I believe in the communication ministry. He has been extremely free on the Internet with contacting myself and other people in America and having very free and open discussions about everything to the extent that he's interested. It just is an entirely different window into China than I would have expected five years ago. China is changing very rapidly.

*Q: Going back to 1986, what did you do?*

SVEDA: When I finished on the China Desk… This is where this whole career catastrophe begins, in 1985. That would be worthy of a full interview because it's going to carry everything through rather rapidly from 1985 to the present.

*Q: Let's start on it.*

SVEDA: Okay. In 1985, the State Department security people, then known as SY, now known as DS/SY, learned that I had had sex with a young man who was above the age of consent but below the age of 21. I had not realized that this guy was as young as he was. I thought he was over 21. But they found out about it. There was a man whose name I can't remember in SY who was particularly big on routing out homosexuals from the State Department. I guess they must have learned about this. I had the encounter in May of 1985. They must have learned about it in July of 1985. They did not question me until December of 1985.

*Q: How did they find out? This is Washington.*

SVEDA: It was a different atmosphere then. What had happened was, this young man, whose name was Myles… I met him in New York at a bar. The drinking age then was 18 and he had a chauffeur's license, so I assumed he was 21. Indeed, he had false papers showing that he was over 21. He came down to Washington for a visit and we had sex and he went back up to New York. Then he came down to Washington to stay at my place. We didn't have any sexual relationship, but he wanted to move to Washington and stay at my place for a few weeks until he did find a place. I said, "Fine." At this point he went back up to Massachusetts, where he had been going to college, and saw a girlfriend of his. He managed to have an accident where he wasn't hurt but the van that her family owned was very badly damaged and they were not insured for him as a driver. So they contacted his family in Oklahoma, his mother specifically, and she said, "Well, I'm divorced from the father, but the father is the one who is responsible for the boy financially, so why don't you talk with him?" So, they talked with him and he was saying, "Well, what the hell was the kid doing in Washington?" "Oh, he's staying with a Foreign Service officer," said the mother. This guy called the local DS investigating office in Tulsa and complained about his son living with a gay Foreign Service officer. That was it. It was just a phone call. So, they must have learned about this in July or so. Nobody ever contacted me.

That October, I noticed that my name was not on the promotion list from 3 to 2. I was a little bit disturbed because I was pretty certain that the job that I had done on the China Desk and the job that I had done in Moscow would have really put me in a good position to be promoted. So, I talked to my CDO [career development officer], a guy named Dave Tapakono, and he said, "You know, why don't we find out where you were on the promotion list, how close you were to being promoted? If you were very close, then it would probably mean that you will be promoted next year. If you were very far away, you won't be promoted and maybe ought to think of doing something else." I said, "That sounds okay." So, in December, he calls me and says, "Hey, Russ, I just found out that you were promoted. You were number 3 on the list of 60 to be promoted and somebody blocked it." I said, "Who could have blocked it?" He says, "Well, there are only three offices that have the power to block a promotion. One is DS, one is the Inspector General, and the third…" I don't know.

*Q: It must be the White House because it requires presidential approval.*

SVEDA: I guess so. So, that evening, December 17th, a Tuesday in 1985, while the State Department was having Christmas parties in all offices, I go to find out what it is. It's not the Inspector General's office. It didn't seem to be the White House. I found out that it was DS. So, I went to the office of this man who has since died who was the man who was the most fanatically anti-gay person in DS, as far as I understand from other gay people. He interrupted the Christmas party and sat in his office with me for a minute. He said, "Oh, well, this is just something we need to look into. It may be nothing. We'll get

back to you." So, the following week was Christmas and after that they found this guy, Myles, who had moved back to Oklahoma. They interrogated him. He never said that he had had sex with me. He said he couldn't remember, which is actually nice of him to do but not very complimentary. Then in January of '86, right after the new year, they called me for two or three days of interrogation. The charge that they were investigating was homosexuality. I mention that because in the ensuing years and a huge grievance fight that I had with these people, they denied that this was what they were investigating, that they didn't care about that, but that is only after the climate changed. In 1986, in January, they were investigating homosexuality. It's very easy to prove because I have a copy of the paper that I got under the Freedom of Information Act, myself and my lawyers. So, there began the case against me. The DS people wanted to withdraw my security clearance. At first, they didn't say they wanted to withdraw my security clearance. They were considering it. Then I hired a lawyer. The only help that the American Foreign Service Association [AFSA] ever gave me was to give me the phone number of a lawyer to contact. Sometimes I wonder why I had been paying my yearly dues because they really did nothing for me. But I did get a lawyer. As soon as I got a lawyer, a man named Bill Bransford, he said, "Look, now that you're represented by counsel, I can tell you you don't have to deal with these people except through me. If you have any contact with them, please give them my name and my number." I told them that. There was nothing until March when Ambassador George Vest, who was the director general of the Foreign Service, sent my attorney a letter saying that because I had not cooperated with an investigation, I would be removed from the Foreign Service for non-cooperation. Well, of course, the lawyer got in there and we were able to have an interview with the lawyer present. It went on from there.

This is a very long story, but basically the next 14 years are the story of this grievance and how I managed to fight it. It was the longest grievance in the history of the State Department. If I were to sum up the whole story in a few sentences, I would say that, first of all, the people in the State Department, the professionals who entered by the exam system, have been always very supportive of me. The people in DS who did not enter through the exam system have been very hostile to me. The political appointees it depended on which administration it was whether they were friendly or not. In the case of the Bush administration, not friendly. In the case of the Clinton administration, very friendly. So, there's that factor. The other thing is that in dealing with the State Department, I have learned that the State Department is like an octopus with a very weak central brain and arms that do not really recognize the other arms as being part of the same organism. Sometimes the arms fight with each other thinking they're being attacked by a stranger. So, it's very easy to temporize with the State Department on a grievance because you just simply get one arm of the State Department acting in cross purposes with another arm and it takes months and months to figure things out.

*Q: This is one of the complaints I get from some of my colleagues in the Foreign Service who say, "So and So was really a substandard officer and really screwed up somewhere." We're not talking about homosexuality. We're talking about performance. As soon as they put in a grievance, particularly if they happened to be either a woman or*

*a minority, they were home free for at least 10 years because the State Department was almost paralyzed - this is probably true with most of government – in dealing with it.*

SVEDA: Yes. When the thing began, I never really expected it would last more than two weeks. I hoped it would last at least two weeks because I needed to find another job. As time went on, my objectives changed because I wanted to come as close as possible to age 50 and 20 years of service so I could have a retirement pension. But the way I did that, looking back on it, was really quite amazing the twists and turns of this case. Initially, when I lost my security clearance, which was at the end of my tenure on the China Desk, the China people, people from the China Desk and people who worked with them, expected me to have an assignment in Beijing as political-military officer in Beijing. So, in anticipation of that, they assigned me to language training, figuring that from 1986-'87, I could settle my affairs with DS, make sure that my clearance was okay, and then go off to Taiwan for the second year of language training and then go off to Beijing. The expectation was that I would be able to clear this up because the whole thing seemed ludicrous from the point of view of people I talked with who were professionals, the State Department professionals. So, they were very supportive. When in 1987 it became clear that DS would not allow me to go to Taiwan for the second year of language training even though technically there are no U.S. government employees in Taiwan, I was able to find a detail to the National Science Foundation, where I was until retirement a month ago and still am actually hanging on for a few weeks because one of my colleagues has just had a baby and I'm sort of filling in for her. The State Department was very good about having me detailed there. While details are normally only a year, my detail to NSF has been 13 years.

*Q: Let's go back to 1985. There is a case against you for being a homosexual. What was the state of the law or security or something at that point?*

SVEDA: As far as I know, the security people thought that homosexuals were security risks. We were at risk of being entrapped overseas. They did this on no evidence whatsoever. I say that because there were hearings that were held in the Senate in 1987 or '88 on this very point and it turns out that in the whole 20th century, there had never been a case of a homosexual who had been blackmailed against his government except in World War I an Austrian officer was blackmailed. That was the only incident that anybody ever came up with. So, basically, from that one incident-

*Q: What was his name? He was a chief of Austrian intelligence or something like that.*

SVEDA: I don't recall.

*Q: There has been a movie on it.*

SVEDA: Basically, that was the only case. There was a witch-hunt out for homosexuals. The technical thing that they used about my security clearance to get my security clearance away was my first denying that I had "intercourse" with this young man. I never

did have anal intercourse with him. But they asked me if I had had intercourse with him and I said, "No." They didn't ask me if I had performed fellatio on him, which I had, which I don't consider intercourse. In a way, it's sort of reminiscent of the Lewinski thing later on.

*Q: The President of the United States has said he never had sexual relations with the young lady. I must say I think he had a point.*

SVEDA: Well, in fact, later on, working at the White House in the press section while this whole thing was occurring, I was struck by the parallel. I went to school with Bill Clinton and I knew him then. I really was intrigued by a sort of a parallel occurrence in our lives. There were also other incidents. Gerry Studds, who I had known when I was in the senator's staff in college, later became a congressman and he was censured by the House for having had homosexual relations with a page. That had happened about that time. I think Barney Frank, who was also in the House, was censured for some sort of relationship he had. But I had tried to use the words strictly to not admit anything that I had not done but not tell more than I wanted to tell. The State Department security people said that later on when I admitted having had sexual relations with this guy, I had lied to them on the earlier one and that's what they were concerned about. But they were also concerned about the fact that I had had sex with this guy, not because of him but because he was under 21, although that was above the age of consent in DC. So, they were playing both ends of that.

When we went to George Vest that spring in 1986, George Vest decided that the only punishment that needed to be accorded to me was a letter of reprimand to be put in my file for a year. That effectively would block a promotion for a year. But then it would be taken out and that would be that. So, two weeks after George Vest cleared me, the State Department security people suspended my clearance. My lawyer complained about this. He said that the question before George Vest was one of my suitability for the Foreign Service. George Vest as director general had decided that I was suitable for the Foreign Service. If I was suitable for the Foreign Service, I should have a security clearance. The problem in the case on a technical level was that they had done this thing backwards. They should have first removed my security clearance and then given me to Vest to decide on suitability. But up until that time, the suitability determination was the determination of whether you should still be employed by the State Department and therefore have a security clearance. The case occurred at a time when DS had just become a bureau independent of the Director General's Office. I've always seen this case as a turf battle between the two. Basically, when the case began, they were under the director general, it was an office under the director general, and suitability was the issue. But by the time the case had been decided by Vest, they were a bureau equal to the Director General's Office and their attitude was, well, the director general can make his own decision about suitability, but we're going to make the decision about his security clearance. This is one of the reasons why I've been able to maintain my employment with the State Department because I have been declared suitable. It's bizarre.

*Q: It seems incredible that this sort of thing could go on for 14 years. What would happen without going into over exquisite detail? We're talking about a bureaucratic process. Was there a constant rejection of security clearance all the time? There must have been hearing after hearing.*

SVEDA: First of all, when DS began the business about my security clearance, we filed a grievance. The grievance was supposed to be decided within 90 days. But consideration of the grievance by the Foreign Service Grievance Board was suspended while the State Department drafted regulations and promulgated regulations allowing for a review by an appeal board of security clearance determinations. You see, in the old system, if I can call it that, when security was an office under the director general, the suitability decision was the final decision. But when DS became a separate bureau and said that they could make security decisions independent of the director general, my lawyer pointed out that, gee, you really have to have some kind of appeals process above DS because otherwise, it's unfair. The State Department went back and forth on this. They went to the White House and they went to the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice said, "You know, we really do have to have some kind of regulations." They literally did not have regulations on the books. So, we had to wait for a while until they drafted and promulgated regulations and then applied them to me retroactively and just told me to carry on the appeal as though the regulations had been enforced at the time that my case had begun. That thing went at least until December of 1989. There was a decision by this appeal panel which was made up of M [Management], DS, and the Director General's Office. Those three were sitting on this appeals panel. When I made my presentation with my lawyers, we expected it to be an adversarial procedure, which is to say we would get to hear DS' case, but we never got to hear DS' case. We just made our own argument. DS was sitting in the room. We left and then DS made a separate presentation out of our hearing to the board, which decided against me. We never had a chance to hear DS' arguments. We never had a chance to respond to DS' argument. As it struck us, this was a fundamental denial of due process, which gave us another round for another grievance or to add to our grievance. This just went on. There were times when the State Department seemed to forget totally about my existence. There must have been a whole year when we never heard anything from anybody. We just went on and on like that. I should go through the chronology briefly and maybe the next time we talk briefly go over the ins and outs of the chronology because 15 years is a long time. I've sort of brought it up to 1989, which is the first three or four years, but there are another 10 years beyond that.

*Q: Maybe this would be a good place to stop. We'll pick it up in 1989.*

SVEDA: I first was assigned to the China program at the National Science Foundation. Then after Tiananmen, I really didn't want to have anything to do with China for a while, so I went over to the programs involving Central and Eastern Europe.

I remembered the name of that security official who was so obsessed with homosexuality: Clarke Dittmer. Later on when the Clinton administration came in and Clarke Dittmer had left office and indeed died, he was called by DS people as the man who had started

the changes leading to the acceptance of homosexuals, which was an astonishing statement.

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*Q: Today is August 9, 2000. 1989.*

SVEDA: Before we turned on the microphone, we were just chatting very briefly about how difficult it is for those of us in the Foreign Service who served overseas to structure our thoughts about our time in Washington. You can remember what happened when you were assigned to Korea or Italy or some other place like that very vividly, but when you're in Washington, time becomes just a duration and it's very hard to remember what years were which.

*Q: You were seconded to the National Science…*

SVEDA: I was seconded to the National Science Foundation. Normally a detail is for a year. Somehow, I was overlooked. The basic problem that the State Department had with me was that they had already decided that I was suitable for the Foreign Service, but then DS had taken away my security clearance. It had been done backwards. If DS had taken away my security clearance, then the suitability probably would have gone in the other direction. But it became something of a turf battle with DS now equal in dignity to the Director General's Office. The director general was reduced to basically handling just personnel. It lost control of the security function. In fact, actually, this is a story that somebody really should examine concerning the State Department in the 1980s, the rise and rise and rise of the security function. It's gotten to the point where, if I may be so bold as to say, the State Department is like a great university where the campus cops had wound up deciding on hiring, firing, and tenure questions. I noticed from the recent newspapers that the security function is expanding even beyond.

*Q: Maybe we can cover without going into exquisite detail what you did in the 14 years at the National Science Foundation.*

SVEDA: I'm not going to get into very much detail about the National Science Foundation except to say that for the first two years there, 1987-1989, I worked on China programs. The breaking point with us came in 1989 when the Tiananmen incident occurred and suddenly all of our cooperation with China was on hold.

I then shifted to the Central and Eastern European programs because I had a background in Russia. As luck would have it, in 1989, a lot of the communist regimes of Central Europe and Eastern Europe received their independence from communism, call it that, and in 1991, there was the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. One of the things that we did there in that terribly important period, 1989-1991, and immediately beyond was to realize that the science communities of these countries, which are ancient science communities and had had a tremendous effect on science… Most Americans don't realize

that the periodic table of the elements, which is on every chemistry classroom wall, was devised by a Russian. During the Cold War, we wouldn't have admitted that. These science communities had to be sustained. We did it by immediate $10,000 grants to all of our 120 grantees. That comes out to $12 million that we came up with from somewhere. The idea was to give these people computers. Back in 1991, computers and the Internet were just beginning. President Bill Clinton a few weeks ago made a speech where he said that in January 1993, when he took office, there were only 50 websites in the whole world. In 1991/'92, there were far fewer than that. Our task really, quite frankly, was to get Soviet scientists to communicate with each other via the computers, to put their data in forms that would be compatible with our computer formulations, and establish links between our own people outside of the Soviet Union and then later Russia and the people inside. We wanted to give them hope, the sense that they were participating in a larger community. I think that we did this.

*Q: Your part of this was what?*

SVEDA: First of all, calling up all of our 120 grantees and saying, "Do you want $10,000 provided you spend them right away to buy equipment or supplies that are used by your former Soviet counterparts?" George Soros of the Soros Foundation learned of our efforts and came over to Gersen Shur, one of the people I had been working under, and said, "How would you like to have $100 million to spend in two years to aid scientists in the former Soviet Union?" So, Gersen set up the International Science Foundation. After two years, he set up a foundation called the Civilian Research and Development Foundation with Nunn-Lugar money, money taken basically from the Defense Department budget, about $25 million matched by funds from other sources which would continue to aid the scientists.

After that, I was basically trying to encourage American researchers to contact Russian researchers. We set up a program at the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council [NRC] which gave and still gives money to scientists to make short visits to this region to write up proposals to the National Science Foundation. That is about $500,000 a year.

*Q: While you were doing this, were you consulting with the Office of Science?*

SVEDA: I'm glad you asked that question. The feeling of the various science agencies in Washington - the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and so on – is that the Science Office of the State Department (OES) has been, to put it most kindly, a stepchild of U.S. foreign policy and really an abused stepchild at that. There has been almost no interest, coordination, anything coming from them. The only good thing that they did do in our view was to set up a series of joint funds in Poland, Hungary, and former Czechoslovakia. These joint funds would allow PL 480 money, agricultural surplus that we sell and the money would be taken in in zlotys or kroner or whatever, and then would be kept in the country. This money would be matched with dollars and the Hungarian, Polish, or Czech researchers would be able to have hard currency in order to

cooperate with American scientists. These joint funds were spectacularly useful enterprises, but unfortunately, the State Department ceased funding them, I think, in 1994.

National Science Foundation became so frustrated with dealing with the State Department that basically the National Science Foundation set up two offices overseas, one in Tokyo to handle East Asia and one in Paris to handle everything in Europe and Africa. So, there is that terrible frustration in dealing with OES.

*Q: In the science world, I take it that Latin America doesn't play much of a role. Was this your impression?*

SVEDA: Latin America and Africa are two areas of the world where we have to work harder to encourage cooperation. In the case of Latin America, there are many scientists that are very good but mostly in the blackboard, theoretical, sciences. There are areas of cooperation that are very important to us. For example, the whole study of the rainforest, the accumulation of medical anthropology or medical pharmacology. These people go out into the Amazon and talk with witch doctors and find out what medical preparations they are using.

*Q: I can see where that is country specific – Brazil. Correct me if I'm wrong that despite the sophistication, whenever it is, the system in Latin America isn't turning out scientists to whom one would turn to as opposed to what was the Soviet Union or Eastern Europeans and Western Europeans and the Japanese or the Chinese.*

SVEDA: Absolutely. Although I don't follow Latin America very closely, it is a mystery to me why that is the case. Latin America has the European educational tradition which goes back hundreds of years, 500 years, and surely should be performing at least on the level of Hungary or Poland, but it's not.

*Q: Let's go to your time at the State Department windmill. Let's go through the chronology.*

SVEDA: I tried in a rough way to jot down a chronology which makes sense to me in terms of conceptualizing this period in Washington.

Between 1989 and 1992, not much happened. I think there was a whole year, maybe 1991, where my lawyers and I heard absolutely nothing from the State Department, which in retrospect was a great lesson. When 1992 rolled around, my classmate from Georgetown, Bill Clinton, was running for President. My lawyer asked me, "What do we do?" I said, "Just keep delaying until the election." He said, "How can you be so sure Bill Clinton is going to win?" I said, "I don't have any choice but to believe he's going to win." In April or May of 1992, a group of gay and lesbian – really only gay – Foreign Service officers got together in an apartment in Columbia Plaza and it was a very tense gathering. I mention this to explain how things have changed and how this meeting led to

the formation of an organization. The gathering had about 25 people there. The tension in the room was palpable. The paranoia was palpable. People were terrified that there was a DS plant in the room, that they would find out that they were gay. They knew that they were taking a very big risk by appearing together as a group of gay Foreign Service officers. That first meeting was an opportunity to vent a lot of anger, which was done, and then the organizer of the meeting asked if this meeting suggested that we might form an organization sometime in the near future to work on issues of concern to gay and lesbian Foreign Service officers. The decision was taken by us to do that, to meet again in calmer circumstances.

*Q: Who was the organizer?*

SVEDA: I can't recall at the top of my head, I would tell you if I did. There are probably several people who are involved in that. We formed an organization called Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies [GLIFAA]. The group has changed over the years. In 1992 before the election of Bill Clinton, before his inauguration, there was a great deal of tension and the main concern was to get DS to stop harassing homosexuals like myself for being homosexual. After the election of Bill Clinton and in subsequent years, the organization has become largely a social organization, but also has prevailed upon the State Department with unmarried heterosexual Foreign Service officers to have the State Department accord equal housing to unmarried Foreign Service officers, gay or straight, and married Foreign Service officers without children. The purpose of this would be to allow the partner, gay or straight, of an unmarried Foreign Service officer to have enough room to live. The interesting thing is that, in subsequent years, the job market being what it is and the fact that Foreign Service officers tend to become romantically involved with people of their own professional background and standing, it has become harder and harder for the State Department to keep people who are romantically involved with people who want to have a life and a career of their own. I know of a number of instances of straight people and gay people where the relationship has either broken up because of this… So and So is being sent to the Dominican Republic and there is nothing for the partner to do or the partner just chooses not to work for the embassy in the case of straight people and there are visa problems with work visas, diplomatic visas, all sorts of problems. I know of one couple that was assigned to what would be my dream assignment: Embassy Vatican City. This one guy took his lover with him to Rome, but it was very hard for his lover to find the right kind of job in Italy and I think getting a work permit was a problem and a diplomatic visa was not extended. So, he broke his assignment and went to USUN to follow his lover. He went back to New York because he had job opportunities there. That relationship basically broke up over that. He is now back in Washington after his USUN assignment. So, there are a lot of people who are seriously thinking of leaving the Foreign Service, gay or straight, simply because they cannot have their intellectual and educational peers with them. It's a very big problem. This is one of the things that GLIFAA is hoping to help the State Department solve.

In 1992, in November, my classmate, Bill Clinton, was elected President. Up until that point, I was not able to work on his campaign. My partner, Richard Victor Schachter, was

able to go to New Hampshire in February and March of 1992 and campaign with Bill and Hillary. Victor had never been to Arkansas, but never mind. He passed out literature, videotapes, and all the other things that they did up in New Hampshire. So, he worked on the campaign. I was not able to work on the campaign, but the minute that Bill was elected President, both Victor and I were hired as consultants for the Clinton/Gore transition. You could only imagine my feeling at this point. Here I was, working on a presidential transition. Meanwhile, the State Department was not sure what they would do about me in terms of keeping me or not keeping me or giving me a clearance or not.

In January of 1993, when he was inaugurated, the day he was inaugurated, I gave up my seat on the reviewing stand of the White House, which Victor and I were going to share – Victor and his mother instead took the places there in the presidential reviewing stand on Pennsylvania Avenue – and I went with a group of volunteers to take the White House from the Bushes. We were supposed to be led in at 11:30 that morning. We were delayed in the cold until about 10 minutes to 12:00 pm. We came in. Everybody had left the White House. We went to the OEOB [Old Executive Office Building] because we didn't know where else to go. We went to the big conference room that Vice President Nixon used to use as his own office and later President Nixon as a hideaway office. Luckily, somebody had brought a little three inch screen TV with him, so we were able to watch first Al Gore and then Bill Clinton be inaugurated President. Then we waited around to see what we could do. The phones had all been turned off. All the TVs had been taken away. There were no pens. There was no paper. There were no hangars in the closets. Somehow, the Bush people had managed to put hot water in the cold water drinking fountains. We still haven't figured out how they managed to do that. But the first thing that I did when we turned on the phones was to go and start answering the phones. We expected that there would be a lot of positive comments about the President, who had just been inaugurated a half hour earlier and was then watching the inaugural parade. The next five or so hours, we had the most vitriolic, sterilous, and anti-Clinton telephone calls organized by the religious right, excoriating him for his position on abortion and also on gays in the military. So, I had my introduction to what later became the rather tempestuous Clinton administration.

A day or so later, I was asked by Nancy Ward, who was the White House Press Office manager, to help her set up the White House Press Office. We went off and found office supplies. We set up desks. We figured out where we could find TV monitors, things like that. Basically, the long and the short of it is that ever since then I have been working as a volunteer – at first rather intensively every night and most Saturdays and now most weekday evenings – in the White House Press Office. It's been a very interesting experience. I've been able to watch the White House and the press and its relationships between the White House and the media for the last seven and a half years. Meanwhile, my case is percolating at the State Department. The State Department security people perceived a shift in the climate and recognized that I had some form of White House protection, although what it was was unclear. In point of fact, there was very little protection, but perception is where the name of the game was.

*Q: Were there others in your case or were you the point person?*

SVEDA: There was one other person: Jan Krc. His case was a little bit more advanced than mine. He had been a USIA officer who had been assigned to Yugoslavia. There, there was a non-fraternization rule. The non-fraternization rule was that Americans could have sexual relations with Yugoslavians, amorous relations, as long as there was no entangling romantic involvement. He says that it was an interesting fiction because a lot of embassy officers and other U.S. government employees wound up marrying Yugoslavians and then had to go through this charade that somehow they had just met and decided to marry without ever having any romantic entanglements. So, when Jan left the post there in Belgrade, he was debriefed by DS and the DS person who debriefed him asked him if he had ever had any sexual relations with any Yugoslavians or with any other foreign nationals. He said, "No, not with any Yugoslavians, but yes with other foreign nationals." "Oh, who?" He said, "Oh, the Swedish military attaché." "Oh." The DS person looked up and asked, "The Swedes have a female military attaché?" Jan said, "No, male." He said, "Oh." Jan was supposed to have gone to his next post, South Africa, but his assignment was immediately curtailed and his security clearance was suspended. Jan took this to the Foreign Service Grievance Board [FSGB] and they gave him a decision which basically ordered the State Department to reinstate him and give him back promotions and back pay and lawyers' fees and all that. The State Department appealed this to federal district court, which said, "Well, the merits of Jan's case aside, we don't have the authority as a court to look into security clearances because Congress has not given us that authority." This went up to the court of appeals, which agreed. In their opinion, they asked the Congress to give the courts authority to look into such matters. Jan's case went up to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court declined to reverse. But meanwhile, Jan, who had worked for USIA, had taken the Foreign Service exam for the State Department. He passed the exam with flying colors, the oral exam, and DS had to do a background check. DS has three options – either to recommend a clearance, not recommend a clearance, or to take no position on it. This is apparently what they did in Jan's case. Jan is now a Foreign Service officer - ironically, of course, USIA is now part of the State Department – and he is serving in St. Petersburg at the moment. He's doing quite well. That's Jan's case.

In 1993, expecting that my carefully orchestrated White House connections would serve me in good stead with the new administration, I was shocked to get an assignment by the director general, Genta Hawkins, to leave my National Science Foundation detail. The order said that I would be allowed to stay in the State Department until age 50, which at that point would have been December 27, 1995, and allowed to retire, but in the meantime, I would have to work at the Dulles Airport unclassified pouch mailroom. So, basically, it was 1993-1995, the middle of '93. I was looking to essentially two and a half years of working in a way like Oscar Wilde at hard labor in this absurd location. The Dulles Airport mailroom is very far from where I live and I don't own a car. I've never owned a car. So, it would have been a very arduous thing for me to have done. I immediately went to my lawyers, who thought of whatever they could do, but not very

much because the State Department is a disciplined service and has the right to assign anybody anywhere on a "take it or leave it" basis.

*Q: At your rank, had any Foreign Service officer ever done this?*

SVEDA: Well, that was one of the things that we were going to ask. The lawyers thought that we might have something to say about that. That is exactly what the lawyers did argue. They said that this was not using me at my rank. My rank at that point was a 3 in the Foreign Service scheme of things.

*Q: That's about the major level.*

SVEDA: Yes. At the major level. That was the argument that he made. Meanwhile, my boss at the National Science Foundation, who I regret has since died, Marcel Dardon, a wonderful French physicist with a twinkle in his eye, wrote a letter to the State Department saying that the National Science Foundation could not understand why this detail was being ended because I helped administer the State Department funds. Remember the joint funds that I mentioned? They were several hundred thousand of that that I did help administer. He said that I was indeed giving benefit to the State Department by the proper administration of their funds. Meanwhile, in a third mode of attack, I remembered one little detail. Remember I mentioned GLIFAA, that gay and lesbian organization. In the course of chatting with members, I had learned that Sherman Funk, our inspector general, and his wife were very active in a group called PFLAG [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays]. It turns out that Sherman Funk and his wife, while they're not themselves gay or lesbian, have a daughter who is lesbian who they're very proud of and that Sherman Funk or his wife – I'm not sure which – were the national head of this organization of parents and friends of lesbians and gays, a very active organization. So, I knew that my trump card was talking to him, the inspector general, and having something done about this.

*Q: Also, I might point out that there is an oral history of Sherman Funk in our collection, but also he was imposed essentially on the Foreign Service, so he was considered to be a watchdog of the right. This is not a liberal inspector general by any means.*

SVEDA: No, he was a conservative Republican. So, I called up Sherman Funk's office with my hand trembling on the phone, and I asked his secretary or his assistant if I could meet with him. She said that he would be traveling shortly, but she would ask him. He agreed to meet with me the very next afternoon. I went to his office. He is a very genial man, a really wonderful person. I went to his office. He asked me to sit down on one of the facing couches. He lit up a cigarette. I know from passing that there was no smoking in the State Department, but he was the inspector general. He offered me a cigarette. I don't know how to smoke. Under those circumstances, I might have decided to learn, but I said, "No." He said, "Well, tell me the story." I said, "It's a long story. It might take at least 45 minutes to tell." He said, "I have the time. Tell me." So, I told him all the details and when I came to mention Clarke Dittmer's name, he practically spit on the ground. He

said, “That man is…” He was the head of security at that point, but he was particularly anti-gay. Sherman Funk basically said he would see what he could do. He told me in the course of the meeting that he was indeed involved in PFLAG and he had marched in gay civil rights demonstrations on behalf of that organization. He said that he could not describe to me his contempt for those Foreign Service officers who came to him after he had been interviewed on TV during one of these demonstrations and told him they admired his courage in marching on behalf of his daughter when they themselves had children who were gay and would not be seen doing so in public. He said he could not describe his contempt for such people. So, he said he didn’t know what he could do, but he would make a couple of calls and see what was possible. He called me the next day and said that he had spoken with Genta Hawkins Holmes, the director general, and also with the head of security, whose name I think at the time was Sheldon Krys, but I’m not sure, and that security said that they could do nothing, but the director general had said that I would be allowed to stay at NSF at least until I turned 50. That was the best he could do and he wished me well. So, that was turned off.

So, as the case chugged along from that point, DS decided – probably on the urging of that phone call – to do a full background check of me. We thought that DS would give me back my clearance. My lawyer pointed out that under Defense Department guidelines, which had the general use by other departments of the government on security clearances, if an event had occurred five or seven years earlier, basically if that sort of event had not occurred in the intervening time, you could have your clearance back. The lawyer, William Bransford, kept asking DS for copies of those precepts and they refused to give it to him. They refused to give those precepts to him. Later on when we did a deposition of Gary Gower, who works for DS, and Clint Boushel, who also works for DS, would do depositions with them in connection with the Foreign Service Grievance Board grievance, they admitted that they did have precepts which they did not give to us. We thought that was rather shocking. But I was obviously on DS’s…

*Q: We call it the “shit list.”*

SVEDA: I would have used that term. Frankly, I was on their shit list and I was not going to get a clearance no matter what happened. So, while this was going on, of all bizarre things, I get a letter from Personnel hand delivered to me at NSF. One of my colleagues was in the room when this messenger came and she asked if she ought to leave the room. I said, “No, you can watch me open the envelope.” I opened the envelope, which was handed to me by the messenger, and I practically fell over. It turns out that Personnel, the Personnel office that at the time was headed by Curt Struble, who was a friend of mine from Moscow, the office that monitors time in class… In any event, there was some question about my time in class and it turned out that as they looked into my record, I had been promoted in 1987 from 3 to 2 and nobody had ever informed me of that. Indeed, nobody had ever informed Personnel that my name had been inexplicably removed from the list. DS had removed my name from the list.

What happened was this. In 1986, Vest had put that letter of reprimand in my file. That blocked a promotion in 1986, but in 1987, the letter had been removed and not seeing anything else in the file, remembering that I should have been promoted in 1985, the 1987 board promoted me. In 1985, I'm promoted from 3 to 2, but DS blocks it. Vest in 1986 has a letter of reprimand put in my file which stays there for a year and is removed in 1987. The 1987 board, seeing the case of an officer who was promoted number two of 60 in 1985 but somehow was still listed as a three, promotes me in 1987. DS blocks it again but doesn't tell Personnel. Personnel discovers this in 1994 about the time I was about to be thrown out for time in class and they go back and have a whole review, which I had to pay for with my attorney, and promotes me retroactively from three to two as of 1987. So, this suddenly throws everything out of whack for the State Department because now my TIC [time in class] date theoretically is somehow like 2002. So, they were stuck with me at NSF until perhaps that time or at least until the time I turned age 50.

At this point, the Foreign Service Grievance Board notices that they have this case on the books, a grievance that had been filed in 1987 which somehow had been left undecided for more than 90 days. They asked my attorney if we were still interested in pursuing this. Of course we were interested in pursuing this. So, the last phase of this case began. Basically, it allowed us to do the depositions that I mentioned. We filed a very complete record. I'd be very happy to submit that to anybody who is interested in looking at it. In 1996, the Foreign Service Grievance Board gave me a decision which basically told the Department of State security people that they had to cleanse my record and review the matter of my security clearance. From 1996 until 1999, we were fighting on those grounds. The question of DS refusing to cleanse my record in any meaningful way finally being forced by this order to cleanse it literally with a razor blade, taking out all references to the word "homosexual" or "gay" or any intimation that these might be somehow criminal activities – because, frankly, they were not under DC law – so they went through the record. When I finally looked at it with somebody from the State Department Personnel grievance staff, it was like holding a piece of Swiss cheese up to the light. It was absurd. Eventually, the State Department and my lawyers came to a settlement, the terms of which were retroactive promotion to FS-01 as of 1995; back pay with interest, my outstanding lawyer's fees, which at that point were about $70,000 (not unfortunately the money that I had already paid my lawyers, which was probably another $40-50,000); and the fact that I would have to retire as of the date that these things went through, my retroactive promotion went through; and one provision of the settlement, that I was not allowed to talk to members of the media. My interlocutor here, Charles Stuart Kennedy, assures me that he is not a member of the media.

*Q: By the time this took place, you were getting read to retire.*

SVEDA: Yes, formally, I retired on June 30th of this year.

*Q: This whole thing… There is no time to go back and use you as a Foreign Service officer outside of the National Science Foundation.*

SVEDA: No, and it's really a pity. I don't think it's a pity for my own sake necessarily, although I really loved diplomatic work and loved working with the State Department and what the State Department does… A couple of days ago, I spoke with a colleague of mine who just curtailed her assignment in Barbados where apparently people are curtailing right and left because there is no front office and they're not getting funding and support. I asked her if there was any real negative repercussion on her curtailing her assignment. She said, "Oh, people are curtailing right and left because the State Department is finding it very hard to retain people in difficult locations." A friend of mine just went out to Chengdu in China. He will be the number two person there to the consul general. There are altogether 14 people at post. Twelve of them have asked to curtail. Beijing is quite aware of that and the problem apparently did not rest with my friend, who just got there. I guess the consul general has not asked to curtail. I do not know how to interpret that situation. But it appears that in the Foreign Service today, one can curtail assignments knowing that it is very hard for the State Department to get people to put up with the visa line in Moscow or in Mexico City and that the State Department will not hold it against you.

*Q: You mentioned GLIFAA. Has that become a force within the foreign affairs community?*

SVEDA: Well, yes, not a major force. What they're working on really now are partner benefits. I keep reminding GLIFAA that they are an auxiliary organization to AFSA. They have been accepted as such. AFSA is an organization which as far as I can tell is a company union. It doesn't really champion the needs of the people in the State Department. I will say that, as I mentioned earlier, in the 15 or so years of my fight with the State Department, AFSA only did one good thing for me and that was to tell me the name of the lawyer I could call. But they showed no interest in my case and every time I tried to meet with the president of AFSA, he always was very careful to have counsel sitting with him so that there would be no complaint I could make against them, I don't know. I am very disappointed with the role that AFSA has played. It seems to be part and parcel of the way the State Department is operating. AFSA operates the way the State Department operates in the sense that it prefers to look away from unpleasant problems. As with the case of OES, others come in to fill the vacuum. In the case of OES not doing its work in the science area, the National Science Foundation sets up offices of its own overseas to carry on the work that needs to be done.

*Q: One of the things you mention, and this is probably not as much a propos to what's going on, but I don't know the culture, gays and lesbians, did you find that this was a natural union or did lesbians have a different attitude? Were they a different breed of cat?*

SVEDA: It's very difficult to get lesbians to join the organization. It's very difficult to get black Foreign Service officers to join the organization. The reason, to be perfectly frank, is that several years ago, there was a court approved settlement that the State Department had with women who petitioned as a group of women complaining that the State

Department had been discriminatory against women in recruitment and promotion. The State Department has quite honorably tried to keep women and promote them as fast as possible to positions at all levels of the Foreign Service so that, in accordance with the settlement, 50% or better of officers at all levels are women. Because the State Department is doing that, the lesbians in the Foreign Service – Carol Laise, for example – have not had to worry about the effects of DS.

I think there is also something going on in DS. DS is mostly white males of mediocre educational background. I think that they feel threatened by white males who are gay. They don't feel threatened by lesbians who are gay. They don't want to get involved with blacks who happen to be gay.

That's the other group that really is not interested in enjoying a group like GLIFAA simply because they have nothing to worry about.

*Q: You're talking about people who have fallen into preferred groups, where there are special laws enacted, which make it a hell of a lot easier.*

SVEDA: For whatever reason, I think the lesbians are off the hook because the State Department wants to retain and promote women. They are doing a very good job at that. I think culturally that the DS officers never wanted to go after the lesbians. As far as the black Foreign Service officers go, I think the DS people perhaps don't feel threatened by them because most of the DS officers are not black and also because they realize it would lead to more trouble than it's worth. So, the people that they picked on are people like myself who are perhaps perceived as somehow foreign. Jan Krc was born in the Czech Republic. While I was born in New Jersey and my parents were born in New Jersey, I do have an Eastern or Central European family name. So, I guess I was an easier target than others might have been. Somehow I am regarded as not a proper representative for the United States of America by these people who speak with a mid-south accent.

*Q: Since I'm doing a certain amount of cultural social history while I'm at it, let me ask one other question. "Gays" stands for "males" and "lesbians" stands for "women." Do they in other places have really a united cause or do each sort of go its own way in society? What is your observation?*

SVEDA: I think you have to separate the advanced societies of Europe and Japan from the traditional societies. In countries such as the Netherlands, Sweden, or the rest of the Scandinavian countries, gay marriage is, in fact, legal. They recognize no problem with gay or lesbian Foreign Service officers. In fact, the State Department has had a problem with the Dutch embassy sending over a gay Foreign Service officer who was married legally to another male and the State Department has just simply not addressed the problem of a diplomatic visa. I forget exactly how they sidestepped that, but they just didn't want to deal with it. I know that the question has come up with the Netherlands. I think it's also come up with one or more of the Scandinavian embassies to the embarrassment of the people who deal with these things in the State Department.

*Q: It's a problem because you know damn well that Congress will jump all over anybody who approves one of these things.*

SVEDA: You are a consular officer. What do we do with multiple marriages in Muslim countries?

*Q: You don't give a visa to the person or you say, "Which wife is your wife?"*

SVEDA: What about diplomatic?

*Q: We don't give them. In other words, we give it to one wife and it's sort of "don't ask, don't tell," but we're not going to give a visa to somebody with four wives unless they might be companions. I'm sure we've had emirs who have come over with his wife and attendants.*

SVEDA: Right. I would think that under the Congress of Vienna treaty that people such as that or indeed gay or lesbian partners could be treated as members of the household.

*Q: I'm sure this is how it's done. You give an A2 visa or whatever it is.*

SVEDA: Number one wife gets an A1; number 2 wife gets an A2.

*Q: I remember instructing somebody who had two wives who was Jewish come in from Iraq. It was an old man. His brother had died and so, according to Jewish law, he had married his brother's wife. So, he had two wives, although nothing much was going on at that age. I just told his family and him, instructed them very, very carefully that when they went off to St. Louis, "She is your aunt; she's not your mother to the kids. This is your sister in law. Don't forget it." This is what a good consular officer does.*

SVEDA: Sure. About the gay and lesbian culture, just a thing on terminology, "gay" is very often used to include lesbians except when you're talking of them specifically. It's very much like the word "man" or "mankind" could include women unless you wish specifically to talk about women.

*Q: Russ, I want to thank you very much for this. Take care.*

*End of interview*