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

PHILIP C. BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Preface - 2012

At a Public Diplomacy Alumni Association luncheon in late 2011, a colleague asked me if I had done my oral history. I had to admit that I had not. In fact, I was not that familiar with the project. I went to the ADST website and was impressed by the collection of oral histories, including those done by many people that I had known and with whom I had served.

Soon after, my attention was drawn to the December 2011 issue of the Foreign Service Journal. Devoted almost entirely to the years of my second tour in the Soviet Union (1987-1990), it convinced me that I needed to stop procrastinating.

I sat down with Stu Kennedy for the first time on January 18, 2012. Before he turned on the tape recorder, I told him that if he was looking for someone who had spent the bulk of his career in senior policy positions, we could get by with one or two sessions.

But if he was interested in someone who had spent 20+ years overseas in a variety of posts and who could recollect a lot of unusual experiences, ranging from walking across the Tassili Plateau in southern Algeria to walking across Red Square in Moscow with Bob Hope, my hand was up.

Between January and June, 2012, I had 12 separate oral interviews (some 24 hours) with Stu. For every hour of conversation, I spent several hours preparing. This meant going through a journal that I have kept almost daily since 1972 and occasionally looking at folders full of mementos from those years. (I did not touch the myriad slides, photo albums or programs from virtually every cultural event I have attended.) The journal provided an enormous amount of raw material but also presented me with a challenge of organizing and structuring that I did not always meet to my satisfaction.

In July, 2012, I began editing some 300 pages of transcript. As I did, I was constantly reminded what a privilege it is to be able to take advantage of this project. I would never have done something like this on my own.

But as I went through the transcript, I had to be careful not to fall victim to one of my most serious weaknesses, i.e. making the perfect the enemy of the good. During the interviews, I was often talking off the top of my head and not for the printed page. I began to notice overused words and expressions. And I discovered that the beginning of one session would overlap the end of the previous, resulting in occasional repetition.

It has been no easy task cleaning up the syntax and punctuation, taking out words and occasionally entire paragraphs and relocating some portions simply for continuity. Even with this, the now-final product often reads like an oral interview. It is not a finely-polished piece of prose. It is not perfect!

All of the above notwithstanding, I am very pleased to have undertaken this project. It gets a monkey off my back. It reminds me of what an interesting and rewarding career

and what a supportive wife I had. Thanks to the Internet, it has allowed me to revisit some of the people I met and relive other experiences. And just in case someone should ever want to know something about me after I am not around, this memoir will be a good place to start.

Thanks to the ADST.

INTERVIEW

Background (1941-1965)

Q: Today is January 18, 2012. This is an interview with Philip C. Brown. What does the 'C' stand for?

BROWN: 'Chace', spelled 'C h a c e'. It's a family name.

Q: And you go by Phil?

BROWN: I do.

Q: Ok, we will start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

BROWN: I was born November 7th, 1941, exactly one month before Pearl Harbor, in Springfield, Massachusetts though my family lived in the nearby town of Chicopee, Massachusetts. I was the first child of Charles W. and Alice E. Brown.

Q: Let's get a feel of where the family came from. Your father's side, what do you know about them, his family history?

BROWN: My father's grandparents, James and Isabella Johnston Brown, emigrated to the United States, to Pittsburgh, in February, 1882. They were Protestants from Northern Ireland. There were six children (George, Jane (b. 1864), Maurice (b. 1866), Robert (b. 1868), Joe (b. 1869) and the youngest, William, born in 1871, who was my paternal grandfather.

Q: What were they up to?

BROWN: I honestly don't know. I have been to the town in County Down in Northern Ireland that they left but I don't know what motivated them. Isabella's parents (the Johnstons) were already in Pittsburgh. I don't know what my great grandfather's profession was. He was 61-years old when he arrived; early records list him as a janitor and later as a grocer and a clerk. All but my grandfather are buried in Homewood Cemetery in Pittsburgh. There were six children — five boys, one girl. Of those six children, my brother, sister and I are the only offspring in our generation so there aren't too many sources.

My paternal grandfather, William Brown, my father's father, attended Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, and became a Presbyterian minister. There are a lot of Presbyterians in western Pennsylvania and my father followed him in the Presbyterian ministry.

Q: Did your father go to theological school?

BROWN: He did. He was an only child (an older brother did not survive infancy). He was born August 24, 1912, in Clinton, Massachusetts, lived later in Providence, Rhode Island, and went to Geneva College near Pittsburgh. From there, he went to Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary which is now Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

A few years ago, based on the fact that my paternal grandfather was born in Ireland, I obtained an Irish passport. I was able to go back in the records, get my grandfather's birth certificate, marriage certificate, all the other documentation I needed to prove to the Irish Embassy that I had that link and I was issued an Irish passport. I have never made use of it but at least I can claim that I am a citizen of Ireland.

Q: I am thinking of Presbyterian Northern Ireland as very fundamentalist. Do you recall?

BROWN: I wouldn't call them fundamentalist; for me, that implies something else in today's world. Not fundamentalist but they were strict. We didn't have alcohol in the house; TV watching on Sunday was frowned on. My grandmother on my father's side was a member of the WCTU, the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

In his late years, my Grandfather Brown came to live with us. By now we were living in Washington, Pennsylvania. If there was an advertisement on television for beer, perhaps cigarettes, my brother and I were under instructions to turn the sound down. We were not prevented from watching television on Sunday but it wasn't encouraged.

Again, fundamentalist is a word I wouldn't use – we believed in evolution! -- but strict.

My father's mother, Clara Fisher, was born in Clinton, Massachusetts, the only child of Abial and Louisa Chace Fisher. That side of the family goes back many generations in Massachusetts. Grandmother Brown died in 1952 and Grandfather Brown in 1956. They are buried in Clinton.

Q: Let's take your mother's side of the family.

BROWN: My mother came from Cambridge, New York, a village north of Albany up near the Vermont border, a lovely part of the world. One part of the family was from the McGeoch family, Scotch-Irish. There is an extensive McGeoch family history that goes way back on both sides. Both my maternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother's family go way back in America.

Q: Do you know what they were up to?

BROWN: Farmers. My mother's father ran a small grocery store. Nothing high brow. They were not lawyers, doctors, business people. They were small town folk.

Q: Your mother, how much of an education did she have?

BROWN: High school. My mother was born June 24, 1915, the youngest of six children (Robert, Ruth, Mary, Arthur and Marguerite). Higher education for her simply wasn't affordable. She graduated from high school during the Depression so her formal education stopped at high school. She was always self-conscious about that. She compared herself unfavorably to other people, to my father in terms of formal education.

Neither of my mother's parents went to college, I am quite sure. She did have older siblings who went to college, who continued their education beyond high school, but in my mother's case, it ended at Cambridge High School in Cambridge, New York.

Q: How did you mother and father meet?

BROWN: My father's first church was in Coila, a little village next to Cambridge, New York. This was in the mid '30s and he met my mother and fell in love with her. They were married in Cambridge, New York on September 30, 1940.

Q: Were you the only child?

BROWN: No, I was the first child, born in 1941. My brother, Paul McWhorter Brown, was born on Christmas Day 1944 while we were still living in Massachusetts. My sister, Jannet Elizabeth Brown, was born ten years later, December 26, 1954, by which time we were living in Washington, Pennsylvania.

Q: What was your father up to in Massachusetts?

BROWN: Again a United Presbyterian church in Chicopee. He was a Presbyterian minister from the time of his graduation from seminary and ordination and his first church in Coila, near Cambridge, New York in the mid-'30s. He left his last church in Ben Avon, Pennsylvania, in 1978 but remained very active in church work in retirement.

Q: I would think in the family the Depression loomed rather large, didn't it? Are there stories or not?

BROWN: I don't recall many stories. One of my paternal grandfather's brothers, Maurice, lost a lot of money in the Depression in Pittsburgh. If I am correct, he had a number of stocks and investments. He was the one member of the family who, I won't say amassed a fortune but, had some resources.

Other than that and the references of my mother about not being able to go to college, I don't recall stories of the Depression.

Q: How long were you in Chicopee?

BROWN: Three plus years; I was born in 1941. We moved to Washington, Pennsylvania in October, 1945. My first conscious memories are of the Mayflower moving vans that delivered our furniture to our new home in Washington, PA, and our vacation in August,

1945. I was almost four years old and there was a parade in my mother's hometown, Cambridge, New York, to celebrate the end of the war. These are the first conscious memories I have.

When I went overseas, people would ask, "Where are you from?" And I would answer, "I am from New England." By that, I wanted to say something about myself.For me, it conveyed an image of that part of the United States that is full of intellect and thought and a certain pace, style of life. My roots are in New England or close to New England, upstate New York. My father was born there, I was born there.

I have special interest in my father's mother's father, my great grandfather Abial Fisher who was born, like my father, in Clinton, Massachusetts and served in the Civil War in the 36th Massachusetts regiment. I have nearly 100 letters that he wrote during the Civil War, and that provide a Massachusetts perspective on my background.

But with all of that, I really spent my formative years in western Pennsylvania from 1945 until I left for college.

Q: Let's talk about Pennsylvania. Where again was this?

BROWN: We were ten years in Washington, Pennsylvania. They call it 'Little Washington', Washington County, way down in the southwest corner, home of Washington and Jefferson College. We lived at 315 East Chestnut Street in East Washington. It was a big house. My mother was awestruck by it. She had never lived in such a large, brick house plus she was the minister's wife. That's something of a fishbowl.

I walked to school every day from first grade to eighth grade. There were in my class never more than 15 to 20 students. To this day I can remember the names of many of them. I remember the names of my teachers — Miss Iames in first grade, Miss Conger in second, Miss Borland in third, Miss McMurray in fourth, Mr. Boynton in fifth, Mrs. Fisher in sixth, Miss Rice in seventh and Mrs. Nichols in eighth. It was a very close knit community. My father could walk in the other direction to his church.

I mentioned Washington and Jefferson College because as a kid, it was fun to go to W&J football and basketball games. Washington was also, at one time, a center for manufacturing, glass manufacturing in particular.

When I was in ninth grade, 14 years old, we moved to Ben Avon, a close-in suburb of Pittsburgh. Washington, PA, is only 26 miles from downtown Pittsburgh but nevertheless, it was a driving trip. We'd go to baseball games but visiting Pittsburgh was special. With the move in 1956 to Ben Avon, we were much closer to the city. You could take the streetcar into Pittsburgh.

Q: I have talked to a lot of people who were 'PKs', preachers' kids and they usually got into trouble. How did you find being a 'PK'?

BROWN: Sorry to disappoint you. I don't have any of those special stories about getting in trouble or things that would have driven a minister crazy because he preached about it on Sunday and then his kid went out and violated it. Not that I was a goodie, goodie but I don't have any of those delicious stories.

I wasn't terribly self conscious about it. Some of my classmates went to my father's church but we got accustomed to it.

I was perhaps more conscious of it when we moved to Ben Avon because my high school from ninth to twelfth grade was on one side of Woodland Avenue and my father's church on the other side. So everybody knew that Phil's dad was the minister of that church. They got over it too. Some of them probably, when they first met me, thought gosh, your dad's the minister of that church over there. But we went beyond that. We became school friends and played softball together.

Q: Let's take first Little Washington. What was the ethnic mix or was there an ethnic mix?

BROWN: The neighborhood was ethnically white but there was an area behind us, easily accessible, where the 'colored kids' lived. One of my closest friends was a 'colored' boy named Charlie Duncan. He went to school with me from first grade on. When he was asked what his name was, he said, "H. C. Duncan."

The teacher said, "Well, we can't call you H. C." His name was Hershel Charles and he became known as Charlie Duncan. Charlie occasionally would spend the night at my house. We would walk home from school together and I think my parents took particular pride that I was walking with a 'colored' boy and that I had a 'Negro' friend.

Charlie lived in a ramshackle wooden house. It must have been a terrible fire trap. He had a mother and an uncle named Fletcher but no apparent father, younger brothers named Bert and Welcome and then another brother who was born later. The fact that I can so easily remember those names says something about how close a friend he was.

I tracked him down a few years ago. He was a highly-respected physician in Cleveland. When my daughter Sarah was living there, we went to a baseball game in Cleveland. Out of the blue, Charles called me in January, 2018, and we had a wonderful conversation, full of laughs and recollections. Ten days later, Charles died. After his death, I talked with his widow. Charles knew when he called that he was ill and had a short time to live.

With that exception and a couple others, my classmates were primarily white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. I have a photo of my eighth grade class with our teacher and everyone's name.

Q: When you weren't in school, what were the sports or amusements? What were you up to?

BROWN: Little League baseball. I played for the Indians. We had all the Major League names (it was 16 teams at the time) and I played with the Indians as an outfielder from ages 10, 11, 12.

I did pretty well as an 11-year old and the town newspaper, the Washington Reporter, would report on the teams as they got ready for the next season. One year, they wrote that the Indians' outfield of Phil Brown in left, Terry Sherrick in center and Sammy Parisi in right is "a manager's dream." Before the season was out, my batting average had slumped — I must have gone into a 12-year old slump — and the other two guys were playing different positions so it wasn't really a manger's dream.

One of the most memorable Christmas presents I ever received was a radio — a radio you plugged in and turned the dials. AM was much more important than FM and there was often static and other interference. But that radio was a constant companion for me. It was a vicarious means of traveling. Late at night I would fall asleep listening to either Fibber McGee and Molly, the Great Gildersleeve or one of those travel programs. I could hear radio stations in Detroit or KMOX in St. Louis where I could listen to a St. Louis Hawks basketball game.

We weren't doing a lot of traveling but I think vicariously, the idea of travel entered my brain at the time. To this day, I cannot get along without a radio – or radios – close by.

I also remember driving my mother crazy by taking magazines like National Geographic, clipping out coupons, filling in my name and address and receiving packets of travel material from all over the United States. The idea that it was free was wonderful; I could collect materials about Florida, California, places I had never visited.

You asked earlier about the Depression. I was never led to believe that, as a minister's kid, we were poor but I was also conscious that there were people who had a lot more money than we did. The term "jet setters" was used. There were certain things that were well beyond our means.

Today I love to ski. I was introduced to skiing much later on in my Foreign Service career. I was 36-years old. Growing up in western Pennsylvania, aside from the fact that the terrain didn't lend itself to skiing, skiing was like a Caribbean cruise. It was beyond our wildest dreams.

Every summer, in August, we would take the long, two-day drive to Cambridge, New York, where we would see my mother's family, my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We might stay on Hedges Lake near Cambridge or farther away at Lake George. Cambridge was a village of maybe 2,000 people so I felt like a big-city kid when visiting there. There were also summers when we vacationed at the Jersey shore but Cambridge, NY, was a constant.

Q: What about western Pennsylvania. What about sort of the coal miner culture and all that?

BROWN: I was intellectually conscious that coal mining was done in western Pennsylvania. In Washington, PA, there was still a commercial laundry down the street. It must have used coal in its furnace because my mother would run out in the back yard and pull down all the laundry off the line when the smoke started coming out of the plant and all that soot and whatever would settle on the clothes.

My father tells about living in Pittsburgh in the '30s when you would have to change your shirt twice a day. But other than that, I wasn't terribly conscious of it. I can't claim that I had coal miner friends or anything of the sort.

Q: Did your family fall politically anywhere?

BROWN: I am going to guess that my father was a Republican (when that meant something far from today) but not actively so. He probably walked a fine line and most of his congregants were probably more to the right. We had a U.S. Senator from Washington, PA. (Note: Edward Martin, U.S. Senator 1946-1958).

What I remember myself is that I became interested in politics and journalism. I enjoyed anything that had to do with politics, talking about it or broadcasting it or informing people. One of my earliest memories is the 1952 presidential election, Eisenhower versus Stevenson.

Adlai Stevenson's vice presidential candidate was a senator from Alabama named John Sparkman; he came to Washington, Pennsylvania and made a speech. I stood there and listened to John Sparkman speak. Obviously he didn't succeed because Eisenhower won the election.

I can also remember being on my little soapbox out in the backyard pretending to be either a spokesman or a journalist, I am not sure which, reporting on the Eisenhower and Nixon candidacy. I did become very interested in politics.

I also remember attentively listening and watching in 1952 to the conventions; back then, it really was decided on the convention floor with the delegate count. Alabama would cast so many votes for Eisenhower and so many votes for Kerr of Oklahoma and all that. Somehow I thought it was always going to be that way. I miss that horse race aspect of political conventions.

1956, the Democratic convention was in mid-August. We were at the Jersey shore on vacation. Adlai Stevenson had locked up the nomination but the vice presidential nomination was still up for grabs. I had a portable radio and my brother and I were listening to it. We walked into a restaurant and they told us we couldn't bring in the radio but when they realized we were listening to the contest for the vice presidential nomination which eventually was lost by John Kennedy, one of the few elections he lost,

they allowed us to come into the restaurant with our radio. People were actually interested in knowing what was going on.

Q: What about the outside world? The Cold War was going hot and heavy and Korea and all that. Did this grab your attention?

BROWN: I can recall the beginning of the Korean War but without any specific memories.

When we moved to Pittsburgh in early 1956, one of the first things I learned was that our neighbors, Tom and Ina Bole, had lost their son Frank in the Second World War in the Battle of the Bulge. They were extremely bitter about it, blamed Roosevelt for the loss of their son, and blamed Roosevelt for most everything. That was part of my political education. I would be straining to come up with other memories of the time. Of course, we all think of the nuclear drills — going under our desks — and that kind of thing.

Years later, after I had left home, I received a letter from my Mother telling me that our other next-door neighbor's son, Richard McCormick, had been killed in Vietnam. So we were bracketed by families that lost sons in war.

Q: You were in Pittsburgh from when to when?

BROWN: We moved there in January, 1956. I was a freshman in Avonworth High School. In 1959, I left to go off to college. I kept coming back to visit my parents through college and graduate school. My parents lived in the Pittsburgh area, through various stages of their life, until they died. Pittsburgh was my home year round until I graduated from high school in 1959.

Q: From your perspective what was Pittsburgh like?

BROWN: One was taught at that time about the transformation of Pittsburgh, from a smoky city to the Golden Triangle, a city remaking itself. I can recall the slag heaps along the Monongahela River. The steel plants would dump out the cinders, the slag, and at night, they would be glowing piles, very vivid memories of the steel industry.

We lived very close to the Ohio River. We frequently took visitors down to the river to see the barges passing through the locks. They often carried the raw materials used in Pittsburgh's industries or the products of these industries.

But we also knew it was a transition period from heavy industry to pollution control and ultimately to a focus on education, health care and the like.

I grew up a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball and a Pittsburgh Steelers football fan. The Steelers were a terrible team in the '40s. They became one of the premier franchises in the National Football League. I was not a Johnny-come-lately to the Steelers.

I also adored the Pirates. I vividly remember their 1960 World Series win against the Yankees. I have a ticket stub from game seven, arguably the most famous game in baseball history when Bill Mazeroski's home run ended game seven against the Yankees. By the time of their later World Series victories, I was overseas.

I also became an Arnie Palmer fan and in 1962, I went with a friend to Oakmont Country Club on a Sunday for the U.S. Open playoff between Arnie and the upstart Jack Nicklaus. I was very disappointed when Nicklaus won.

I mentioned an interest in journalism. In 1961, I got a summer job at the Pittsburgh Press, a Scripps Howard newspaper. I worked on the city desk and the editor was a man named Leo Koberlein. He gave me one of the best educations in the use of the English language that I ever heard. Aside from doing what all bottom-of-the-rung reporters do, obituary writing, I was occasionally sent out on reporting assignments.

One day, Mr. Koberlein sent me to the Pittsburgh Zoo. It had some new animal. Maybe I rode the animal, I can't recall. I came back and I wrote that it was "one of the most unique experiences of my life." Instead of calling me over, Mr. Koberlein came to my desk. He said to me that an experience is either unique or it's not unique. There are not degrees of uniqueness. Every time I hear someone talk about "the most unique restaurant" or whatever, I react. That was only one example in a wonderful education in the use of the English language he gave me.

Aside from that, I learned to write. I learned to write a journalistic article; put the five Ws in the first paragraph. Who, what, when, where, and why. I also learned to take initiative. There was an article one time in the morning paper, the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and Mr. Koberlein said, "Here Phil. We need to have our version of the story."

I could have simply rewritten it but I looked at a couple of names in the article, people at Penn State University, got on the phone and talked to them and came up with a new angle. They put my by-line on the story. Mr. Koberlein was very complimentary not only to me but to my father. It pleased my father to hear from Leo Koberlein that I had done well. Those two summers with the Pittsburgh Press were certainly part of my education.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

BROWN: I wish I could say yes and list all the books I read. I did my basic assigned reading but I can't develop the answer beyond that. I will just add that in my Christmas letter this year, one of those inevitable letters that you write to family and friends recounting all the wonderful things that happened in the past year, I concluded by saying that I don't read enough. To this day, I wish I could say I was more of a book reader.

One of my Foreign Service colleagues, a fellow named Jim Bradshaw, came up to me back in the 1970's and instead of saying, "How are you?" or "What's new?" said, "What are you reading?" I felt embarrassed that I couldn't cite a book because this man was

famous for reading a book a day. This has always been an area of self-criticism. I don't read enough now. I do read a lot of magazines and newspapers and some books.

Q: Up through high school, was there anything in world events, a country or area that particularly engaged you?

BROWN: If we could go to my college years, Africa became the answer to that question and that led to my Foreign Service experience.

Q: Was Pittsburgh in high school a different ethnic and cultural mix than when you were in little Washington?

BROWN: Slightly different ethnic and cultural mix. I lived in Ben Avon and there was Ben Avon Heights as well. We were a primarily Protestant, predominantly white community though there was the area literally under the streetcar bridge where a number of African Americans lived, including a family, last name Morris. That family produced a famous professional football player named Mercury Morris who set all sorts of records with the Miami Dolphins and of course, was part of our high school football team.

I went to Avonworth High School. The name Avonworth came from Ben Avon and Emsworth. Emsworth was the next suburb down the Ohio River. Emsworth in my mind had many more Catholic kids, including a parochial school, and there was also a perception that -- I can't remember which way it worked -- that the better, smarter Catholic kids went to the parochial school or the less competent Catholic kids went to the parochial school. I think the better Catholic kids came to the Avonworth and the lesser ones went to parochial school. I guess for the first time in my life, I was at least becoming conscious of Protestants and Catholics and a few African Americans.

I can't say the ethnic mix was much more complicated than that. There were no Jews to my knowledge. If there were, I didn't even think in those terms.

After I had been several years in the Foreign Service and had some experience in Eastern Europe, maybe I was serving in the Soviet Union, I drove home through the north side of Pittsburgh. I drove by the Slovak Savings and Loan Association and for the first time in my life I thought, "Oh, now I know what they were talking about."

Growing up, I knew there were Slovaks and Czechs and Hungarians and Poles. They worked in the coal mines. They had these long complicated names of football players. I wasn't really conscious of their ethnicity. You asked about coal mining. I wasn't conscious of those people in my neighborhood. But that reaction to Slovak Savings and Loan says to me how isolated I was at that time.

Jumping ahead, when I went to graduate school in Boston, I had a Jewish roommate; it was the first time I thought about Jews and their role in the United States. That I had a Jewish roommate was quite a surprise to me.

Q: Did the troubles in Northern Ireland affect you at all?

BROWN: No. Until I went to Northern Ireland a few years ago, I don't think I was I even brought face to face with the distinction between the Protestant north and the Catholic south. I used to say my family was Scotch-Irish and I never knew quite what that meant until I got up to the northeast corner of Northern Ireland. You could look over and see Scotland. I realized that Scotland was closer to Northern Ireland than that point in Northern Ireland was to Dublin. I began to understand what I meant by Scotch-Irish heritage.

You asked me about growing up in Pittsburgh. Aside from those two summers at the Pittsburgh Press, the previous two summers, 1959 and 1960, I had a job working at the Civic Light Opera in Pittsburgh. This was done adjacent to the Hill District, a big African-American neighborhood, and it took place under a tent. Along with several other fellows, I got a job with the local catering company (B&J) going out there selling soft drinks and hot dogs at the intermission of the evening performances. I quickly discovered how much I loved hearing that music — "South Pacific," "Most Happy Fellow," "Guys and Dolls." The shows would run for one or two weeks at a time. As much as possible, I would get away from our trailer where we were not selling Coke and hot dogs to get down and hear that music.

It had an impact on me. To this day, I love light opera and grand opera. I was also fortunate enough in grade school to have enough of a music education that I could read music and sing a bit. So music is a central part of my life and a lot of it began right there with those summer jobs at the Civic Light Opera and of course with the musical education in grammar school.

At the end of summer, 1961, I went to New York City and saw my first Broadway show — "Camelot" with Robert Goulet and Julie Andrews. I bought the record and I must have driven my parents crazy playing it, constantly singing the songs of "Camelot," which of course later on became an icon.

During that same visit, I went to Yankee Stadium for a doubleheader (back in the days when they played doubleheaders) between the Yankees and the Cleveland Indians. This was the year that Mantle and Maris were both vying to break Babe Ruth's home run record. On this day, September 11, 1961, only one of them hit a home run but another event made it memorable. This Indians' center fielder was a flamboyant player named Jimmy Piersall and during the game, a fan came onto the field and ran towards Piersall as if to attack him. Mantle was on second base and when he saw what was happening, he raced to Piersall's defense. Piersall may have been on the other team but Mantle didn't want anybody coming onto the field, especially not onto center field. I still have newspaper clippings from the game. The New York press had a field day with the event.

Q: In high school what were your favorite and least favorite courses?

BROWN: It was pretty clear I was not into sciences. We had a new science every year; biology, chemistry, physics. I think botany was included in biology but that was not going to be my long suit. I dutifully went through the classes but I did not distinguish myself.

I actually did pretty well in math; I liked math. I think without knowing it, I liked a world in which there were absolute answers. There are clear-cut formulas and answers.

I wasn't strong in literature but I was good in English language, in the written word and whatever passed for political science, social studies we must have called it.

We had a teacher in about tenth grade who taught us a lot about the United Nations, so much so that she incited the antipathy of some right wing, John Birch, anti-UN groups. Poor Miss Clark. She was a very dedicated teacher of social sciences and put a lot of emphasis on the United Nations and actually believed in the United Nations.

I also learned the basics of music — the scales, how to read music — and sang in the concert choir. Bill Keister was the teacher. Little did I know at the time how valuable those music fundamentals would be later in life.

Probably the most influential teacher was a man named Benjamin Bast. He was a product of the Catholic schools of Pittsburgh. He got us involved in forensics club and weekend after weekend, my classmates and I would go to forensics competition with other schools.

One of the competitions was debate and you and your partner would go up against two people from another school. My partner was often Ray Hodil, the smartest guy in the class. You had to be prepared to argue both the pro and the con of a given issue. It was good training in the importance of public speaking. Benjamin Bast was a very important influence on me.

Q: You graduated from high school when?

BROWN: 1959. I had been elected president of my senior class to the surprise of my parents because we didn't come to the school until half way through the ninth grade.

The school had something called assembly club. It was a student group that would try to plan weekly or bi-weekly programs, bring in speakers and that kind of thing. I was nominated for that in 11th grade and lost what was essentially a popularity contest to a well-liked classmate. I was disappointed but it meant that the next fall, I was elected senior class president. Maybe I got the sympathy vote or something.

Come June of 1959, at graduation, I gave the senior class speech. It pleased my parents. I was a parent pleaser. I was the first child. Nothing gave me more satisfaction than to give my parents satisfaction.

Q: Where were you pointed? I assume by this time it was assumed you would go to college?

BROWN: Yes. This was a time where in my orderly world, one stage of life naturally led to the next stage. I always say that people who are only six to ten years younger than I am came of age in a world that was 25 years changed from the world that I grew up in. The late 60's changed everything.

So I was accepted at the College of Wooster, Ohio, not coincidentally a Presbyterian school that gave scholarships to the sons and daughters of Presbyterian ministers. It was a three-hour drive from my home to the farmlands of Ohio, Amish country, west of Akron. A very fine school with an esteemed president, Howard Lowry, and a very fine faculty. To this day, look at any listing of excellent liberal arts co-educational schools in the United States. Wooster is high among them.

Q: What was it like? What was your impression when you went there?

BROWN: It was the first time I had been away from home. I had a box that I used to send my laundry back to my mother. Off would go my dirty laundry and a couple of days later it would come back clean. I was in a dormitory, Douglas Hall, with two roommates, a single bed and a bunk bed but one of those roommates didn't last for very long so there were really only two of us. I was frustrated because fluorescent lights in the bathroom would create a terrible static on my radio and I couldn't hear it very well.

Over the course of four years I received a quality liberal arts education. Freshmen had a required course called Introduction to Liberal Studies. It was divided into four quarters. The entire faculty participated so you might have for the first quarter the math teacher, the second quarter you'd have an English teacher, the third quarter you'd have a chemistry teacher, the fourth quarter you might have a French teacher but they were all teaching this broad general introduction to liberal studies.

I didn't fully appreciate it at the time but in retirement, I have often commented that I now understand the advantages of a liberal arts education; there are very few subjects, ranging from architecture to history to geology that don't at least have some interest for me. I feel as though a liberal arts education gave me a very wide exposure.

The sciences were not my long suit but the science course that I took in college was geology. I don't retain much of it but every time I see stratified rock, whether it be in the Grand Canyon or the middle of the Sahara Desert, I think about what I know about that from the college course in geology.

It was a very solid, quality education. It was based on two semesters and of course, the first semester did not end until exams in January so you came home for Christmas vacation with all those final exams hanging over your head or papers or whatever. What a torture that was.

I took a lot of courses in political science with the same professor, Gordon Shull, and he always gave me an A. I guess I probably merited the A but it certainly did bring up my grade point average. You had to take required courses in religion — Old Testament, New Testament — and I probably should have hidden my grades from my dad on those because I didn't do particularly well.

Q: You came from a very solid religious background; did you find yourself questioning when you got into college?

BROWN: I probably did but it was not a conscious memory. I wasn't one who went completely the other way. Our campus was dry. You were not allowed to drink beer on campus. You had to go off campus. I didn't go off campus to drink beer. I was still respectful of my father and grandfather. There were enough ministers' kids there that you weren't singled out as one. After the initial smile or whatever, that wasn't a subject.

We had the required religion class. We not only had that but we had chapel four days a week. This wasn't a religious assembly per se but four days a week the entire student body gathered in the chapel for a talk; it might have even been preceded by a hymn but I am not sure of that. It was required. Attendance was taken. It was an important and valuable component.

I look at my alumni magazines these days and they are walks down memory lane. They talk about the year in which chapel was no longer obligatory and how attendance was taken; for those of us who went there during that era, it is still a memory.

I am and was a sports fan.I became the statistician of the college football team. I wrote sports for the college newspaper and eventually became the editor of the college newspaper, the Wooster Voice. Those are vivid memories of college.

In our senior year, we had to write an independent study paper, a senior thesis. Somewhere along the line, I discovered nearly 100 letters written by Abial Fisher, my father's mother's father during his two plus, almost three years in the Civil War with the 36th Massachusetts Regiment. My college years, 1959 to 1963, were the centennial of the Civil War and for my senior thesis, I transcribed the letters and recreated Abial Fisher's Civil War experience. It was fascinating.

In the summer of 1962, I took these letters with me to my work at the Pittsburgh Press newspaper. The second summer, I was on the evening shift. It was a little less active and I would sit there and type 'Dear Mother' or 'Dear Susie, Today we marched 16 miles to such and such'. More recently, a neighbor retyped the letters so they are in digital form.

I have also scanned my senior thesis and the letters themselves, the originals, are in a safe deposit box and in remarkably good condition. They certainly won't be lost after me.

Q: Where did he serve?

BROWN: He left Boston by ship and landed at the Naval Yard in Washington, DC. They marched north through Maryland (not far from where I now live). His unit was too late, fortunately for my sake, for the Battle of Antietam of 1862 and for the Battle of Fredericksburg later that same year.

Q: Which were two slaughters.

BROWN: Two slaughterhouses. By 1863 and Gettysburg, he had travelled down the Mississippi River to near Vicksburg. Vicksburg was more of a siege than a battle. In 1864 they were back up in this part of the world and after some battles with ill health, he was wounded in the siege of Petersburg, south of Richmond, the summer of 1864. Using his letters and regimental history, I have been able to stand on the spot outside Petersburg where I can imagine he was struck by a sniper. He went into a hospital and returned to Clinton, Massachusetts, after about two years service.

In a way it is a little frustrating because my great-grandfather didn't write that the battle raged and we ducked and all that kind of thing. On the other hand if he had been in that kind of frontline combat situation, perhaps he wouldn't have lasted as long as he did.

I have been fortunate enough to visit almost all the spots he was in. I have driven up through the hills of Maryland where he hiked. I have been down to Petersburg and even to Vicksburg. I haven't been to the areas of Kentucky where they were. It is certainly part of my heritage.

Along with my brother and sister, we are the only descendants at our generation of that man and neither my brother nor my sister have children so my two daughters and my five grandchildren are now the only descendants of Abial Fisher.

Q: This sort of overlaps high school and college. In your area what were the dating situations?

BROWN: I didn't date very much. It wasn't the fact of girls' dormitory and the boys' dormitory; I certainly had my eye on a lot of girls. It was a personal self-confidence issue. I was never good at dancing and I felt self-conscious about that. To this day, if I go to a wedding or celebration and it comes time to dance, I wish that somewhere along the line, I had learned to enjoy dancing. Now my grandchildren go out and dance and everyone focuses attention on them. It was purely a self-confidence thing. I had occasional dates but I didn't have a lot of serious steady girlfriends.

Freshman girls had to be in the dormitory, I think, by 9 o'clock at night. It was a fairly strict code. But that wasn't the impact on me.

Q: An election that really caught young people at the time was the 1960 Kennedy versus Nixon. Did this engage you?

BROWN: Very definitely, yes. I had good friends who were respectively heads of Young Republicans and Young Democrats. I was into politics. I remember the election of 1960 very vividly. I was 18 on Election Day 1960 but at that time, you had to be 21 to vote so I did not get a chance to vote for JFK.

Moving ahead and thinking about my decision to go into the Foreign Service, my interest in international affairs, I call myself a product of the Kennedy era. I am not quite sure I idealized him then though I did after November 22, 1963 but he was very definitely my inspiration.

I have one specific political memory from that time and that goes back to the fall of 1962. It involved Sherman Adams who was Chief of Staff in the Eisenhower administration.

He was from New Hampshire and he was a man of great rectitude but he got caught up in something called the 'Vicuna coat scandal' and he had to retire under a cloud. He went back to New Hampshire. He wouldn't speak to anybody but by some means, the College of Wooster invited Sherman Adams to come and speak. He was to be there for six weeks in a Dialogue in Politics program. One of the conditions was it would be off the record. No journalists would be allowed in and so Sherman Adams did come.

I did interview Mr. Adams after the November, 1962, election and wrote at least one story for the college paper, The Wooster Voice, on the tenth anniversary of President Eisenhower's election and the naming of Sherman Adams as Chief of Staff. I described him as both "abrupt" on the one hand and "personable" and "cordial" on the other.

Even before this, a New York Times journalist named Gay Talese came to Wooster hoping to cover Sherman Adams, even though Adams had these set these particular conditions. Talese located me because by then I was editor of the college paper and I think he intended to use me as a way of interviewing Sherman Adams but it was to no avail. It did not work.

At exactly that time, the Cuban missile crisis came, the Kennedy speech, which we watched on a black and white television in the dormitory so Talese gave up trying to cover Sherman Adams and said, in effect, "I have a new angle I am going to pursue. I want to interview these Amish people." We got into his bright red rental car and went to an Amish farm and knocked on the door. The story I know he wanted to write was: "The world is on the brink of nuclear catastrophe. The missiles are primed to strike America but out here the Amish people know nothing about this. They go about their lives simply as they have for hundreds of years, unaware of the pending catastrophe."

I have searched The New York Times and I haven't been able to find the story but I think that is the gist of what he wanted to write. I recounted this to Professor Schreiber, the German professor at the college who knew the Amish people very well. He wrote books about the Amish and he laughed and said, "Of course they knew what was going on. The Amish people do not live with their head in the sand or behind a plow. They were aware; they just didn't want to share it with some New York Times journalist in a fancy red car."

So Talese went back to New York. I don't think he had a very good story about Sherman Adams or about the Amish and the Cuban missile crisis. Again, that is sort of a long way of saying one cannot fail to remember October 1962 and the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: Then you graduated in 1963?

BROWN: 1963. I had been partly influenced by the Kennedy Peace Corps idea. I went abroad for the first time in my life for nine weeks during the summer of 1963 on a program called Operation Crossroads Africa, the brainchild of a New York African-American pastor named Dr. James Robinson. It sent young, idealistic kids off to Africa for a summer, nine weeks of volunteer work.

We assembled in New Jersey, got our training and then took an Air France charter plane from New York and landed in Dakar. Little did I know at the time that I would be coming back to Dakar a few years later in the Foreign Service. We headed on down the coast. We spent some orientation time outside Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Our smaller sub-group flew on to Lagos, Nigeria, and from there, we took a mammy wagon to Ibadan, the capital of the western region. Then we went to a little village called Ifaki where we assembled mud bricks. We took mud and water, shaped them into bricks, piled them up on top of one another and called it a school. That was part of the summer.

We went next to what was then becoming the Midwest region. They had had a referendum, created a Midwest region with the capital at Benin, one of the historic cities of Nigeria. We were in a little village called Uwessan where we did the same thing. We assembled mud bricks and called it a school.

It was an eye-opening experience for me. There were about a dozen of us, evenly divided between young men and young women, a couple of African-Americans in the group. A professor, Roy Craig, and his wife Jane from Texas were our leaders. Our Nigerian leader was a fellow named Dejo. It was the first time in my life I had been outside the United States. I took a lot of pictures. I was even so daring as to package them up and mail the film from some little post office in Nigeria to my father. They came through. I still have the slides from that summer. In fact, I have an entire folder with letters, a diary, programs, even a booklet on "Yoruba Cookery."

I missed two major events of that summer. One was the March on Washington, August of 1963. The other was the birth of the Kennedy child, the son who survived for two or three days before succumbing. I returned at the end of the summer to my home in Pittsburgh before going off to graduate school.

Q: What was your impression of Nigeria?

BROWN: I came back very idealistic, very impressed. It was a summer where you were a little nervous about the water you drank and a little reluctant to go to that man-made outhouse. We slept on straw mattresses in schools and put up with mosquitoes and other

inconveniences. I was probably counting the days until I could return to the comforts of home but nevertheless, what I told people was this was a wonderful experience and that we met these wonderfully kind people.

We were in simple villages. When the sun went down, it was pitch dark. One night, we heard a loud clamor in the village. We went to see what was going on. It turned out a policeman from Lagos had come back to celebrate his father who had died. His duty was to organize a big party with lots of palm wine and firing of guns in the air. I was having experiences, such as going in dugout canoes on the Niger River, that were very new for me.

One of the things we were supposed to do on our return, part of our commitment for having this experience, was to make a number of speeches so you would look for occasions to speak to a church or school or community groups. The message I brought back was independence had come to Africa and this was certainly going to be the flowering of wonderfully vibrant countries. I don't share all that idealism today but that was how I felt at the time.

When I joined the Foreign Service, I said I would be interested in serving in Africa. You can imagine the door was wide open.

Q: Looking back on it, how did the Nigerians react to a bunch of Americans, young Americans bouncing in there?

BROWN: They were very welcoming. These were small villages. We may exaggerate but I don't think they had seen many white people before and they had not seen very many young American college kids full of idealism so they were very welcoming. They probably hoped to benefit from it in any way possible and that meant that when we left, any scrap of paper or anything we left behind they grabbed up as potentially valuable. They danced and sang for us and did all those wonderful African things. We spent very little time in Lagos which was a very different environment.

The things you associate with Africa today, ranging from AIDS to the proliferation of weapons to drugs, were not on our minds at the time. They were not concerns.

At one point that summer, I had some little ailment or illness so I went to a local doctor and he prescribed a couple of things for me. I gargled and drank them and overcame my illness. I survived ill health which was probably the uppermost concern on anybody's mind, much more so than personal safety.

At the end of the summer, we boarded the train in Enugu, the capital of the eastern region, and took it all the way to Kano, the capital of the northern region. There of course, we saw a totally different environment from the tropical rain forest of the south; we were now in the arid north and the Muslim part of the country.

I remember going up in a tall structure in Kano and as far as you could see, there were mud buildings and minarets. Either on the train going from Enugu to Kano or on the train trip coming back from Kano, we had a locomotive that burned coal. The windows in our cabin were open for cooling. When I awoke in the morning, you could see the outline on my sheet of where I had slept during the night. It was clean and everything around it was covered with smoke from the coal-fired engine.

Q: Had you graduated from college?

BROWN: This was the summer after my senior year in college. I had already been admitted to the Fletcher School, Medford, Mass, Tufts University. I knew even in my senior year in college that I would go to graduate school. In my orderly world, everything built on top of the previous stage. Once you finished high school you went to college. When you finished college, you were going to go to graduate school. I applied to several graduate schools of international affairs -- Syracuse, Columbia, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, and Fletcher. I was not admitted to SAIS and I was keenly disappointed. I thought I would never get to Washington, DC. It was little consolation at the time that I was accepted by the Fletcher School until people began to explain to me that it was a well thought of graduate school and that Boston was a fine place. So off I headed in the fall of 1963 to the Fletcher School where I would spend two years.

Q: Fletcher is on the campus of Tufts University. What was it like then?

BROWN: Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy on the campus of Tufts University; the letterhead said 'Tufts University, administered in cooperation with Harvard'. It was another eye opening experience for me.

My Wooster experience represented good quality education but it was not ethnically diverse. We had any number of African-Americans and international students but it wasn't a world opening experience to me. Fletcher had close to a 40% foreign student body and a diversity that I did not encounter at Wooster.

My roommate, Richard Berger, was Jewish and from Long Island. The first question he asked me when he learned I had grown up in Pittsburgh was, "Is this the first time you have been east?" For him anything west of the Hudson River, certainly on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains, could not be considered east.

I said, "Richard, I lived all my life in the east." As far as I was concerned, Pittsburgh was part of the world that included New York and Boston and Philadelphia. That was just one example of a different perspective.

1963 was the heart of the civil rights movement. Our U-shaped dormitory, Blakely Hall, had eight different entrances, each with three living levels, around a courtyard. My entrance and my floor included a fellow who had graduated from Sewanee University in Tennessee and another who had graduated from Emory College in Georgia. Both these

fine guys represented the views of the south. We were all fairly uncompromising. We were going to talk about civil rights from our own particular perspectives. They were anything but racists but they were certainly going to defend the honor of the south.

We also had a student in our unit from Liberia, Lami Kawah by name. To have a Liberian perspective added greatly to our discussions. Lami became a very close friend and was an usher in our wedding. He later served as Liberian Ambassador to the UN before settling in California.

Fletcher was much more than a school, an educational institution; it was a community. After hours we played sports together and we partied together. There was a lovely young woman who walked past the dormitory every day because she was studying for a master's degree in education. She dated an awful lot of guys before I felt confident enough late in the school year to ask her for a date. She became my wife.

I have spoken of my interest in music. Small groups of us would go on Friday afternoons to performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. They were very low cost with special rates for students. I was there on Friday afternoon, November 22, 1963. They had just completed the first work on the program when conductor Erich Leinsdorf came on stage and said we have a press report "that the president of the United States has been the victim of an assassination."

We all gasped. The orchestra was handed the second movement of Beethoven's third symphony, the funeral portion of the Eroica Symphony. I will never hear that symphony or that movement without thinking of that moment, the first news we had of the Kennedy assassination.

After that point, my friends and I left the concert and we all went back to the Fletcher dormitory and watched the news nonstop on television that weekend. On Sunday morning, several students went with me to services at Harvard Memorial Church.

Fletcher was not only a much more diverse student body than anything I had been exposed to in college. It also had excellent professors whose names I still recall — Leo Gross, Ruhl Bartlett and John Spencer. The dean during my first year was a man named Robert Stuart. He was replaced in my second year by a retired Foreign Service officer, Edmund Gullion.

Dean Gullion had been Ambassador to Congo and early on, he asked how many of us were thinking of a career in the Foreign Service. It wasn't uppermost in my mind; I didn't ever want to exaggerate. My interest was still in journalism so I didn't hold up my hand which meant I missed a free dinner at Dean Gullion's house. Those people who held up their hand and said they were interested in the Foreign Service were invited for dinner. He was dismayed at how few people were interested in the Foreign Service. Even at that time, the job possibilities in the international sphere were expanding to include World Bank, journalism, business, etc. One of Dean Gullion's ambitions was to encourage more people to think of a career in the Foreign Service.

I should mention that Fletcher students had cross-registration privileges at Harvard so I took a course on Nationalism by Professor Rupert Emerson, a scholar on the subject. I received an "A" for my efforts which allows me to claim I have a "straight A average" at Harvard.

So Fletcher represented two years of high quality, traditional classroom education, lectures and seminars. There wasn't a lot of field work. I wrote a master's thesis on Nigeria and on its economic development plan which was not a distinguished piece of scholarship. It just kind of talked about how Nigeria thought it would achieve economic development in various spheres.

The first year in the dormitory was really a shaping experience because you were not only in the classroom with people but 24 hours a day you were together.

The second year, I was off campus in a rented place at 865 Somerville Avenue close to Cambridge. During that second year, I decided to take the Foreign Service exam. I had colleagues and classmates, who were dead set on the Foreign Service. I remember one fellow in particular who knew from the day he was toilet-trained that he wanted to go into the Foreign Service.

The Foreign Service wasn't my first ambition. During the course of that year, following an interview in Boston, I had been invited to visit the NBC affiliate in Seattle, a possible job in journalism but I took the Foreign Service exam because it was free and I had nothing to lose. Given my interest in journalism, I checked the box for USIA but the exam was the same for both State and USIA candidates.

From my college years, I had owned a 1953 Buick Special, a big tank of a car. This was one of these Boston winter mornings where we had an overnight freezing rain and the streets were slick as could be. I wasn't more than a couple of blocks from the house, I hit the brakes and my Buick slid right into another car, doing considerable damage to the rear bumper of that car but little damage to my car. I left my name on the windshield, went off and took the Foreign Service exam. I wasn't nervous. I wasn't under a lot of pressure. In fact, I was probably thinking more about the damage to the front bumper of my 1953 Buick. But I passed the exam and then subsequently took the oral exam which led to my Foreign Service career.

Q: When you took the Foreign Service exam, do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

BROWN: No. What I recall is that it was similar to the graduate record exam and other types of aptitude tests that you took at the time. There was not any essay requirement. It was more fill in the blanks, more like the English and math portions of a graduate record exam, the aptitude test. I was pretty test savvy at the time.

Q: Where did you take the oral exam?

BROWN: In Boston with a panel of three and I don't recall their names or much about it. I do recall one specific thing. We were talking about USIA Foreign Service and about speakers and they asked me, who you might want to invite to come abroad. They threw a name at me and asked me, "Would you think of inviting this particular individual?" Rather than admitting I didn't know who the individual was I said, "Well, yes."

Of course, I learned afterwards when they told me the results of the exam that this person was "anti-American" and that the message, they didn't have to say it, was if you are going to represent the United States in the Foreign Service, you certainly don't want to bring out people who are anti-American.

I think I was told that only two of the three panel members voted for me but that was enough to get me over the hurdle and so I would go on to the next stage.

Q: Tell me about your wife?

BROWN: When I was growing up in western Pennsylvania, Roberta Kaesemeyer, better known as Bobbi, was growing up in eastern Pennsylvania, near Bethlehem, where she was born. Her father was not with Bethlehem Steel. He was a businessman whose company, Fuller Company, did a lot of work with Bethlehem Steel. She also lived for several years in Western Springs, Illinois, outside Chicago when her father's business took them there. From there, they returned to Emmaus, Pennsylvania. The schools there were not very good and Bobbi's parents sent her to a Quaker boarding school, Westtown, for high school. More on Westtown later.

Like me, Bobbi was the oldest of three children; she is one year older than I am. She was born in 1940. Like me, she had a younger brother (Tom) and a younger sister (Paula). Like me, she went to college in Ohio. She went to Oberlin and graduated in 1962; I went to Wooster and graduated in 1963. It is not inconceivable that our paths crossed during those years but we were not aware of it.

Bobbi's family was Moravian. That is a Protestant Episcopal denomination that has many members around Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. If you want wonderful music or a special Christmas or Easter service, go to Bethlehem's Central Moravian Church.

While I was spending my senior year in college, Bobbi was at a Moravian orphanage in Kwethluk, Alaska, way up in the tundra where she tended to orphan Eskimo kids. She has her own collection of memories from that experience.

She was accepted for graduate school in education at Columbia and at Tufts University. She opted for Tufts. So we arrived on the campus of Tufts University at the same time, fall 1963. I was at Fletcher; she was walking past our dormitory from the apartment house she lived to her classes on the Tufts campus. She was a very attractive young woman with long blond hair. Not many of the guys missed her. She was frequently asked for dates by Fletcher students, eventually by me.

She spent 1964-1965 teaching in a private school in Abington, Pennsylvania. We became engaged over the Christmas holidays (while she was recovering from knee surgery) and we were married in Bethlehem on July 10, 1965.

I received my Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from Fletcher in 1965. Between my two years at Fletcher, the summer of 1964, I applied for and got a summer internship at the Voice of America. It reflected my interest in journalism.

So I came to Washington to live for the first time. I lived on Arlington Ridge Road in north Arlington and took the bus to the Voice of America building on Independence Avenue. (For reflections on my ties to VOA over the years, see Addendum 1).

I worked on the Africa desk of the newsroom writing news copy for their four times a day news broadcasts. This was one summer after I had been in Nigeria, there was a lot of news emanating from Africa and VOA was broadcasting in French, English and multiple other languages to Africa. So I was tearing copy off the news wire and other sources and rewriting it for the broadcasts.

Q: What was your impression of the Voice of America, the part you were dealing with?

BROWN: I loved it. It was sort of miniature United Nations. You had all these different language services and they hired people from those countries.

Curiously, on the Africa desk, several of the people were Jewish -- Moses Than, Frank Feinberg, etc. On one particular Jewish holiday, I came in to find I was the virtual chief of the Africa desk of the newsroom. I could hardly find time to have lunch and also write all the news broadcasts.

Summer interns were invited maybe once every two weeks to a hotel ballroom where someone from the administration would speak. One of the speakers was Vice President Hubert Humphrey. What an inspirational speaker, what a liberal in the best sense of the word, what a warrior for good causes. That was certainly part of my idealism, part of my formation.

Meanwhile, having passed the exams, I was accepted into the Foreign Service but I didn't have a date to report. I had a brief (maybe one week) job with one of those left-wing student organizations, Students for a Democratic Society perhaps. I quickly found myself uncomfortable with them, not so much politically but because I was now married and wanted to prove to my businessman father-in-law that I was going to take good care of his daughter and earn a good living which I wasn't going to do with Students for a Democratic Society.

I contacted the Voice of America and sure enough, they were happy to have me return so I found myself by the summer of 1965 back on the Africa desk of the newsroom. The great thing about it was they told me I could stay there as long as I wanted, right up to the

Friday before I would begin my Foreign Service career. So Bobbi and I packed our car and found a one-bedroom at the Buckingham Apartments, North George Mason Drive in Arlington.

Washington, DC (1965-1966)

Soon after moving to Washington, I was invited to join the Foreign Service in September of 1965 and was about to accept until someone pointed out that if I waited until I was 24 years old with a Master's degree, I would come in not as an FSIO-8, the bottom of the rung, but as a 7. I wouldn't turn 24 until November so I asked if I could postpone my Foreign Service appointment until December, 1965. As a consequence, I came in as a 7. I always thought that helped me a little bit along the promotion process, coming in one grade above what I originally expected.

In preparing for these conversations, I found that I had retained a lot of papers and notes pertaining to my life experience. That includes a letter dated September 8, 1965, informing me of my appointment as a Foreign Service Officer, Class 7, at a salary of $7,010 per annum, quite a generous salary at that time.

I was invited to report for duty on Thursday, December 9, 1965. I have a picture of my A-100 Foreign Service class taken on December 9, 1965 at the Foreign Service Institute at the Arlington Towers in Rosslyn.

Along with our supervisor, Alex Davit, there were 26 of us, 25 white males and one woman. The woman was Jane Whitney. I don't think she stayed in the Foreign Service for very long. Of the 26, five were USIA Foreign Service and 21 were State.

I can say immodestly that of the five USIA Foreign Service officers, I had by far the most distinguished career. I don't think any of them stayed beyond one year. One fellow had Spanish and Portuguese and got Vietnam as his first assignment; that was the end of his Foreign Service career. Another may have gone to Iran. Two others never went overseas. I was the only one who stayed in USIA beyond one year.

I didn't necessarily think at the time that this was going to be a 30-year career. I tell people when we talk about pensions that on December 9th, 1965 the word pension was not part of my vocabulary or part of my thinking. I had no idea that after 30 years, I would be able to retire with a comfortable pension and that it would give me the comfortable lifestyle I have today.

I came in motivated by the concept of public service. I was a product of the Kennedy era. I wasn't a Peace Corps volunteer but I had been a summer volunteer. I knew the part of the world where I wanted to serve and that was the word we used, "serve." It wasn't just a term; it was something people really meant. Public service was the uppermost thought in my mind when I joined the Foreign Service.

I have an affidavit that I signed on December 9, 1965 affirming that I would support and defend the Constitution. I also swore that I was neither a Communist nor a Fascist and had no intention of striking against the federal government.

Five months later, May of 1966, I went through the same process and by that time I was a Foreign Service officer of class 7, consular officer and secretary in the diplomatic service. I never did any consular work.

The A-100 basic officer training course was pretty straight forward. We had the normal introductory and welcoming sessions, introduction to government. I recall one field trip. We went to the inner harbor in Baltimore and visited McCormick, the spice company. We toured their facility with the idea that this is something that a Foreign Service officer might do overseas. To this day I can remember those delightful smells. I had no idea at the time that McCormick was manufacturing spices in Baltimore.

There were a few special programs for USIA types, perhaps one day a week. Our headquarters building was 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. We were very proud of that address, even if many of the offices were at 1750 or in another building on New York Avenue. "1776" had a special ring.

Early on, we were invited to indicate where we would like to serve. I said clearly I would like to serve in Africa. I am sure the response back then was the same as it is today; we are looking for people to serve in Africa.

USIA people were given their assignments separately but I recall someone standing in front of the room, reading off names and telling people where they had been assigned; this was a gut-wrenching experience for some people.

I was assigned to Dakar, Senegal. There was a tradition of voting who had the worst assignment and who had the best. The majority opinion was that the worst assignment was Blantyre, Malawi and the best was Paris. The lucky guy who was assigned to Paris had to buy a bottle of champagne for the poor guy who was going to Malawi.

I was in the minority, a contrarian. I felt then and I would feel the same way today that it was exactly 180 degrees opposite the truth. The best assignment at that point in your life is to a small, out of the way post where the stakes are not very high, where you know the entire gamut of embassy operations, you are a big fish in a little sea and you can learn. The worst assignment is some mammoth institution in Western Europe, Tokyo or similar.

But it was a while before I went to Dakar. After the A-100 class, I went into French language training. I had rudimentary French from high school and college but I needed the intense Foreign Service experience. The course lasted 16 weeks with a new teacher every four weeks. I struggled, feeling I would never get the language, followed by those little "ah ha" moments when you realize you are making progress. I came out with a 3/3.

By now, Bobbi was five months pregnant and I asked if I could delay going overseas. USIA was extremely accommodating and they assigned me temporarily to the African Area Office. I went to that office around May or June and worked there over the summer. It was a very good experience. I got to know some of the people in the area office. The office director, a man named Mark Lewis, had a fiery temper and I laid low when he

exploded. But I got to know how things operated in the area office before I went overseas.

At that time, the entire U.S. government was being told to implement something called PPBS, 'Planning, Programming Budget System.' It was a matrix system that Secretary McNamara introduced to the Defense Department. We were going to try to make government operate like a business and we were going to match activities to resources. You were going to evaluate what was valuable and what wasn't and how much money you were spending, etcetera. So in the area office I heard a lot about PPBS.

Our daughter Sarah was born on September 25, 1966, in the now demolished George Washington University Hospital on Washington Circle. It was now time for me to go overseas. So on October 25, 1966, we packed the little Chevrolet that Bobbi had brought to our marriage and drove to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where Bobbi's parents lived. She lived there for six weeks before coming to Dakar.

I went to Pittsburgh to say goodbye to my parents. I didn't think about it at the time but I would not see or talk to my parents for almost two years. That was pretty much the case when you were going to Africa in those times. My parents didn't travel and we didn't make international phone calls so I would not see or talk to them for another two years, until June of 1968. But I did write letters and as you can imagine, my mother was very proud of her son. She kept those letters and I still have a few of them.

More recently, I began to think that I would like my children and others to know about what we did during those years in Africa. So drawing simply upon my memory and scraps of paper, I started writing memories from our six years in Africa -- one year in Dakar; one year in Douala, Cameroon; two years in Yaoundé, Cameroon; and two years in Algiers for a total of six years in French West and North Africa. (See Addendum 2 - 4 for Douala, Yaoundé and Algiers memories.)

I traveled to Dakar via Paris, the first time I ever set foot in Europe. I went there for "consultations." I learned over the years in the Foreign Service that consultations allowed people to travel to interesting places. I talked to USG officials in Paris who were involved in regional support for Africa programs. For me it was an eye-opener to be in Paris.

I wrote a letter on the Air France flight 303 from Paris to Dakar with stops in Marseilles and Las Palmas en route. From that letter: "I saw many of the regular tourist spots in my walking tour of Paris but I left plenty to explore in greater depth at a later date." Little did I know at the time that I would serve in Paris for five years.

"I changed to a 'left bank' hotel and got a room for $4 a night plus breakfast that was just as satisfactory as my right bank room which cost $12." I know prices were lower back then but reading this I am still astounded.

We later (1969) took a month-long R&R trip through Europe with two children, so there were four of us and we came pretty close to Europe on $20 a day. It is just amazing that that was possible.

Dakar, Senegal (1966-1967)

The long flight — Paris to Marseilles to Las Palmas to Dakar — arrived late evening on November 2, 1966. I was met by the PAO, Jim McGinley, and taken to a hotel since my apartment was not yet ready.

I felt uncertain and confused and didn't begin to appreciate that Dakar was a wonderfully comfortable place to live 10 months out of the year. Two months out of the year, the rainy season, it is quite humid but for the rest of the year, it is a vacation spot and many French travel there to this day.

The president, Leopold Senghor, who was married to a French woman, was a poet and intellectual and had French citizenship. He was Senegalese-born and a member of the French parliament.

My hotel had a terribly uncomfortable bed and few if any amenities. Of course, I was missing Bobbi and our newborn daughter. Before I left Arlington, Virginia, we held Sarah under a lamp and took pictures of her with high speed black and white film. It produced nice photos. I would look at those multiple times during the day with such longing.

I might have had a short Foreign Service experience had it not been for a political officer named Allen Caswell. I had met him and his wife briefly in Washington. They had two sons and they invited me to stay with them in their very lovely house along the coast. I accepted and I could not have had a more life-changing type of experience. Playing croquet on their lawn was but one pleasant memory. I think I celebrated my 25th birthday while living with them.

I probably should be embarrassed to admit it but my reading material was a Sears Roebuck catalog. I was reassured to see how much one could order out of a Sears Roebuck catalog and receive via the pouch. Somehow my material needs were assured through that catalog.

I would ride to and from work with Allen. This went on for several weeks. I was not in the embassy, which was in an office building in a central square in Dakar. We were in the American Cultural Center and it was easy to tell anyone where it was. We were on the Boulevard de la République, directly across from the Cathedral. At the end of the boulevard was the President's palace.

After a few weeks, an apartment became available in what was called the 'water building' (Immeuble des Eaux) at 70 Boulevard de la République, just a couple of blocks from the American Cultural Center and across the street from the Daniel Sorano Theater. Daniel Sorano (I learned later) was a Franco-Senegalese actor and the theater had just opened in 1965. It was notable at the time because in April, 1966, just before I arrived, President Senghor had organized the Festival of Negro Arts.

They brought in black or Negro artists from all over the world and organized a major international cultural festival. This was typical of Senghor. He wanted to celebrate negritude, celebrate the black cultural experience; many of the activities took place in that Daniel Sorano Theater.

Q: What was your impression of Senghor, professionally?

BROWN: I recall him as a man with one foot in France, one foot in Senegal, an intellectual, the head of a nominally independent nation but hardly a man of the people, the masses. Everyone knew that the real decisions were being made, the strings were being pulled by the French. Senghor knew and understood that this was the way the country was going to run for a while. He not only tolerated it but benefited from it personally.

I have a picture of myself with Leopold Senghor. I can't remember the specifics but there was a small international exhibit. We didn't have the resources to devote to it that some countries did but somehow USIS got posters and we put them up on the walls of our booth. I was the person on duty when Leopold Senghor made his official visit. I am standing there next to him looking quite young. My French was good enough that I probably welcomed him and told him something about these posters of America.

The memory is vague but I also saw him in a motorcade when he welcomed Emperor Haile Selassie to Senegal. I think Selassie was on his way to the United Nations and came through Dakar. I have this vision of these two men, one from the western side of the continent, the other from the eastern side, two of the great old men of Africa. Whatever you say about their contributions, their successes or failures or the fact that their names are forgotten today among young Africans, Leopold Senghor and Haile Selassie were two major African figures of the 20th century.

Within Senegalese society, there was a hierarchy and the Africans seemed to be at the bottom of that hierarchy. The people who lived most comfortably were the thousands of French who often occupied the position of technical counselor (conseiller technique) in the ministries.

The second level in the hierarchy in terms of how well people lived were the so-called Lebanese. They were not necessarily from Lebanon but that term was used. These people were merchants, second level professionals doing things like plumbing, accounting and whatever.

The third level were "the Arabs." There were a considerable number of Arabs in the country. And the fourth level were the Africans.

Dakar was a beautiful city, a modern city in some ways with many amenities. I almost said all of the amenities but there were things we missed or found disturbing. You didn't have to go too far inland to find children with distended bellies and that loss of hair color to show you that it was in many respects a poor country, maybe not like Niger or Upper

Volta or Mali but you didn't have to go too far from Dakar with its skyscrapers and French restaurants to find poverty.

Our own apartment building was also easy to identify. Right next to it was the residence of the Grand Marabou of Dakar, a leading Muslim figure in this very Muslim town. So if I wanted to tell anyone where I lived, it was the water building, right next to the residence of the Marabou, across the street from the Daniel Sorano Theater.

Often, before I would leave for work, there would often be a knock on the door. We would open the door and there would be a young man there with a platter on his head full of fresh shrimp. There was a large fleet of small fishing vessels that would go out every night and you could be quite sure what they brought to your door the next morning was fresh off those boats.

My work was across the street from the Cathedral on the Boulevard of the Republic. These were easy to locate, notable landmarks. I walked up the street just a few blocks from my apartment to the cultural center. The cultural center had big display windows and a library on the ground floor and offices on the second and third.

I had met my boss, Jim McGinley, briefly in Washington. Jim was a delightful fellow. He was married with two small children and a pregnant wife. He was a hard working and serious guy but also easy going outside the office. We could talk sports, we could play tennis. Jim taught me a lot of things about the job.

I recall going into his office to discuss a project. Jim asked me a question and I began my answer saying, "I assume" and Jim looked at me with a scowl but a smile behind it saying, "Phil, as long as you are working with me in Africa, don't begin any sentence with 'I assume'." It was good advice. You didn't take anything for granted.

On December 6, 1965, Bobbi and Sarah arrived on one of the thrice-weekly PanAm flights from New York to Africa. They all went on to different cities but all stopped in Dakar. Jim took me to the airport. That was pretty exciting, the Pan Am plane coming in with my wife and baby daughter. He is standing next to me and asking, "Is this your wife?"

"No."

"Is this your wife?"

"No."

"Is this your wife?"

"No, oh, it is my wife." She had cut her hair; I hadn't seen her for a couple of months. I didn't even recognize her. Maybe too it was the early hours of the morning. That was one of the brightest moments.

We didn't have an ambassador when I arrived. The Chargé was a man named John McKesson. I remember very little about him except that to me, he was the quintessential Foreign Service Officer — very correct, lots of white hair, tall, dignified. I called him Mr. McKesson. I don't remember very much about him.

The ambassador who arrived a few months after my arrival was William R. Rivkin. He had been ambassador at USEC in Brussels. A very nice gentleman. He was married and they had a young son (who went on to become an FSO and an Ambassador). The ambassador had a lovely residence on a point where you could look out at the sea. We would often be invited there for receptions and activities.

The Ambassador was accredited not only to Senegal but to the Gambia. The Gambia is this tiny little country, inserted within Senegal on the Gambia River. You could drive down there in a few hours. If your car survived the road and the ferry boat going over to Bathurst, you found yourself in a very English colonial environment, perhaps having afternoon tea on the veranda of a hotel. I went there with Ambassador Rivkin when he presented his letters of credentials.

As I recall, he climbed up on some structure to look around and I noted how red his face was. It was only a few months later, on a Sunday morning, March 19, 1867, that Jim McGinley called and said that Ambassador Rivkin had very tragically died of a heart attack.

He is the Ambassador Rivkin for whom one of the State Department awards is named. I mentioned his son. A few years ago, my daughter who lives in France showed me a copy of Paris Match magazine with an article about the new American Ambassador to France, son of Ambassador Rivkin, Charles Rivkin. I wrote him a letter saying that I had known his father in Dakar. I never heard back.

By the time of Ambassador Rivkin's death, John McKesson was no longer the DCM. He had been replaced by Alan Lukens. Allan Lukens had lost his wife and children in a terrible plane crash. Because of that, he loved company and didn't ever want to be home alone at night. His new wife was the same age as Bobbi.

.*Q: How stood our USIA contingent there?*

BROWN: PAO Jim McGinley was a great guy. The CAO (cultural affairs officer), Kintzing Emmons, had come out of academia. Bobbi came home one day all excited because she had gone sailing with his wife, Carol. Carol had said something about the private school she had gone to and the fact that they played soccer rather than football. Bobbi picked up on that and it turned out they had gone to the same private Quaker school, Westtown Friends School outside Philadelphia.

If you are new in the Foreign Service, on a new continent with a new baby and all of a sudden you find someone with whom you share not only the school but all the values associated with a Quaker school — it gave Bobbi a lot of warm, fuzzy feelings.

Kintzing Emmons went back to academia in Atlanta and in 1972 he tried to talk me into going there to take a position at Georgia State University. I didn't. To tell the truth, the position was not offered to me but that would have been a real career change. To this day, we are very good friends with Carol Emmons. Carol did a lot of work in Atlanta with the International Visitors' Council. Kintzing died of cancer many years ago.

They were our close friends in Dakar. They also had a very nice apartment with a big open balcony. I recall going there one night when they showed the movie, "Twelve Angry Men," a black and white movie about a trial when there is one courageous holdout on the jury. The movie was in English but they invited in Senegalese guests. I don't think many of the guests understood the film, either the English or the idea of a jury.

The assistant CAO was Jack Simmons. Jack had just come into the Foreign Service, though he was older than I was, out of Baptist missionary work in the eastern Congo. It would not be the last time I would be exposed to someone in the Foreign Service with that background. We knew about the rebellions going on in the eastern Congo at that time; people were going back and forth evacuating across the lake over to Tanzania. Jack left that and came into the Foreign Service with his wife and a lovely family of four children.

We had an executive officer, a woman named Harriet Love and myself. There really wasn't a need for an information officer or a press attaché. There wasn't enough press or radio/television media there. To the extent it was done, I did it.

I was on the third floor of the cultural center building. I was fortunate, I have always said, to be surrounded by a Lebanese secretary, Madame Houdrouge, and African employees who spoke virtually no English. Not only did Madame Houdrouge not speak English, but she couldn't even try to come up with a word if I was struggling. It was great because it forced me to use French all the time with her.

The same with our films guy who had been there a long time. Papa Diaw, who drove a Citroen, lived a bit out of town in Rufisque. He was the photographer. When we got news that Ambassador Rivkin had died, my job was to drive out and get Papa Diaw, no phone, get hold of him so that he could come in and start developing pictures and put up an exhibit in a window.

Diaw was a few years older than me. On one particular day, I came to work, went to Papa Diaw and asked, in French, "Do we have a film for his project?" He looked at me and said, "Phil, here we say 'bonjour' and then we start our business."

I took that to heart. I'm no longer in an office situation but I do a lot of projects these days with international visitors and when we get on the bus in the morning, I start out by

saying, “Good morning. How are you? How are your families?” It is a very personal approach that is important, was important in Africa. It didn’t take any time and it just made a big difference.

As long as we are on anecdotes, a similar one comes to mind. In Moscow, I had a wonderful secretary named Anne Edwards, about whom more later. She recalls another time and another post when it was lunch time and Anne was alone at her desk. The head of the office came back to the office, looked around and said, “Nobody here?”

Ann looked up and said, “I’m here.”

It was a reminder to me that your colleagues are not just your work partners. The FSNs, the administrative staff, the secretaries were not a lower class. They are extremely important people. I would always say hello to them, greet them and commend them whenever possible because I liked them as friends but also because it was professionally wise to do.

Back to my work, there was very little opportunity in Dakar for what might be called “press placement.” We would get two-three page printed materials from IPS, the Press Service of the USIA, that dealt with current affairs issues such as civil rights. We did distribute a French-language magazine published by RPO Paris.

What I did do frequently was packing up a Land Rover — this is where I learned to drive a standard shift Land Rover — and take one of the African employees on a multi-day field trip. I did this in both Dakar and in Cameroon.

Most of the travel was along the coast. But first, from Dakar, you had to go a little bit inland to Thies to get to the road to the coastal cities. Even in Thies, a few kilometers from Dakar, you could see evidence of poverty and malnutrition.

We would be gone for two and three days at a time. We might go up along the coast to St. Louis and from there inland to some of the villages where there were Peace Corps volunteers. We had a multimedia approach. We would take movies.We also had books that we could give away; American publishers could donate excess books, take a tax write off and then we could give them to schools. We would also take posters and magazines, anything to advertise American values.

We showed two basic films at every stop. One was on President Senghor’s just-completed nine-day state visit to the United States. Africans were most struck by an image of him sitting in the White House next to Lyndon Johnson.

The other was a very sensitively done film about the Festival of Negro Arts. The problem with it was they decided to be creative in Washington. They weren’t going to do a color film; they weren’t going to do a black and white film. They were going to do something called “sepia.” The whole thing had a brownish tint to it.

Back in the United States, this must have been thought of as artistic creativity. But our audiences thought we had a defective film, that something had gone wrong. This was during the cold war. The Soviets produced a color film that was much more favorably received than our sepia film on the Festival of Negro Arts.

Another place I visited was a town called Ziguinchor in the very south of Senegal, south of Gambia. I recall sitting down there with one of the Lebanese businessmen who ran a movie theater. We contracted with him to use his movie theater to show our films and do a reception afterwards. I will never forget sitting outside in the courtyard where he lived eating mangoes, or *mangues greffés*. They were mangoes grafted with another fruit, how delicious they were. To this day, I can almost taste the sweetness of the fruit and the memory of what an unusual adventure I was having.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Senegalese?

BROWN: Sure, through schools, through some of the contacts with the very small media, through the ministry of culture, through various receptions and through these travels. For a while, I taught English at the University, even though I had no training. Jim McGinley thought of it as a way for me to better understand the young people and to influence their thinking.

Do I remember individual people? I remember especially the FSNs like Papa Diaw whom I mentioned. The woman who ran the library was named Mae Diagne. Mae was from a very prominent Senegalese family. During the course of the year an American named Leo Sarkisian who worked for the Voice of America came to Dakar.Leo was a renowned musicologist who understood African rhythms and African music extremely well.

In addition to being a musicologist, Leo was a very gifted artist and he did portraits of Mae Diagne and many other African women. The African women were very beautiful, especially as portrayed by Leo Sarkisian, very tall, erect, good looking women. I would have purchased these portraits if he had been willing to sell them. We staged an exhibit of paintings by Leo Sarkisian in an exhibit hall in Dakar. The Africans flocked to that. Somehow they could much more easily understand that American cultural presentation that either of those two films I talked about, Senghor in the United States in the Oval Office or our sepia film on the Festival of Negro Arts.

Through vehicles like that, I had a lot of contact with Africans. It was an especially helpful way to learn to speak French.

We had a houseboy named Mamadou Diallo, a wonderful Muslim man. When we would go out in the night, we would quite often leave our daughter in his charge. We would leave the building and Diallo would be sitting on his prayer rug in front of our building right next to the residence of the Grand Marabou. Sarah would be on the prayer rug next to him. I am not sure I would have enough faith to do that these days but in those days it seemed very natural.

Q: We were going through the Vietnam War and of course, Senegal had a significant connection with Vietnam in the fact that a lot of Senegalese troops were there.

BROWN: No memory. This was 1967 and by that time we are deeply involved in Vietnam. But I don't recall it being an issue. Maybe it was just I wasn't aware of it but I don't recall being aware of Senegalese who had been in Indochina.

I don't recall either Vietnam or civil rights being something that caused much either tension or was raised. Perhaps it was with other people but not at my level.

But in other ways, those were the years when Vietnam dominated our lives. I did not serve in Vietnam, not because they were not looking for me. I received a draft notice somewhere in the mid-60's and had a deferment, an education deferment. Then I had a marital deferment and then a deferment because I was a father. Someone said to me "you should tell them you are going in the Foreign Service" and my retort was "they won't understand that. That's what they think they are trying to get me into," another type of Foreign Service. So I didn't serve in the Army or in Vietnam but I do feel strongly that I served my country well and faithfully for 30 years.

Various other things come to mind when I think of that year in Dakar, special memories.

I mentioned traveling into the interior. USIA had an office in Paris that would find talented Americans living in Europe and send them to the African posts. I made several trips with guitarist Steve Waring to Saint Louis and other places. He was not a great folk singer but it was a way of flying the flag a bit.

I also mentioned that when I was in Washington before Dakar, I was introduced to something called PPBS. One day Jim McGinley called me into his office and asked, "What was that program you told me about that you had worked on in Washington before you came out?"

I said, "PPBS" and he looked at me and basically his thoughts must have been "poor kid" or "just the person I was looking for" because the overseas posts had now been assigned this project and I was placed in charge of it for Dakar. I had to look at all of our programs — speakers, IVs, exhibits, the library, etc — attach a point value to them, decide what audiences they were reaching and how much money we were spending. This is the matrix that I talked about. I took this thing so seriously and I thought "how am I going to measure this and that?" I was languishing over it.

One day at home, I put down my best thoughts, arbitrarily attached numbers, took it to Jim and thought well, if he doesn't like it, he can either fire me or change it. He tweaked it a little bit and sent it in to Washington. I got commended for our presentation which was one of the first and one of the best, etcetera, etcetera. I never told anybody how unscientifically I had gone about it.

We were very fortunate that year to have a visit from Bobbi's parents. They had three children. At that point, their son Tom and his wife Sally were in the Peace Corps in Peru. Their younger daughter Polly was with her husband Franklin, who was teaching in India. And their older daughter, Bobbi, was living in Dakar, Senegal. Their friends back home must have wondered what they had done right or wrong to have three children on three different continents. They stayed in a local hotel, visited us, and went on to India, back through Europe, back home. It was great to have visitors from back home, to have them see what life was like.

One particular restaurant in Dakar was built on a pier over the sea with waves crashing below. I went there only once or twice but when I did, I would see French people dressed in their bathing suits having a meal, jumping in the water, coming back up, continuing their meal. That was a lifestyle that I didn't know at all. This was my first overseas assignment. I was more inclined on Saturday morning to go to work and try to clean up my desk. I probably could have done just as well had I spent a little more time on some of the hedonistic pleasures of Dakar.

We did go out quite often to a spot near the airport where the embassy had a little beach house. We enjoyed many, many afternoons, particularly on the weekend on the beach.

Unfortunately, en route to the airport, there was an open sewer and for as long as you could, you would put your hand over your mouth or hold your breath or try not to breathe in.

Beautiful sunsets. Our apartment did not afford us a view of the sunset but of course, being close to the equator, the sun set almost the same time every day; this was one of the joys of Dakar.

I was also introduced to Muslim holidays. Senegal is a very Muslim country and we were introduced to Ramadan and various other aspects of the Muslim calendar.

We also visited Goreé, a close-by island that had been used as a slave holding site. In more recent years, American presidents and others have visited Goreé. It is now something comparable to a national historical site.

And we frequently visited Peace Corps volunteers. I remember visiting one particular volunteer in a coastal town south of Dakar called Mbour. Bobbi, daughter Sarah and I went for a visit. There was no place for Sarah to sleep so we pulled out the dresser drawers and put her in there. She was safe.

We had no major health problems associated with living in sub-Saharan Africa. Bobbi did have to go back to the States for a tooth problem and I began to realize the inadequacies of the French and African dental care. We took the anti-malaria medicine our entire time in Africa. We did so in a way that we might not be comfortable doing these days, just popping pills without knowing what the consequences might be.

So after exactly one year in Dakar, I got the word that I had been reassigned. Dakar was my JOT assignment. I understood all along that I would only be there for one year. I was reassigned as branch public affairs officer, BPAO in Douala, Cameroon. I am sure I had to go to a map to find it. I knew Africa pretty well but Douala was not the capital and not exactly one of the places that popped immediately into mind. It's the largest city in Cameroon, a port city but not on the ocean, on the aptly named Wouri River.

En route to Douala we stopped in Monrovia, Liberia, for "consultations" at the Voice of America facility. Liberia, for all intents and purposes, was a virtual American colony in Africa. It was the place where we had the largest presence, including a very large Voice of America facility.

By chance, we happened to know the regional doctor there, Doctor Ron Hilty. He was a college classmate of Bobbi's and he confirmed that she was pregnant with our second child. That made that stop in Liberia an indelible memory.

There was another facet to our stop in Liberia. Back at Fletcher, I had had contact with Liberians, both Americo-Liberians from the Tubman family that ruled Liberia at that time and an Afro-Liberian, Lami Kawah, a very close friend. I felt much closer to Lami.

We drove around Monrovia along a route around the perimeter of the city. Along it you would find huge antebellum homes built by the Americo-Liberians, the people who had come back from the United States and sort of recreated the America that they recalled from the American south. They lived much better than the Afro-Liberians, the tribal Liberians who were farther inland. Those were the seeds of the conflict that later plagued the country and led to mass killings.

Looking back, the period from 1963 to 1968 was probably the most formative five years in my life. I graduated from college, I completed graduate school with a Master's degree and I met the young woman who would become my wife. I chose a profession that, unbeknownst to me at the time, became my life's work for the next 30 years and I saw the birth of my two children. Nothing was more formative to the rest of my life than those five years -- education, job, wife and children.

Douala, Cameroon (1967-1968)

We arrived in Douala on a Tuesday. It had to have been a Tuesday because Pan Am flew three flights a week from New York to Dakar and from Dakar, each of them took a different route. The one that left New York on Monday night ended on Tuesday afternoon in Douala. It puddle jumped down the coast; Monrovia, probably Abidjan, Cotonou and then Douala. It arrived on Tuesday afternoon and left the next morning to go back to the U.S.

We were met on arrival by my boss from Yaoundé, PAO Fred Quinn, and the CAO, Charles Dawson. Charles, like Jack Simmons back in Dakar, had left the Baptist mission field in eastern Congo to come into the Foreign Service. He was now in Yaoundé with his wife and children.

Q: Douala was a consulate?

BROWN: Douala was a two-person consulate, the Consul and the BPAO (myself). Yaoundé was the capital?

The house that we lived in was barely a couple of miles from the airport, right off the road leading out to the airport. It was a single-level dwelling that had air conditioning only in the bedrooms. In the rest of the house, including the kitchen, not only was there no air conditioning; there weren't even screens. We discovered right away that if you left a light on or went in there at night, the bugs, the critters were everywhere.

Douala was not a pleasant place to live, extremely hot and humid with annual rainfall totals defying description. In some places, you might say that Europeans simply couldn't get used to the heat. I always felt in Cameroon that the Cameroonians never got used to the heat. A lot of the work they did was labor intensive and the sweat would be pouring off them.

Not far away as the crow might fly is the largest mountain in West Africa, Mount Cameroon, an active volcano but you would barely ever see it. Once in a while you would say, "Oh, look. There's the mountain" because it had cleared just long enough. Perhaps there had either been a massive thunderstorm and it would be visible briefly and then it would disappear into the clouds.

So it was not a comfortable place to live. I could talk about my work but to be honest it was not a full time job. It was a place where I invented programs and didn't have a real challenge. I think if I had been there for more than a year, I might have really given second thoughts to the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, why did we have your job there?

BROWN: I suppose the answer is that we could afford it at the time. It was the biggest city and we had a consulate. I ran the cultural center with its exhibit windows, a library and film programs and some personal contact with decision makers there.

Let me talk for a second about Cameroon, a most interesting country, Africa in miniature. The north was Muslim, the south was Christian and all of it had a heavy animist overlay. Arid desert in the north, tropical rainforest in the south. It had been one of four German colonies in Africa, along with Tanganyika, Togo and Southwest Africa (now Namibia).

Under the Germans, it was 'Kamerun'. After the First World War, it was divided into two League of Nations trusteeships called French Cameroons and British Cameroons. You can always tell someone who has never served in Cameroon because they will call it "the Cameroons." By the time we were there, independence had come and it was the Republic of Cameroon. The Douala consular district included West Cameroon, the Anglophone part of the country. Most people there spoke Pidgin English but there was an educated class and a regional capital in Buea and some of our programming was directed to the schools.

A lot of what I did involved traveling, much of it on dirt roads, to the towns along the road north from Douala through Nkongsamba and Bafoussam to Foumban or into West Cameroon toward Bamenda. From Bamenda and its comfortable guest house, there was a circular dirt road through small towns.

We would fill a Land Rover full of books and movies, visit schools, many of them run by Irish priests. The climate was much more pleasant. I remember Americans coming out there, seeing some of the longhorn cattle and saying "this reminds us of Wyoming." I did a lot of those kinds of trips; I would be gone for days at a time on dirt roads.

Q: Was there any receptivity? Was there really much interest?

BROWN: Oh, yes. There was receptivity because there wasn't much else going on.

I used to think we were competing with the French and being a very proud American, I was hoping a day would come when we could displace the French and be the dominant influence in the country. I don't think anyone feels that way these days. When things go awry in some African country, it is great to have the French go in and try to resolve things. So they were and still are the dominant foreign presence in Francophone countries.

Receptivity? No one ever objected to us coming out and doing our programming. The schools and villages loved to have us. Typically we would take along a projector with a generator. We would hang a big sheet between trees and project the movie on it. If you didn't have the sheet, we also carried a portable screen. It came in a big box and unfolded. We had Bell and Howell projectors with the big feeder reel on top and a take-up reel at the bottom; the film would be wound through all these loops and sprockets. I knew how to set up that projector. If you didn't leave the loops big enough, the sound

wouldn't be in sync with the image on the screen but I knew exactly how big to leave the loops.

We'd wait until the sun went down. Africans were extremely patient; there was no hurry. They didn't have any deadlines so if things were delayed a little bit, they didn't worry. Once the film started, 90% would be looking at the picture on the screen but 10% of them would be looking at that camera, that machinery, that complex series of loops and twirls and whatever the film did going from the feeder reel down to the take-up reel.

We had a standard group of films. One was about a recent visit by Cameroonian boxers to the United States. These school kids just loved to see their countrymen; anytime you can identify with somebody in a movie, it means so much more.

We also had films on the Apollo space program. We had a Charlie Chaplin-like movie, no sound track, just stuff for laughs. The African students howled as they watched this.

Then we had what we called the "freight." This was a film featuring life in Wisconsin. It showed farmers, students, manufacturing and ordinary people going about their daily lives. This was to show everyone a typical American heartland state. I must have shown it "The Life of Wisconsin" or whatever it was called a hundred times if I showed it once.

That was our package along with giveaway books, posters and that kind of thing. Much of what I am describing about Douala, I also did in my next post which was Yaoundé.

More about the Douala experience. The consul was an African American named Jim Parker and his wife, Odessa. Jim was a generation older than me. He had a wonderful sense of humor and a hearty laugh but he was also very old school in terms of manners and protocol and correctness and I was always very careful to do the right thing and to shake hands in the proper order and that sort of thing.

Jim was old enough to remember when the State Department cafeteria had a separate section for "coloreds." He had a son whom we never met. Jim did a lot of representational activities at his residence. Not long after we were transferred to Yaoundé, Jim was transferred there as well as the DCM.

Jim was replaced by a man named Michael Phelps Evans Hoyt, Michael P. E. Hoyt, whose name had been in the news because he had been the consul in Elizabethville in eastern Congo. Mike had been forced to eat the American flag. He was just off that experience when he came to Douala with his very lively wife. His wife wrote a book called "For the Love of Mike."

But more memories of life in Douala.

Victoria, the largest town in west Cameroon, was a very short distance away but there was no road because it was all swamp and marshland so you had to go all the way up one side of a river, put your Land Rover on this little ferry that went at unscheduled times,

and then come all the way back down the other side of the river. That was at least a half a day trip.

Or you could take a little puddle jumper airplane that would make three round trips a day. I was over there one time with a visitor and wanted to come back on the last round trip of the day from Victoria back to Douala. I arrived at the airport only to find there were no seats available; the plane was sold out. So I said to the gentleman, "I know that sometimes when this happens you fly an additional flight. Is there any chance that there will be an extra flight today?"

And he looked at me very seriously and said, "Oh no, sir. We have been advised not to fly an additional flight because of the bad condition of the aircraft."

Of course I was so trusting that when a seat opened up I said, "Sure." Despite the "bad condition of the aircraft," it landed and I never heard more about it. It was one of those ways they were so open, so honest. They didn't try to hide anything. There was no FAA looking over their shoulder.

Douala was the first time I was exposed to Asian and particularly Vietnamese cuisine. This was part of the legacy of the French in Indochina that there were some wonderful Vietnamese restaurants in Douala. There were French Peace Corps volunteers, "*cooperants*," in west Cameroon teaching French. On the weekends, they would flock into Douala to have a meal in these Vietnamese restaurants.

There were also quite a number of French business people. There was the Hotel Cocotier where the Pan Am crew would stay. One could sit on the veranda, have a nice drink, perhaps swim in the pool. There was a resident Pan Am representative, an American, but that was the extent of the American community in Douala.

We hosted a performing arts group from Chicago, black musicians called the Junior Wells Singers. Junior Wells was famous for the blues. The group performed in Douala and then I took them somewhere upcountry where they did another performance. Just as we began the drive back, our vehicle went over a soft spot in the road and sank right to the axles. But someone pulled us out and we made it back to Douala in time for the concert that evening.

We came back to our house. They were sitting outside on our porch, which wasn't very comfortable because it was hot and humid, and suddenly the musicians came dashing inside with their eyes wide open.

Well, we had a guard, which was standard, someone who came at night and watched over the outside. He happened to come up the driveway that night wearing his long robes. Junior Wells and company were from Chicago and probably had seen much worse but boy, they thought the end of the world had come. They were not at all comfortable. I mention that just to say that cultural shock can be experienced by African Americans as easily as it could be by anybody else.

Remember that Kamerun had at one time been a German colony so the Germans had occasional cultural presentations there. But they didn't adapt. German chamber musicians in full formal garb were performing one night in a nondescript building that had a corrugated metal roof on it when the kids outside decided to start throwing stones. The stones came crashing down on that roof as these musicians played away. If you think musicians are interrupted these days by cell phone sounds, you can imagine the sounds of these rocks crashing on the roof as they played. I can't recall whether or not they stopped their performance but the rocks on the roof were the memory we took away.

Africans would come into the American cultural center every day and ask about study in the United States. We did too good a job of advertising the United States as the land of opportunity so they all wanted to go there to study. All I could say was "Well, there are some books out here. Maybe you could get a scholarship" and I referred them to the Institute of International Education, still very active today, as a source of scholarships. I doubt if any of them ever succeeded.

But one day a Chinese man came into my office with the same question, "How can I study in the United States?" I started to go through my same explanation, "Well, there is an address you can write to but you will need a scholarship" and he said, "No, I have the money."

At that point I sat up in my chair. His name was Winfred Shen. So I inquired a little bit. Winfred was from Hong Kong, one of approximately 30 men working at an enamel pot ware factory on the outskirts of Douala. Even at that time, it was apparently cheaper to import labor from Hong Kong and these 30 gentlemen worked round the clock producing these enamel pots that the African women would use in the markets. They allowed themselves one luxury and that was a cook. Otherwise, they would repatriate their earnings back home to families. In Winfred's case, he put money away so that someday he could go to the United States to study.

We had a nice conversation and I invited him to our house for a meal and then he invited us to the factory. We went there, sat at these long tables, no adornment, flypaper hanging from the walls but when it came time for food, it was a delicious Chinese meal. I stayed in touch with Winfred Shen. I tracked him down a few years later. He had come to the United States. We went to his wedding in New Jersey. I lost track of him for years before I relocated him in California. He had a daughter and is quite a successful businessman. It all began in 1968 in Douala.

This was also the time of the war in the Biafra region of Nigeria. At night, we would hear the planes that had taken off, I think, from the island of Fernando Po and were flying supplies into eastern Nigeria. There were many refugees from eastern Nigeria coming into west Cameroon; a very open border there. West Cameroon was politically closer to eastern Nigeria than it was to the rest of Cameroon. So the Biafran war was not far away; the news of it was brought to us by the Voice of America.

And then there was a day in March when I turned on the radio and the news was that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. You might think that to be in an African country when MLK was assassinated, you would fear for your safety. I did not. We immediately reacted. I went to a local stationery store, bought a condolence book and sat in the cultural center. In a little courtyard out back, we started showing a film about Martin Luther King and the "I Have A Dream" speech. We projected it onto the wall over and over. People came in great numbers responding to the death of Martin Luther King. For me it was just a horrible sinking feeling. I think it had more of an impact on me personally than the ongoing events in Vietnam. What had my country come to? Martin Luther King had been assassinated. Of course, the source of the information was the Voice of America that we listened to every day.

Through all of this, especially the heat, recall that Bobbi was pregnant. She had given birth to our first child by caesarean section and she knew the second child would be born by caesarean. She had a doctor in Douala who provided consultations but she was not going to give birth in Douala and so she departed in April to go back to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in anticipation of giving birth in early June.

By early June, I was due for home leave after almost two years overseas, Bobbi was about to give birth and I looked forward to going home. I got on the Pan Am plane on Wednesday morning, June 5. The first of several stops along the West African coast was in Cotonou and it was there that I first heard a report that Robert Kennedy had been shot. We stopped again probably in Abidjan and at Robertsfield, Liberia, and Dakar where I tried to try to get news. It was very vague. And then we flew from Dakar to New York where I learned that indeed Robert Kennedy had been mortally wounded. This was now very late on the day of Wednesday, June 5th. He had been shot on Tuesday evening, June 4, primary day in California. He was alive but barely alive.

I went from the airport to the East Side terminal in Manhattan, across Manhattan to the West side terminal where I got the last bus to Bethlehem. In the very wee hours of the morning, a man in the bus station in Bethlehem said, "Oh, you need to get over to the place where your wife is staying because her father has already taken her to the hospital. She is in labor."

I was supposed to be there a week ahead of the delivery but Bobbi had gone into labor early so I went almost directly to the hospital and saw my second daughter, Christine. She was born only hours after Robert Kennedy had died.

That daughter is now living in France; her two children were born one year before and one year after 9/11, 2001. We have conversations about who brought their children into a more threatening world; the world she was born into in the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, riots, Vietnam, Nixon, inflation etcetera or the world of 9/11/2001 and terrorism. It is an interesting discussion. It usually ends up with me saying, "Well, I was born one month before Pearl Harbor. My parents brought me and my brother into the world at a time of mass genocide and killing." So I don't think anyone should ever decide to have children based upon whether it is a safe world they are coming into.

So summing up Douala, the memories are the heat, a not terribly challenging job, lots of travel on bumpy roads. I was constantly looking to see if there was some assignment or project I could carry out but there wasn't enough to keep me busy. The frequent travels over to West Cameroon, meeting with tribal leaders including the Fon of Bafoussam. Meeting Winfred Shen from Hong Kong. Bobbi shopping in the open markets. We didn't have anything resembling a commissary or PX. We were completely dependent on the local environment except for what we might order from that Danish firm called Peter Justesen. An American doctor passed through every few months. A very small American presence. The news of the assassination of Martin Luther King and then the assassination of Robert Kennedy, terrible punctuation marks toward the end of my year in Douala.

I returned to Douala ahead of Bobbi. Soon after Bobbi returned (what a courageous mother she was, taking that trip from JFK to Douala with two small children!), I got a message that Charles Dawson, the cultural affairs officer in Yaoundé, would be leaving. Would I be interested in moving to Yaoundé to replace him?

I did not hesitate. I jumped at the opportunity so we used newspapers, packed our household effects ourselves and flew to Yaoundé for the next stage of our lives. There would be no question of going there by any other means than flying because there was no train and the road was paved only for a few miles outside Douala. It would be foolhardy to consider driving. It was a very short flight up to Yaoundé and its small airfield.

Yaoundé, Cameroon (1968-1970)

So in early fall of 1968, with our two small children, one just two and the other an infant, we moved to Yaoundé. Yaoundé was basically created by the Germans. They were no dumbbells. They knew you needed an upland place with a more temperate climate. It wasn't cool by any means but at least when the sun went down, there was some relief from the heat. It was at a higher elevation and a much more pleasant living environment. I think it is not an overstatement to say that Yaoundé saved my Foreign Service career. I found almost everything about Douala negative but as I look back on 30 years in the Foreign Service, that was the only negative assignment I had, the only time I questioned being in the Foreign Service. All that changed in Yaoundé.

Q: Let's talk about the government and the country itself. How was it run, Cameroon?

BROWN: I told you that I would take these trips to the interior. That meant driving from Douala north along a road that was paved for maybe a couple of hours and then it was a dirt road. I mention that because not long before we arrived in Cameroon, that road was dangerous and people had not been allowed to drive it. We heard stories of tribal clashes and people's skulls being placed on spikes along that road.

By 1967/68, that was apparently a thing of the past; there may have been conflict but it didn't emerge into the public.

The country was governed by President Ahmadou Ahidjo the entire time we were there and long after. It was, I suppose it is fair to say, a police state; there was a nominal assembly but it was not a democracy by any means. Ahidjo ran the show. He was a northerner, a Muslim. The conventional wisdom was the southerners might have preferred a southerner but there were so many tribal differences they couldn't agree on who that person would be and so they compromised on Ahidjo from the north.

There were other prominent well-to-do families. One of those families, Biya, succeeded to the presidency. Another prominent family was the Noah family that produced the tennis player and the professional basketball player for the Chicago Bulls. It was a prominent Cameroonian family.

The countryside was ruled by tribal leaders and in the cities by some families like the privileged elite. Really the only individual we ever heard about, knew much about, dealt with for official business was President Ahidjo.

Q: Was Cameroon in any particular East/West camp?

BROWN: No. They were not playing footsie with the Soviet Union. The Soviets had an embassy there but we didn't think of Cameroon being in that camp by any means. You might think of Sekou Toure in Guinea or Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana who were considered, to use the terminology of that period, leftist. But there was no worry about Cameroon "slipping into the communist orbit." If anything, the French were in control.

Not in the way they were in Senegal which had been a French colony but still they had a dominant presence there. And French was the national language.

The Chinese were there. I think that during that time, Cameroon shifted its recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. I recall going to a dinner hosted by the Taiwanese. By the time we left, that had changed and there was a Chinese embassy.

Q: Did the events in France, the June of '68 student revolt and the overthrow of de Gaulle have any reflection?

BROWN: No, at the risk of sounding as if I had my head in the sand, I don't recall people talking much about the events of 1968 in France. News was not in your face the way it is today. We didn't have television so you heard news primarily on the radio; you didn't see dramatic pictures. Even what was going on in Vietnam was not in our face.

Having said that, this was not an easy time to be a representative of the United States. There wasn't very much good news from back home. I try to remember November of 1968 with the extended uncertainty about who had won the election, Nixon versus Hubert Humphrey. We were on tenterhooks about who our next president would be.

The one really positive phenomenon at that time was the Apollo space program. We were in Yaoundé in December of 1968 when Frank Borman and his crew made their Apollo-8 flight around the moon. With each successive Apollo mission, we would receive a film, albeit several weeks delayed, that showed the latest accomplishment leading up to Apollo 11 in the summer of 1969.

USIA supplied us richly with films, rocket models, posters, printed materials in French and more describing the Apollo space program. We had a model of the Apollo Saturn rocket. You could go to Cape Kennedy these days and see the real thing. Our model was a couple feet high and it came apart. I was very capable of standing up in front of a large audience taking that rocket apart as the various boosters were no longer used. I took that space capsule to the moon and I landed it and brought it back safely. I would do that in French and then we would show a film.

Some of these films were beautifully produced. You'd have the music of Bach in the background as a spacecraft headed to the moon. Anyone who lived during that period knows what a "booster" (pun intended) that was for our morale. What a good feeling that gave us even if some of the Africans disbelieved or didn't have any comprehension of what we were doing.

Then came the day when we were told that wow! We are going to get a moon rock. An actual piece of moon rock will be put on display. It was going to be brought in by the courier. We announced it; we told people where they could come to see it. I distinctly remember the ambassador asking, "Is it going to be here on time?"

And me rather jokingly saying, “Mr. Ambassador, don’t worry. Even if the moon rock doesn’t arrive, believe me we will have a moon rock.” By that I meant we would go back out behind the embassy in the clutter and find a piece of rock.

But indeed it arrived. It was under a hemisphere of plastic. The Africans came and looked at it and said to themselves, “That doesn’t look any different from any other piece of rock.” I guess they thought maybe it was going to glow in the dark or give off special rays or something. But we had our moon rock.

I mentioned the ambassador, a wonderful man who really boosted our morale both from a professional and personal level. He was one of these guys that you were so proud of.

His name was Robert Payton. He was a political appointee although he didn’t like that term because he said political appointees were people who have been big donors. He was a protégée, I think, of Senator Symington of Missouri. He had been vice chancellor at Washington University in St. Louis and was accompanied by his wife and three handsome sons. He was a very outgoing ambassador. He spoke quite respectable French. He traveled extensively around the country and one of my regrets was I never went on one of his trips. The timing just didn’t work out. He even went down to my old area and climbed Mount Cameroon.

He enjoyed black and white photography and he took some 8,000 pictures, many of them of people with whom he met — a local governor, prefect or other official or dignitary. USIA had a little photo lab and a Cameroonian on the staff who specialized in photography. He developed these pictures and then the ambassador would send them back to the local officials. When I would go to a town after the ambassador had been there, the first thing they would show me was the picture that they received from “your ambassador.”

When Ambassador Payton left, USIS organized a display of his photos and printed a small flier titled “Cameroon: Faces and Places.” The crowd lingered well beyond the end to look at the photos. By the way, African faces are not easy to photograph. You have to have the proper setting to get the right light and these were really good pictures.

Ambassador Payton was also a backer of one of the local soccer teams and it wasn’t just nominal. He would attend the matches. This was a country where there weren’t a lot of high stakes issues. He didn’t have to be running over to the foreign ministry with démarches. It was made for personal public diplomacy before we used the term “public diplomacy.” Ambassador Payton was a real practitioner.

The public affairs officer when I arrived was a man a generation older than me named Howard Calkins. I am going to say he was in his 60s and some people wondered why at that age, he was PAO in Cameroon. It just didn’t seem to be the pinnacle of a Foreign Service experience. Tragically, not long after we arrived, he received word that his son, my age, had been killed in an automobile accident back in West Virginia. I remember the

ambassador telling me one day how difficult it was to go to Howard Calkins with this news and inform him of this terrible tragedy.

What it meant for me was that for several weeks, I was the acting public affairs officer.

I should back up a little bit and explain that the PAO when I arrived in Yaoundé was Fred Quinn, the same man who met us when we arrived in Douala. Fred was a Foreign Service career officer but he was also an academic. He loved the world of ideas, art, African art. His wife Charlotte was a lovely woman, herself an intellectual. They treated us very kindly. Even when we were in Douala, they found some reason to bring me up to Yaoundé for a TDY assignment and I brought Bobbi and our daughter Sarah along. We stayed with them; at the time, they did not have children of their own.

Fred and Charlotte left soon after we arrived in Yaoundé but we stayed in close touch with them. Charlotte, who had a career with CIA, was among Bobbi's closest friends right up to her tragic death; she drowned off the coast of North Carolina

I am thinking back to that anecdote about the Foreign Service assignment, about who got the best assignment and who got the worst. Well, this was an example of my thinking. Yes, Cameroon is a small country, not exactly on everybody's radar screen, but I was the public affairs officer so I was dealing with the ambassador, I was going to country team meetings, I was seeing the big picture. That's why this type assignment is great for a young person.

I remember very clearly the Foreign Service national staff. David Lobé was secretary to the PAO, my assistant was Paul-Henri Nkot. There were about eight or ten others and I have a picture of them in our yard with their names written. A great bunch. They were very devoted to the American embassy. Sure, they had a job, a very respectable job, a very prestigious job but they were very loyal and very committed to the work.

I mentioned our house. We were again in a single level, colonial-style house but in a much nicer environment than in Douala; we had a big fenced-in yard. We now had a baby. Our younger daughter learned to walk in that house. We got a dog, a big German shepherd that we called Pele-Pele, from Americans who lived down the same dirt road we lived on.

We had a record player. I mentioned earlier I loved music, loved light opera. By this time, we had a recording of Puccini's La Boheme which ends with the words "Mimi, Mimi" as the heroine dies. My children called their grandmother Mimi and I loved to pick them up and dance around that living room singing Mimi to them; they were laughing as they couldn't quite figure out what I was doing. I was quite vicariously through the record thinking about their grandmother.

We did a lot of entertaining in that house. We frequently invited people in for movies or for dinner.

Back to the embassy, in addition to Ambassador Payton and DCM Jim Parker, there was a guy three years older than me who was head of the econ section. His name was Jim Bishop. A lot of people served in Africa and then moved on to other parts of the world. Jim was an Africanist through and through. Quite often in staff meetings, the question came up whether anybody had seen such and such person or knew about this or that individual. Jim would consistently say, "Oh, I know him. I had lunch with him the other day or I met him somewhere."

This was not like Paris where you had a lot of restaurant lunches but Jim, I quickly realized, had his ear to the ground. He was almost like a role model for me. I said to myself, "Ah, ha. This is a guy who is taking full advantage of this opportunity. He is out there, meets people, knows who people are and it is not by coincidence when the ambassador asks, does anybody know this person, Jim is right on the mark."

Either consciously or unconsciously, I modeled myself after Jim all through my Foreign Service career. I really tried to get out and meet people. After I retired, I often remarked that I did at least two things well in my Foreign Service career. I met people in the host country and I was a good notetaker.

The embassy staff included a military attaché who had access to a plane. I think it might have been a DC-3. I took several trips, usually to the northern part of Cameroon.

We had a small AID mission and a CIA named John Stein. We had a small American recreation site with a pool, a volleyball facility, a place where you could get hot dogs and a school. We played a lot of volleyball on Sunday afternoons. I always tried to position myself on the opposite side of the net from John Stein because he was so mercurial, such a firecracker, that if he would miss a shot, you knew he'd get so mad at himself that he would miss the next two or three. John was much more successful in his professional career. He went on to very high in the ranks of the CIA.

We also had on the USIA staff an English teaching officer and we did a lot of programs for English teachers. On one occasion, we offered a seminar for English teachers and a woman named Ruth Montalvan came out from Washington. We must have thrown the invitation open a bit too widely because if we thought 20 were going to come, 200 came. The question arose how we were going to accommodate them all? We went back to Washington, got some money and it was a roaring success.

I shared an office right across from the library with a young woman on her JOT assignment. I was in my late 20s and she was even younger than me. Her name was Cynthia Frasier. She went on to a very successful career in USIA; public affairs officer in Rome, special assistant to the director. At that time she was unmarried, almost like a younger sister. She loved my two daughters. She was a very fine professional colleague.

Very soon after I arrived in Yaoundé, I was told that we had the possibility of sending somebody to the United States on an international visitor (IV) grant. This was a program for French speaking journalists but we were going to lose it because the deadline was

looming. I went out and found Daniel Mongué, the editor of the Weekly Cameroon, *La Semaine Camerounaise*. I think it was a Catholic newspaper. I asked him if he would be available to go. He was and we sent him off.

That was my very first overseas involvement with the IV program. To this day, I still do contract work with the State Department escorting IVs on their travels around the United States. Now I am on the receiving end; back then I was on the sending side and throughout my Foreign Service career, I was very conscious of looking for good people to send on the IV program.

I have a picture of Daniel Mongué and his old Mercedes and his kids, a delightful guy. I wish I could track him down. If we had had Facebook back then, I would have immediately made him a Facebook friend.

So things like the IV program, programs related to Apollo, going out in the field with a Land Rover full of movies and books and posters, representational events at home were an essential happy part of the job.

It wasn't a representational event but one night we had a visiting fireman from Washington and my boss, Howard Calkins, just the two of them in for dinner. Bobbi went to the kitchen to check on the meal and I heard this boom and the windows rattled and the house shook. Bobbi started shouting, "My eyes, my eyes, my eyes."

What she had done was to try to light the gas in the oven. It didn't work. She came back in to get a match in the living room, went back and didn't realize the gas had been running all that time. We were very fortunate that all she suffered were scorched eyebrows; didn't lose her sight or some terrible damage. We had an embassy nurse across the street and she came over and provided immediate first aid.

We didn't contract tropical diseases. Our kids had the occasional high fevers but no chicken pox. It was good because if you really needed serious medical attention, you were a long way from it.

On one occasion, our older daughter fell and badly cut her lip at the swimming pool. It was a Saturday afternoon. We left our younger daughter with friends and dashed into town and by good fortune the Peace Corps doctor, a woman, was there. She was a hard-line gal. She didn't take care of embassy people; she was there to deal with Peace Corps volunteers but in this case she saw that it was her talents or nothing and her oaths took precedence. We held Sarah down on a table and she screamed as this doctor managed to sew the lip back on. To this day, there is a small scar on our daughter's lip but I am so grateful that on those two occasions -- when the oven exploded and when our daughter fell -- that we didn't suffer anymore than we did.

It was a happy embassy and Ambassador Payton set the tone. I saw him years later. He had only that one diplomatic assignment. He became President of Hofstra University and he taught philanthropy at Indiana University.

When Ambassador Payton left, I remember thinking, gosh. How are you going to replace him? I feel sorry for his replacement, Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker. But I learned an important lesson from Ambassador Hoffacker. When you replace somebody, especially a really capable person with a fine reputation, don't try to do things exactly the way your predecessor did it. One of the cheapest things I would occasionally see people do was to complain about how poorly their predecessor had performed. Maybe that was the case for some but it wasn't the case with Ambassador Payton.

What Ambassador Hoffacker did was to go about doing what a career for Foreign Service officer knew how to do well. He interacted more with the Cameroonian government on the official level. He was involved in an aid project to build a railroad east from Yaoundé. Perhaps there was more reporting; he just did what he knew how to do best. That was a lesson to me later on. If I replaced someone who had done a really good job, I didn't try to mimic that person but rather have confidence in myself and try to do what I knew how to do well.

My first (of what turned out to be many) Secretary of State visits took place in Cameroon. Secretary William P. Rogers, accompanied by Mrs. Rogers, came to Yaoundé in February, 1970. This was a big deal across the continent — the first visit by an American secretary of state to Africa, 10 countries in 15 days. Everyone in our small Embassy, from our newly-arrived Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker on down, was involved in the planning.

I worried that Cameroonian officials were referring to Mr. Rogers as the "*secrétaire d'état*." In French bureaucracy, "*secrétaire d'état"* is a sub-cabinet official. I kept thinking we need to call him the *Ministre des Affaires Etrangeres* and not Secretary of State. Secretary Rogers was a true gentleman. I emphasize that because he was later big-footed by Henry Kissinger.

The Secretary's military plane landed in Douala because the airport in Yaoundé could not handle such a large aircraft. Secretary and Mrs. Rogers reached Yaoundé on a Sunday afternoon and came directly to the embassy swimming pool/volleyball court, where they had hamburgers and hot dogs with the staff.

As CAO, I was very fortunate to be named Mrs. Roger's control officer — fortunate because her program was much more interesting for me than that of the Secretary. The highlight was a meeting at the Benedictine Monastery on Mt. Febé with a Cameroonian priest, Father Englebert Mveng, to discuss African art. Years later, I ran into Mrs. Rogers at the Safeway in Bethesda and mentioned the visit. I couldn't get her to stop talking about it!

A tangent: By 1988, I was PAO in Moscow. President Reagan visited. The entire USIS staff was involved. A woman ACAO was designated to work with the White House as Mrs. Reagan's control officer. She came to me to complain. This was sexism. She wanted

to be involved in something with President Reagan. Just because she was a woman, she didn't want to be assigned as Mrs. Reagan's control officer.

I said to her, "I know how you feel. We will make it up to you somehow. I don't have any control over this. But believe me; you will have a much more interesting experience." She came to me afterwards and said, "I am so happy I was Mrs. Reagan's control officer. While the rest of you were standing around, I went to the ballet school and to art galleries. We saw icons that the rest of you will never see."

I understood! My Cameroon experience with Mrs. Rogers had served me well many years later.

I want to add another story to the three years in Cameroon, one that was certainly a life changing experience for all of us.

It was September, 1969, our children were three years and 15 months old, and we were due for R & R. We left Cameroon from Douala, the international airport, flew to Rome and spent four weeks traveling around Europe. It was the first time I had ever traveled extensively in Europe. We went to Rome, to Athens, out to the island of Hydra, on to Vienna and back to Rome. I kept a detailed multi-page diary which I may introduce for the record later on.

I don't exaggerate when I say it was a life changing experience. We certainly got to know each other better as a family. We celebrated Sarah's third birthday on the Greek island of Hydra and we came back with a great deal of recreation. I am not sure how much rest. It was rigorous but it was one of those memorable experiences.

While in Vienna, we went to the Prater, the great amusement park and bought our children gas balloons. One of the girls let her balloon go and it flew up and lodged itself under one of the cars on that enormous Ferris wheel. We watched and laughed as it went round and round with the balloon still there. I titled my diary of that trip "The Balloon under Car Number Ten."

So to repeat, Yaoundé was a happy environment. A young American couple lived across the street, Mike and Judy Phelan. She was pregnant. The Presbyterians were very active in Cameroon as missionaries. They did standard missionary work through a church in Yaoundé and they also ran a hospital in a place called Ebolowa; the number of lives they saved in that hospital probably far exceeded the number of lives they "saved" in their mission work.

Mike and Judy got on a plane one night to go down there for the birth of their child. They hit one of these tropical storms and the plane turned around and came back and the baby was born in Yaoundé but we always remember that harrowing night for them.

A number of other American families lived along our dirt road. A Greek gentleman named Vrouvakis who worked at the embassy. He was in the category that people called

"Lebanese" at the time, people from the Levant or the eastern Mediterranean. He was an accountant of some sort; Mr. Vrouvakis had a son, Aki, who was a good friend of our children. They had a goat. They were not Muslim but they had a goat. One day, our dog got out and chased their goat and it ended up in front of a car coming up the road. We had to replace the goat. It is one of those little memories you have of life in Cameroon.

There was an older American businessman named Henry Boguslawski, Polish born; he was there with ITT, International Telephone and Telegraph. He managed to put in an early satellite that would allow you to call from Yaoundé to France. We didn't have a phone in our house so we couldn't even call the embassy. We didn't make personal phone calls of any sort. But lo and behold, before we could make a local phone call from our house, people could call by satellite from Yaoundé to Paris. Henry Boguslawski was really the toast of the town for that accomplishment.

We met him and his wife Dorothy later on when we were in Princeton and they were in New York City. He was a lover of Chopin. I think he ended up on the coast of Spain. We never went to his home but I can imagine him having his very cultivated friends in for a Chopin piano festival.

I did not see my parents for two years from 1966 to 1968. This happened again, 1968 to 1970. I did not see my parents, didn't talk to them. The only communication was by letter mail. We also sent these little tapes.

Bobbi was more fortunate. Her parents came in December,1969, and we went with them to the Waza Game Park in northern Cameroon. We entrusted our two children to a couple in the consular section who had no children, a couple our age, Paul and Nancy Dekar.

We had a car and driver, saw local villages, saw giraffes, watched elephants from one side of a watering hole. It probably was somewhat risky. As these elephants came closer and closer, I got some pretty good pictures until I realized I had the wrong setting on my camera. Back then, you had to adjust your camera setting to the speed of your film so my elephants were pretty bleached.

We returned to Maroua Airport at 11:00 am on December 22 and to the Air Cameroun DC-4 (four-motor propeller) that would take us back to Yaoundé. Check-in would be simple (no security precautions) and we would walk across the tarmac to the rear steps up to the plane (the front portion of the aircraft carried freshly-slaughtered meat products). But we would not soon be airborne. As we taxied, the front tire went flat and we were obliged to leave the plane and return to the modest waiting room.

What might have been a resolvable problem in some areas and with some airlines became a major issue. There was no jack available to lift the plane. Even if there had been, there was no spare tire available and no other similar airplane available to borrow from. In fact, we learned that Air Cameroun had only three aircraft (including two DC-4's) in its entire "fleet."

Our delay clearly would not be brief and, to make matters worse, there was no way to communicate with Paul and Nancy Dekar and our children. They would have to trust.

The crew was understandably taken to a hotel in Maroua but passengers were expected to spend the night in the plane. However, when someone came on board to spray for bugs, we disembarked and retreated to the waiting "lounge." During the night, we heard a plane overhead but it was later determined to be an Air Cameroun plane en route to nearby Fort Lamy, Chad.

During our wait, we struck up a conversation with people who turned out to be Peace Corps volunteers Philip and Jennifer Burnham and Philip's visiting brother.

It was not until the next day that a French military plane arrived from Fort Lamy with the new tire and the means to install it. We departed at 2:30 pm on December 23 and a 27+ hour late reunion with the kids and our home.

Footnote: The area we visited, close to both Nigeria and Chad, is today probably off limits because of Boko Haram. But even before this affliction, the area suffered from drought (Sahel) and it is unlikely that much remains of the game park and its wildlife. Very sad.

I later prepared this summary of the trip to go with our photos:

Northern Cameroon - 1969

December, 1969 - Bobbi's parents, Cassard and Marjorie Kaesemeyer, visited us for the second time in Africa. The first visit was to Dakar, Senegal, in 1967; by 1969, we were in Yaoundé.

Still in our 20's, we had just returned from a month-long R&R trip to Europe (Rome, Greece and Vienna) but were full of energy.

To make the visit memorable, we left Sarah (age three) and Christine (1 1/2) in the care of our Embassy colleagues, Paul and Nancy Dakar, and headed off by plane to northern Cameroon, noted for its mountainous, arid landscapes, Islamic culture and Waza National Park.

We probably made the arrangements through the Cameroon National Tourist Office; their brochure describes a three-day itinerary that would have included RT air fare on Air Cameroun, a driver and guide, accommodations in Maroua, Rhumsiki and Waza and meals. To do all that we did, there must have been a fourth night, perhaps back in Maroua.

The tour went as planned and even exceeded expectations. We flew via Ngaoundéré to Maroua and our first night accommodation.Thanks to Cassard's meticulously-noted

photo album and an article he wrote for the Fuller Company house organ, we have an account of our route:

Maroua via Zamia, Mokolo and Mogode to **Rhumsiki** (home of Kapsiki people); back thru Mogode, Mokolo, Kozo and Mora to **Waza**; return to Maroua via Andirni, Alagarno, Foderé, Balda and **Bogo**.

Our 1960's-era photos and slides include a few images of our young selves plus:

the Maroua market;

our guide Ammanou;

village chieftains, villagers and their villages;

the outdoor Mokolo market;

local enterprises (e.g. indigo dyeing), agriculture (e.g. cotton), long-horned cattle, etc;

a Kapsiki village and volcanic plugs near Rhumsiki;

women (some gaily dressed, others bare-breasted) using mortar and pestles to grind grain & carrying goods on their heads;

giraffes and elephants on the other side of a watering hole in Waza
(we were out of our vehicle even though we were told that an elephant could tip it over);

robed men in Bogo riding horseback while blowing ceremonial horns;

the Lamido of Bogo;

our disabled DC-4 plane in Maroua.

I earlier mentioned Father Mveng, a Cameroonian priest who was really more of an intellectual and a scholar on African art. There was also a Swiss priest named Father Luitfrid Marfut, a Benedictine, and he too was very interested in African art, especially ways of preserving it from being commercialized and sold. He established the Benedictine Museum on Mount Febé in Yaoundé as a home for Cameroonian art, especially abbia carvings. There was a rivalry between him and Father Mveng but Father Luitfrid had a wonderful collection of art that was preserved for the benefit of Cameroonians.

Many days, when I came home for lunch, there was a trader on the other side of the fence peddling some piece of African art. Like many people who served in Africa, we thus

have a considerable collection of masks, carvings and even a granary door. I used to say to my children that I would someday pay for their college education by selling these pieces. They are now educating their own children and the African art is still hanging on walls or up in the attic or has been given away. We ended up with a lot of it. A dozen or so pieces were held by the Smithsonian African Art Museum for several years and from that, we have curatorial descriptions of what they are.

Overall, Cameroon, especially the Yaoundé portion of it, lived up to its reputation for being Africa in miniature. Not only did I learn much about Africa and its diversity but I really benefited in terms of my long term Foreign Service experience.

In spring of 1970, I received word that I had been reassigned as branch public affairs officer, BPAO, in Tangier, Morocco. So we packed up after four years in tropical Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and headed back to the United States for home leave and to get ready to go to Tangier, Morocco.

Q: Today is the 14th of February, 2012 with Philip Brown. We got to 1970. How did you get assigned to Tangier?

BROWN: The assignment to Tangier was just what some cable said. I was completing four years in tropical Africa. I don't recall whether I had applied or indicated I wanted to stay overseas longer but I was assigned to Tangier, Morocco. But I never went there and that's where I will pick up today.

We spent our home leave in Westtown, Pennsylvania, a small town west of Philadelphia. We went there because we had lodgings on the campus of Westtown Friends School, the Quaker school where Bobbi, her brother and younger sister had all studied and where her brother at that point was teaching. We had access to a house there, a beautiful campus, a lovely place in which to spend the summer.

I also had the opportunity that summer to see my parents for the first time in two years. Not just to talk to but to see my parents for the first time in two years. We were closer to Bobbi's parents, got to see her brother and sister-in-law who was pregnant.

All was going along smoothly and then, just about one week before we were to go to Tangier, I received notification that my assignment had been changed and I had been assigned as cultural affairs officer in Algiers, Algeria.

This was upsetting, disconcerting. Our household effects were already en route to Tangier. We were thinking in terms of Tangier. We just weren't ready to change. I made some efforts to resist but did not succeed and so we were reassigned to Algiers.

The lesson is "go with the flow" because Algiers turned out to be a much better assignment. I am really glad that I did not succeed in changing the assignment.

Algiers, Algeria (1970-1972)

Q: What was the situation in Algeria in 1970?

BROWN: The situation was tense. I went ahead for consultations in Paris. Bobbi and our daughters linked up with me there and we flew two hours to Algiers. No one met us at the airport. Apparently communications had failed and so we took a taxi to the embassy and announced ourselves. I'm not sure how we managed with four people and luggage but our self-sufficiency impressed the people at the embassy.

We called it the embassy but the situation was very unusual. We were the American Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy. To back up a bit, in the early 1960s, the Algerians were struggling for independence in a bloody war against the French. No one had spoken out more on their behalf than President Kennedy. He was very moved by their struggle for independence and so there was a great feeling of gratitude towards the United States.

But by 1967 and the Six Day War, Algeria followed many Arab nations in breaking diplomatic relations with the United States. They broke diplomatic relations with the United States but they still wanted to do business with us; they wanted to have it both ways. We accommodated them because it was in our interest to have a presence there.

If you go back to that earlier period, the '50s and '60s, the oil and gas industry had a thriving relationship with the Algerians and many young Algerian men went off to the United States, particularly to Oklahoma and Texas, to study oil and gas technology. Many of them, incidentally, returned with American brides.

And we had a presence in other ways. After Algeria became independent in 1962, we had a library in a cultural center. But by the time I arrived, 1970, we were flying the Swiss flag. It is the only country where I served where I never met my ambassador. We never really had contact with the Swiss Embassy.

The only exception to that might be when we had a visit from astronaut Frank Borman seeking Algerian assistance freeing American POWs in Vietnam. There is a color photo of Borman with the Embassy staff and an individual whom I do not remember; that may have been the Swiss Ambassador.

The Algerians had this schizophrenic relationship toward the United States. If you read the public newspapers, especially *El Moudjahid*, their official daily newspaper, what was there for public consumption was that we were a capitalist exploiting nation, terrible race relations, Vietnam, anything that they could come up with to pin on us, they did.

President Houari Boumedienne had very close relations with the Soviet Union; close economic and other ties. When they were talking to us in that vein, the head of our mission was the *Chef du Service*, chief of service, chief of the American Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy.

But they were equally interested in loans from the Export Import Bank. They wanted to sell natural gas. El Paso Natural Gas had a big presence in Algeria and the Algerians wanted good economic relations with us so when they addressed us in those terms, my boss, the head of the interest section became the Chargé. He was accorded that honor.

That reflected things overall. They wanted to have it both ways. For public consumption, they wanted to appear very much at odds with the United States politically and to be seen as cozying up to the Soviets. But behind the scenes, they wanted money, loans, technology and exports.

Q: You were located in the city of Algiers.

BROWN: We lived in a remarkable house that had three different levels plus a basement; it was situated above a garden. Just to get from the street up to the main living level, you had to come up about 30 steps. The house was shaped like a boat. Whoever built it was probably a well-to-do Frenchman who built his house of dreams because from the top level on a clear day, you could see the snow-capped mountains in the distance and you could see the harbor of Algiers. The house also had a huge and dank basement where the furnace was. It also had the contents of the now-closed American Library.

I don't recall that I ever visited the former library but all the books were in the basement and anytime I went to a school or made any kind of official visit, I gave away some of these books. They were in good condition but they weren't getting in any better condition and we knew if we ever reopened the library, we wouldn't be using these books so we gave away as many as possible.

We lived right down the street from the building that I believe had always been the American Embassy. It was not an office building. It was a rather attractive, small villa and it was just down the hill from the ambassador's residence called 'Montfeld'. Montfeld was a beautiful villa overlooking the sea with gardens, a swimming pool and tennis courts. The embassy complex also included land across the street, a little compound that had a snack bar, school and parking. The house that we lived in was in easy walking distance.

The head of the Interests Section when I arrived was William Eagleton, quite well known at that time in Middle East. He had spent almost his entire career there and he went on to spend quite a bit of time in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East. He had a wonderful collection of Middle Eastern artifacts, particularly rugs. He even wrote a book on Kurdish rugs. Bill and his new wife Kay were very cordial, very friendly with Bobbi and me and our children.

More than once, I have talked about what constitutes a good or a bad assignment for a relatively junior person. I had been overseas now for four years but was still relatively junior. This was a perfect example of a really good assignment being a small mission

where the stakes are not that high but you see the whole operation from soup to nuts. A bad assignment is one of those big Western European assignments, Paris, Bonn, Rome.

In Algiers, we had a daily meeting in Bill Eagleton's office. No more than eight people attended that meeting, virtually the entire staff — the political officer, a fellow named Fred Galanto; the economic officer, Bill Keller; the commercial officer; a station chief; the head of the consular section, Richard Castrodale; the PAO, David Burns; the admin officer, Oscar Reynolds, and myself. The fact that I can remember many of their names now, many years later, says what an indelible impression it made on me.

We talked about what was on the docket. Bill Eagleton would quip that each day, we were "one day closer to restoration of full diplomatic relations." The meeting didn't last more than 20 or 30 minutes but it exposed me to almost the entire gamut of embassy operations. Why "almost"? Because the CIA station chief never told us the whole story.

Q: As the cultural officer, what did this mean for you?

BROWN: I was the cultural affairs officer. There were two USIS positions in a very small mission and one of the things I was charged with doing was renewing a scholarship program. I must have worked for the better part of two years to send something like six or eight Algerians to the United States on full scholarships. That sounds small but it was symbolically important and bureaucratically so laborious that it took the better part of two years to get these guys recruited, all the processing completed to send them off to the United States. It had symbolic value; it was the direction we were trying to go.

Despite the restrictions and no diplomatic relations, I felt productively busy in Algiers. I never went to work feeling bored or feeling "gee, I don't have a job here." I really thrived and it wasn't simply the travel or sending these six or eight fellows to the United States on a scholarship program.

Aside from the scholarship program, we did have the occasional opportunity to bring in performing artists. We relied on the office in Paris that recruited American talent living in Europe and sent them on tour. I developed a working relationship with an Algerian named Mr. Bel Hadj who ran a little theater, a performing arts venue downtown. We could bring programs there.

We had a couple memorable visits from a black jazz player named Hal Singer. My children called him the "singer man." He was in his 60s, a black American who had gone to Paris because he had found the cultural scene there more hospitable.

We could bring folk singers such as Steve Waring and other performing artists there. We also had the occasional speaker. Again, this was still that Apollo space era I mentioned in Cameroon.

Q: What about contact with universities, colleges, academic places? Were we able to get anywhere?

We had a Fulbright professor, a very interesting man; Elton Smith from Florida. He was, I believe, an ordained minister but he was teaching American literature. He must have been in his 60s which meant he was 30 years older than I was and a mean tennis player. I don't think I ever beat Elton Smith on the tennis court. Just when I thought I was about to finally win a set, he would grit his teeth and win. Elton Smith was replaced by a man named David Stryker.

We also had an English teaching program. On the other hand, I cannot recall any intense interaction with people at universities. It would have been more with the Ministry of Higher Education. It wasn't because I was not outgoing or not taking the initiative. We were not given that opportunity. We were not encouraged to do that. Everything had to go through the ministry. If I had gone to the faculty of American studies, if there was such a thing, directly to a dean at the university, it would have been frowned upon and he probably would have not received me. We just didn't have that kind of contact.

USIA had a program under which they would send out sports figures. On one memorable occasion in June of 1971, they sent out a group of basketball players headed by none other than seven foot two inch tall Lew Alcindor, as he had been known up to that point. He had just converted ti Islam and changed his name to Kareem Abdul Jabbar. He was accompanied by his coach, Larry Costello of the Milwaukee Bucks. The group was also supposed to include Oscar Robertson but at the last minute, he cancelled. There was a fourth person who played pretty good basketball, I think at UCLA, a white American who also spoke French.

It was a stressful project. Lew Alcindor/Kareem Abdul Jabbar, was not going to take any chances at that point and start playing basketball with Algerians. He was a highly paid NBA talent and what he did was run a couple fast break drills up and down the court and then he would dunk; a dunk at that time was something pretty special. Everyone oohed and aahed and that was it.

He had recently married a woman named Janice Brown. She called herself Habiba. He had become a very devout Muslim. We had a greasy spoon snack bar but Kareem Jabbar would not go near that snack bar because something might have been cooked in the same frying pan as his food was going to be cooked in.

We had a reception at the ambassador's residence in his honor. He didn't want that. I can perfectly well understand why because all you were going to do was gawk at this man who was so tall. He finally did come, came reluctantly and didn't stay for very long. It was memorable but I am not sure it did anything to enhance U.S.-Algerian relations.

Another example of the type of program we were involved in, I accompanied a man named Donald Bullard, a retired American with many years of experience in international educational exchange. He called on the directors of training and a wide cross-section of Algerian companies and ministries to learn more about their foreign training programs and to answer questions about opportunities for training and study in the U.S.

Over a week, we probably visited 10 or 12 different Algerian companies and institutions to talk about professional training in the United States. It may not seem like much but it was one of those openings we had. It took me not to a university or newspapers, the traditional kind of USIA contacts, but to companies and ministries.

At this distance it is hard to recall some of the other specific projects that we had except that I knew that I was fully busy and I really enjoyed the assignment.

One of the things I did a great deal of was travel. When we traveled, Washington was always interested in our reports.

Q: I think of Algeria now as a place where you didn't want to get outside the compound because you'd get your throat cut by Islamic fundamentalists. What was the situation then?

BROWN: If I had thought that was the situation, believe me, I would not have been willing to do the travel we did. No, it was a period in which the Algerians were unsmiling, perhaps fearful. We always contrasted them with the Moroccans and the Tunisians who were much more hospitable to foreigners, who had received their independence through a normal transition process rather than through a war. The Algerians seemed to be an angry, inhospitable people but I never really felt that I was going to get my throat cut. Bobbi and two small children often traveled with me.

Q: One of the attributes I have heard ascribed to Algerians as opposed to Moroccans or Tunisians is dour.

BROWN: Yes, dour would be a good word. I think they were also scared of their own government. They were scared of the implications of having too close contact. In that respect, Algeria was good preparation for my later assignments in the Soviet Union.

Q: What about the tribal situation there?

BROWN: We never referred to it as a tribal situation such as we experienced in Cameroon where there is a multiplicity of tribes. There were the Berbers. In fact, one of the most enjoyable day trips we would take would be east from Algiers to a town called Tizi-Ouzou, up in the Kabylie Mountains. There you would meet the Berbers who were much more gaily dressed, who produced beautiful jewelry. Sometimes we called them, and I am not sure it is accurate, the Jews of North Africa. They were separate from the Arabs. They were very enterprising people. So it was just the opposite of having your throat cut. Look, you say to a visitor, do you want to go out and really have an interesting day trip? Let's go out to the Kabylie Mountains, have lunch in some restaurant there, meet some of the people. They were extremely hospitable.

Another group of tribal people whom we really had to go a long way to see and meet were the Tuareg in southern Algeria and that gives me the opportunity to talk about one of the most interesting experiences that I had in my lifetime. It took place in Algeria.

At one of the morning staff meetings soon after we arrived, Fred Galanto said that he was going to be taking a trip in the near future way down to the south of Algeria. I don't recall the circumstances, whether somebody had dropped out or what, but there was room for another person and would anyone be interested in going? I checked with Bobbi and got the okay.

Fred and I went off with no more than 12 or 14 people. We flew from Algiers to an oasis town called Djanet, in the southernmost part of Algeria. Mind you, Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa. At its easternmost point, it is farther east than all of Tunisia and at its westernmost point, it is west of much of Morocco. So we were way down in the very south of Algeria, not too far from the border with Libya.

After a night in Djanet, we hiked up to what is called the Tassili Plateau. For a week, we hiked around this plateau. We had Tuareg guides and donkeys which carried all our supplies. We went out in search of paintings done some 5,000 to 10,000 years earlier. These were not cave paintings; they were on recessed walls, not deep in caves. They were done when this area was tropical. You knew that because some of the paintings were of long-necked animals, giraffes, elephants and the like.

These beautiful paintings had been discovered only a few years earlier and had been written about in Horizon magazine of May, 1959. I have the article called "Surprise in the Sahara." A Frenchman named Henri Lhote had gone there and discovered the paintings. An artist named Georges Le Poitevin, who was part of the team, had reproduced the paintings. There was some controversy about whether reproducing them had done any damage to them. I later met Monsieur Le Poitevin. He lived west of Algiers and we bought reproductions of some of these paintings.

I say paintings. They were done by mixing crushed stone and water and they were overlaid at different periods. Our guides wore blue so we called them our *"guides bleus*." They knew where the paintings were and could help us interpret them.

We slept out under the stars, under little overhangs in one of the most remarkable weeks I can recall. I know exactly the timing of that trip. Most of our fellow travelers were French or West Europeans and we got the news, maybe someone had a shortwave radio, of the death of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle died November 9, 1970, so I know that I celebrated my 29th birthday (November 7) on the Tassili Plateau in southern Algeria.

Q: How was de Gaulle viewed by Algerian colleagues?

BROWN: For the French, this was like the death of Churchill or Roosevelt. Even if people did not admire everything about him, there was acknowledgement that he was one of the major figures of the 20th century. I am not sure how the Algerian people viewed de

Gaulle. We didn't talk much about that. It was only a few years earlier that they had won a very bloody revolutionary independence from de Gaulle's France.

Back to your theme about being afraid, I never felt fear but sometimes I look back and think gee, was I naive to go off to this country with my family, small children and no security. You walked into the embassy right off the street, nobody asked any questions.

The famous movie, "The Battle of Algiers," would be shown regularly in Algiers. The scenes of the Casbah suggested the use of terror as we know it today. It was during this time that four airplanes were diverted to the Jordanian desert which leads me to another facet of life in Algeria.

We had a very small American community, a few business people, oil workers and a number of American women married to Algerians. We had an American neighbor up the street, Eldridge Cleaver, the famous Black Panther. He represented the other side of how the Algerians dealt with the United States. They wanted to provide hospitality to Eldridge Cleaver and the Black Panthers, anything to poke their finger in our eye.

Cleaver was a fugitive. He jumped bail in California and fled to Algeria via Cuba. His presence was well known. One time he came into the embassy, ostensibly for some consular business. Unfortunately, when the consul had his back turned, Eldridge Cleaver stole or walked off with the seal. Whatever he did was terribly embarrassing. Otherwise, we weren't very conscious of Eldridge Cleaver but he was there and we were barred from contact with him..

I recall another terrorism-related incident. In June of 1972, an American airline called Western Airlines was flying somewhere on the US West Coast when the plane was hijacked. American authorities gave in to the hijackers and they took that plane all the way across the United States. They released the passengers but forced the crew to fly all the way to Algiers with $500,000 ransom money. One of the pilots told our political officer that this was the first time he had ever been out of the United States and here he was in Algiers.

Two months later it happened again. A plane was hijacked out of Detroit en route to Miami. The hijackers demanded ransom money. The FBI provided it. There was some insistence on the part of the hijackers that the FBI people come to the plane wearing nothing but their underwear so they couldn't be hiding any weapons. The money was delivered, the plane flew on to Boston and then to Algiers.

On this occasion, I was the duty officer so I got the call. I went to my boss, Bill Eagleton, and informed him there was a plane en route. It was a Saturday, so Bill and I decided to play tennis on the lovely clay courts at Montfeld. After each set, Bill would check, call the authorities to see where the plane was, come back out and say, "No, we've got time for another set." Eventually he had to go to the airport.

In both cases, if you had read the Algerian press, you would have imagined they provided red carpet treatment to these hijackers who were fighting the American system. In fact, what they did was put them in the back of a police van and turn most of the money over to the Americans. They didn't provide any real encouragement to the hijackers though they did let them go.

The person who got the red carpet treatment on arrival in Algiers was the President of the Export Import Bank. He had what they were really looking for but symbolically, the plane hijackers received publicity.

In the case of the second plane hijacking, I was listening to the news last year (2011) and heard that a black American had been detained in Portugal; he had been fingered by the FBI as one of the hijackers in that 1972 plane hijacking. This individual settled down in Portugal, married, and had a family there but the FBI tracked him down. They are trying to get him extradited to the United States.

When I read that, I said, "That rings a bell. I remember that particular plane hijacking."

Q: What about the Soviet and maybe the Chinese communist presence in Algeria?

BROWN: I have no recollection whatsoever of the Chinese presence. They probably had an embassy but I don't recall. The Soviets were there and we would occasionally meet some of their officials.

Certainly in the 1970s, Algeria was my introduction to the Cold War. We would hope that the United States would be able to counter and replace the Soviets and their influence there. The Soviets were after a foothold in North Africa. We had two consulates, Constantine in the east and Oran in the west. The one in Oran had as its primary mission observing activities in the port. The Soviets would bring military vessels in there. I wasn't directly involved but I do recall that we were very conscious of growing Soviet presence and influence.

President Boumedienne would make frequent trips to the Soviet Union for medical treatment; he died in Algeria soon after seeking medical treatment in the Soviet Union so we kind of thought he got his comeuppance.

We had to heat our house in the winter. It got pretty cold and believe it or not, in this country with its great supplies of oil and natural gas, we had a coal furnace. I used to go down in the basement and throw coal into the furnace; I think some of it came from the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you have the chance to socialize with the Algerians?

BROWN: With selected people, yes. I mentioned Mr. Bel Hadj, who ran the performing arts center. That's too fancy a name for it. Let's call it a cultural center. For some reason or other, he was quite comfortable working with us when we could bring in performers.

Before I completed my two years there, I was able to send him to the United States on an international visitor grant. I was in the United States when he came to Princeton.

A considerable number of American women were married to Algerians. Remember, a lot of Algerians went to Oklahoma and Texas in the '50s and '60s to study oil and gas technology. These were handsome guys, good looking men who came back with American wives. Quite often these American women found that life in Algeria was not very comfortable. The man they had known in Oklahoma was not exactly the same man when they got back home; especially if they had children, it was going to be very difficult to take those children out without the husband's permission.

One couple whom we got to know very well were Dr. Zachary Brahmi and his wife, Fran. They now live in the US. He was a physician. We got to know them, socialized with them, went east of Algiers to his hometown of Bejaia or Bougie. He had to be very careful and there were times when we sensed that we ought not to have contact. They and a few similar couples were windows on Algerian society.

I recall an interesting couple and exactly how we got to know them I am not sure. But I can see these people, I can see their apartment, I can recall them inviting us on many occasions for dinner. They would serve elaborate Algerian meals; when we reciprocated, they would come but would eat hardly any food. She was so slender, so conscious of her size.

There was an Algerian educated class; most of them had pretty close ties to France. If they hadn't been educated in France, they had traveled there.

Were there a lot of occasions like that? No, but there were enough to give us a window on Algerian society.

Q: Were you dealing with the press, the newspapers?

There wasn't an information officer because there wasn't that much you could do with the press and media but if we did have a visitor, we would try to expose him to at least the cultural writers in the news media. I am not sure we can even say papers, plural. The only one I can recall of any significance was this *El Moudjahid* which was in French.

Which leads to another subject. The Algerians thought of themselves as Arabs but French was the language. The French that I had learned in my four years in Senegal and Cameroon was all I needed really to do business in Algeria. The Algerians were importing Arab language teachers from Egypt. They didn't have them themselves. The French language and French culture were so strong that French was the *lingua franca*. Algerians, many of them, struggled themselves with Arabic.

Q: The interview I did with Dick Parker, who was our ambassador there, said he was at a meeting with President Boumedienne and his cabinet and Boumedienne very pointedly said, "It is ironic that the American ambassador speaks better Arabic than you all do."

BROWN: They were painfully aware of that. I can imagine that they might have joked about it but in other circumstances they probably found it pretty awkward.

I mentioned earlier that well before I thought of doing these interviews, I prepared for my own satisfaction written summaries of my years in Africa. I am going to read three sentences from one because it goes back to that question that you asked:

"We traveled frequently. In retrospect given Algeria's recent bloody war of independence, its overt hostility toward the United States, the dawning of the era of hijacking, the lack of even basic services on many desert routes, the ages of our children and Algeria's later civil war, we made some remarkable trips. We certainly did not live behind high walls."

That was the case. We took many day trips in and around Algiers. We really loved the amazing Roman ruins. There were sites within an hour or two drive of Algiers. One was west of Algiers, a place called Tipaza. For others you might have to take a longer trip, east to the area near Constantine.Djemila and Timgad had remarkable Roman ruins.

In the fall of 1971, my parents-in-law visited. Bobbi was fortunate. Her parents came when we were in Dakar, again in Yaoundé and a third time in Algiers. Each time, it was an opportunity to take a trip so we went with them out to the east beyond Constantine, stopping to see the Roman ruins. I know it was an eye-opener for them and of course, our children loved seeing their grandparents. It was very special.

I made a lot of observation and reporting trips. The consul in Oran was a fellow named Glen Cella. Glen and I got along well. We both liked sports. We hit it off well, although we came from very different backgrounds.

Glen and I decided to take a lengthy reporting trip together. He came to Algiers and we headed east to make a big loop. We decided we were going to share the driving so I drove much of the first day, then Glen took over. Right away, I realized I was not particularly comfortable. I discovered that Glen had grown up in New York City where he didn't have a car, didn't learn to drive until he was probably in his 20s.

I said, "How about I do all the driving?" He said, "Fine" and it was a wonderful arrangement. I was much more comfortable doing the driving and he was much more comfortable being a passenger.

We went east, stopped in Constantinople and then headed down into the desert to the oasis town of Ghardaia. I left Glen there. He was going to take a plane to a place way down in the south called Tamanrasset and I drove back alone — 600 kilometers via the oasis town of Laghouat. I remember very clearly that it was May 1, International Labor Day, another day on which the Algerians let their socialist or their leftist credentials be known.

Glen Cella was replaced in Oran by a fellow named Bob Maxim. When we were in Dakar, Bob Maxim and his wife were in Nouakchott, Mauritania. That was the time of the Middle East Six Day War. The Mauritanians broke relations with the U.S. and Bob and his wife had to pack up all their belongings, using paper towels, and evacuate to Dakar. So only a few years later, we ran into them again in Algeria.

I should say a little bit more about our personal life in Algeria. Our children were small but they started school there. This was the first time they went to any sort of formal school, nursery school.

My boss was a man named David Burns. David was an avid jazz player. He once went on a trip and came back with a string bass. He bought two seats on the airplane, one for himself and one for Mr. Bass because he didn't want to put this big stringed instrument in the hold of the airplane. I think Dave's mind was on jazz as much as anything else.

His wife, Sandy, taught at the school, a dear friend. My children looked at Mrs. Burns like an aunt. In addition to their little formal schooling, they just loved Sandy Burns. They lived not too far from us in a very nice house and they did quite a bit of representational work. We did minimal representation just because there weren't that many opportunities. We used the ambassador's residence and the PAO would host the occasional representational event.

In the summer of 1971, my sister Jannet, who is 13 years younger than I am, which means at the time she was about 16 years old, was entrusted by my parents to visit us. She had never been outside the United States. My parents took her to New York, put her on the plane to fly from New York to Paris, change planes and fly from Paris to Algiers. I went to the airport around midday to meet her. There were four flights a day from Paris.

You could stand on a deck and see people coming off the plane and I looked and I looked. My sister was not there. My parents had dropped her at the airport in New York and gone on vacation. There was a telephone strike in the United States at the time, not that telephone calls were very easy anyway. I couldn't reach them and I was distressed.

I went out to meet the second flight and the third flight of the day and still no sister. Only by chance, 24 hours later, did I decide to make one more try. I went to the airport and there was my sister. Just an example of the way things can sometimes go awry. When my parents spoke of the date, they spoke of the date she would be leaving the United States. Somehow I put that date in my head as the date she would be arriving in Algiers. If she was leaving New York on August 16th, let's say, she would arrive in Algiers August 17th. It is a small anecdote but I mention it because today with email, there would be no confusion. At that time, with our limited means of communication and a telephone strike in the United States, there was total confusion and a great deal of fear for 24 hours.

Q: What was the Casbah like when you were there?

BROWN: I remember walking with my sister through the Casbah of Algiers. It fits the stereotype; narrow, twisting streets, laundry hanging out everywhere, Algerian women wearing the traditional face covering and long white attire.

Q: Were their faces covered?

BROWN: Yes, not everyone but these people who had not been influenced by the French, very traditional. There was an open market. You would see animal parts and I mean every part of the animal hanging out there. Music playing, trash in the streets, it wasn't clean. It wasn't fancy and it probably wasn't that large an area of Algiers either.

I remember going to Tunis with Bobbi for a meeting. There is a little part of Tunis that visitors go to that is known for bird cages. My goodness, it was clean, well painted, everything maintained in an attractive style to please foreign visitors. The Algiers Casbah was 180 degrees different. There was no pretense, no dressing it up for visitors. It was narrow twisting streets, paint peeling but lively.

Back to the summer of 1971, when my sister came, we took another of these memorable family trips. We drove west from Algiers, spent the night in Oran, crossed the border beyond a town called Tlemcen and into Oujda in Morocco and stayed in Fez for several nights. We visited the famous ruins at Volubilis where I saw mosaics for the first time.

We visited Tangier, recalling that I had once been assigned there, and then continued all the way across Spain, through Seville and Cordoba, to Madrid, where I took my sister to a bull fight before we put her on a flight back to the U.S. We then went on to San Sebastian to visit friends of Bobbi's and came back via a stop in Granada.

We spoke very little Spanish and I joke that we survived on three words – gazpacho, paella and sangria.

We cut costs by traveling to Europe from Spanish enclaves in North Africa. En route, we went from Ceuta past Gibraltar to Algeciras; returning, we crossed the Mediterranean from Malaga to Melilla. These were internal Spanish sailings and so our travel costs were much reduced. After a month long trip, we came back to Algiers with a lot of recreation and not too much rest but it was part of our total educational experience.

Early on in Algiers, we got a dog. We met a Frenchman who had a kennel. He was very reluctant to allow us to take the dog we immediately focused on but finally, when he realized we were going to be a good family, he let us purchase her.

We named this wonderful black cocker spaniel 'Tar' and Tar accompanied us for the next 15 years -- Algeria, back to the United States, the Soviet Union. Eventually we buried her in the back yard in France. A much traveled member of the family.

In 1972, I had a chance to go to Rome on a pouch run. For some reason, they were looking for someone to carry the diplomatic pouch to Rome. Of course, I used my free

time there for a day or so to look around Rome. One of the people I contacted was Henry Boguslawski, the Polish-American businessman we met when we were in Yaoundé.

I learned through meeting him on this trip to Rome and then in New York that he was a wealthy man through his art collection. He had an amazing life story of being arrested by the Russians during the Second World War, was freed, spent some time in Iran. I don't believe he had any children. He has passed away. The last time we saw him was in New York in the 1972-73 period.

When I came back from that brief trip to Rome, we took another family trip within Algeria. Again I ask, was I foolhardy? Was I naïve? We drove almost 2,000 miles over eight days, just Bobbi and me and our two children down into the desert from one oasis to another. I have extensive notes on that trip and I would describe going from oasis X to oasis Y not really knowing whether we would see anybody along the way, hoping the road would be open, that sand wouldn't be blowing across it.

Much of the desert, by the way, was not sand. Much of it was just barren, flat, and rocky.

We would see camel caravans. At one point I stopped and there, several hundred yards off the road, was a tent and a man gesturing to us. We got out of the car and went over. He took us into his tent and gave us milk to drink. I let it collect on my upper lip so it would look as though I was drinking a lot of it. He had small children running around. And then we went on our way.

The unfortunate part of that trip was that after all these years in Africa, we got careless at one point and I asked for bottled water by asking in French for "water in a bottle." I think all they did was run some tap water into a bottle and very quickly Bobbi and both children were seriously ill, almost life threateningly in the case of the children, ill with diarrhea and infections.

We got back to Algiers and I thought we would get medical attention and rest there. We did go see the doctor but the kids kept getting worse and we had to evacuate them to the American Hospital in Paris. I was really at that time torn between my job and my family. I reluctantly went along to the American Hospital, got them all installed there and then turned around and came back.

This is all in the form of a confession. This was not an easy point in my professional life or my personal life. I really should have spent more time with Bobbi and children at that hospital. But I felt that I had to get back to the office. My job seemed important. I was always very dedicated to my work. I would go in on Saturdays and the like and I couldn't let my job not be done.

Bobbi and children were in the American Hospital in Paris for about three weeks. Her mother came out from the United States to help. This led to some hard talks about priorities. It was a very difficult period and it was sad that it came at the end of our six years in Africa where we had the normal ups and downs but nothing this serious. It taught

me a lesson. Happily I am still married to the same woman and my two daughters have grown up and are very happy mothers themselves. We survived it but it was a tough period.

Q: You left there in '72?

BROWN: 1972. One of the last things we did was sell the trusty Volkswagen straight back that we had purchased in 1966 just before we went to Africa. That car had taken us through six years, really a reliable vehicle.

Again, just another couple footnotes.

One of the most interesting American families we met during our stay in Algiers was that of Malcolm Kerr. He and his wife were on a Fulbright scholarship traveling through North Africa when they stayed with us. Malcolm Kerr eventually became President of the American University of Beirut; he was a very astute student of the Arab world and one of the best friends the Arab world could ever have had. He was assassinated in Beirut in 1984.

Among their children was a son named Steve, who went on to become a National Basketball Association star with the Chicago Bulls and San Antonio Spurs. We knew him briefly when he was just a little kid, running around that big house we had in Algiers.

Malcolm Kerr's father was a professor at Princeton and we saw them for the last time at Princeton which is the next stage of my life.

I was in Algeria from August 1970 to August 1972; on March 10, 1972, we had a visit from Nicholas Katzenbach. He had distinguished himself as Attorney General under President Johnson.

I don't know what brought him to Algiers, except that by that time, he was a high-level lawyer for IBM. So after meeting him at a reception, I said to myself, "Gosh, I am meeting these interesting people. I should make a note about this" and beginning March 10, 1972, I began keeping a journal.

I have kept a diary virtually every day since, sometimes writing down simple memories, nothing more than that I listened to a baseball game but in other cases, making notes about my experiences. It was all inspired by the visit of Nicholas Katzenbach.

Princeton, New Jersey (1972-1973)

So after six years in Africa — four years in French-speaking black Africa and two years in North Africa, it was time to come home. I was due to return to the United States. I decided to request a year of University training and wrote a letter outlining my qualifications — more than seven years USIA experience and at least ten more years of potential service training — for mid-career training.

USIA agreed and decided I should apply to the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University. I had to present letters of recommendations, transcripts and more for this rather prestigious opportunity. Malcolm Kerr was one of the people I wrote to for a recommendation and he replied with a very personal letter.

In May, 1972, I received a letter from the Dean of the Graduate School welcoming me as a Visiting Student under the Mid-Career Program of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. I was informed that the tuition fee of $3,150 would be paid by the Department of State.

When I joined the Foreign Service in 1966, Africa was what caught my fancy. That was the Kennedy era with a focus on the third world.

1972, was the Nixon détente period and without a drop of Slavic blood and no background whatever in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, I said I'd like to do Soviet studies. I was told that somebody in the European area office who was responsible for clearing on these assignments didn't turn over the piece of paper where my name was. If he had done so, someone might have questioned my lack of Soviet credentials but no one noticed and I received the Princeton assignment.

Princeton did not have a Soviet studies program per se or famous Sovietologists but they had plenty of people for me to interact with. Fred Starr, who was teaching Russian history, went on to be president of Tulane University, then Oberlin College and then he came to Washington with a focus on Central Asian Republics. He had musical talent (jazz) and had lived in Moscow where he actually played with little factory orchestras.

Steve Cohen taught Soviet political history. His wife became the editor of Nation magazine. Steve, Jewish and an expert on Bukharin, taught a course on Soviet political history.

Probably most notable was James Billington, who became the Librarian of Congress. He was the author of "The Icon and the Ax" and was teaching a course on Russian cultural history. It was an idiosyncratic course, one he shaped entirely himself. He became an advisor to President Reagan and I would eventually see him often in Moscow.

We moved into the Magee Apartments, junior faculty apartments on Lake Carnegie; we could walk right up to the campus. It was a great way to come back to the United States. We were an hour or so from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where Bobbi's family was and she

went there frequently with our children to visit. Bobbi volunteered at the Princeton University Art Museum. We attended a lot of events at the McCarter Theater.

We developed a large number of friends our own age in Princeton. There were 12 mid-career fellows. Three were from State Department and the others were a cross section of Washington executive agencies. The mid-career program was headed by Jay Bleiman, a very good guy who was very attentive to the needs of mid-career fellows.

We couldn't have a dog in the apartment and so I imposed upon my parents; would they take Tar? So we drove the dog to Pittsburgh. I heard later my father was pretty resentful they were going to have to put up with this dog for a year. He didn't really think it was appropriate for us to ask him to do it. At the end of the year, he was so attached to that dog he could hardly give her back to us.

The dog, by the way, stayed in Algiers after we left and a friend put her on a plane; Algiers to Paris and Paris to New York. I will never forget going to Kennedy Airport and finding a friendly person in the air freight office there. On a dark night, we went out on the tarmac at the international arrivals area to find our dog. There was no question when the dog emerged from the cage that I was the rightful owner. She was just delighted to see me and vice versa.

I guess under any circumstances, people love their dogs. I was recently in Key West and was reminded that Harry Truman said if you are in Washington and want a friend, get a dog. Well, certainly there is the Foreign Service attachment to animals; when we hear about people being evacuated from various places, they leave behind photo albums and everything else but they must take the dog. We were very happy to have the dog safely back with us.

Princeton was also a mixed emotional experience in some ways. It was a great way to reenter the United States, to come back after six years abroad, but it was also a little hard on my confidence. Number one, I didn't have a background in Soviet affairs. My experience had been in Africa. I interacted with some people who were teaching that part of the world but as you know, the experience of a Foreign Service officer who has been out there doing a particular job and the perspective of an academic are very different. I can remember feeling a lack of confidence. I didn't know how to address the questions that academics might put to me even if I'd lived and worked in Algeria for two years or in Africa for six years.

I took classes on Soviet cultural history (Billington) , Soviet political history (Cohen) and Russian history (Starr) but I gave myself a free ride; I only monitored them. I didn't take them for credit. I didn't take the tests. It wasn't a demanding academic experience the first semester.

I felt the need for a project of my own and I interacted with a professor named Robert Tucker. He was on the faculty of the Woodrow Wilson School and had been at the American Embassy in Moscow in the late '40s; if I recall correctly, he had married a

Russian woman and because of that, he had had to leave and come to the United States. It was a U.S. government requirement that he come back and I think it was touch and go whether he would be able to bring his Russian wife with him but he did. I don't think he continued on with Foreign Service. He was teaching some aspect of Soviet studies and he became my adviser.

I said I would like to do research on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges. Out of that, I produced what I thought was quite a good paper on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges from 1955 to 1972, from the first formal cultural exchange agreement during the Eisenhower Administration. Rather than simply list programs, I looked at them in a political context and that was the beginning of wisdom for me as far as the Soviet Union.

I saw cultural exchanges not as just an end in themselves but as part of the political relationship. Cultural relations were the first thing you suggested when you wanted to imply a warming relation, the first thing you tried. It might be the New York Philharmonic performing in Moscow or later, ping pong diplomacy with the Chinese.

On the other side of the ledger, when things went badly and you wanted or had to indicate a deteriorating relationship, you didn't immediately impose embargoes or launch missiles. You suspended cultural exchanges. This was your way of showing that you were upset with the behavior of the other country.

So in 1972, I was writing about it in an academic context. I covered this trend over a fairly short period, but you could see it continue almost through the end of the Soviet era. I would see it in practice a few years later. Come 1980, the Soviets were hosting the Olympics but they had invaded Afghanistan so we suspended cultural relations.

So I wrote this paper for Professor Tucker on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges in a political context and I got a very nice, very positive reception from him. I still have the note he wrote. It said: "A careful, thoughtful scholarly review, informative and demonstrating again the uses of history. I enjoyed reading it."

Q: Was George Kennan there?

BROWN: George Kennan was there. Kennan came twice, my diary says, to speak in classes. Professors would invite Kennan to come in and speak to the class. He would have been in his late 60s and was held in very high regard. He was resident in Princeton and his word was gospel. I never got to know him personally but I did have a couple of chances to hear him speak. A very thoughtful individual.

Midway through the year in Princeton, I had a call from a man I had known in my Dakar assignment, Kintzing Emmons. He was by now out of the Foreign Service and teaching at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He said, "They are looking for someone to head the foreign studies program at Georgia State University. Would you be interested?"

I was mildly interested, thought about it, read up on Atlanta. Bobbi was pretty much thinking we had done our time in the Foreign Service so I went to Atlanta in January of 1973 and interviewed for this job as the foreign student adviser at Georgia State University. I was so serious about doing it that I looked around and made some inquiries about cost of living and housing. The man I interviewed with said, "Don't burn your bridges. I have a lot of other people looking at this job."

I stayed the night with my friend in Atlanta and the next morning, he said "I've got some bad news for you. They don't want you in that job. They think you are too interested in material things of life like housing and salary and don't have enough passion for the job."

Well, it told me something about myself. I guess I needed to show more rah, rah passion. I should have gone in with my school sweater on and not worried about practical things like my children's education, whatever. But that wasn't then my nature, nor is it now. I have a New England reserve that sometimes works to my benefit and sometimes works against me.

In retrospect I am really glad they did not accept me because it might have provided a few years of interesting work but nothing would have given me anything like what the Foreign Service gave me. I am very glad.

One other recollection from those Princeton years; it reflects how my mind operates. One day I said to myself, "Gosh. It has been exactly one half year, 26 weeks since we came back from Algeria. Will I ever again have an opportunity, an experience like those six years in Africa? Will my life ever again be as interesting as it was during those six years? I have been back for six months. I guess I am just fated to live out the rest of my life in boredom or something."

Well, that would not be the case. The best years were still ahead.

At the end of the academic year, as was (and is) my habit, I wrote a letter to USIA Director James Keith and to Princeton President William Bowen summarizing how (in three ways) my Princeton year had benefited me. I received replies from both men and from Jay Bleiman thanking me.

Washington, DC (1973-1977)

Princeton is only about three hours' drive from Washington and I was able to come down and talk to people frequently. Since I was changing areas, I didn't know many of the players. I knew some people from my African experience but my entire Foreign Service career for all practical purposes had been overseas so I didn't know too many of the people in Washington.

I don't know exactly how it happened but I learned there would be an opportunity to spend a year in State Department. I don't know what label they gave to it but it seemed like part of your overall education in the Foreign Service. State Department liked it because they didn't have to pay for me. They would provide an assignment and USIA would continue to pay my salary.

At the time, it seemed logical that I would go to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (CU) and perhaps be the Soviet desk person for cultural affairs. Somebody, I can't recall who, suggested that that would be a pretty narrow slice. I could perhaps be assigned to the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, EUR/SOV, in the Bureau of European Affairs. And so, after a lot of back and forth, I was assigned to the Soviet desk in the State Department.

In the spring of that year, 1973, we bought a house in Chevy Chase but the house would not be ready until August. My job began in June and so for the entire summer I left my family in Princeton and commuted; I would take the train down on Sunday night and come back on Friday night.

I very clearly remember my first day on the job — June, 18, 1973. We were all invited to go to the White House because President Nixon was receiving Leonid Brezhnev on the White House lawn. I stood in a long line and was way back but I could see the ceremony.

The hierarchy in State Department at that time was as follows: the assistant secretary of state for European affairs was Walter Stoessel. The deputy assistant secretary was Jack Armitage. Closer to my level, the office director was Jack Matlock. His deputy was Bill Luers. And then, the office had four sub-units; bilateral, multilateral, economic and exchanges. I was assigned to the bilateral office headed by a man named Bill Dyess.

I didn't realize it at the time but I would be interacting with these people over the next 17 years or so until 1990 when I left the Soviet Union. Jack Matlock was the hard-charging office director. I met him there. I would know him later when he was briefly the chargé in Moscow in 1981. I would know him again when he was on the NSC as the Soviet affairs adviser to President Reagan in the mid 1980s. And most directly, I would know him as my ambassador in Moscow from 1987 to 1990.

Many people in that office became colleagues. Dick Combs was a political officer and then DCM in Moscow. Dick Miles became the consul general in Leningrad. The head of the multilateral section was J. Stapleton Roy.

My slice of the pie was rather narrow. Much of it involved answering congressional inquiries. Every day, we would have a stack of "Congressionals" to answer, correspondence forwarded by members of Congress. Much of it had to do with Jewish emigration. This was long before computers but they did have some sort of technology that allowed you to crank out boilerplate responses. We answered mountains of congressional correspondence.

I had a couple of other portfolios that fascinated me. One was the working conditions of journalists in the Soviet Union. This was before the Helsinki agreements but I discovered in that office that there were files going back to the 1930s (and I hope they exist in the archives somewhere today) about American journalists working in Moscow, the conditions and some of the interesting personalities who had gone out there as journalists.

One congressional inquiry had to do with sending mail to the Soviet Union. I looked around and there was no boilerplate language so I took an initiative. I called the postal service and maybe the Justice Department and I got factual information that was more than just boilerplate. I put this into a letter back to the congressman that he could share with his constituent.

I would attend the weekly staff meetings presided over by Jack Matlock. I will speak more about him later; I have the highest regard for him professionally. He knew his subject in 1973 and he knew it even more in 1990. He has written one of the great books on the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was privileged to work for him in various guises. There were many times when it was wonderful to have such an extremely competent, knowledgeable boss and ambassador.

But there were also times when he was a terror to work for. He had no patience for the slightest foible and I used to go to these staff meetings wondering if today might be my day to be singled out for some sort of demerit or something I had done wrong. My boss got called on the carpet regularly at staff meetings. If something wasn't being done on time, something was done in sloppy fashion, you heard about it publicly.

On one particular day, I heard my name and I thought "oh, what have I done wrong?" I was going to shrink under the desk. But lo and behold, I was being singled out for this letter about postal deliveries that I had prepared because I hadn't just gone to the boiler plate. I had actually gotten on the phone, taken some initiative, come up with more than just standard verbiage. I had gone the extra mile and I was being singled out in this rather embarrassing way.

It wasn't put quite like this but the message was "he not only did this but he is a USIA guy. He is not even a State Department officer but he was able to think and reason and take initiative." It was somewhat condescending but I accepted it.

I will say immodestly I got a lot of plaudits that year, most notably from a man whom I really admire and that's Bill Luers, the deputy. If I had prepared a draft that Bill Luers

had some question about, instead of writing "please see me," Bill would come in and sit across from me and put his feet up on the desk and say, "This draft you have here, did you ever think about maybe approaching it this way?" and I could say, "Ah, I see what you are talking about." He was like a friend, a mentor and I retained a couple of memos he wrote to people in USIA in which he sang my praises. I really appreciated it. Bill Luers, a wonderful man, went on to become ambassador to Prague and president of the Metropolitan Museum.

Many years later, I was visiting Prague. I went to the opera one night and I met this very sophisticated Czech couple and started talking with them. Then I said, "Have you ever heard of William Luers, Ambassador Luers?" Yes, certainly, they had not only heard of him but felt the same way that I did. Well, I wrote him a note and said, "You probably don't remember me but blah, blah, blah" and of course I got a personal letter back. I hoped he would remember me and he did; he wrote a very flattering letter.

Q: How stood relations with the Soviet Union?

BROWN: On the surface, this was a pretty good period. Brezhnev received on the White House lawn by Nixon.This was one year after Nixon had gone to Moscow and a couple of years after he had gone to China. These were pretty heady times in our relations with communist countries.

Of course, it was also the Watergate era, the seeds of Watergate had already been planted. Nixon had won the overwhelming victory in '72.

Q: On the Soviet desk, did you feel the hand of Henry Kissinger?

BROWN: Oh, indeed, yes. Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. I really loved watching Kissinger press conferences or his extemporaneous remarks because unlike his predecessor, William Rogers, who was pretty bland, Kissinger was interesting. I admired his ability to analyze, to articulate.

We sent a lot of memos to the secretary of state. I recall one in particular. Our Moscow embassy suggested that a certain member of the politburo might be invited to the United States and said that at age 54, he was one of the youngest members of the politburo. I was in charge of drafting the paperwork. The substance was easy. The paperwork was what was hard. It would have to go through so many different layers to get cleared and then to the secretary to decide.

There it was decided that it wouldn't be to the secretary with an attachment but to the president for a decision and it went back and forth and back and forth. I started out writing that "at 54, so and so is one of the younger members of the politburo." I joked that by the time I got done with it, I would have to say "at 55 he is one of the younger members" and the person who takes over for me will be saying "at 56 he is one of the younger members of the politburo."

It was very, very frustrating to try to move paper through the system. If you only had to get it as far as the deputy assistant secretary of state, that was okay but to get it up to the seventh floor was next to impossible.

On a beautiful fall weekend in October, I was the duty officer. That's funny to say because everybody came in on weekends but I happened to be duty officer on the weekend of the Yom Kippur War. I remember being there from early morning until late afternoon and then coming back in the evening because Mr. Kissinger wanted a list of all U.S.-Soviet activities, interactions, meetings, exchanges, whatever so that we would know what tools we had if we wanted to suspend something to indicate unhappiness.

So I worked hard but it was a very valuable year. I am so glad that I didn't end up in that job in the cultural exchange bureau. The value was in meeting these people with whom I would have continuing contact and in seeing all the issues, bilateral, multilateral.

And just getting a feeling of how State Department worked. These were the days you could just walk in the front door of State Department.

I did have some contacts with people at the Soviet Embassy. I was careful but it was all right to accept luncheon invitations with them. I tracked them down a couple of years later when I went to Moscow.

Q: Well, they were trying to make a book on you, I guess.

BROWN: I'm sure. If they wanted to know that I enjoy symphonic music and was a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, they could write that down in their book.

Q: Did you get a feel about the influence and importance of Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador?

BROWN: Not so much there as when I went to Moscow in 1978 and worked for Ambassador Toon. Ambassador Toon never let a day go by in which he did not remark on the failure of Washington to make full advantage of its ambassador in Moscow. Dobrynin's role as the point of contact was taken for granted. I didn't have any direct dealings with him, maybe I shook his hand at a reception at the Soviet Embassy.

Q: Did you find that you were, I won't say discriminated against, but the fact that you didn't speak Russian and hadn't served in Moscow, was this a hindrance?

BROWN: No, it might have been my own personal hang-up for a while but as I say, without being immodest, I pulled my own weight. You didn't have to speak Russian on the job as long as you just kept drafting. I went beyond drafting Congressionals. I was asked to draft some speeches. I drafted one for Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and was commended for that.

After a while, it felt like a football team. We were down there in the trenches. If you did your blocking and everything else, they didn't care what your religion was, whether you were USIA or State or whether you spoke Russian or not.

I do remember one time when an outsider came in and was asking me all these questions. He was getting ready to go to the Soviet Union. He was thinking about going to Novosibirsk and the question was whether to travel there by train or by plane and when he discovered I had never set foot in the Soviet Union, he sat back in his chair and decided my thoughts on the matter were not really worth listening to.

Otherwise, no, I didn't feel a hang-up.

Q: Did you feel the effects of Watergate and the evolving demise of the Nixon presidency?

BROWN: No. As we all know it was in the news, not quite as much in '72-'73 as in '73-'74 leading to the resignation. Like a lot of people, I guess I took a fiendish delight in seeing Nixon squirm but I don't recall that it had much of an impact on our relations and certainly not on our workload.

Beginning with this assignment, I would spend four years in Washington. This was the longest period I ever spent in Washington. During my 31-year Foreign Service career, I spent a total of only ten years in the United States and two of those were outside Washington. I used to joke that I couldn't keep a job; every one of those four years from 1973 to 1977, I did something different. The first year was on the Soviet desk.

It was understood, since I had this experience and was now well known in USIA, that I would go to work in USIA's Office of Eastern Europe. So I got the job of desk officer for Romania and Czechoslovakia. There were four desk officers and it was divided so you had one big country and one small country. The big countries were Soviet Union, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. I say big in terms of the amount of activities and programs we had. The small countries were Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Once again, I ran into a group of people that I would interact with quite a bit over the next few years, although not as much as those people from the Soviet desk. The person I have to cite above everybody else was John W. Shirley, known to all as Jock, who became a mentor, a friend and a man I really admired.

Jock was the office director. His deputy was Gifford Malone, a State Department officer. Giff's father was the well-known biographer of Thomas Jefferson. I remember Jock trying to convince Giff to enlist his father to be the speaker at the ceremonial opening of a USIA activity in Eastern Europe.

My fellow desk officers, John Kordek, Bob Coonrod and Mike Hoffman, were good guys. They had good experiences in USIA as well. So we were a pretty happy group.

Here I have to say, no disrespect to my State Department friends, that while working on the Soviet desk was professionally to my great advantage, it was never a relaxed, happy environment. People were workaholics, working late in the evening, working weekends.

When I got to USIA, it seemed as if people had a more balanced life. Jock Shirley on weekends went horseback riding. I found out that his wife, the special assistant to Assistant Secretary of State Walter Stoessel, was a woman with whom I had gone to Fletcher. I knew her as Kathy Horberg; now she was Kathy Shirley.

So USIA was an easier, more fun environment. We did our work seriously but I was much more relaxed. Jock Shirley took a liking to me. I was very fortunate. I did my job well. I was careful. I crossed the 't's and dotted the 'i's and I drafted well and Jock liked that.

He was responsible for my first trip to Eastern Europe. Jock had grown up in Hungary during the war and was a fluent speaker of Hungarian. As early as October, 1974, soon after I arrived at USIA as a desk officer, Jock sent me out on a two-week trip to Eastern Europe, specifically to Bucharest for an exhibit opening, "Photo USA."

The ambassador there was Harry Barnes, a very effusive outgoing ambassador. Everybody knew Harry Barnes. We went from Bucharest to Ploesti for a performance by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. I don't know whether Ambassador Barnes did it deliberately or not but he arranged it in such a way that I was sitting in the limousine in the normal position for the ambassador, back seat on the right. I didn't mistakenly get in that seat; he maneuvered it so that I sat there. We arrive. The door swings open and I step out and people think I am the ambassador. Harry Barnes emerges and of course, ahhh, Mr. Ambassador.

I continued on in that trip, thanks to Jock Shirley through Budapest and to Vienna, Bratislava, Prague and Warsaw. It was my first ever exposure to Eastern Europe.

I still have a two page memorandum, random impressions of the visit to Eastern Europe.

Q: What were we doing in Romania. Ceausescu was on our good books but also a rather disgusting person?

BROWN: A disgusting person but he was our good guy. Remember, Nixon visited Romania; Ceausescu never joined the Warsaw Pact. He allowed a certain amount of economic freedom and he poked his finger in the eye of the Russians. Most importantly, he allowed us to open a big American library. That was a major symbolic presence in Eastern Europe.

A colleague of mine named Steve Chaplin was the library director. We had a very active, high profile cultural exchange program in Romania with a library. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra was performing there and in other eastern European cities. We, Bobbi and I, had heard them at Wolf Trap during the summer so I had a chance to talk with some of

the performers, flutist Carol Wincenc and a Wooster classmate named Skip James, both about that concert and about their tour.

I went back to Bucharest in 1986, 12 years later, and I remember going back to that big central square in Bucharest and having the feeling that there was no life. If not a ghost town, it was a very sad lifeless spiritual desert. That's the impression that hit me in Romania. I don't recall I noticed it so much on my first visit. We had the cultural program so it didn't hit me in 1974 the way it did 12 years later in 1986.

Q: What was your impression of Budapest?

BROWN: I remember distinctly one impression I have shared with a lot of Hungarian and American friends. It was fall, late October. I was there over a weekend and on Sunday night, Hungarians were coming back from their weekend trips to the countryside. They were coming back in droves by public transportation. They were coming back with flowers and mushrooms.

This sounds so corny, so cliché but I am saying to myself, these are just normal people like all the rest of us. These were families with cares about getting up tomorrow and going to work, putting their kids through school and visiting grandma in the country and coming back with flowers and mushrooms. As I say, it sounds corny and cliché but it was breaking down my images of this communist-controlled robotic society.

I was also amazed by the architecture, standing on the Buda side looking down and across the Danube at the Parliament Building. It wasn't something I associated with communist Eastern Europe. Our PAO there had a beautiful residence that was used quite extensively for cultural programming.

On this same trip, I went from Vienna to Bratislava where we had an exhibit. I don't remember the theme but it was comparable to the large traveling exhibits we had in the Soviet Union. We had a geodesic dome and guides speaking the local language. Locals would line up at great length to travel through the exhibit. Just before I went, there was a big windstorm that did severe damage to the exhibit in Bratislava. It took away some of its show time there.

I continued on to Warsaw and visited a Polish couple, Steven Garczyinski and his wife Zosia. They took me out on All Saints day, November 1, to a cemetery; as far as you could see, there were candles burning. It made such an impression upon me. The religious atmosphere was powerful; this wasn't godless communism. I didn't feel the least concerned for my safety but I always wanted to make sure the people we talked to I wasn't going to in any way endanger them, put them in an awkward or embarrassing situation.

I went to their apartment. They were an older couple, intellectuals. They had been through the war. I am afraid they gave me too much food, more than I realized. They had

very little food to give and what they put out there probably came from their very limited supply.

I would point out, because it kept coming back to me during all the time I was in the communist world, there was no question we were monitored. Our activities were subject to surveillance but I never for one minute worried about it. I never really felt that anything I was doing was illegal or inappropriate; the only concern I ever had along the line was that my contact with local people might be dangerous to them.

Even later on, when I traveled through the Soviet Union with colleagues and someone would say, "See that guy over there? He is monitoring us," I usually didn't see it. I know it happened but it didn't affect me that much. As I used to say so often in Moscow, if they want to write in their files that I have a deep interest in classical music, so be it. Let them do it.

USIA's director at the time was James Keogh. Mr. Keogh decided that it didn't make sense to have separate Eastern and Western European offices. He combined them into a European office to parallel what the State Department had and he tapped Jock Shirley to be the director for Europe and Jock asked me if I would take a position he created called staff director. It was a little bit controversial to some people who were senior to me because Jock had a deputy for Eastern Europe and a deputy for Western Europe and a policy adviser and an executive officer. I was above desk officers but beneath all these other people.

Again, without being immodest, it was Jock's way of saying he respected my work, my attention to detail, my ability to draft. I was very flattered to go work for Jock Shirley as his special assistant, his staff director.

That year, 1975 to 1976, while I was the staff director in the European office of USIA, Jock decided to have a European PAO conference in Vienna, all 35 public affairs officers. My job was to make sure that the conference was put together with all the proper preparation and documents and did we ever amass a mountain of paper. It came off well and I got to go to Vienna and meet all the players. Jock would quite often point to me; it was very flattering and good for my career.

Following that, I went to Budapest and met Jock there. Jock had very close ties to Budapest and so it was fun meeting him there and professionally very interesting.

On that trip, I also went for the first time to Moscow and Leningrad. I didn't know I would end up spending many years in Moscow and Leningrad. I had friends there from my year in the State Department.

There was a cultural presentation by folk singer Roy Clark and I had a chance to attend a reception at the ambassador's residence, Spaso House and also go to an apartment where Roy Clark performed for a small group of invited guests. It was a little slice of something I would be experiencing in much greater depth later on.

Somewhere during the course of that year, I was assigned as information officer in Moscow and Jock again was instrumental. It would mean a year of Russian language training. I would go out to Moscow in 1977 as the IO, information officer.

Well, lo and behold, during the course of that same year, they decided to extend the incumbent information officer, Jack Harrod, by one year so the job wouldn't open up until 1978. At that point, Jock could have said it was all down the drain — "You will have to do something else" — but he didn't.

He arranged for me to have not only a full year, 44 weeks, of Russian language at FSI in Rosslyn but to have a second year at the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch, Germany. So I had two full years to prepare for my Moscow assignment. In addition to the language training, the spinoff benefits, the people I met, were extremely valuable.

Bobbi wasn't keen on going to the Soviet Union. She thought when we came back from six years in Africa that I might change careers, that we wouldn't go back overseas again, but she reluctantly agreed to two years in Moscow. When I came home one night and said there had been a slight change of plans, we were going to have not only my language training here but a year in Germany followed by three years in Moscow, I was invited to sleep out back in a tent. She wasn't too happy. The story turns out much better; she thrived in our Moscow assignment. She threw herself into life in Moscow, took full advantage of our three years there and was with me when I opted for a second three-year assignment in Moscow.

I should mention that during those four years, 1973 to 1977, any number of things in our personal lives impacted on our Foreign Service experience. Just to list them: For the first time in our lives, in 1973, we became home owners in Chevy Chase using money we had saved when we lived in Africa to make a down payment.

Our children walked to a neighborhood school, the same neighborhood school that kids walk to today, Somerset in Chevy Chase. Our kids were in second through fifth grade and kindergarten through third grade during those four years.

We joined Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, where we established lifelong friendships; some of our best and closest friends to this day are in that church. I also joined the church choir under the direction of a fellow named Ken Lowenberg. Singing anthems on Sunday and special concerts a couple times a year became part of my musical education, something that had a profound impact on me when I was overseas. Music and the Foreign Service went hand in hand for me.

One year, we had vacation and on the recommendation of a friend, we went to Maine and fell in love with the state. In 1976, we purchased a small cabin on a lake, on Pitcher Pond in the town of Lincolnville Center. We usually link it with Camden, Maine, because that is a better known spot.

That cabin in Maine became the place we headed for anytime we had home leave. It was very comforting when we were overseas to know, when we were on home leave, that we would not need to stay with family or friends or look for a place to rent. We had the cabin in Maine. It also had a direct impact on a couple of our Foreign Service experiences.

For the first time in six years, we were closer to our parents and to our siblings. Bobbi taught at Sidwell Friends School, at the lower school. That was very consistent with her educational experience; she had gone to a Friends school. Her brother by that time was headmaster of Westtown Friends School and later on our daughter Sarah would come back from overseas and attend Westtown.

Maybe I could turn quickly to the year at FSI. I remember July 4, 1976 celebrating 200 years of American independence. Soon after, I headed off to the Foreign Service Institute where I walked into a small room and a lady looked at me and said, "*Zdravstvyte. Prisazhivite pozhalusta*" and I had no idea what she was saying. Her gesture indicated I should sit down and I sat down in a room with six other neophytes totally new to the language.

As I said before, I had no background in the Slavic world. I didn't speak a word of Russian. I had the advantage at least of having one foreign language under my belt, French. So for the next 44 weeks, and anyone who has been through language training at FSI knows what I am talking about, I went over to Rosslyn for five hours a day of oral and one hour a day of reading Russian, sitting around a small table with five or six other fellow students. It was arduous, with homework, emphasis on speaking, learning how to communicate in Russian.

I was taken under the wing of a woman named Nina de la Cruz. Nina, I don't know what her maiden name was, was born in Russia, pre-revolution, lived in pre-Leningrad, St. Petersburg. I wish I knew her full story but at some point, with her family, she left the Soviet Union. She ended up, I believe, in Brazil where she married Senor de la Cruz and became Nina De La Cruz. She was head of the Russian language program.

She was a true Russian intellectual and a believer in not only the language but in the importance of the culture. She made some snap judgments about people, about whether they were good, committed language students. Fortunately, I impressed her as a good language student and along with a couple of others, she would occasionally invite us, including a USIA colleague of mine named Barbara Allen, to her apartment on Sunday afternoon. We'd have tea. I wouldn't realize fully at the time how often that would be replicated in Moscow in much less elegant apartments -- going to someone's apartment for tea and simple conversation.

I can remember Nina saying to me and to others, "Are you here to learn the Russian language?" And of course, we all said, "Yes, we are here to learn the Russian language." She would in effect say, "Oh, you could never learn the Russian language. You would have to be born into the Russian language. The Russian language is an entire culture unto

itself. We are here to teach you how to communicate using Russian as a tool." That Russian phrase stuck in my brain.

It was a good lesson because I tend to think if I can't do something in its entirety, then I have failed. It taught me that if I could at least learn to use the Russian language to communicate, I was achieving the ends set forth in that program and I would be able to do my job in Moscow. Many times in my years in Russia, I said to myself "If I only knew Russian," that is if I had grown up with the language, if I had greater oral comprehension, then I could understand the jokes, I could understand these plays, I could understand these movies, etcetera.

I did well in Russian. At the end of that year, I tested 3/3 and later on tested 4/4 but I was always more conscious of my deficiencies than of my abilities in Russian. But it was thanks to Nina De La Cruz and other very serious, very dedicated teachers, that I did as well as I did.

An anecdote about the year. We were always studying Russian verbs of motion. We would drive little pretend vehicles around the table and study Russian that way.

To get from my home in Chevy Chase over to Rosslyn, I had to take three buses. On the return, one of those buses picked up every school child in Georgetown as we limped our way through Georgetown and I was exhausted. This was public transportation before Metro so against the better judgment of many women in my life -- my mother, Bobbi and my daughters -- I bought a motorbike and I found a way to drive that motorbike on safe routes all the way from my home to FSI.

I didn't realize but that would become my verb of motion and so often, when we were invited in class to speak extemporaneously, we used my motorbike for verbs of motion, for driving. It was a convenient means of transportation but also a tool in the classroom. For me it was very uncharacteristic. I was never a motorcyclist. This was not a motorcycle. It did not require a license and I drove it very carefully and only a couple of places along the way was I competing with a lot of traffic. It sure did make life simpler as far as getting from my home to FSI.

Garmisch, Germany (1977-1978)

So summer of 1977, we rented out our home, packed everything and headed off to Garmisch, Germany to the U.S. Army Russian Institute. I went ahead of the family. I took Tar; the dog that came into our lives in Algiers in 1970 was now going back across the Atlantic. We were met at the airport and warmly welcomed by Colonel Bob Benning, our next door neighbor in the military community known as Breitenau.

With a family, we were entitled to live in one of the lovely townhouses on the circle. Right out the front door, we looked at the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany. Out the back door was a mountain stream, the Eibsee, and another climbable mountain, the Kramer. On my first weekend, Bob Benning took Tar and me on a wonderful hike. It presaged a wonderful lifestyle.

Bobbi came along soon after with our children. I didn't realize at the time but this would be a life changing year. We had traveled in Europe but this was our first experience living in Europe. Not the typical situation, but nevertheless, we were living in Western Europe.

It was a great year to be there with our children. They were young enough that they were still very much part of the family but old enough that we could do many things together.

Let me emphasize first of all that this was an academic year. I spent a lot of time studying and in two ways, it was much more difficult than the year I spent at FSI in Rosslyn. For one, when you are in a tower in Rosslyn, you have no other distractions. When you are in Garmisch, Germany trying to study Russian and you look out the window and you see the mountains and the snow falling, it is very hard to keep your mind on academic work.

Secondly, I encountered a very different teaching method. The method I had experienced in FSI focused on oral communication. My colleagues in the two-year program in Garmisch -- I was in mostly with the first-year students -- had spent their previous year at Monterrey at the Army Language Institute with much more of an emphasis on the written language and what endings to put on words and passing written tests.

For much of the year, I did very poorly on those written tests simply because this was not a method I was familiar with. When it came to speaking the language, I did much better by comparison. Not many of my colleagues there were destined for American Embassy Moscow. Many of them would go into situations where they might be listening to the Russian language or other types of intelligence assignments. My preparation was on the spoken language and this was where I did better.

One Friday (the exams often came at the end of the week), I took one of these written tests and basically failed it. I did poorly. I was discouraged. That same afternoon, I went over to the ski area where there was a ski competition. I noticed at the end that a Russian skier was fumbling with her equipment and I decided "I am going to risk this." I walked over and I said to her in Russian, "*Mozhno vam pamoshch*?" "May I help you?" Three words and without hesitation she replied, "*Da*." Yes. She handed me her skis and I

walked with her a few hundred yards down to some transportation and we chatted in Russian. I came home ecstatic. I said, “This is what it is all about. I actually used my Russian to communicate.”

She didn’t ask me where I had learned my Russian. She didn’t ask me what endings I put on my verbs or nouns or anything of that sort. I had used Russian to communicate and I was thinking back to the advice I got at FSI from Nina De La Cruz. That was pretty exciting but that went along with many moments of self doubt and discouragement.

The program there was demanding. There were lecture classes, occasionally in English but mostly in Russian. One-on-one arrangements were made for me. There were grammar classes. I spent a lot of time in this lovely, wonderful environment of pure academic study trying to improve my Russian.

The head of the institute was (then) Lieutenant Colonel Roland Lajoie, another of those persons who really had an influence on me. Roland Lajoie went on to become Major General Lajoie. He was head of the Liaison Mission in Potsdam and the On-Site Inspection Agency that monitored START agreements. He had a very distinguished career but first and foremost for me, he was a friend. We were very close friends with him and his family, his children. One of his daughters was a very close friend of our daughter.

In a more general sense, not having served in the military myself, this was an invaluable exposure for me to be living in a military community. They all assured me it was atypical because they were all officers and many of them in military intelligence so it was not exactly a cross-section of the U.S. army. But it was a chance to meet some really wonderful people. No better way of saying it, some of my best friends, some of our best friends came out of that class.

Besides Roland Lajoie, then Major Greg Govan, who was a fellow student, went on to a distinguished career in the army. Likewise, a US Marine major who went on to become Colonel, George Connell. He had served in Vietnam and he used to regale us with stories, often riotously humorous, of his experiences there.

They all eventually went to this town in the Ural Mountains, Votkinsk, where Tchaikovsky was born but which was also the place the Soviets manufactured their SS-20 missiles; they were part of the monitoring team out there.In time we would see them frequently in Moscow. They would have a wealth of memories of their experiences.

I knew I was going to Moscow so naturally, events related to US-Soviet relations were very much on my mind. On August 26, 1977, barely after I arrived in Garmisch, there was a fire at the embassy in Moscow. Somebody should write a book on that subject alone; fires at American Embassy Moscow. There was another during my second tour there. They were an all-too-frequent occurrence and they had an impact on how we did our job there.

That 1977 fire impacted when we eventually arrived in Moscow. Certain apartments were lost. I don't know what went on behind the scenes but instead of going into Moscow in early summer, 1978, we didn't go until later on. It was something we kept wondering about, when we would be able to go. When is the apartment going to be ready? Every section had to take a hit because there were fewer apartments available.

During the year, the hope was that the whole first year class at the institute would be able to go to Moscow on an observation trip. We were all set to go in December but the visas fell through. I was crushed. We didn't get to go as a group but I did go later in February with a smaller group and we were there for several days with the instruction just to observe, walk around, see what life was like, get in line for Lenin's tomb, go to a concert, that type thing.

When we came back and debriefed (a good Army word), a couple of the guys complained to Roland Lajoie that the hotel wasn't good quality and that the food wasn't up to standards, things like that, and he hit the roof. He said, "I didn't send you there on a tourist trip. I sent you there to observe and if everything was not comfortable, that's exactly what I wanted to do to find out." He said it much more convincingly than I just said it. It was a point very well taken.

I made a second trip to Moscow that year under somewhat different circumstances. During our six years in Africa, Bobbi's parents visited us three times — in Dakar, Yaoundé and Algiers. My parents did not. It was simply beyond their means and so they went two years at a time without seeing their only grandchildren.

I was thus very excited when, in April, 1978, they arranged to visit us in Garmisch. We were enjoying a once-in-a-lifetime family experience and I knew I could adjust my schedule to spend quality time with my parents, including some side trips.

And then, just three days before they were due to arrive came the bombshell. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance would be visiting Moscow and it was determined that I should go there for a week on TDY to help out and to learn how to handle the press during a SecState visit. I would have to leave Garmisch just days after my parents arrived and they would have departed by the time I returned.

I didn't break the news to my parents until I picked them up at the airport in Munich and they took it as I would have predicted — disappointed that I would not be there for much of their visit but proud of me. They would have much to tell their friends (I might even say bragging rights) when they returned home.

We did find time for an overnight trip to historic Rothenburg ob der Tauber before I was off to Moscow. The good news is that thanks to Bobbi, my parents saw and enjoyed Garmisch.

And I had a most productive and positive professional experience in Moscow, including contact with Soviet MFA officials and journalists; State Department spokesman Hodding

Carter; Soviet affairs adviser (and a former professor of mine) Marshall Shulman; many of the 17 traveling American journalists (Strobe Talbott of Time Magazine, Bernard Kalb) and the senior FSN (Yuri Zarakhovich) with whom I would have regular dealings once I returned a few months later.

I was also included in Secretary Vance's party at a Bolshoi Ballet presentation of "Nutcracker." Vance later came by the dismal Intourist Hotel to shake the hands of those of us involved in press arrangements. And then, after a couple free days to look around, it was an Aeroflot Tu-134 flight to Frankfurt en route back to Garmisch.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this was probably the most physically active year I have had. I never felt physically in better shape than I did at the end of our year in Garmisch. We regularly took these 10 or 20 kilometer hikes that the Germans organized, called volksmarching. We did it with our children. Their reward was a medal or a pin at the end of each hike. We climbed. We took rather demanding walks up the mountains all around us.

We learned how to ski. Roland Lajoie rather wisely said, "I know you guys are all going to try skiing on your own. You are going to fall and stumble. I am going to lose time as you recover from your accidents." So he closed the institute for a week in the fall, ostensibly to repaint the library or something and we all had a chance to go up to the Zugspitze, the tallest mountain in Germany, 3,000 meters and learn how to ski.

Well, I stumbled and fell plenty of times at the beginning but skiing became and still is a wonderful part of my life. I tried rappelling one time but I was not very good at it; I'm not good at tying knots.

Garmisch was an R&R spot, the Armed Forces Recreation Center, for the U.S. Army in Germany. A lot of young soldiers came to try hiking and skiing.

Hotels such as the General Abrams offered inexpensive meals. One of my diary entries says that we went out for dinner one night and both our children came along and actually ate full meals, which they weren't doing very much of those days. It was a great family evening. It cost me $25 but it was a good investment, I wrote! Not only were things less expensive back then but in this army environment, a night on the town was even less expensive.

We did a lot of personal travel. As beautiful as Garmisch was, it was also very tempting to see other parts of Europe. Munich, of course, was the consulate. We'd go down there occasionally for business or to a musical event, a museum or the theater.

Bobbi took an art class in Rothenburg, the beautiful medieval city on the Tauber River. We went to the puppet theater in Salzburg. We visited Zurich and Lucerne and in Lucerne we reunited with one of the priests, Father Luitfrid, whom we had known in Cameroon years earlier. He was now working with the blind and disabled in Switzerland.

And even before my family arrived, I went to Oberammergau for the passion play. Normally it is only done every ten years -- 1970, 1980 -- but they were preparing a new version for 1980 and so in 1977, I got to see a full presentation of the passion play.

We went to Prague over the New Year. The PAO, Fred Quinn, had been my boss back in Cameroon years earlier and he invited us to come so we got permission, got the visas and drove from Garmisch through a terrific snowstorm into Prague.

We went to the Dolomites in Italy on USARI-organized ski trips.

We went to Venice, Florence, Berchtesgaden and Vienna. It is hard now even in retrospect to imagine how we found the time for all these weekend trips but we did.

I also went a couple of times to Bonn on briefings for army types and in June, I went to Bonn for the G-7 meeting. This was one of the early G-7s and Jimmy Carter's first. I got on the G-7 circuit later on during my years as press attaché in Paris.

There was a lot of music. You could go to the opera in Munich or to choral concerts in churches throughout Bavaria. On a given day, there might be a wonderful performance of the Verdi Requiem in a church somewhere in Bavaria or the local oompapa bands marching through the streets of Garmisch.

And we had another family visit. Bobbi's brother and husband and seven-year old daughter Kate came over Christmas. And friends who knew we were there either made special visits or spun off from a trip they were taking in Europe to come see us.

So if I paint a picture of a really wonderful year, that is exactly how we remember it.

Q: Were defectors from the Soviet Union giving lectures.

BROWN: I don't recall that any of the staff were defectors. They were more likely people who ended up in Bavaria at the end of the war as displaced persons. One couple I particularly remember were Eugen and Helena Posdeeff; they taught courses on Russian literature and Russian history.

That's how the U.S. Army Russian Institute was established — after the war using refugees and displaced persons. The staff had a perspective that looked back on almost pre-revolutionary Russia; these were people who had a love affair with pre-revolutionary Russia, its Orthodox Christianity, its literature, its history.

Quite a number of the professors were in their 60s, if not in their 70s.There were a few, more recently arrived younger staff. But certainly no one had any sympathy for the communist system.

I recall going to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) at its headquarters in Munich and to another nearby facility for defectors called Westport. We had briefings that were about recent experiences from a very anti-Soviet perspective.

I also recall that I learned the term 'Fulda Gap', the spot in Germany where the Russians, the Soviets, would presumably attack; quite often there would be a talk for the army types that I would attend. I noted how often they talked about "when" the Soviets attacked, not "if" the Soviets attacked. That was the way the army went about its mission. It was presumed it wasn't going to be a matter of if; it was when. This is where the Soviet tank assault would take place etcetera, etcetera. I listened with some degree of bemusement but it was also a part of my learning experience.

At the same time, I would be wrong if I suggested it was a steady diet of anti Soviet, anti-communist lectures. The major emphasis during the year was helping me prepare for the job I was going to be doing, using my Russian in conversation but also reading newspapers and journals such as Literary Gazette (LitGaz).

Q: You went to Moscow when?

BROWN: September 6, 1978. We had expected to go much earlier but as I said, we were delayed because of the fire in 1977. Word finally came in August that we could come but that meant we needed Soviet visas. We packed and made plans to arrive on September 2 but when our passports arrived from the Soviet Embassy in Bonn, they were marked for entry beginning September 14. "Technical error," they told the embassy in Moscow.

So on Monday, September 4, with authorization and funding from Roland Lajoie, I got up at 4:30, drove to Munich and flew to Cologne. By 9 am, I was at the gate of the Soviet Embassy in Bonn. They didn't open until 10 but I managed to talk my way inside, where an obliging consular officer called me by name and rectified the problem. I was back at the airport by 10:30, where I called Bobbi and asked her to re-enter us in a tennis tournament going on that afternoon in Garmisch.

Everyone was quite interested in my experience when I got back to Garmisch. In the tennis tournament, Bobbi and I were on opposite sides in the finals of the mixed doubles. Her side won. We had the next day to wrap things up and on September 6, all six of us – including the dog and the cat – flew from Munich to Frankfurt to Moscow.

Moscow, USSR (1978-1981)

Q: You stayed there until '81.

BROWN: We would be there for three years.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BROWN: The ambassador was the late Malcolm Toon. This was his fourth ambassadorial post. He had been ambassador in Prague, Belgrade, Tel Aviv and Moscow, a true career ambassador.

I had a career ambassador in Yaoundé, Cameroon but this was the first time I had really encountered someone who was as steeped in the Foreign Service as Malcolm Toon.

The general impression of Mac Toon was that he ate young or even mid-level Foreign Service officers for breakfast and that the first time I screwed up, I would be out on my ear. I was in a very exposed position. My title was Information Officer but really I was the press attaché. I was the first point of contact for journalists, both American and non-American. The first time I did badly, I would be tossed out on my ear.

The PAO, Ray Benson, barely introduced me to the ambassador. It was very perfunctory. It was not long after I got there but there was no formal introduction, no meeting in his office.

I don't want to sound boastful but I connected with Mac Toon. He liked my work and I liked working for him. I really felt comfortable. To get to him, I often had to go through the PAO and the DCM Mark Garrison. They were both fine individuals, very professional, but they had to clear on my memos. When I got to Ambassador Toon, I felt a degree of comfort, professional comfort that I could then do my press attaché job well.

He took a liking to Bobbi and me. I knew that when, early in our first year, we found ourselves invited to Spaso House for a family dinner on the second floor along with the British ambassador, his wife and one of the correspondents and his wife. I knew then that Mac Toon liked me both professionally and personally. It was a source of satisfaction.

He was renowned for his background briefings, generally done on Friday afternoon, for the American press corps. These were to be attributed to a "senior Western diplomat." Mac Toon had no sympathy for the Soviet Union and he came up with some wonderful quotes that the journalists liked and he didn't mind seeing himself quoted in the press. Back in Washington, on Saturday, if they read anything that said "senior Western diplomat," they all knew this was Mac Toon speaking. If they knew that in Washington, I am sure everyone else knew it.

He was pretty candid but to be honest, we had limited exposure, limited first-hand exposure to Soviets. I can remember one time when he came into one of these briefings

and had actually seen at some sort of activity a member of the politburo. The journalists must have spent half an hour asking him questions about this individual. It wasn't a high member of the politburo but simply what he looked like, what clothes he was wearing, what his health was, how he comported himself.

I recall one occasion when he said something that got him in a little trouble in Washington, a little hot water. Something I had then said may have compounded it. He said to me later on, "Did you see that back in Washington they don't like what I said?"

And I said, "Uh huh," thinking I was then going to be in trouble myself. He smiled and said, "I could care less." The way he confided in me was great for my ego and, of course, made me feel very loyal to him.

I will mention him more because I really liked Mac Toon. Just another anecdote:

Early on, there was a fire in a building directly across the street from the embassy -- the embassy was located on the Ring Road in Moscow – from where it was believed the Soviets directed their radiation at the embassy. This was an ongoing subject when I arrived, that the Soviets were directing radiation at our embassy, whether to foul up our communications or as a health issue, it was an ongoing issue and to this day, I would like to see some in depth reporting on that subject.

I went in to work on a Saturday morning and there were fire trucks across the street; it must have been cold weather because there were icicles dripping and we quickly learned that the fire had taken place on a Friday night up on that level where we knew the Soviets had their equipment to direct radiation at the embassy.

So I started getting phone calls from the press. What's happening? Is the radiation continuing? I worked my way up through the two levels I had to go through to Ambassador Toon's office and the question was posed there.

The simple answer was "we don't know whether anything has changed because they operate their radiation equipment Monday through Friday and we won't know if this fire had any impact until Monday morning."

Toon said, "Let's just say that."

And I thought, "Oh, goodness. What a wonderful way to deal with a press issue. A straightforward, honest answer" and that's what I was authorized to say to the press. "We don't know because they operate that equipment Monday through Friday and we won't know until Monday. Check back with us then." They checked back with us on Monday and I was authorized to say there was apparently no radiation coming at us from that building. The fire had damaged their equipment.

That's a long way of saying I really felt comfortable dealing with Ambassador Toon. He was honest and direct and didn't mind being quoted.

In May, 1979, the embassy issued a statement saying that the Soviets had stopped directing radiation at the embassy. The New York Times published that in a four paragraph AP dispatch. I am really surprised that that issue did not gain more press attention and hasn't been looked at more.

It was an issue at the time because Johns Hopkins, at the bidding of the State Department, did a study about radiation at the American Embassy. To this day, I remain convinced that that story has never been fully explored. They were directing radiation at us. My guess is that we, the CIA or whatever entity, was also directing radiation outwards. We were trying to listen to messages. There must have been something to explain the terrible heat in the embassy building, which was nothing more than a 12- or 14-story apartment building. There was strange heat in that building. It was just warmer than it needed to be.

Ambassador Walter Stoessel, who had been there before I was, died of leukemia. There was speculation even then that he might have been a victim of that radiation. I sure would like to see a deep, thorough study of that issue.

Q: How would you say relations were with the Soviet Union in 1978?

BROWN: On the day we arrived from Munich via Frankfurt, we were met at the airport, we retrieved the dog and were taken to our apartment. The next morning, Bobbi walked our children to the Anglo-American School and then set about doing what she needed to do to make our life there, to make our apartment there livable.

I rode to work with my colleague Dick Combs for my first day on the job. There were already three issues of interest to the press. They all said something about the nature of our relations.

Number one: We had a big delegation in for SALT talks headed by Paul Warnke and General Ed Rowney. They were meeting with the Soviets; part of the negotiation that would lead to the signing of a SALT treaty the next summer. From that point of view, relations were pretty good. These were serious negotiations. I wasn't the spokesman for the group but I was immediately dealing with journalists and if there were any statement to be released, I was the source of that statement.

At the same time, issue number two involved an American businessman whose name was Jay Crawford and who had been arrested on some phony charges; his verdict was announced on my first day, September 7, my first full day at work. You can Google Jay Crawford, businessman verdict and see more about that issue.

The third issue. Senator Edward Kennedy was in Moscow en route to Central Asia, to Alma Ata, for an international meeting on health care. I don't recall that journalists were going with him but he was a source of news as well.

So you had the good, the bad and the in-between. But for the most part, we were in a fairly upbeat mood that year.

The leadership was Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. There was also a nominal president but the ones we would be dealing with were Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. This was Cold War leadership.

I should describe our personal situation.

We were largely out of direct contract with friends and family back home. But it was a family experience. Our children were at a good age (Sarah was 12 and Christine was 10 the year we arrived). They were not so young that they required babysitters or constant tending. Nor were they so old that they were restless and I will say proudly that we fully integrated them into our lives there. There were opportunities to interact with Americans, Russians or with others and we fully involved our children.

They went across this huge highway, Leninsky Prospekt, that we lived on to the Anglo American Canadian School. There were almost zero opportunities to send your children to Russian school and we never considered that. I know that some of the correspondents sent their children to Russian schools but it really wasn't an easy alternative and the Anglo American Canadian School was excellent.

Our apartment was in a standard Soviet apartment building, Leninsky Prospect, number 83. All the various compounds where people lived had shorthand descriptions. We were L – 83. Someone else would live at L-45 or K-7 or SadSam.

We were on the 12th floor of a 14-story building. Two Russian apartments put together so we could look out in three directions from the balconies. It was extraordinary. You put that apartment with that view in Manhattan today and it would sell for several million dollars. On a clear day, in the distance, we could see the gold from the bell tower at the Kremlin. And a creaky old elevator, we always hoped it would keep functioning.

It was occupied by a wide variety of foreigners, not only Americans. There were Brits, New Zealanders, Syrians, Japanese. All around us, the other apartment buildings were occupied by Russians; it was a Russian neighborhood. We had Tar and that dog needed to be walked and when we would walk we would quite often have conversations with Russians through the dog. One of the first phrases I learned was "*kakaya eta paroda*?" What is the breed of your dog?

This gave us a window, literal and figurative, on the way Russians lived; we could see their apartment buildings, see them going home from work. Right up the street was a store that a lot of Russians frequented. It was called the Leipzig and apparently had goods from East Germany and so if you were talking to a Russian or a Soviet, you would say we live not far from the Leipzig store. They all knew where you were talking about.

We weren't close to a metro. The nearest metro was over near the university, much too far to walk. Early on, I bought a little Russian car called a Zhiguli, basically a Fiat, and I would drive that little Zhiguli from the L-83 into the embassy; there was also an embassy shuttle.

Soon after we arrived, there was a Russian holiday and they spent lots of money on fireworks, launching them from multiple sites. This experience, early on, of looking out and seeing the fireworks displays in all directions was great fun for us and for the children.

Not too far away was the Russian circus. We spent an early evening there. The embassy had a dacha, an hour's drive or so from where we lived, in Tarasovka. We would make frequent trips out there. The way it operated, during the course of a year, you would actually have a dacha weekend and that was sacrosanct. You went out there with your family, invited anyone else you wanted and you stayed in the dacha.

When I say sacrosanct, I can remember that my boss, even when we had some high level visitor, said, "No, this is my dacha weekend. I am going to be there."

There was also a smaller ambassador's dacha and a tennis court. It was a real plus as far as making yourself comfortable with this lifestyle. Behind the ambassador's residence, the famous Spaso House, there was a paddle tennis court. I got introduced to paddle tennis and learned that Mac Toon was also an avid paddle tennis player. At 11 o'clock in the morning, you might get a call from the ambassador's secretary saying, "The ambassador is playing paddle over the lunch hour. Do you want to come?" I loved that invitation. You never cut Mac Toon any slack. He knew if you were making a call that favored him; he wanted to be treated like one of the guys on the paddle tennis court.

During that first winter, I learned 40 degrees below zero is the same on both the Centigrade and Fahrenheit scale. We had minus 40 degrees and I learned what really true cold weather is. That was the coldest winter we had. Many times, people would ask "how did you stand those cold winters in Moscow?" By the end of three years, I knew the biggest climate issue I had to deal with was the hot weather in the embassy; this horrible building where there was no air conditioning and temperatures in the office where you were trying to work must have been in the 80s and 90s.

My birthday is November 7th which was also the anniversary of the great October Revolution. The kids and my Soviet friends always got a kick out of the fact that on my birthday, there was a great parade across Red Square and fireworks. It was a source of a lot of laughter and jokes and fun. "*Slava Philu*," people would say.

These were things that made life enjoyable for us. There wasn't a PX. There were no movie theaters. There were none of those things that you sometimes associate with life overseas but we found a lot of ways to make life there fun and enjoyable. Films would come in from Frankfurt in the pouch. The military attache could bring them in and they were on these big 16 mm reels. People would sign up as soon as the films arrived. To

carry home a movie, you'd carry this very heavy suitcase with maybe three or four reels. Various people had projectors.

In our building, where there were quite a number of American families, we did something called hot reeling. The family downstairs would start the movie and when they came to the end of the first reel, they would bring it up to another floor where another group of people would watch the first reel and when they were done, they'd take it to another level. The movie might start at 7:30 in one apartment and 8 o'clock in another apartment, 8:30 in another. We called it hot reeling, moving movies from one floor to another.

I had learned how to thread a projector in Africa and it stood me in good stead in Moscow. These were Bell and Howell projectors with a big reel on top and a take-up reel on the bottom.

But we were not by any means confined to the American community for our entertainment. Early on, through various means, I had a lot of Soviet contacts or more precisely, Russian and specifically Jewish friends. We got to know any number of them. I will go into detail later. We enjoyed our American and other expatriate friends living in Moscow but we had a lot of other friends in the Russian community.

My job was information officer and there were two assistant information officers. In addition to the press corps, we had responsibility for the monthly magazine called America Illustrated, a Life Magazine size publication which the formal cultural exchange agreement allowed us to "sell" through Russian kiosks. The number was something like 63,000; they had a magazine called Soviet Life that they sold in the United States, the same number.

We also brought in large-scale, thematic exhibits. These went back to the Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate. They would be open in six cities for about a month each with 25 to 30 Russian-speaking American guides. The cities would be chosen in negotiations with the Soviets and would take us all over the country – to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, major Russian cities.

The opening was always the occasion for a high-level American visitor along with the ambassador and local officials. In addition to the guides, American specialists interact with counterparts or did lectures. During my time in Washington, 1974 to 1976, I had actually interviewed and recruited some of these guides.

Russians, or other nationalities, would line up for hours to go through the exhibit. Inevitably, there would be problems and issues that required negotiations with the Soviets. My office was the primary point of contact with the exhibits.

There were also occasional journalists or media types who went on exchange programs to the United States, part of the international exchange program.

But my primary duty or responsibility as press attaché involved interaction with the press corps. There were 25 American journalists representing 15 American news media. To this day, I could recall off the top of my head the names of many of those 25 journalists.

The two wire services, AP and UPI, each had five correspondents. Reuters was also represented and we always had a debate whether or not they were an American news agency. That came up when you had pools or when the ambassador did his press briefing. The New York Times had two correspondents and the other major American newspapers had one -- The Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor.

The magazines all had correspondents -- Time, Newsweek, U. S. News, and BusinessWeek. The three TV networks -- and there were only three then, NBC, CBS and ABC -- had correspondents. They also had a cameraman who was quite often an American or non-Soviet.

Then you had a couple of special correspondents, an American named David Satter who worked for The Financial Times and a man named Ed Stevens, who had been there for years and years and had won a Pulitzer Prize and was a freelancer at the time. A whole book has been written about Ed Stevens.

I knew the American journalists in many different ways. There was first of all the standard professional, sometimes adversary relationship of the press attaché and the journalist. They ask questions. We try to answer. That goes without saying.

But we also knew them almost as clients under the Helsinki Accords and the basket three provisions which included working conditions for journalists. I don't think anyone at the time realized how important this was going to be but the Soviets committed themselves to minimal working conditions for journalists and we were constantly going to the foreign ministry press division to raise an issue such as an American journalist who had his film seized at Red Square, who wanted to go on vacation, whose replacement could not get a visa. One kind of indignity or another, we would go in and raise the issue under the broad heading of working conditions for journalists.

We also knew them because journalists had privileges at the embassy that they didn't have anywhere else in the world. I think it would surprise journalists these days to know they had these kinds of privileges. They were allowed to receive their mail through the diplomatic pouch. They were not allowed to receive personal packages but they could receive letter mail and business packages. The mail came in by pouch twice a week and one of the big moments was to go down and dump all the mail on the floor and sort it out. The journalists got their mail that way. Occasionally some of them received packages and we had to go through these and say "Oops, well, we will give it to you this time but remember you guys are not supposed to get packages." It would sometimes be cookies from their mother for Christmas or something like that.

The journalists also had access to the embassy doctor and to the snack bar; in the little compound right behind the embassy was the famous snack bar. Many Italians had come to work in the Fiat factory in the Soviet Union. Two of them left and came to work with the Americans. One named Clemente Pandin ended up as the major domo at Spaso House and another, Alfredo, ran the snack bar.

It was such a convenience to go to the snack bar and have lunch. It was also a place to do business. The American journalists had access but it was understood that things talked about down there were off the record. This was a time when we didn't have any rapid communication so when you wanted to get out a message, you sat down at your phone and you dialed the numbers consecutively of all these people and communicated with them one-by-one. There was no email or other easy communication so the snack bar was a great opportunity for quick communications.

In addition, these journalists were our age; many had families and their kids were in the American School. We very much integrated them into our social life. Some of the journalists that we met in Moscow were among our closest friends after we left Moscow.

Bernard Redmont was the CBS correspondent. Bernie and his wife were a generation older than Bobbi and me. He was a highly respected journalist and they remained close friends until their deaths.

The correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor, David Willis, had three children, two daughters about the ages of our daughters, and a son. It is a very long and complicated story but we went with them on a vacation to Sri Lanka. We flew Aeroflot from Moscow to Sri Lanka. David wrote a story about that vacation. My kids loved reading it because they could understand it. David said he got more comments about that story than about any of the deep thoughtful, thumb sucking pieces that he did about internal Soviet political affairs.

One of the Willis daughters, Sarah, went on to become a French horn player with the Berlin Philharmonic, one of the finest orchestras in the world.

On one occasion, we were at a party that was mostly journalists and I noticed Bobbi and one of the journalists, Charles Bierbauer of ABC, were laughing uncontrollably; they had discovered they had gone to elementary school in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, together.

Q: What was the mood of the correspondents there? Were they able to do their job or were they working under siege or what?

BROWN: I think they were like foreign services officers. Some had better Russian than others. Some managed to delve more deeply into what was going on than others. There were some really fine correspondents, some who went on to write books, people who went on to very distinguished careers in journalism and beyond.

Just to name a few: Craig Whitney and David Shipler of The New York Times. Kevin Klose of the Washington Post. Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. David Willis of the Christian Science Monitor. David Satter who wrote for the Financial Times. Tom Kent and Serge Schmemann of AP.

They all had their own qualities. Some had better Russian. Some were better writers. They used to joke about Dan Fisher. He didn't have the best Russian. He wasn't the best writer but they always say if we could only have Dan's ability of ferreting out facts. He was a fact finder. He would come up with the little details the others wouldn't find.

I can't say I read everything they wrote but I do know that in dealing with them, they were enterprising, they had good language, and they had no illusions about the country they were dealing with. I think we owe a debt to these people for putting on the front pages of our newspapers really fine insightful reporting on the Soviet Union.

What was their attitude? They were as frustrated I suppose as everybody in trying to gain access to Soviet officials but on the other hand, the really good ones didn't let that stand in their way. They found ways to interact with other people. They were perhaps frustrated because the Soviets imposed restrictions on travel but the really good ones found ways to travel. What I am getting at is that journalists, like anybody else, could use restrictions as a peg to say "I really just can't do my job because the Soviets impose all these restrictions" or they could say, "the restrictions are there but I am going to find ways to get around them and do a good job in spite of that."

Q: Did you get stories from the journalists about harassment from the KGB?

BROWN: Yes, and that fell under the issue of working conditions for journalists. They assumed their conversations were monitored. They knew when they met with people they had to be careful about compromising the safety of their Soviet counterparts.

Even before we got there, two of the journalists, Craig Whitney of The New York Times and Hal Piper of The Baltimore Sun, were on trial for slander. For anyone who wants a lot more detail, it is all on the record. It was called the Whitney – Piper affair by every news media except The Baltimore Sun which, we all jokingly noted, called it the Piper – Whitney affair, putting the name of their journalist first. It involved their contacts with Soviet dissidents and what they wrote. They were put on trial in a major form of harassment. This was certainly a very ugly way in which the KGB, Soviet authorities, interfered with the abilities of American journalists to do their job.

During that first year, in April, 1979, a journalist for U.S. News and World Report named Robin Knight was traveling in Central Asia, in Tashkent in particular. We got a call at the embassy from his wife saying that Robin "is deathly ill. We don't know what has happened." The ultimate conclusion was he had been slipped some sort of drug by the KGB and was very ill, incoherent. His wife had to virtually carry him back to Moscow. He recovered. We protested. The Soviets denied any responsibility for it.

I might as well take that story right through to the last stage. That summer in Vienna at the Carter-Brezhnev summit, Ambassador Toon met with Marvin Stone, the publisher of U.S. News and World Report, accompanied by Robin Knight. I sat in on the meeting as note taker.

The question was whether Robin should go back to Moscow to finish his assignment or was it too dangerous. Might he be further compromised? I was really surprised to hear Mac Toon say, "I don't think he should go back. I think it is probably risky for him to return."

This seemed uncharacteristic for Toon because he was a stick-his-finger-in-their-eye kind of guy. I realized afterwards that he was giving that advice on the record to protect himself. If Robin Knight had gone back and something had happened and Toon had been on record saying, "Oh, I don't think there is any problem. Sure, let him go back," he, Toon, would have been vulnerable. As a matter of fact, Robin Knight did go back. He completed his assignment and there was no problem.

This same Marvin Stone later became deputy director of USIA and visited Moscow in the late '80s. He was a really good guy, a man I liked very much. I met him first when he was publisher of U.S. News and World Report and at that meeting in the summer of 1979 in Vienna.

Robin Knight wrote a very thoughtful article in the June 2011 Foreign Service Journal about Ambassador Toon and his press briefings. I would agree with almost everything he wrote except for one phrase and I will quote that phrase: "The embassy and the American media were locked in a tight embrace to the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department and his long suffering press attachés." By "tight embrace," he was referring to Ambassador Toon's weekly background briefing for the American press corps. "To the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department . . ." Well, I can believe that. They must have wondered what they were going to read the next day attributed to a senior Western diplomat.

But not "his long suffering press attachés." There he was wrong. I was that press attaché and I loved Ambassador Toon's accessibility to the press. I looked forward to those press briefings.

Yes, at the end we had to type the notes on an old mechanical typewriter. You had to get those notes up to the ambassador by Monday, a lot of work, but if I hadn't done them, my life would have been much less interesting. I was not "long suffering." I was very privileged.

Another thing Ambassador Toon did -- I keep coming back to him -- was to meet one-on-one with the occasional itinerant journalist or maybe with one of the resident press guys. You couldn't abuse the privilege but you could ask for a one-on-one or two-on-one interview with the ambassador; I would sit in on those meetings and take notes.

After having done that probably somewhere between 10 and 20 times, I heard from my boss that Ambassador Toon commented favorably on my notes. “How does he do it? Does he take shorthand? He’s not taping these, is he?” No, I wasn’t taping them. I told him, in all honesty, that “I have heard you ask the same questions and give pretty much the basic answers so many times that I can hear it coming.” He laughed approvingly.

Sure, I’d take notes but I could almost do the briefings as well as the ambassador could because I had heard the same question answered a number of times. But I couldn’t do them the way he could, the way he answered questions, they loved that. They loved his rather gruff personality and his little turns of phrase. But as for the main message, I was pretty familiar with what he was going to say.

I was not the only one who had a close working relationship and close personal friendship with some of these very fine journalists. I want to emphasize that again. These were really top notch journalists. People who follow the world of journalism know that this was a cream of the crop group of journalists. There is a subject for another book; the American press corps of the late ‘70s in Moscow.

Q: Did any of the press people complain that their bosses back in their home offices really didn’t understand them?

BROWN: If they weren’t complaining, they weren’t human beings. Exactly. Sure, it wasn’t easy to have people back home understand the difficult working conditions.

I was back in Moscow a few years ago (after I retired) and I thought comparatively what would it be like? A lot of things were a lot simpler when we were there. You never had to worry about parking. On my first trip to Moscow, when I was there on TDY, I linked up with Dick Combs, with whom I had worked in EUR/SOV. He was now in the Embassy political section. I mentioned Red Square and he said, “Oh, I haven’t been down to Red Square for quite a while. Why don’t we go down?”

We drove down somewhere close to Red Square, parked and walked around. You never really had to worry about parking when I was there in 1978 to 1981, didn’t have to worry much about it ten years later. Today I don’t know how you get around Moscow in the traffic and how you would park anywhere.

On the other hand, we didn’t have email or cell phones or any of the modern means of communication. Maybe that made life simpler in some ways, too. You weren’t constantly being tasked or constantly being expected to do things you are expected to do today.

I am sure the journalists complained that people back home didn’t understand.

One thing we didn’t have too much of, and I don’t think the journalists had too much of, was people from back in the States coming out. We occasionally had to hand hold and

organize dinners but it wasn't overwhelming. I can't recall too many times when the journalists had to do hand holding for visiting firemen from Washington.

Maybe I could turn to some of the events during that first year that made news. Hardly a week went by when there wasn't some activity, event or newsmaker. I mentioned what transpired on my very first day with the SALT negotiators, the American businessman released from prison and Senator Kennedy.

From June 27, 1978, we had a group of people living in the embassy called the Pentecostals. This was basically two families, close to a dozen people, who had dashed into the embassy compound to seek asylum. It helps to understand how the embassy was constructed. A couple of militia men always stood out front but there were no gates or physical barriers to go through and when the militia men were not looking, these fundamentalist Pentecostals had dashed into the embassy seeking religious freedom, refuge. And in this period of human rights, we were not going to throw them out. They were given refuge in a small below street level apartment where they lived for years. They were known as the Pentecostals. Books have been written about them.

They were off limits to the press and the journalists who came into the snack bar understood that they were not allowed to interview them. That was one of the rules of the road. Finally, towards the end of my first year, Ambassador Toon decided we would allow the journalists to come in on a Saturday and film them. They were not allowed to interview but they could at least film these two different families, parents and children walking around the courtyard of the embassy. Of course, the ground rules broke down because the Pentecostals did decide to talk, present documents and plead their case.

On March 28, 1979, the same day that I had lunch to meet the new Baltimore Sun correspondent, I got word that a man, a Soviet citizen, was in the consular section threatening to blow himself up; he would not leave. The issue dragged on throughout the afternoon and into the evening. Eventually, it was resolved by, I believe, Ambassador Toon allowing Soviet officials to come into the consular section. The man did blow himself up. He died. From my 8th floor balcony, I saw his body being carried out late in the evening.

Prior to that, I had never experienced teargas but the smell of teargas in my office, which was quite some distance from the consular section, made a big impression on me. Our consular officer was a good friend named Tom Hutson. You always knew when Tom was coming. You could hear him singing and whistling as he strolled through the corridors. After that incident, I never again heard him singing and whistling. That one night incident, that man blowing himself up in the consular section, affected all of us but no one more than Tom.

I don't think anyone ever really determined who the man was because his body was taken away. According to some news articles, his name was Yuri Vlasenko. I believe one of the consular officers was faulted for escorting the man into the embassy.

Q: The Helsinki Accords had been signed fairly recently, hadn't they?

BROWN: In Vladivostok in 1976. Gerald Ford went to Vladivostok and signed the Helsinki Accords.

Q: I realize we were using them as sort of an instrument with the press corps. Did you realize how powerful these things were because they did turn out to be a major instrument in ending the Cold War?

BROWN: If someone claims to have realized how important those documents were, ask him or her to show you that in writing in 1976. Ford and others took a beating that this was just another Yalta type agreement.

You had the three baskets: political, economic and human rights. People said and wrote things like "We all know the Soviets don't respect human rights. Sure, they will sign anything. This is just another giveaway." The part I focused on was working conditions for journalists but freedom of movement and similar rights were covered.

I think it is pretty well agreed on right and left today that these were very important documents in the whole history of the Cold War.

The people who realized most how important these documents were the dissidents themselves. They said, "Well, if our government signed these documents, then we are going to take them as true." They risked their lives and their liberty but many of them said "we are going to claim these rights." They wouldn't have had much meaning if people like the dissidents hadn't taken them seriously.

Going back to that visit by Secretary Vance in spring of 1978 when I was there on TDY, a Soviet woman who had married an American and who was seeking permission to emigrate chained herself to the fence around the embassy. She chose that moment to call attention to herself. She got a lot more attention that day than did the SALT negotiations or whatever Vance was doing.

In December, 1978, we had a joint visit from two cabinet members. Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal and Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps. That said something about the quality of the relationship at that time. They were received at a high level. I rode to the Kremlin with the press pool and got to observe Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. I was back in the corner with the Soviet handlers but it was my chance to see the table with Ambassador Toon, the interpreters and the two delegations. It was one of the special aspects of my job.

There was another side to such a visit and it involved a lot of cumbersome logistics — running around, preparing transcripts and other reports and you breathed a sigh of relief when they left town.

Another subject that we dealt with regularly was shortwave broadcasting, especially in Russian and other languages. The Voice of America Russian service was jammed. During the course of my first year, we had a visit from the director of Voice of America, Peter Straus. I used that occasion and other similar occasions for outreach. I invited American and West European journalists and made it a representational affair.

We made full use of our spacious apartment on the 12th floor of our building at L-83. The guys (they were mostly guys) would come and we'd do a buffet dinner and someone like Mr. Strauss would answer questions or, more often in a case like that, he would ask questions. It would be a business evening but enjoyable and I received a lot of positive feedback.

One time I hosted something for some journalists who had gone to the University of Indiana on an exchange program and one of the persons who popped in that night unannounced was a man named Vladimir Pozner. Vladimir Pozner grew up in Brooklyn and spoke absolutely flawless American English. He was very smooth, very gifted.

He went one time to the American School and spoke and the kids came away thinking, "oh, my goodness. They are just like us" because he was so smooth, he was very candid. He would say: "We are just like your country; we have people who are smart, people who are dumb. We have people who are courteous and people who are discourteous, etcetera, etcetera." He disarmed the kids a lot and he could do that equally well with adults. I liked him and I thought he was an honest man.

There was a problem within the Embassy and it goes back to that impression I spoke about our very first time. If you met somebody who either spoke English well or was willing to receive foreigners or spoke out candidly, there was an inclination on the part of some to immediately say "Oh, he's KGB. He's a colonel. You just can't trust that person." Sometimes they would tap two fingers on their neck. I don't know how they felt so sure unless you concluded that everyone who had style was KGB; I think it sometimes gave people a sense of self-importance to say all-knowingly that someone was KGB.

I didn't know myself; maybe that was sometimes the case, but other times, these were genuinely interesting people. In any case, I didn't risk anything by interacting with them. I knew or know about a few of them to this day and I don't think they had close ties to the KGB. I think they were just willing to talk to foreigners.

Q: What was your impression of the non-American press representation?

BROWN: Equally high. One of the names that pops right into mind was Michael Binyon with The Times of London who was then and later on a very distinguished British journalist. Sam Rachlin, a Danish journalist, had deep Russian connections, was virtually bilingual and knew a lot; he also had a lovely wife and small daughter. Bob Evans of Reuters had been many years in Moscow and had an encyclopedic knowledge. Daniel Vernet of Le Monde was another outstanding journalist whom I knew in Moscow and later in Paris. Within the French, German and Italian press corps, there were people who

seemed equally well qualified, had language and were there as serious correspondents. I very much enjoyed having contact with these people.

But the American press corps was by far the dominant foreign group. No one else had as many journalists as we did or as many top notch journalists.

Q: Were you able to pick up much information or contact with what later became known as 'the stans', or other parts of the Soviet empire which eventually broke away?

BROWN: We had been in Moscow for only six weeks when Bobbi and I left our children in the charge of somebody else and flew to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, just over the mountains from Afghanistan. This was our first trip outside Moscow. I remember walking out on the tarmac, seeing the pilot checking out his plane, looking at the bald tires. It gave Bobbi some degree of comfort when she saw the pilot because she thought he looked like what a pilot should look like.

That was the first of many trips we took to Central Asia and they were uniformly wonderful experiences. During my first three years, I visited every one of the republic capitals except for the Baltic States. I went to every one of the Central Asian capitals.

The principal reason for going to Dushanbe was the traveling exhibit called "Agriculture, USA" with its American guides, staff and specialists. We watched them in action and then we visited with them and shared their experiences in the hotel.

I also went to observe life outside Moscow. Central Asia seemed like a totally different world. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen and others were not native speakers of Russian so they were dealing with a foreign language just like I was. You could go to the markets and gape at these wonderful faces and the piles of fruits and vegetables that you'd never see in Moscow or only in very special places in Moscow. They would hand fruit to you as a gift and they loved conversation. They loved having their picture being taken. There just didn't seem to be any fear of communication with an American.

Along with exhibit staff, we were taken on that trip to the Nurek hydroelectric dam, described as the largest earthen dam in the world. You would think this would be the kind of place that the Soviets would not allow you to visit but we spent a whole day going and coming back, traveling in and around the dam, feeling dwarfed by this giant construction.

After several days, we came back to find that our children were well. Our Aeroflot plane had landed as many times as it had taken off. We were safe. It was an exciting first trip outside Moscow.

After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Brzezinski sent out instructions that any intelligence, any sort of reporting you could bring back from Central Asia, was encouraged so we had a blank check to travel to that part of the world. I didn't go back to Dushanbe but I went frequently Central Asia -- to Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand; to

Alma Ata; to Frunze, now called Bishkek. I think it was there I stayed in a yurt. I also went to Ashkhabad, so to all five Central Asian capitals.

Q: Did you get any feel of knowledge or coverage of the United States there?

BROWN: The exhibit was a real eye-opener for Soviets. Anything they knew about the United States was primarily through Soviet filters. They probably disbelieved much of the propaganda they heard from their own government but our own little modest efforts, American magazines or the exhibit would be as much as they would have.

Radios would be jammed but in Central Asia, especially away from urban areas, you could more easily avoid the jamming of both Radio Liberty and Voice of America. If you understood English you could hear Voice of America English unjammed. But knowledge of the United States was superficial.

Q: America Magazine was very popular wasn't it?

BROWN: Sure. We regularly received "unsold" copies from the Soviet distributor and then we could take them on trips and give them away.

Q: In Moscow, there were public educational sessions, people giving lectures.

BROWN: I didn't attend many of those events. I do remember going to one in particular about a year before the Olympics where a member of the audience stood up and talked. The countdown was on to the 1980 Olympics. I came away from that thinking what genuine pride he had that his country was going to host the Olympics. Certainly he was picked and primed to do this topic but there was a great sense of pride in the Soviet Union was going to host the Olympics. That of course, all became an issue.

I'd like to return to the year 1978 – '79 just to give a sense of how much activity there was.

One Friday night, I got a call at home from my boss, Ray Benson, who lived right in the embassy itself. The embassy building was in reality nothing but a converted Soviet apartment building and Ray lived in one of the apartments. Ray and his wife Shirley (who became lifelong friends) were just about to take a trip along with the DCM Mark Garrison and his wife. Ray said, "You need to come in here, come in here right away."

He didn't say anymore, didn't tell me what it was, but by the time I arrived, the incident had ended. Once again, an apparently deranged Soviet man had managed to walk right into the courtyard with a firearm and start shooting at the exterior of the building. You could see bullet marks or chips on the building. Don't get me wrong. This building had plenty of chips but these clearly were new ones.

David Shipler of The New York Times came by, covered it and picked up a quote from me and for the first time I was actually quoted by name. My family back home was

excited to read in The New York Times "Philip Brown, spokesman for the American Embassy." I don't recall what great thought I had but it was rare that I was quoted by name. That incident was a little like the man who walked into the consular section. There was a mystery to what was behind it.

We had a visit that year by Attorney General Griffin Bell. He spent two weeks in the Soviet Union as head of an American Bar Association exchange. Can you imagine the attorney general being out of Washington for two weeks and in the Soviet Union? It concluded with a Spaso House reception where I met some people I didn't normally encounter at Spaso House receptions, including a man involved in the Soviet judicial system. I shook hands with him and I looked at his hands afterwards and noticed that they were not like mine -- soft, office hands. These were the hands of a steel worker, a metallurgist, rough, big.

I thought to myself, because he had been one of the people dealing with the attorney general, that sometimes it is amazing these people are not more crude in their behavior than they are. These are not guys who studied at the counterpart of Yale or Princeton or who have been sitting at desk jobs. These are people like Brezhnev and others who came up through the school of hard knocks. Many of them were out of the heavy manufacturing, industrial world. This man, for all I knew, might have been a steel worker. I came away from that encounter thinking that we needed to be careful not to judge Soviet officials the same way we would judge bureaucrats back in the system in the United States. I'm not suggesting that we should cut them slack when they abuse human rights or invade other countries. But it was helpful to remember where they came from.

One of the things I did for Ambassador Toon was to write his July 4th speech. Every year, the ambassador was invited to tape something for Soviet TV that might then be carried on July 4th. It would be carried if he said the right thing and there were times when the Soviets either censored it or refused it in its entirety. That year, 1979, I was very pleased that the speech I wrote was approved by the State Department, virtually without change. Ambassador Toon recorded it and it was carried on Soviet TV on July 4th, right after we returned from Vienna.

In June, 1979, I got the word -- and was very pleased -- that along with one of the other assistant press attachés, I was assigned to Vienna for the summit meeting between Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev A lot of the Moscow-based American press corps went to Vienna and Ambassador Toon had recommended that I be present. It culminated in the signing of a SALT agreement and Brezhnev kissing Carter.

I got together for a drink with some journalists on the first night in Vienna and the question among the Moscow-based people was "when did you come out?" We frequently used that expression, "going back in," or "coming out." It was not an idle question. You were out in the West. It was a badge of pride. We were on the front lines in Moscow and now, we were coming out for some sachertorte and the joys of Vienna.

I had a relatively routine assignment in the press center. I did associate myself as far as possible with Ambassador Toon, especially for his meeting with Marvin Stone to discuss the Robin Knight incident in Tashkent and also in setting up his briefing with the American press corps. I am sure Ambassador Toon did not clear that briefing with Washington and I am sure that journalists not invited were envious.

He made news at that briefing when he said, "I haven't yet decided whether I will support the SALT treaty." Well, that was pretty much out on a limb, shall we say? It later came to the attention of Secretary Vance and back in Moscow, Mac Toon had to say yes, he had now studied it and he would support the SALT treaty because there was adequate verification. He didn't mind being an independent operator.

I mentioned travel besides the trip to Dushanbe. We did a lot of little trips around Moscow. We could travel 40 kilometers from downtown Moscow without permission as long as it was an open area. We had CIA-produced maps that showed open and closed areas. We could go to Peredelkino to the grave of Pasternak, to the American dacha, to some of the churches on the periphery of Moscow.

We took a family train trip to Leningrad. I had some business there but Bobbi and our daughters went along and we visited a lot of the standard tourist spots.

We also went back to Garmisch for a week. We traded apartments. A military family from Garmisch came in, lived in our place and we went to Garmisch and did some skiing. We also had an experience there that I will talk about later.

I have read the John Gaddis biography of George Kennan and, it goes without saying, I don't in any way compare myself to George Kennan. Still when Kennan wrote "It was my sixth winter in Moscow," I couldn't help but think that I spent six winters in Moscow and at least some of the experiences I had reminded me of experiences Kennan had.

Kennan was there in 1945, '46, when the British ambassador hosted a dinner for Winston Churchill to which he invited Stalin. George Kennan and his wife were not invited to that dinner. His wife said that although they were not invited to the dinner, they could go by afterwards to stare and she wrote "At least I can tell my grandchildren that I have seen some of the people who made history."

I feel exactly the same way. I can tell myself that I saw some of the people who made history. I know that I was just the press attaché at the American Embassy and later on the public affairs officer but I got to see some of the people who made history.

One of the persons I met early on (I didn't fully appreciate who he was at the time) was a man named Valentin Berezhkov. He was editor of USA Magazine, a scholarly journal published by the USA Institute. I also met him again on my second tour and knew by then that he had been the translator and interpreter for Stalin at Yalta. He was the counterpart to Chip Bohlen; the stories that man could have told.

Victor Louis was a story in himself. Russian-born, he became a British citizen, married a British woman named Jennifer Louis. He lived in great grand style in Moscow. He had a house. The obituary in The New York Times that Craig Whitney wrote in 1992 tells a lot about him. He probably was working for the KGB but nevertheless, interaction with Victor Louis was always an interesting experience.

There was a day when I came by the embassy and this man was standing out on the sidewalk wanting to go into the consular section but his entry was being delayed. I realized right away who he was and I helped André Sakharov walk past the Soviet militia and go into the consular section to do business. I can tell my grandchildren I saw André Sakharov and on more than one occasion.

It wasn't long after that, in January, 1980, that Sakharov was picked up on a Moscow street and sent into exile in Gorky, east of Moscow. It was a closed city so people could not visit him there. He had become a thorn in the side of Soviet officials and so they detained him and sent him and his wife, Elena Bonner off to internal exile.

My contribution at that time was to serve as a conduit for Sakharov's mail to a relative in Boston. What would happen was as follows. Elena Bonner still had freedom to travel and she would come to Moscow with letters that she would give to a New York Times correspondent named Tony Austin. Tony Austin had arrived only fairly recently but of course, I knew him as I knew all the journalists there. Tony Austin and I worked out an arrangement whereby he would give these letters to me. I would put them in an envelope and send them to my dad in Pittsburgh through the pouch. My dad would open the outer envelope and forward the contents to, I believe, a niece of Sakharov's in the Boston suburbs.

By my second tour, the Gorbachev period, Sakharov had been released and I saw him a couple times. Eventually, I would stand in line a long line on a cold winter day in 1989 to walk past his open casket.

In connection with the visit by Secretaries Blumenthal and Kreps, Averell Harriman came to Moscow for a meeting of the U.S. - USSR Trade and Economic council. I went to the airport when he arrived and because of his prominence and his history of working with the Soviets during the war, we were allowed to drive right onto the tarmac.

One day soon after, I got a phone call that I should gather up as many journalists as quickly as I could and go to Novodevichy Cemetery. It is one of the great cemeteries of Moscow, where Khrushchev is buried and the final resting place for prominent people from all walks to life, next to the Novodevichy Convent. It wasn't generally open to the public. I had a way of getting in which is a separate story. But I was to go there because Averell Harriman wanted to place a wreath at the grave of his wartime colleague, Anastas Mikoyan, who had died in October.

Sure enough, at the appointed hour, Averell Harriman and his wife, Pamela Harriman, came and placed a wreath on the grave of Mikoyan. We had half a dozen American

journalists there. It was pretty much a photo event. Harriman was one of the towering figures of U.S. – Soviet relations. He didn't live too long after that.

And I can say I saw Brezhnev and Kosygin in the flesh. I don't think Brezhnev ever even mumbled a word in the photo sessions before various meetings. Kosygin would banter quite often with the people on the other side of the table. He seemed like a much "nicer" man than Brezhnev.

Early on, I got into the world of music, theater, arts. For me, this was one of two avenues for interacting with Soviets. This wasn't the primary example but Senator "Mac" Mathias of Maryland came out to one of our exhibits. The Soviets invited him to go to the Bolshoi for an opera. It happened to be Khovanshchina, a four-hour opera. At first, it seemed long and tedious but I began to appreciate Russian opera and thereafter I would always advise people if you want to go to Bolshoi, don't go to see Verdi or Puccini. You could see that better in Western Europe. Go to see Eugene Onegin, Queen of Spades, Boris Godunov or Prince Igor. I became a devotee of Russian opera.

We met a photographer named Vladimir Sichov. He later resettled in Paris. He had an amazing collection of black and white pictures, many of them published in a book called (in Russian) "The Russians seen by Vladimir Sichov." I read that he had more than 100,000 pictures of ordinary life in the Soviet Union. Not just ordinary life but young military recruits in training. He also used his apartment to exhibit paintings by Russian artists and we purchased several. The artists were delighted to sell their works so I have paintings by Vladimir Arkharov and various others.

Another collector was a woman named Tanya Kholodzei (or Kolodzei). You would go to her apartment and under her bed, in closets, on the walls and stacked up in corners were endless numbers of works of art by Russian painters. We acquired a few of those. In turn, we would invite her to film showings at Spaso House or events like that. Her daughter Natasha now runs a gallery in New York.

Q: How about movies? Were American movies shown in Soviet theaters?

BROWN: No, not unless they had a particular slant.

But various works of American literature would be translated and became very well known, particularly if they provided an unfavorable picture of the United States. Streetcar Named Desire was performed quite often, *Tramvay imeni Zhelaniye*, literally Streetcar Called Desire would be performed in Soviet theaters because it provided a fairly negative image of the United States.

But let's talk about music. Somewhere along the line, through my boss, PAO Ray Benson, I met a woman named Katya Shirman. She worked at *Roskoncert,* the Russian concert agency. She learned that I liked music and boy, the phone started to ring. I knew right away who it was. "Phil", she would say in Russian (it always sounded like "Feel"), "You must come to this concert" so I would go alone or Bobbi and I would go together.

One of the first such concerts featured a young Russian violinist named Vladimir Spivakov. Vladimir Spivakov became one of the world's most famous violinists and conductors but that time he was young and fairly timid, though also ambitious and extremely gifted. We went after one of his concerts to the apartment of Katya and her husband to meet Volodya. It was just the first of many such social encounters.

We went to one concert featuring bothSpivakov and another brilliant, young violinist, Viktor Tretyakov. They were contemporaries, both students of the same teacher, Yuri Yankelevich. There was a joke, a gag. The Russians like these quick one liners. Question: "Who is better, Spivakov or Tretyakov?" Answer: "Gidon Kremer." Kremer is a Latvian violinist. The point being you've got these two really fine young violinists but there is an even better one up there in the Baltics. The Russians would just throw their heads back and laugh at that joke.

Many years later, I went to a concert by Spivakov at Strathmore in Bethesda. I assembled the concert programs from all the Spivakov concerts that I had attended both in Moscow and later on in places like Munich and Paris. He and some of the orchestra members were amazed to see this collection. By the way, in the closed society that was Moscow, it was very easy to walk back stage after a concert and greet the performers. The performers liked the attention. By contrast, that night at Strathmore, I was barely able to talk my way back stage after the concert to greet my friend.

If the KGB was keeping a file on me, they certainly did learn early on that I loved to go to the Great Hall of the Conservatory and to Tchaikovsky Hall and hear orchestras and recitals and that I really appreciated music. I loved it. I would always have great front row seats and people knew that I was American and I enjoyed cultivating that image, that I was a devotee of classical music. I am not a music critic but we heard a wonderful cross section of performers and orchestras in a very safe environment.

There were two problems. It was hard after a busy day at work to keep your mind on the music and not be thinking about what you needed to do the next morning and it took time away from my children.

Let me talk more about going back to Garmisch in the spring of 1979 for a ski vacation. One evening, we went to the apartment of USARI faculty members, Mr. and Mrs. Posdeev, where we met a Russian woman named Tatyana Sergeovna Khodorovich. She had administered the Solzhenitsyn Fund in Moscow and was now living in Paris. I don't know exactly why she was in Garmisch during our visit but she said "you should get in touch back in Moscow with Tanya Ivanova." This began what I will call the "saga of the Tanyas."

So back in Moscow and on a Sunday afternoon a few weeks later, we drove and drove and finally found the apartment of Tanya Sergeovna Ivanova. We made two Sunday afternoon visits there and met a number of interesting people, including Tanya Velikanova and Sergei Khodorovich, two of the directors of the Solzhenitsyn Fund.

Tanya Velikanova, who would later on spend time in Siberia, urged us to meet someone named Tanya Zieman. This is why I call it the saga of the Tanyas.

Don't try to follow all that except to know that on April 1, 1979, I walked not too far from where we lived to the apartment of Tanya Zieman. Her husband, Yuri, was not there but their three-year old daughter, Vera, was. We learned they were refuseniks. Yuri had applied to emigrate and had been "refused," from whence the term in Russian.

Tanya welcomed me warmly, offered tea and, after I spoke in Russian, asked if I would like to speak with her in English. It turned out that Tanya was an English teacher with a rich command of the language.

I left Tanya Zieman's apartment that night entrusted with a package of letters – I held them under my coat -- that had been delivered to her by Tanya Velikanova. When I got back to the embassy, I sent it out through the diplomatic pouch to people in the outside world. These were for people in the West who were active in the Helsinki human rights movement.

To make this long story short, Tanya and Yuri Zieman and family became our dearest friends. They now live in Boston. Vera, then three, went to Amherst and the Fletcher School. Her sister Galina or Galka, Yuri's daughter, was ten years older. She and her husband Viktor and their children also emigrated and live in the Boston area. We always told the Ziemans that if "at any time being close to us jeopardizes you, puts you in danger, tell us and we will vanish from your lives." On the contrary, they wanted our friendship and felt that Kurt gave them a certain protection.

I took journalists, visiting firemen and later on, the Voice of America director, Richard Carlson, to visit them. They finally got permission to emigrate in 1988, right after the Ronald Reagan visit. In fact, there was even in the planning stage of the Reagan visit in 1988 the idea that en route from the airport, Reagan would go by the Zieman apartment and then on to Spaso House. That didn't happen but it was in the planning stage.

Through Yuri and Tanya, we had many, many indelible experiences and our children were involved. We would go out to the woods in one of the open areas, maybe Vatutinki, in the 40 kilometer zone around Moscow, and have a cookout. We would provide chickens that we could purchase at the diplomatic gastronome. Yuri would set up the spit and cook them. You would have thought we were in Rock Creek Park on a wonderful spring day.

Or we would go to a little dacha they were able to rent. They babysat for our dog Tar one summer. It was a life-changing experience.

Q: I have the vision of sitting around a kitchen table drinking tea or vodka or what have you and talking about life, real discussions. This is very much the Russian spirit.

BROWN: Exactly. Much of our conversation was just as human beings, parents, sitting in a small kitchen, of course, all the time hoping that Yuri would not be arrested. He took a job as an orderly in a hospital because he had lost his job when he applied to emigrate. We were always hoping their health would be good and that they would not run afoul of Soviet authorities, which they didn't. They had almost 10 long years before they were able to emigrate. There is much more about that story I could tell but they could tell it much better.

Q: Did you learn to identify mushrooms?

BROWN: I didn't learn to identify them but I certainly knew how important "*gribi*" are to Russians and I enjoyed tasting many varieties of mushrooms.

So through those two avenues -- the creative intelligentsia, particularly in the world of music but also theater, and our refusenik friends -- we had windows on Soviet society. To this day, people will ask, "Did you get to meet Russians?" We got to meet more Russians than we had time, even on our first tour.

I want to conclude memories of my first Moscow year by mentioning four world events that had an impact on our lives. One was the U.S. establishing full diplomatic relations with China early in 1979. All of a sudden, the Chinese Embassy was inviting American diplomats, often their counterparts, for social events. It got to the point that Ambassador Toon had to say, "We need to do this in an orderly, restrained fashion. We cannot look as if we are falling all over ourselves." So there was some sort of structured way of accepting invitations and boy, did it produce very nice meals. They had a huge compound and they raised a lot of their food right there on the compound. They were out on Friendship Street not too far from the university.

Then there was the murder of Ambassador Dubs in Kabul in February, 1979. I didn't know him but some of my colleagues did. It sent a chill over the diplomatic community. Of course he had served in Moscow too. That was very sad.

One day after the incident when a man blew himself up in the consular section, there was a major U.S. - Soviet prisoner exchange. Five Soviet dissidents were released in exchange for two Soviets held in US prisons. That was April of 1979.

And then lastly the Vienna summit in June. That culminated my first year in Moscow. I came back to Moscow and not too long after that we went on home leave.

Let me add one quick thing to the Vienna summit meeting. There had been a report that Thomas Watson, formerly of IBM, would replace Ambassador Toon. Ambassador Toon probably knew more about this than he let on but he didn't confirm it. Thomas Watson came to Vienna for that summit and he was interviewed by journalists Kevin Klose of The Washington Post and Dan Fisher of The Los Angeles Times. The agreement was they would not run the interview until and unless Thomas Watson was actually confirmed as ambassador to Moscow or presented his credentials.

Of course, he was and the stories were published. There was nothing wrong with the stories but Ambassador Watson didn't like them. He would write personal notes on his hand. If he was going to be interviewed by Dan Fisher or Kevin Klose, he would write on his "Fisher/Klose" in pen on his hand. They picked this up and wrote about it in the story. It was just a little thing but Ambassador Watson was offended by it. So for that reason, he always felt very uneasy dealing with the press.

That summer, we went back to our beloved cabin in Maine for home leave. I knew all along that the Watson name was associated with Camden. It was his brother Arthur who had a house in Camden. Along with a little more research, I realized that Tom Watson (I never would have called him that at the time) had a place on one of the islands in Penobscot Bay and it was he who had been named ambassador to Moscow.

I screwed up all my courage and with some trepidation called that number, introduced myself to Tom Watson and explained that Bobbi and I were vacationing there. We had just finished one year in Moscow, we would soon be going back and we were, whatever I said, excited and pleased to know he was going to be our new ambassador.

I am not quite sure he grasped who I was or what I was saying but he said, "Well, we will have to get together. Call me back." I called him back a few days later. When he said "get together," I assumed he meant that we would get together for lunch. I had to explain to my children that they were not going to be involved in this, that this was Dad's new boss and that I would have to deal with this very carefully.

So I called him up on the given morning and he asked me, "Do you have children?" All my kids heard was, "Yes, we do, two. They are 11 and 9." They immediately caught on that he was inviting us all. He asked "You know where Lincolnville Beach is?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, get down there at 11 o'clock and I will pick you up in my helicopter." And he did.

He picked us up and flew us over to North Haven, his end of the island, where they had a large family estate. He and his wife, Olive, were the most hospitable, warm, welcoming people, nothing pretentious about them and yet, we looked around at this vast estate and were reminded that he was a former chairman of IBM and was now going to be the American Ambassador to Moscow. He took me aside. We went walking and he started asking me questions about how we could solve the problems of U.S.-Soviet relations and nuclear weapons and I had to explain that this was a little above my competence.

Then we completed lunch and the kids went swimming in the pool. Somewhere along the line, I learned that not long before, Mr. Watson had had a heart attack and so I was somewhat relieved when he introduced us to his pilot, who flew the helicopter back to Lincolnville Beach. It was an experience we will never forget.

When I went back to the embassy a month later and mentioned in the country team meeting that I had had lunch under these circumstances with Ambassador Watson, I certainly got people's attention. Everyone wanted to know who he was and what he was like.

It also meant that when Ambassador Watson came out in October, 1979, I had to make it fairly clear when he called me up to his office to discuss certain subjects that I was not the person to talk to. He needed to talk to the head of the political section or the DCM. That eventually got straightened out but we always had a very personal friendship with the Watsons and it continued. Several summers thereafter, we would go to North Haven, be their guests for a meal or meet him somewhere along the Maine coast.

He wrote a book ("Father, Son & Co: My Life at IBM and Beyond") and inscribed it to Bobbi and me "with admiration." The book has about 20 pages on his time as ambassador. He referred to it as "his short, unhappy tour as a diplomat." We felt a twinge when he passed away; we felt as though we had lost a close friend.

In retrospect, it seems as if Ambassador Watson was snake-bit. I went to the Kremlin with all the senior officers from the embassy as he presented his credentials. I have that photo. In late November, less than a month later, Ambassador Watson had to return to the United States for gallbladder surgery. Not only were political things going to turn sour, but his health was a challenge.

Q: You went back after leave to the Soviet Union in '79. What was the situation? Was there anything developing at that time?

BROWN: Let me repeat that I kept diaries during this time. As I go through them, preparation for this interview has been tedious. It is time-consuming. I am sometimes amazed at how I found the time to keep a diary and put in the details that I did.

That was then and this is now but as I see names and recall incidents, I look them up on the internet. I learn more about them now than I knew back then. I am not only reliving these experiences but I am rediscovering them and learning about people I met back then.

I am not even looking at various files and photo albums but only at my diaries. I kept diaries every day, probably 362 out of 365 days of the year. What I conclude is that we, and I deliberately say we, had an amazing experience, an amazing opportunity. This was an extremely interesting place to be in a Foreign Service career. Our professional and personal lives were intertwined and one was as interesting as the other. Ee took full advantage of the opportunity.

Our experiences there were people-oriented. I am amazed at the energy we had. I am amazed at how we could go out night after night and be involved in some activity or other. We were in the prime of our lives. For me, it was age 37 to 40. I had a lot of energy then. We involved our children. Our children were at a great age to be in Moscow. They

were not so young that we had to have them taken care of and couldn't really understand the experience. If they had been a few years older, they might have been restless teenagers or we would have sent them off to boarding school. They were right in between. It was a good time for them to be involved.

It is fun for me even now to ask if they remember such and such an experience, like the day my 11-year old daughter Christine and one of her friends, the daughter of a colleague in the political section, decided to get on the bus that goes around the Ring Road in Moscow. The only problem was they couldn't quite figure out where to get off and so they went all the way around the Ring Road -- Christine would have to recall the details -- before they realized where they needed to get off.

On the one hand you think, wow. You let your kid do that in Moscow in the midst of godless communism? On the other hand, I am reassured by the thought that Russians love children and that the kids would have found somebody who would have helped them out. It was an adventure.

You asked what kind of mood we found when we went back. September, 1979, seemed to be a pretty good period in U.S. – Soviet relations.

It was still the time of Ambassador Toon — Ambassador Watson didn't come out until October — and we had a special event. It took place just down the hill behind our embassy on a big plot of land that was to be the site of our new embassy, the NOB, new office building, on the new embassy compound, the NEC. I recall Ambassador Toon standing on a little podium; it reminded me of the Politburo on top of Lenin's tomb on November 7th. It was a very formal ceremony which included Soviet officials.

If anyone had told me on that date that I would come back to Moscow in 1987, I certainly would have assumed that I could look forward to working out of a new office building. Well, when I came back in 1987, we lived on that compound in a very nice townhouse. A lot of embassy support facilities had been relocated there but the new office building, the NOB, was alleged to have bugs in it and was being deconstructed; it was a work site for Americans trying to find and take out those bugs.

In my three years, 1987 to 1990, we never got into that new office building. We continued to work out of the old office building under abysmal working conditions. I mean abysmal, dangerous to your health. It was dirty, a fire trap, a hot, awful work environment. One of my regrets is that we didn't ever have a chance to work in proper working conditions. I might have stayed a fourth year in Moscow on my second tour if the working conditions had been better.

Let me turn to a different and happier subject. I am reminded that one of our senior FSNs, a fellow named Yuri Zarakhovich, wrote an article in 1979 for Ogonyok Magazine. Ogonyok was one of the more interesting magazines and the subject was the father of John Beyrle. John Beyrle was in our exhibits program. His father, Joe, had been in the Second World War and had a very interesting experience with Soviet troops.

I never thought about that issue again until just a couple of years ago when John Beyrle became the American Ambassador to Moscow. That subject, his father's World War II experience, was recalled just a couple of years ago in exhibits, newspaper articles and interviews. Those are the kinds of stories that Soviets, now we refer to them as Russians, love. U.S. - Russian cooperation during the Second World War.

Q: I think today Russian citizens don't live as long as most others; heavy smoking, heavy drinking, not much exercise. The population is shrinking. Did we ever address it?

BROWN: A man named Murray Feshbach, an expert on Soviet demography at the Census Department, was pointing out way back in the '70s that Soviet population was not growing, was in decline from these very factors that you mentioned -- alcoholism, diet, lack of exercise and perhaps just lack of incentive, given their living conditions, to have large families.

It was a problem that the Soviets, though they wouldn't come right out and say it, had to be aware of it as far back as the '70s and maybe before that.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet press at that point? Was it strictly a tool of the Communist Party? Was there any movement there?

BROWN: The short answer is yes, strictly a tool of the Communist Party. We dealt with Soviet journalists but we dealt with them as very competent, very well trained polemicists. As press attaché, I would often take Washington visitors to meet Soviet journalists. I recall going with Congressman Solarz to call on the editor of Pravda, Viktor Afanasyev. Solarz raised the question of Soviet press coverage of American hostages in Iran. Afanasyev had no problem replying; he was a very skilled spokesman for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Alexander Bovin of Izvestiya was another with whom we would frequently meet. Vikentiy Matveyev was another. I sometimes thought "boy, I wish we had people who are as skilled both in expressing a particular point of view and perhaps doing it in Russian." Our visitors such as the congressman were frequently outmatched.

When it came to the crunch, to the issues in foreign policy, all Soviet "journalists" sang the party line. And for good reason; their jobs, their livelihoods depended on it.

I would occasionally invite Soviet journalists to our apartment. A number of them came to watch a video of the Reagan-Carter presidential debate in 1980. They would watch this debate and would discuss it. They were always, as we would say today, on message. There would be no concessions; whether they were defending the invasion of Afghanistan or saying it was the U.S. fault that we had hostages in Iran, they were right on line.

At the same time, you would talk to any of them and either by the look on their face or by what they would actually tell you, the message was that this was all a big lie. Whatever the Russians were claiming about their standard of living or their role in the world, they were basically a third world country with nuclear weapons. I am sure that the official spokespeople recognized that as well. It is just that a lot of them benefited from this system and so they were not going to undermine their own position.

The short answer to your question is people knew that they were being lied to. We often watched the television news at night, the program called "Vremya." You would hear the reports on food production or the general level of contentment and you knew that very few people could have watched those and thought it was true.

But the competence of the Soviet press was never to be underestimated. They were very adept at doing their job as official propaganda and they managed to write things that supported the government line. In terms of competence, even if you scoffed at what they wrote, they were very effective in doing their job.

By the late '80s they were emerging out of their restrictions. They were probing into all aspects of Soviet history, the Stalin period. They were taking full advantage of the new freedoms.

But they still looked at the United States through the prism of communism. I was never in anything other than the Soviet Union. The collapse didn't come until a year later so it was still communism. There were people who were beginning to think independently. Views were being printed in the media that you never would have imagined before. I would never underestimate the intellectual competence of the Soviet-era journalists. They were well educated, they knew how to do their job but they also knew how to keep their job and didn't want to push too far.

Q: Was there any effort during this time to spice up the news or something? Tractor production is not exactly a gripper.

BROWN: No, it wasn't but it was there every night along with the speeches. Was there an effort to spice up the news? The front page of every major newspaper would have exactly the same article with exactly the same words. Newspapers like Literary Gazette might have long, tedious pieces on some aspect of cultural life but I don't think Russians turned to newspapers or TV to spice up their lives, at least not TV newscasts. They watched cultural events, sporting events, children's programming, that kind of thing.

They didn't look to the media for news and the media was not trying to make it look interesting. Its role was to be the official mouthpiece for the CPSU.

Q: Where did people get their news in those days?

BROWN: We used to say that the rumor mill could get stories across Moscow and around the country in no time; that's where news traveled fastest or most believably just through conversations.

Beyond that, where did people get their news? A certain number were able to listen to foreign broadcasts including the Voice of America. Radio Liberty was jammed but if you got in the right places you could hear it.

I did a great deal of travel. When I traveled to places like Tbilisi, Tashkent or Irkutsk, one of the things I was supposed to do was listen to the Voice of America and see if I could monitor it despite the jamming. The answer was sometimes yes, sometimes no. International broadcasts were a source of news.

Beyond that, you had the intelligentsia or the few people who were able to travel abroad and see things differently or who had contact with foreigners. For most other people in the country outside the big cities, I don't think they really cared that much. They just went about their daily lives struggling to make ends meet.

Q: Did we see any differentiation or cracks between what you were seeing in the central part of Russia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan?

BROWN: A city we visited frequently, and where you would find the greatest sense of skepticism, where you felt a total change of spirit, was Tbilisi, Georgia. There was just something special about that part of the world. The first morning I awakened in Tbilisi, I felt as if I was in a Mediterranean country. Over the course of two tours in the Soviet Union, I went there numerous times, quite often with family members.

I didn't go to Belarus, to Minsk, until my second tour but I don't think you would have found much deviation from party line in those areas.

In Central Asia, there was a whole different look – the faces, a different way of living, the ready availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and that kind of thing. Again, I don't think they were thinking that much about political issues out there.

But aside from these specifics, there is another more important point. What these three years in Moscow from 1978 to 1981 did for me was to make 1987 to 1990, when I went back on my second tour, so amazing. From the first day back in 1987, I would start the day, probably at a staff meeting, saying or hearing "you can't believe what we just read, what we just saw, what we just experienced." How different it was from ten years earlier. It really did go from a tightly controlled, thought-controlled society to an amazingly open, vibrant new world.

Q: Let's take two issues that must have had quite an impact. One is the hostage issue in Tehran and Soviet reaction and the other of course is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

BROWN: The hostage taking was terribly depressing. I didn't make a note in my diary about it until several days after it happened. Soon after, we had a meeting in the embassy to ask ourselves what we should do. I am not exactly sure what we meant by that but it seemed important to address our concern over this issue. The Soviets were exploiting it fully, blaming the United States. They had interests of their own as far as their diplomatic immunities but they showed no sympathy for us for that situation.

Then there was the day -- and again, remember how we got our news, news wasn't as instantaneous back then as it is now – when I learned through an AP report of the failed hostage rescue mission. That made that whole experience all the more depressing.

Life went on, we didn't stop living. It was on your mind every day. We had no fear of that kind of thing in Moscow. If anything, the Soviets had more worries about the safety of their diplomats in places like New York and elsewhere. In Moscow, we didn't fear hostage taking or physical attacks but you had to think of those poor souls in Tehran.

Jumping ahead to February of 1980, we and the David Willis family took a vacation in Sri Lanka. We got there flying Aeroflot from Moscow nonstop to Colombo. Part way through our flight, the pilot told us we were flying over the Persian Gulf. People even looked out to see if they could see American warships. It occurred to me that we were flying right over that country where this was going on.

I remember the beginning of negotiations in November of 1980 and the Algerians being involved. When the hostages were released in January, the Algerian Ambassador in Moscow came to an event at Spaso House. We had served in Algeria and there was some grudging thanks to the Algerians for some little role they played in resolving the issue.

Q: Let's go to the invasion of Afghanistan. Here were the Soviets invading essentially a communist country. It is sort of a peculiar thing. Do you recall when it first happened?

BROWN: I am sometimes struck as I read my diary to see that I didn't write on that day that the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, etcetera, etcetera. I guess I took it for granted that this was in the news so I didn't have to write it. I do have a note on December 28, 1979 that the Ambassador briefed the American press on what we called the Soviet-led coup in Afghanistan. That's about the only note I made.

Of course, the consequences were immediate. The sanctions imposed by the Carter administration had a profound effect on our lives. Ambassador Watson was recalled. We were groping for sanctions and sanctions included closing what we called the Kiev Advance Party, KAP. We were going to open a consulate in Kiev and they would open a consulate in New York.

We thought we were going to punish the Soviets by closing the Kiev advance party and withdrawing our very good people. That was about the most stupid thing you could do, to close your eyes and ears to an important part of the country, to withdraw your diplomats but that was one of our sanctions.

Another sanction was to suspend grain sales. This played right into Soviet hands. All those ships would no longer be coming from New Orleans to the port of Odessa. Aside from the negative impact on American farmers, the Soviets managed to manipulate the embargo quite nicely. They assured their people that the supply of bread would not be affected. Tightening belts in a time of crisis was nothing new for Soviets. It simply reinforced the sense of nationalism and loyalty.

The other major sanction was the boycott of the Olympics. I well remember the summer of 1980. We were not allowed to go anywhere near the Olympic Park lest we appear to be in any way involved in the Olympics. In my opinion, the boycott was a mistake. I think it would have been a wonderful way to poke our finger in the Soviet's eye to have young American athletes throwing a Frisbee on Red Square. We played into Soviet hands through that boycott which, of course, allowed the Soviets four years later to boycott the U.S.-hosted Olympics in Los Angeles.

I vividly recall those three things -- closing our consulate in Kiev which never really opened, suspending grain sales and boycotting the Olympics – in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan. But there were also a few other "minor" things, cutbacks in cultural exchanges, that affected us more directly.

Back when I was in Princeton, in 1973, I wrote a paper on the history of U.S. – Soviet cultural exchanges. I concluded that when you wanted to show that you were happy with a country with which you had tense relations, you initiated a cultural project. You sent ping pong players to China or the New York Symphony to Moscow. And when you wanted to show you were unhappy but didn't want to launch nuclear weapons as the first action, you suspended cultural programs and so that's what the U.S. did. We suspended many cultural programs.

But it sometimes went to extremes. A young unknown American pianist came to perform in Moscow. He wasn't even there officially. His father had arranged for him to perform. I was told I should not go to his performance at the Conservatory because it would look as though I was somehow endorsing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by going to hear an American pianist at the Conservatory.

That young pianist was Andrew Litton, now a noted conductor; his father was George Litton. George Litton asked me afterwards if I could get a copy of Andrew Litton's tape of his concert that night. I turned to our senior Foreign Service employee, Yuri Zarakhovich, and Yuri by some miracle got the tape from Gosteleradio, state television and radio. I passed it on to George Litton. A few years later, I was in Paris and Andrew Litton was there, either to perform as a pianist or maybe as an orchestra conductor. I got hold of his father because I wanted to go to the concert. I said, "You probably don't remember me. My name is Phil Brown. You were in Moscow . . ."

He responded, "How could I ever forget you? You got me that tape of my son's concert in Moscow."

I didn't want to say it wasn't I who did it, it was Yuri, but anyway I took the credit and the tickets. George Litton said, "You do me a favor. I will be grateful. If you do my son a favor. I will never forget you." George Litton lives in Manhattan. To this day, every time I see him or go to one of his son's performances, he remembers that 1980 concert in Moscow.

Q: Did the atmosphere of the embassy change after the Afghan invasion?

BROWN: Yes and no. The bloom was off the rose. No one felt that more than Ambassador Watson. Ambassador Watson comes to Moscow and he wants to preside over a period of good feelings created by the Vienna summit; within six months, that is all down the drain.

Did the atmosphere change? Indeed. On the other hand, did we still go about our work day to day? Did we still have a full plate of activities? Very much so. We weren't going to have exhibits and speakers and cultural presentations. That had a particularly demoralizing impact on people in the cultural section. I was in the press section. I still had a full platter, particularly in my role as press attaché, but the assistant IOs who dealt with exhibits, magazines and the like had a vastly reduced workload.

Q: You are press attaché and here the press is a complete creature of the political apparatus. What did you do?

BROWN: Let me explain once again that as press attaché, I dealt a lot with the American press corps. They were always asking questions on various issues. And under the Helsinki Agreements, working conditions for journalists were an ongoing issue. Anytime an American journalist couldn't get a visa, had his film seized or felt that his working conditions were compromised, we went to the foreign ministry to raise that issue.

It was tedious. I never really enjoyed doing this but we would go to the foreign ministry press division to defend the rights of the American press corps constantly.

We also had a very interesting and ambitious group of journalists from Western Europe and I found it very important to work with them. I had no sense that after the invasion of Afghanistan I had any less on my platter than I did before.

I mentioned that Ambassador Toon was very comfortable dealing with the press. He had a weekly, Friday afternoon background briefing for the American press corps. He almost seemed to revel in being contentious and getting a rise out of Washington. Ambassador Toon left in the fall of 1979 prior to the hostage crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan. In connection with Ambassador Toon's departure, we had a whole series of activities, social events that were not merely social events. They were part of the whole fabric of living in Moscow. One such party for Ambassador Toon, held in the snack bar, was in October of 1979, and I offered a toast that was a variation on the toast he said that he had offered to Secretary Kissinger.

Toon said his toast to Kissinger was "you have been a great secretary of state but an SOB to work for." I recalled this and I remember people nervously shuffling thinking I was going to say the same thing about Toon but my variation was "you have been a great Ambassador and a delight to work for." I went to Moscow being told to watch out for Toon. He has press attachés for breakfast. And now that he was leaving, I felt so comfortable that I could make him the potential target of a joke.

Q: He had a reputation as a curmudgeon.

BROWN: A tough guy to work for, a demanding boss but he certainly made my life interesting and more comfortable because he was honest with the press. He was candid with them. He occasionally got himself in trouble doing it but, to me he was a role model in how to deal with the press.

Ambassador Watson undoubtedly heard how comfortable Toon was with the press and it reminded me of when Ambassador Payton was replaced by Ambassador Hoffacker during my tour in Cameroon. One came from outside the Foreign Service and the next was a career man. I wondered "how can this new guy replace his predecessor?" In fact, he didn't try to replace; he went about doing what he knew how to do best.

By the same token, I don't think Ambassador Watson felt he was trying to replace Toon. He was going to come out and do what he knew how to do best but dealing with the press was not what he knew how to do best. He was always uneasy and his DCM, Mark Garrison, and his political counselor, Bob German, shared that uneasiness and so it was like walking on eggshells when we dealt with the American press. We tried some of the Friday afternoon background briefings but that was trying to do what your predecessor was comfortable doing and Ambassador Watson was not comfortable doing that. I can think of example after example where it was a very awkward relationship, complicated of course by the fact we quickly went from relatively good times to relatively bad times.

Just one more anecdote about Ambassador Toon that is too good and too memorable for me not to mention. Besides the snack bar farewell, there was another more formal affair at Spaso House. But the best farewell for Ambassador Toon was hosted by a correspondent named Ed Stevens. Ed Stevens won a Pulitzer Prize with the Christian Science Monitor in 1950 but by 1979, he was a character nobody fully understood. He was probably in his 70s then. He was afflicted by a physical problem where his head hung down on his chest. He couldn't stand erect. He and his wife Nina had a lovely, multi-story home in central Moscow that was full of icons. Ed hosted a party for only the American press corps. Bobbi and I were invited along with all the American journalists to say farewell to Ambassador Toon.

The first event of the evening involved Gene Pell, the NBC correspondent. I can't imagine how much company time he had spent with his cameraman creating this video, a spoof on Ambassador Toon. It picked up on and exploited many of Toon's

idiosyncrasies, habits or comments. I hope it exists somewhere because it was very funny; we were in hysterics laughing at it.

That was over and you thought nothing could exceed this for laughter and kidding. Toon was loving it and then this man appeared and you would have sworn it was Leonid Brezhnev. Out lumbers this hulking man with his head down on his chest and a Brezhnev mask. It was Ed Stevens, our host for the evening. He went on in a mumbling style you could hardly understand. It was partly the way Ed talked at the time and it was vintage Brezhnev. Toon again just loved it.

It was a genuine tribute from the American press corps. There were guys there like David Shipler of The New York Times, who only a few weeks earlier had written a very critical article about the embassy and about the embassy limiting access to the consular section in the wake of the incident there and this kind of thing. These guys didn't lose their critical edge but they really genuinely wanted to pay tribute, say farewell to Mac Toon.

To this day I look back on that with real warmth.

Q: Watson mentioned that he was sent to Moscow because of his business experience and the idea when Carter nominated him this was going to be an opening. Here was a businessman who could go out and get a business perspective. Did you find that there was any business perspective coming out of the ambassador's office?

BROWN: Not really. That may have been why he was nominated, partly because he was a Democrat and partly because of his business acumen. I would imagine it would have been saying to the Soviets, "Look. This man has achieved the top of his field. We are sending you someone who is really number one in his field." They would take no offense in it being a business person. They have great admiration for American business, even though they might claim otherwise.

I can't speak for Ambassador Watson but I think what he hoped to do was to bring the force of his personality to the position, whereas a career person would have been simply representing the official policy of the U.S. government. Sure, Watson would have represented the official policy of the U.S. government but he would leave a lot of the negotiating and that kind of thing to other people.

He was going to use Spaso House and make it an American cultural center. He was going to be able to use his personal wealth to improve U.S. – Soviet relations. He often recalled that he flew across the Soviet Union right after the Second World War in his own plane. He wrote about those wonderful experiences. He was involved in lend lease so by dint of his personality, he hoped he could contribute to the improvement of U.S. relations.

Who knows? In Watson's mind, maybe that would also make them more open to arms control and to loosening immigration restrictions but it wouldn't prevent them from, as we know, pursuing their own national interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Q: How stood our relations with our Russian employees, the Foreign Service nationals?

BROWN: We still had Russian national employees. We had only a couple in the press section, most notably Yuri Zarakhovich. After December, 1979, we had less work for Yuri to do, there was no question. That was a regret of mine.

I might as well take a minute and talk about Yuri, a heavy-set, garrulous Jewish intellectual, a member of the Communist Party but only out of necessity. He had a hearty laugh, loved to exchange jokes or stories in either Russian or English. I believe that he had come to the press section from the exhibit program.

Yuri was a great help on many projects and we got to know each other well. He invited me to his dacha one weekend. I went out there alone, probably a violation of embassy restrictions. You shouldn't travel alone but I went out to his dacha, met his wife, his mother, his mother's mother and their daughter. There were four generations

Yuri went along on several of our trips to Tbilisi; he had good connections there. In one particular case, Yuri put us in touch with a leading figure in state radio and television in Georgia. On a particular Saturday, we had a big Georgian meal with Yuri and his friend. I am sure we had not only a lot of food but a little bit of libation along with it. At the end, as we were walking out of the restaurant, we noticed that there was a Georgian wedding going on. It wasn't a house of worship; I think it was the reception. There was a ceremony in connection with it so I asked "can we just stand here in the back?" We did, the four of us, Yuri, the Georgian official and Bobbi and my daughter Christine.

People caught sight of us, realized I was not Georgian, found out that I was an American diplomat and pretty quickly, I was paraded up in the front of the room with somebody acting as an interpreter. The next thing I knew, I was being offered one of these cow horns full of, I am not sure what it was full of, wine, let's say and I was "invited" to toast the bride and groom by downing that horn of wine nonstop with the appropriate amount of wine trickling down my chin. I did it and got a round of applause.

Then I said through the interpreter, "I have observed one of your traditions and now I am going to ask you to observe one of our traditions and that is I am going to kiss the bride." So I kissed the bride on both cheeks and that produced a lot of laughter and applause. We walked out and the Georgian jokingly said to me, "You better be careful you don't overplay your hand; kissing the bride before the wedding or before her bridal night might be contrary to local tradition. You might end up finding your tires slashed or your throat cut." It was fun. I remember that Christine was there because she was in hysterics watching me drink this cow horn of wine.

On another occasion, Bobbi and I went to the Moscow puppet theater with Yuri. My Russian was good but I could not have begun to appreciate the nuances of what was going on in the puppet theater if Yuri hadn't been sitting behind us whispering and explaining things. He was always willing to become involved in any activity we had.

That same summer we were home, 1979, we linked up with a woman named Helen Papashvily and learned about her husband George Papashvily (a Georgian-American sculptor). Helen Papashvily and Bobbi's grandmother, Helena Couch, were friends. We took a catalog of George's works back to Moscow, showed it to Yuri Zarakhovich and asked if he could translate the introductory remarks. He initially looked at it skeptically but he translated it into Russian. He brought it to me a few days later full of enthusiasm. He loved it. It was a genuine U.S. – Georgian story.

By my second tour, we had dismissed all the Foreign Service national employees. There was a lot of chest beating about "boy, oh boy. This is the best thing we have ever done. We got rid of all these spies. How could we have ever operated an embassy with these disloyal people working inside?" This usually came from people who had not served in Moscow or whose jobs were not facilitated by input from locals.

I am proud to say that I did not buy that argument. I thought some of these people were very good. If we weren't smart enough to know how to use them but keep them in control, then that reflected on us. As I have said many times, if Yuri and others reported back to the KGB that Phil Brown loved classical music or that I had any of a variety of other legitimate interests, let them fill up the file.

By my second tour, Yuri was working for AP, the Associated Press, and our loss was their gain. After the invasion of Afghanistan, in that year and a half that I was there, we didn't have enough work for our Foreign Service Nationals but by the time I went back in 1987, we had so much work that I kept thinking if I could only get Yuri to help me out with this or that.

Then he was stolen away by Time magazine. The AP bureau chief, Mike Putzel, was married to the Time magazine correspondent, Ann Blackman, and I don't know how that went down within the family but Time stole Yuri away from AP. We last saw Yuri in Moscow in 2006 when we returned as tourists.

In the interim, Yuri had arranged for his daughter Masha to do university study at Emory University in Georgia. It happened to be a period when we were living in the States and Yuri asked whether Masha could call us in case there was a problem or issue. I said certainly. Masha became an immigration lawyer in Jacksonville, Florida. She has her own family and her mother became an American citizen.

In 2009, we were coming back from overseas and I picked up a copy of Time magazine. There was Yuri's obituary, a full column on the magazine's own page acknowledging what he had contributed to Time's reporting on Russia. He had died in his mid-60s of cancer. By this time he had come to live in Jacksonville. He lived long enough to hold his first grandchild. Yuri's daughter told me that they still have the dacha outside Moscow.

So that's the Yuri Zarakhovich story, my part of it. I hope he left memoirs.

I just love that kind of story. As I go through my diary and look up people on the Internet, I say, "gosh. So that's who that person was we were dealing with. Now many of them are dead." There are others who were children when we were there and they are now in the prime of life and doing interesting things. We can keep in touch with them; that is rewarding.

Q: In this first tour, did you feel the heavy hand of the KGB?

BROWN: No, I did not. I was conscious that they were probably monitoring my telephone calls and I always carried a number of small, two kopek pieces with me. If you were going to call somebody and didn't want to be monitored, you'd find a phone booth on the street and use that to call. I was not personally aware of the KGB.

I was just the other day reading about a trip I took with the head of the internal political section, a fellow named Bob Ober. We flew to Odessa; from there, we took the train to Lvov (Lviv) and from Lvov, we flew back to Moscow; it must have been a five or six day trip.

The most interesting part of it was when you'd get out and walk the streets or meet people in a restaurant. I have great respect for Bob Ober but I can't tell you how many times on that trip Bob would say, "See those people over there on the other side of the street? They are following us. They are watching us."

I would look at those people on the other side of the street and I'd see just a couple of ordinary Russians going about their lives. So I think it is a matter of perspective.

On trips like these, I had my agenda. I would try to listen to the Voice of America and see if it was being jammed. We also did things like go to a concert at the conservatory in Odessa. I am sure I put Bob up to that. At the conservatory in Odessa, you could see the names of famous graduates, people like Rostropovich and Oistrakh.

Neither when we were going to the conservatory nor when we went out to visit someone by public transportation was I aware of our being watched or surveyed or whatever. Bob was sure we were.

Bob also had his agenda. There were people on various lists he wanted to talk to. So we went to visit a person who was on the embassy representation list. Any time we had a high level meeting with Soviets, we would pass over a list of individuals on whom we were making a formal representation, probably for the right to emigrate. For that visit, we might well have been monitored.

There was an Indian consulate in Odessa and Bob and I called on the consul, who was delighted to have some English-speaking visitors. We signed the guest book. I must have visited there twice because I remember signing that guest book a second time and there hadn't been many visitors in the interim. But there was always something about going to a port city, just a little bit different from other places.

Q: What was the history of the Jewish population of Odessa?

BROWN: All I know is there was a very large Jewish population there and that they were part of the creative intelligentsia but I don't recall very much of the specifics at the time. Undoubtedly, there would have been a synagogue and there would have been some Jewish cultural organizations. Many of the creative intelligentsia came out of the Odessa Jewish community.

We went on by train to Lvov which is a pretty little town. It was really a Polish town with an old square.

People inevitably ask the same two questions when I say I served in the Soviet Union. The first is "could you meet people?" My answer is, "I didn't have enough time to begin to meet all the people." This may sound boastful but I am constantly amazed at how much time I did find to meet people after hours on the weekends and everything else.

Yes, we said to our Russian friends, particularly to our Jewish refusenik friends that if at any time they felt contact or friendship with us put them in jeopardy, let us know and we would back off without any questions being asked. The answer was always the same. "Phil, the more contact we have the better."

The second question was "could you travel?" And I traveled extensively.

We went to Moscow with a Volvo that we had purchased in 1972. That car was a lemon but somehow we nursed it as far as Moscow and it was obviously still going to cause us great difficulty. I managed to sell it. I never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy always dealt with rubles at the official exchange rate but plenty of African and other third world diplomats dealt on the black market. So, quite legitimately, I sold my Volvo for a cigar box full of rubles that I could convert at the embassy at the official rate. It all worked out. The only condition was that I deliver that car to Helsinki.

I had a friend in the embassy named Craig Spitzer. He was not a language-trained diplomat. He was one of the technicians but he knew how to operate cars and on a beautiful spring day, May 12, 1979, we headed off from Moscow and managed to drive that car to Leningrad. For Craig, it was a novel experience. Otherwise, he was not only never going to get out of Moscow, but probably never get out of the embassy-to-apartment routine so it was quite an eye-opener for him.

We stayed overnight in the guest apartment in Leningrad. After I had retired for the day, Craig was still out there working on the car, changing the spark plugs, changing the oil and everything else. The next day, we drove from Leningrad to Helsinki. I put Craig on the train back to Moscow. I would see him frequently afterwards and he'd always talk about that experience. I checked into a guest house in Helsinki and got up on Monday morning to deliver the car to the port. It wouldn't start but thanks to Craig, I knew what I

had to do with those spark plugs; I got the car started, delivered it to the port and that was it. That was the last I ever saw of that car. I think it went off to Sierra Leone. It may still be operating in Sierra Leone.

That was the last we would ever see of non-Russian cars. We bought the little version of the Fiat called the Zhiguli, a little yellow Zhig, probably about as unsafe a car as you can imagine. It provided us with anonymity. It had a diplomatic license plate on it but you could let that license plate get awfully muddy in the winter. That provided us with a degree of anonymity when we went to visit Russian friends. At least we weren't driving a Volvo or Chevrolet.

Your question; what did we talk about? My recollection is that we had close friends and we were not talking very much about politics. We talked about family and raising children. But they were also full of questions about life in America and often about things that made us reflect. I can remember Yuri Zieman, the father in the family we knew best, coming to our apartment. We had a whole row of books about Russia. We didn't have to engage in conversation. They would pull out books and look at pictures of the family of the czar and Russian history, pictures they had never been allowed to see.

I don't recall many conversations, except at the official level, on U.S. – Soviet relations or world politics. We would talk about the news of the day or personal concerns. With musicians such as Vladimir Spivakov, it might be on their hopes and aspirations for performing in Carnegie Hall or just the frustration of music making in Moscow.

Q: What was your impression of the music world?

BROWN: I listened to the Metropolitan Opera performance of "Manon" a couple Saturdays ago and during the intermission, they interviewed the leading singers. One was Polish, Piotr Beczala, and the other was a Russian, Anna Netrebko. The Polish fellow was quite critical of musical training in Poland but Anna Netrebko said that in Russia, they had the best musical training. I think she was referring to St. Petersburg. That's my way of saying that while I am not a music critic or a musicologist, I know that the musical traditions are deep in Moscow and it is not by chance that they have produced some of the world's leading performing artists.

I mentioned the Oistrakh family. I heard two generations of the Oistrakh family violinists perform in Moscow. I am jumping way ahead now but we were there when Rostropovich came back to the Soviet Union in 1991 as the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Musical training in Moscow was outstanding. They produced great singers, instrumentalists. Perhaps the orchestras were not up to the level of some Western orchestras, although I am dubious about that rating game. As often as not, it may have been a lack of instruments.

When the Empire Brass Quintet came out in 1987, they played in Vilnius, Lithuania. A lot of local brass musicians came to the concert and stayed afterward to talk. They were in envy of the instruments that the American performers had.

Q: In literature, what's out there? Certainly at one point Russian literature is, it's almost demeaning to say world class but that's of an era.

BROWN: It is undeniable that under Soviet communism, Russian literature was suppressed. All you've got to do is go back to the 19th century and see the great writers and contrast it with 20th century Russian literature.

I recall a night we went to a dinner with famous poets André Voznesensky and his wife Zoya Boguslavskaya and Bella Akhmadulina and her husband and a playwright named Misha Roshchin. This was on my first tour in Moscow and I am not sure I fully comprehended then who these people were or the role they played. I was the press attaché, not the cultural attaché.

The name Roshchin didn't mean too much to me then and it didn't mean too much to me this week but I looked him up and saw that he was a well-known playwright. The Soviets were still producing writers of note. There just weren't as many and they didn't have the freedom that they had at one time.

You could also argue, of course, that it is restrictions on freedom that produce great writers such as a Pasternak or a Solzhenitsyn. We would regularly go out to Peredelkino, the so-called writer's colony. We'd take friends there to see the grave of Boris Pasternak and be reminded even in the worst of times, or maybe because it's the worst of times, great creative talent emerges.

The Solzhenitsyn immigration was, if nothing else, one of the major points in the disillusionment of Western intellectuals in the Soviet Union and what it stood for, that a great figure like Solzhenitsyn would leave or be expelled.

Q: Did you find within your contacts any nostalgia for Stalin and his ilk or not?

BROWN: Not to any great extent. I have a little item in my files, an 8 x 10 photo calendar that includes a photo of Stalin and all his achievements. You felt a little bit of nostalgia for Stalin if you went to Georgia. I never went there but there was a museum in Stalin's birth town, Gori, that I think exists to this day.

The other place you might find it would be on Victory Day, May 15th. May was full of holidays. May 1st was International Labor Day. May 15th was Victory Day marking the end of the Great Patriotic War and you could go down to Red Square, take all the pictures you want of the men who would come out in full uniform with all their decorations and medals. Among them would be those who felt great allegiance to Stalin for his role in the war.

If you were with a taxi driver or looked into the cab of a truck, you might see a picture of Stalin up there on the visor. If you engaged the taxi driver in conversation, there wouldn't be much more than a mumble. But some people remembered him fondly.

Q. What was the role of the church and the openness in this first tour?

BROWN: I remember attending Easter services in 1979 at Yelokhovsky Cathedral in Moscow. We went with Kevin Klose, the correspondent for the Washington Post, and his wife and another visitor. Easter services were of course on Saturday night. What an experience to walk into one of those great cathedrals. They were jammed with people. There was a terrible crush, even in the diplomats' section, but it was worth seeing and experiencing. We stayed for several hours and the cumulative effect of music, liturgy, incense and the faces of both clergy and worshippers was profound. It will remain with me for a long time. That was our first Easter in Moscow and I think we went every Easter to a Russian Orthodox service. They were such memorable experiences.

We have a photograph of a Russian Easter service, perhaps at Yelokhovsky Cathedral, taken by a Russian photographer who was married to an American. It's a wonderfully-composed picture. He sold it as a way of making money.

The consensus was and is that the patriarch was beholden to the Kremlin but nevertheless, there were plenty of true believers and not just little old ladies. You'd occasionally see guys in uniform. That's probably true to this day that the church is beholden to the Kremlin and as we have seen, they are not terribly tolerant of other faiths. There were certain officially allowed faiths, the Jewish, Baptists and a few others, but they were not very welcoming to anybody else.

We went to a Baptist church to a baptism; I have vivid memories of that. The Soviets always liked to say that "we have religious freedom in this country. Just go to a Baptist church and you will see a baptism." Well, we did. It was a full-immersion baptism service that went on forever and ever. I am quite sure those being baptized and the clergy involved were very sincere and very true in their religion.

Q: Were we seeing problems with Islam at that time? Or were we looking at it?

BROWN: Not that I can recall. I do have a note about going by a mosque in Moscow -- I think maybe there was one mosque -- but we didn't talk much about it. Islam was more associated with Central Asia. If there was a problem associated with it, I don't think we were thinking about it at the time; it was a demographic issue. Even back then, the Russians were conscious that they didn't have population growth. They would try to put in measures that would reward large families but the problem was that all the large families were out in the Central Asian, Muslim areas.

As far as Islam being a political subject, not that I can recall.

Q: How stood Jews in the Soviet Union at that time?

BROWN: Not openly persecuted unless they applied to emigrate and then like our friends, they would risk losing their jobs and any other privileges. There was a variation on that. Some said the Jews had privileges that other people didn't have because they were at least allowed to apply to emigrate. Non-Jewish Russians couldn't even apply to emigrate.

And, of course, the Soviets could point to any number of what I used to think of as Jackie Robinsons. The American version would be: "What do you mean Americans discriminate against Negroes? Just look at Jackie Robinson." The Soviet version was: "What do you mean we discriminate against Jews? Any number of them occupy senior positions." I never stopped to think whether an editor or a member of such and such committee was Jewish but the Russians were very conscious of that. Nobody was wearing a Star of David. There was never any fear of that but there was anti-Semitism.

As for ourselves, we quite regularly attended church services which were held alternately in Spaso House or at the British Embassy. If you go back to the agreement in the 1930's that established U.S. – Soviet relations, one of the conditions was we could have a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest at all times in the Soviet Union and we did. Protestant denominations went together here in the U.S. and paid for a Protestant minister to be in Moscow and there was always a Catholic priest.

The Catholics had their mass in the snack bar which led to names such as Our Lady of the French Fry. We Protestants met in Spaso House, a lovely setting or at the British Embassy, which looked out on the Kremlin. You could sit there at a church service on Sunday morning and look out at the bells of the Kremlin. It was very inspiring. The Brits would bring in an Anglican cleric from Helsinki or elsewhere. There was always good attendance and I even sang occasionally in a little choir. It was an important get together.

Q: Did you find much collaboration with the foreign embassies, particularly the French and British and German?

BROWN: There was something called the QP, quadripartite. The American, French, British and German ambassadors got together on a weekly basis with rotating hosts and compared notes. On my second tour, when I was counselor, I occasionally attended when Ambassador Matlock would debrief but I often came away thinking I've got so much else to do. I understood that we were all political officers in Moscow but we were not all doing this kind of work. I went wondering if it was the best use of my time.

Similarly, on my first tour but not on my second, the four press attachés would get together, the British, French, American and German. I would go to those. We'd host a lunch and occasionally the PAO would also come. The meetings reminded me that we did very different work. My British, French and German counterparts were political officers. They were reading the Soviet press, analyzing it for changes in a word or two; that's what our political internal folks were doing.

Very few of my counterparts were doing what I was doing which was dealing with the press on a day-to-day basis, answering questions. They didn't cater to the press the way we did. They didn't have as many issues. They didn't have as many news making events as we did, as many newsmakers, as many things that caught the attention of the press. So those press attaché get-togethers were always fairly low on my list of priorities; I didn't find them terribly useful.

More important to me was my contact with their journalists. I knew some of their journalists better than they did. They didn't worry about the working conditions for German, French, British journalists but I was dealing with correspondents for the Financial Times and Le Monde and German newspapers on a regular basis.

New subject: In late September of 1979, all four of us — Bobbi, two kids and I — made our first ever trip to Tbilisi, Georgia. It was a real eye opener. This was a part of the Soviet Union that just acted differently than Moscow. This was not our first trip outside Moscow by any means. We had been to Dushanbe, Leningrad and places like that but Tbilisi, Georgia was a real eye opener.

Through music friends in Moscow, we had been given the names of two Georgian artists. The fact that I can remember the names of Shavleg Shilakadze and Nodar Zhvanya -- I don't have to look at notes to remember those names -- says something about what an impression they made on us. They met us near the Hotel Iveria where we were staying. They didn't seem to have any hang-ups, took us around, took us outside town, fed us meals.

I remember one or the other saying he wanted to take us to visit a town called Mtskheta, probably 20-30 miles outside Tbilisi. I explained that I would like to accept but that I hadn't requested permission from the foreign ministry; you always had to outline exactly where you were going before you took a trip. Either Nodar or Shavleg smiled and said, "Phil, that's Moscow; this is Georgia." Off we went. There was that thumb your nose at central authority attitude that distinguished Georgia from the rest of the country.

The proximate reason for going to Tbilisi at that time was an American cultural presentation called the Preservation Hall Jazz Band out of New Orleans, amazing octogenarian jazz musicians. They did several performances in Tbilisi. We hosted a small reception for them afterwards and they again performed in Moscow.

I wasn't the cultural attaché. I wasn't the CAO, I was the press attaché or information officer but I didn't think anything of blending the roles, of going to Tbilisi to attend the Preservation Hall Jazz Band concert and hosting the reception afterwards.

A few years later, I went to New Orleans and heard them perform. You had to line up in the street to get in. Some of the same people who had been in Moscow in 1979 were still with the band. Not the octogenarians but some of their younger performers.

That's the kind of thing we weren't going to experience after the invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979. This was September of '79.

Q: What was the impression you were getting, both you and the other officers of the embassy towards Brezhnev and the leadership of the politburo? Was this a politburo that was even compos mentis?

BROWN: The only member of the politburo who was given much credence was Kosygin. Brezhnev was secretary general of the party. You had the nominal president, Nikolai Podgorny (his official title was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) and Alexei Kosygin who was in effect the prime minister. When American delegations came, they would call most often on Kosygin and he seemed to be *compos mentis*. He was in better health than Brezhnev. In conversation, he sounded intelligent. Brezhnev had only a few years left to live and it was quite well known he was ill. He would reportedly joke with visiting delegations that if there were any smokers among them, they should blow smoke in his direction since his doctors had banned him from smoking. Rumors would frequently circulate that he had died.

He would read speeches and it was this mumbling style that lent itself to mockery and jokes. Not on an official stage but elsewhere, there would be mockeries of Brezhnev who was hardly articulate.

I got to see him a couple of times because I would accompany journalists to the Kremlin when a high level delegation was making a call. I mentioned earlier that one of those delegations consisted of two members of the Carter cabinet, Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps and Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal. They came on their own plane and were received at the Kremlin by Kosygin and Brezhnev -- separate appointments. A small pool of journalists was allowed to attend the opening and I got to go along with the pool. I have a picture of myself standing against the wall in the meeting with Kosygin. I was one of the relatively few people in the embassy besides the ambassador who actually got to see Soviet leaders in the flesh.

I went to a hockey game one time. Bobbi's young cousin was visiting. We went to a hockey game for the fun of it and there was this stir that caused us to pay attention. We realized Brezhnev was in attendance. I also noticed that the crowd was much more subdued than usual. No shouting "shaybu," the Russian word for puck.

One of the things that amazed us in 1987 was that Gorbachev not only appeared in public but you couldn't shut him up. He talked and talked and talked. At first it was interesting and then he wore out his welcome. He was so verbose.

Q: Today is the 29th of March, 2012 with Phil Brown. We are finishing off his Soviet tour.

BROWN: Three years in the Soviet Union and we concluded last time roughly the summer of 1980, two years into my Moscow assignment.

What I would like to talk about today would be the last year but rather than doing it chronologically, I would do it by some categories.

As I read through my notes recently, I was reminded once again that on the one hand, here we were in the depths of the Cold War. The Soviets had invaded Afghanistan; they had arrested Sakharov and many other dissidents. The United States had responded with sanctions, everything from cutting off grain deliveries to closing our consulate in Kiev, a consulate that closed before it even opened because all we had there was an advance party. We boycotted the 1980 Olympics and closer to home or closer to our activities in Moscow, virtually all the cultural programs dried up. There were no exhibits with Americans out there talking about U.S. life, no speakers, and no performing arts groups.

On the other hand, as I look through my notes, I realize that both on a professional and personal level, we were as busy and as active as we could be. And we were enjoying the experience. I say professionally and personally and yet it was really hard to make a distinction because they overlapped so much.

Tom Watson attracted a lot of friends to Moscow. They were usually people who knew him from his previous life. I am sure he said "come see us in Moscow" without realizing so many of them would. I don't know if it was connection with Ambassador Watson but we had a visit by Harry Reasoner, the CBS newsman who at one time had actually been a USIA employee. We went out for dinner with him. He was doing something for "60 Minutes" on the Soviet Union. He told Bobbi and me that one of the reasons he left USIA was he never figured out how he could put his kids through college on the salary of a government employee.

Another visitor was Armand Hammer. His tie to the Soviet Union went way back and he had a blank check when it came to access. He could come in and see Brezhnev any time he wanted. Armand Hammer had known Lenin. On one particular occasion, I was supposed to make sure the film crew that accompanied him had *carte blanche* to film him at Spaso House. I was there to make sure they did what they were supposed to do and still obeyed the rules.

Another name that wouldn't mean too much today but to people of your generation and mine, Lowell Thomas, the man who ended all his radio broadcasts with the phase "so long until tomorrow." He was well into his 80's. He died a couple of years later but he was still well known to that generation of American journalists.

We had lunch one day at the apartment of Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose with Peter Jennings, the ABC anchorman and his wife, Kati Marton.

George Kennan visited. He was there doing research and was invited to a staff meeting. Some other names don't mean quite as much but they are prominent figures in the world of publishing. Hedley Donovan of Time magazine; Time was doing a special issue, cover to cover, all about the Soviet Union. Sander Vanocur, who was a TV correspondent,

came to interview Ambassador Watson. Walter Cronkite, I will mention in a different context.

But I want to go into a little more detail about two special visitors. One was Bob Hope. Hope came to Spaso House as the guest of Tom Watson. You can Google some correspondence between the two of them before the visit. Hope came with his wife and a friend whose name meant nothing to me at the time. The word was they would do a show for the American community at Spaso House.

The man traveling with him was Alex Spanos, a Greek-American, very right of center, a multimillionaire from San Diego. He later wrote a book about how he made it in the United States with a nice preface from Rush Limbaugh.

No sooner had they arrived than I got a call saying Bob Hope wanted to visit Red Square. I should round up some correspondents and walk him across Red Square. It was an experience. Bob Hope, Spanos and a gaggle of correspondents. Nobody on Red Square had the slightest idea who Bob Hope was but he pretended as if they did. He made jokes about Lenin's tomb and about people walking around. We had some TV cameras and flashbulbs. There is a picture that appeared in quite a number of newspapers with Bob Hope, a young Russian soldier and me. I was interpreting for him. I was really quite surprised no authorities came over and asked what we were doing or whether we had a permit to film? You didn't have that easy flexibility at that time.

We went into GUM, the famous or infamous Russian department store. We wandered around a little bit, bought ice cream cones and mingled for the better part of an hour. The American journalists were covering it but they were also enjoying it. It was a once in a lifetime experience.

A day later, I got another call about lunch time saying "Bob Hope and his friend were out last night and they saw some blue suede shoes in a shoe store and they want to go buy them." I am sure the thought ran through my mind, why me? But I was smart enough to realize this was Bob Hope. Don't miss this opportunity. So Bobbi, Bob Hope, his friend Alex Spanos and I walked from Spaso House to the shoe store.

It was the middle of the day when a lot of Russians would do their shopping so it was crowded, mostly with women. It may have even been a women's shoe store but we went in and he was cracking jokes the whole time. You don't walk into a shoe store or any kind of store in the Soviet Union at that time and expect service. Service and Soviet Union do not appear in the same sentence but we managed to get the attention of somebody. Hope tried on the shoes. The process for purchasing was different in the Soviet Union. You didn't pick out your product and then walk to the cash register. If you knew what you wanted to buy and how much it cost, you went to the cash register, paid, got a little ticket and came back and picked up your product.

When I had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to buy, I left Bobbi with Bob Hope and I went to the cash register, got in line, paid, got the ticket, came back and we picked up

the blue suede shoes. Bobbi recalls that while I was doing this, Hope was making wisecracks about women's legs. I was told he wanted to use the shoes for a gag of some sort in California. He gave me a signed, autographed picture. In addition to his name, it says blue suede shoes. If I could turn the clock back, I would have had my own camera to take our own pictures.

There is another memory I have of Bob Hope. He did a show at the British Embassy because he was British born. It really didn't go over too well. The jokes were not that well understood but he gave a show at the American Embassy, at Spaso House, that was just hilarious. It was family oriented and for any Americans who wanted to come whether they were diplomats, press or whatever. The entire community was invited.

The thing I particularly remember was that Bob Hope set aside a couple of hours that afternoon to go upstairs at Spaso House and prepare. Here was a guy who must have done tens of thousands of such shows over his lifetime but he didn't take it for granted. He prepared, he adjusted his jokes for the particular context. They were all family jokes too. There was nothing that anyone would have been embarrassed about.

To me it was a lesson that no matter where you are in your professional career, don't take anything for granted. Always go and prepare. I don't know if there is any parallel or not but when I became a Washington DC tour guide, and I did many, many, many tours around Washington, I tried to prepare and to think in advance what is my audience, where do I want to go, what should I be attentive to. A little bit of that goes back to that Bob Hope experience.

The other prominent visitor was Senator Charles Percy. There was a tradition involving the heads of three corporations. The head of IBM, Tom Watson, the head of Bell and Howell, Charles Percy, and the head of Motorola, a man named Robert Galvan, would get together at Thanksgiving along with their families and they'd have Thanksgiving dinner, these three titans of American capitalism.

By Thanksgiving, 1980, the Watsons had been in Moscow for about a year and Senator Charles Percy and Robert Galvan and their wives came to Spaso House for Thanksgiving dinner. What made it different was that only a couple of weeks earlier, Ronald Reagan had been elected president and Charles Percy was in line to be chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He advertised this and the Soviets were very attentive. So Percy made calls on Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defense Minister General Ustinov and on Brezhnev. He was not discreet about these calls. He let people know in advance. I camped out at Spaso House with the press corps when he came back from these various appointments.

On that particular Thanksgiving Day, Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose and his family were our guests for Thanksgiving dinner. Late in the afternoon, Kevin and I had to excuse ourselves and go to Spaso House where we waited for Senator Percy to return from his call on Brezhnev.

In each case, he talked at great length and I dutifully prepared the transcript and sent it off to Washington. That, I can assure you, was tedious work on any occasion but especially with someone like Senator Percy.

The upshot of it was that Senator Percy made statements to the effect "don't worry too much about what Reagan said during the campaign; now that he is president he will be much more moderate in his thinking about the Soviet Union." I am paraphrasing but that was the gist of his remarks. That did not go over well at all in the White House or more precisely in the Reagan camp. I don't know the full details but I know it created a great deal of tension between President-elect Reagan and Senator Percy.

Without being indiscreet, I can say one morning I showed up at Spaso House in connection with this visit and Ambassador Watson and Senator Percy were having a real verbal battle. I thought it had to do with political issues. Tom Watson took me aside and said "I am tired of being his errand boy." Apparently Watson was being asked to do things that in his role as ambassador and former head of IBM, he didn't think he should be asked to do. That was, as I say, just another people experience.

I ran into Senator Percy many years later at Dumbarton Oaks. Maryland Senator Sarbanes was there. I ended up at a table with Senator Percy. When I started the conversation, I am sure he thought it was one of these "do you remember?" things where you never remember. But as I described his visit with Tom Watson, I immediately had his attention. Yes, indeed. He remembered it very well and he was wondering if I could help him through the Freedom of Information Act to get the reporting cables on that visit. I had to tell him I was now retired from the Foreign Service. My luck with the Freedom of Information Act would not be any better than his would be. He definitely was still interested in that visit.

I have another category called interesting Russian people. I was not the cultural attaché; I was the press attaché. But I had a very genuine interest in cultural activities, people in the cultural world.

I am going to mention names of a few writers and playwrights whom I met either because I was invited to a luncheon or dinner, perhaps at Spaso House or because I was attending a cultural event. I knew vaguely at the time these were prominent figures. But at the time, I did not know that I would be going back to Moscow in the late '80s and that these people would still be very high in the world of the arts, only ten years later they would be liberated. They would be able to do many things they were not able to do in 1980, '81.

I have already mentioned poets like Andrei Voznesensky and Bella Akhmadulina. These were names that I was just getting introduced to at the time.

In the musical world, I have an even longer list. Lev Markiz was a violinist who became a conductor in Amsterdam. He introduced us to a young pianist named Vladimir Feltsman. Feltsman is now an American, lives in the United States and teaches at SUNY. He came out in the late '80s.

We went to a concert by Sviatoslav Richter, the famous pianist. He had a reputation even in the Soviet Union for agreeing to do a performance and then not showing up at the last minute, begging off for health or other reasons. He didn't perform very much.

We did hear concerts by a wonderful husband wife team named Oleg Kagan and Natalia Gutman, a cellist and violinist. I will mention them again ten years later because they came back into my life.

I have mentioned violinist Vladimir Spivakov. Not only did we get to hear him play but we were part of his life in other ways. I helped Craig Whitney of The New York Times do an interview with Vladimir Spivakov. They met in our apartment and according to Craig, Spivakov was nervous. He began the interview by handing Craig a paper and saying "here are the questions and here are my answers." Craig explained that this was not exactly the way American correspondents operated and it all worked out satisfactorily.

Many years later, I ran into Bruce Nelan, who was the Time magazine correspondent in Moscow thirty years ago, and his wife, Rose. We were reminiscing about those days. Rose asked, "Remember when you delivered the shock absorber to Volodya?" To tell the truth, I had forgotten but the question forced me to recall.

We had gone to a lunch or dinner with Spivakov and he lamented that he couldn't get a spare part for his car, a Chevrolet if I remember correctly. I was able to get spare parts for him, probably through Helsinki. I didn't have to beg to get tickets for his concerts. It was a very symbiotic relationship. He could provide me with wonderful thrills on the violin and I could help him with a shock absorber for his car. I had completely forgotten it but Bruce and Rose Nelan remembered it.

The fact that they remembered it says something about the community we were then and about how personal lives were interwoven with our professional lives. Bruce Nelan was a Time correspondent; I was the press attaché at the embassy. We were supposed to have this very professional relationship and we did. But our personal lives overlapped a great deal.

With our friend, Yuri Zieman and his then four-year old daughter Vera, I took a walk through Novodevichy cemetery one winter day. Novodevichy cemetery was off limits to the general public. There were just too many famous people there that might spark some sort of political activity. But Yuri's father was buried there so we got to go with him. After we visited Yuri's father's grave, we walked around and saw the graves of some of the famous people there.

I went back in 2008 and managed to walk by the freshly dug graves of Rostropovich and Yeltsin; it is still a burial place for famous Russians.

On this particular day with Yuri, I noticed the headstone of Nikita Khrushchev. The sculptor of the headstone is a Russian-American named Ernst Neizvestny. A gentleman was there scraping ice and cleaning the area. I wondered and so I asked in Russian, "By chance, are you Sergei, the son of Nikita Khrushchev?" And yes, he was. We had a brief exchange in which I let him know that I was an American diplomat and that I appreciated the historical significance of his father. It was pretty unusual in 1980 to meet the son of Nikita Khrushchev. We had a little conversation, nothing substantive.

Q: Did you feel that despite the fact the Soviet Union had been doing various nasty things, it had loosened up from the Stalin times.

BROWN: No question that things had loosened up, they had changed drastically since the Stalin era.

But people were still reluctant or nervous when they found out that you were an American diplomat. They were taken aback. We knew or encountered Russians who had children our children's age and when they found out we were American diplomats, we realized they were not going to be comfortable meeting with us.

But we had neighbors in a big housing block right across from where we lived whom we met through our dogs. The dogs were a way of having a conversation with people. Their name was Yegorushkin and they had kids. They often invited us over there. We would have cake and tea or celebrate a birthday.

On any given day, I would see something on television or file a protest to the foreign ministry or read something in Pravda that confirmed the image that everybody has of the Soviet Union. These were not stereotypes. This was one aspect of life in that state.

But the same day, you could meet somebody on a plane or train or while you were cross country skiing or walking around the neighborhood and have a personal conversation with them. They would be astounded. "You are an American diplomat and you guys are riding on the second class train between these two cities in the Far East?" That was the reaction that an embassy colleague and I heard on a train trip one time.

We did have a lot of simple conversations with what I call the ordinary neighbor, the man in the street and despite what anyone says, these were not all KGB set-ups. In fact, I don't think any of them were. Quite often they were just that, a one time conversation.

In one case, the guy turned out to be a film producer named Sergei Aleksandrov. I met him on our plane ride to Dushanbe and realized he knew a lot about American film. I invited him to our apartment to see a film – I think it was "Casablanca" – and to my surprise, he accepted. After that, we saw each other from time to time, often at the Union of Cinematographers building. He helped me acquire some really nice Bukhara rugs and in return I gave him a few pairs of jeans.

Q: I think one of the things that gets forgotten is how often we used to have magazines and leave them on trains or even in your car with the windows open.

BROWN: I did this often. It was my own little way of sticking my finger in the eye of the Soviets, the way you did when you left a copy of Newsweek or Time magazine somewhere. Anything that would make it a little more difficult for them to exercise total control over their population.

But I should recall some of the sensitive press issues that popped up during that period. There was a lot of focus on an alleged biological weapons incident in the town of Sverdlovsk. Sverdlovsk was a closed city but some of the correspondents heard rumors of a biological weapons incident there. We spent a lot of time dealing with questions about it that frankly we couldn't answer.

Anthrax was the issue. Anthrax was the word of the day at the time and it was not out of bounds, not out of plausible thinking, especially when you think of Chernobyl and similar incidents. The Soviets were tight lipped. There wasn't much the American Embassy could offer; whether we knew more than we were letting on, I don't know. There is a good subject for a freedom of information inquiry.

When the Soviets did invade Afghanistan, Ambassador Watson's relationship to the press became more difficult. He was never really comfortable with the press but now he was going to be dealing with a very difficult subject. He went back to Washington. I recall that I was told to tell the press it was on "personal business." That made me uncomfortable because I knew it wasn't personal business and I didn't like being told basically to prevaricate. It certainly wasn't personal business.

Ambassador Watson did not have a comfortable relationship with Brzezinski. He was much closer to Cyrus Vance, who resigned, and to his successor, Edmund Muskie. I specifically recall an article in the newspapers that said according to sources in Washington, Ambassador Watson and his deputy, Mark Garrison were sending back "highly varnished reporting" from Moscow, i.e., they were not really being as tough as they should be in their reporting.

That quote came from Washington and probably from the Brzezinski staff. We were inundated with inquiries in Moscow. What kind of reporting are you doing? Of course, we didn't say what kind of reporting we were doing. It increased the tension and Ambassador Watson's discomfort level in dealing with the press. We may have had some of the background briefings but they were more notable by their absence than by having them.

There were also world news events that you couldn't help but be aware of and feel affected by. You didn't get them instantaneously; we relied on the AP ticker. An example was the failed Iran hostage rescue effort which had a terribly depressing impact.

The Moscow Olympics took place during the summer of 1980. We were not only boycotting them as a nation but those of us who were at the embassy were not allowed to go anywhere near the facilities. I remember standing on Lenin Hills and looking down at the stadium. You could see the lights, you could hear the roar but we were not allowed to be even caught close to the facilities.

We had the election of President Reagan in 1980. We had display windows on the exterior of the embassy and there was room there for big photo panels that we would change regularly. These might be an innocuous subject like agriculture in the United States or it might be some news event that we could brag about and Russians would walk by and take only a cursory look at them.

Right after the election, the very next day, we put up big panels of President-elect Reagan. We also had big panels that we never put up of re-elected President Carter. We got these panels from the Regional Program Office in Vienna and we were ready for either contingency. The Russians didn't really quite understand that and they thought it amazing that one day after President Reagan was elected, we could have these panels up there already with pictures of him and his career.

For most of those exhibits, the Russians would walk by and they might glance. Somebody might stand there for a minute or two. If they did, the militiaman would probably encourage them to keep on moving. But for these pictures of Reagan, people lined up three and four deep.

They had heard a lot about Reagan's statements about the Soviet Union during the election campaign. Both at the man in the street level and at the top level, they indeed were wondering who this man was.

That's why they were so interested in talking to Senator Percy. Anybody who could tell them something about this relatively unknown movie actor, governor, anti-communist, they wanted to know.

Did that have much impact on shaping Soviet thinking about Ronald Reagan? I don't think it did, no. But if you wanted to get a message around Moscow, in fact around the country, you could put it in those windows. We didn't do that but you could have put it in those windows and just by conversation, telephone calls, news would travel.

If we had put up there, for example, Sakharov arrested, that news would have traveled real fast. We also would have received a sharp protest from the Soviets had we done that. We never used them for that purpose.

Other world news besides the election of President Reagan and the release of the hostages included President Reagan's shooting which I followed until the wee hours of the morning on the Voice of America. A few days later, we received a tape from Frankfurt with the famous visual of Hinckley firing at the president. And I recall the shooting of the

Pope and finally the death of Alexei Kosygin, the head of government. We didn't realize at the time this was the first of multiple funerals that would take place on Red Square.

After Kosygin, and after we left in 1981, there were Brezhnev, Andropov and then Chernenko. There was a joke about somebody at the funeral for Chernenko who said to another "but you were here for the Brezhnev funeral and the Andropov funeral." And the second guy replied, "Yeah, I bought the subscription." That's the type of humor that the Soviets liked.

One little remembered event of 1981 was the 26th Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. For the rest of the world, it was not a big news event but by then, the chargé was Jack Matlock. Jack Matlock, whom I had first met when he was head of the Soviet desk, was back in Moscow for about six months as chargé before going to Czechoslovakia as ambassador.

He really lit a fire under a lot of sections of the embassy but in his heart Jack was a political officer. The political section was told to cover this party congress like wallpaper.

I don't remember that much came out of it. There weren't any major changes in personnel or whatever but I managed to get a credential for the press center where officials would brief. I probably shouldn't admit it but I felt a little one-upmanship with the political section. I had access to the press center and I could record briefings by spokesman Zamyatin and others and come back with various impressions. The political section always had to come to me and ask to borrow my tape. It was a friendly rivalry. I had some wonderful friends.

Edward Djerejian was either the political counselor or head of political internal. A lot of Matlock's pressure was on Ed Djerejian to report on the party congress. He heaved a sigh one day and said, "Every time I think I have done my last cable on this, Matlock comes to me with some new assignment regarding the party congress." No one would remember these events, they were pretty dull. But for Matlock, he would extract everything possible.

Q: Was it the tenth party congress where Khrushchev made his very famous denunciation of Stalin?

BROWN: Exactly and I think that is one of the reasons Kremlin watchers paid attention to party congresses. Who knows? Maybe this would produce a repeat of the famous Khrushchev denunciation. In this case, it didn't. It was just the same old faces, the same old verbiage, every newspaper reporting it exactly the same way. But Jack Matlock could see the difference between an adjective used in today's Pravda and the one used ten years ago and extract something from that. He was like his mentor, George Kennan, and he put a lot of pressure on the political section to cover the party congress.

Another thing I continued to do and that I enjoyed doing right through the end of my first tour and despite all the bad relations, was to travel, sometimes with family, more often

with colleagues. We took multiple trips to Tbilisi, more than one trip to Kiev; despite the closing of our consulate, we could still go down there and observe. I've described my trip to Odessa and Lvov with Bob Ober. I went repeatedly to Central Asia.

One of the most memorable trips was with a colleague named Gerry Hamilton. Gerry was head of the commercial section and he and I were good friends. We had gone through language training together; we played a lot of paddle tennis, either as partners or on opposite sides of the net. He was a genuinely good guy. One day in the summer of 1980, I took Bobbi and my daughters to the airport and after long scrutiny by the passport control officer, they flew to New York City. They went through eight time zones. They went across the ocean. They went from the capital of godless communism to the United States of America.

The next day, Gerry Hamilton and I went to a Moscow airport and we flew eight time zones the other way, east, and we were still in Russia. Eight time zones west and you went across an ocean to an entirely different world. But eight time zones east and you were still in Russia. We flew across Siberia to Khabarovsk. At first glance, life didn't seem much different in Khabarovsk, a Russian city. From there, we went by train to the port city of Nakhodka. In later times, you could go to the American Consulate in Vladivostok but in 1980, Vladivostok was a closed city. The one place you could visit on the Pacific Ocean was Nakhodka.

We took the train to Nakhodka and back to Vladivostok. One direction, we were in first class and the other direction we were in very ordinary class and ended up with a couple or Russians who were dumbfounded to find two American diplomats wearing jeans, sharing the compartment with them.

There was an American in Nakhodka who was in business there, a most impressive guy, spoke Russian, in his 20s or early 30s. I don't know if there were other Americans there or not. You have to tip your hat to this guy, out there a long way from any of the comforts that we enjoyed. He arranged for us to take a boat ride around the harbor. Just amassing impressions that we could put into a cable when we came back.

On the way back, we stopped in Irkutsk and went out on a hot summer day to Lake Baikal, the Siberian lake that has a greater volume of water than all the Great Lakes put together. People were out taking advantage of the good weather.

There was a story that on the other side of Lake Baikal, the Soviets had some sort of manufacturing plant that threatened to pollute the lake. Where we were, it looked as pristine and clear as we had been told it would be.

That was a week-long trip.

With a colleague in the cultural section, Bill Thompson, I flew to Baku which is not a beautiful city on the Caspian Sea. I recently traveled with a young woman, a visitor from Azerbaijan. She asked me about my memories of Baku? This was before she was born. I

said I have two distinct memories. One was that as soon as you got off the airplane and drove into the city, you saw the oil wells and you smelled the oil and you felt it was terribly polluted. We stayed in a place called the Caravan Sarai which if it had had camels and people traveling the Silk Road, you wouldn't have been surprised. It seemed to be one of those watering holes. The one in Baku had a certain charm. We were well treated and we took a drive around the city and looked down at the Caspian Sea. You could see the oil wells out there.

From there we went on to Tashkent and to Samarkand, one of my multiple trips to that part of the world. One of the reasons we were going to Central Asia was that after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there was a new instruction from Brzezinski that if anybody could go out there and do any kind of reporting, make any kind of observation, they wanted it. It didn't matter how ordinary or how mundane it seemed to be.

What we specifically looked for were soldiers or any indication that this was a jumping off spot for their operations in Afghanistan. Maybe go to a cemetery to see if there were recent burials and that kind of thing. But you couldn't go to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara without being aware of Islam in the Soviet Union -- the beautiful mosques, madrassas, the schools. The Registan in Samarkand is one of the UNESCO protected sites in the world.

At that time, I didn't associate a madrassa with the kind of education that can produce terrorists, radicals, that kind of thing. In fact, these struck me as very gentle people, very easy going. Generally, you had the impression that people were pretty free to practice their Islam, perhaps freer than Russians in Moscow would have been to practice their Russian orthodox faith.

Another memorable trip was to what is now called Bishkek. It was Frunze then in Kyrgyzstan. I went in the spring with a colleague named Kent Brown. Moscow was still grimy and the snow had not fully melted. But what a change when we arrived in Frunze, named for a famous Soviet general during the civil war. We were there for the May 1, 1981, holiday. You could see snow in the mountains but it was beautiful. It was spring, gorgeous. I thought "my goodness. What a relief from Moscow."

Then we saw the May 1st parade and it was as dull and drab as any May 1st parade. Carbon copy. Any republic you went to, these same pictures of the politburo members came through.

We went up into the mountains with a guide and had a chance to realize what quality of life there could be there.

Our next stop would be Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan. To get from Frunze to Ashkhabad, we flew on what was called an AN-24. We flew from Frunze to Tashkent, changed planes, stopped in a little desert town called Mary and ended up in Ashkhabad, an entire day on these three flights.

We went out the next day, a Sunday, to the market, a beautiful market full of fruits and vegetables but also jewelry, camels and all those things you associate with any of the 'stans.' People these days talk about the 'stans' in a somewhat mocking or disparaging way. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan were wonderful, intriguing places to visit. We have embassies in all of them these days. I didn't want to go there for a two or three year assignment but if you were living in Moscow when we were, it was a great change of pace.

I am repeating myself but we would get out into the city, observe the availability of produce, or fruits and vegetables, the markets, have conversations with people, some of whom wouldn't respond, but others would. They were never big political discussions about your country and my country. They were just more about family and life. Those are some of the many trips I took. I am indebted to my embassy colleagues who went along with me.

Bobbi and I also made multiple trips to Leningrad and to Vladimir and Suzdal, the two historic church towns not far from Moscow.

On Russian Easter, 1981, we decided to visit a place called Yaroslavl. En route, we stopped in Old (Velikiy) Rostov (not to be confused with Rostov on the Don) and Pereslavl-Zalessky. On Saturday night, Bobbi and I went to Easter services in the Feodorovskaya Church in Yaroslavl along with my daughter Christine and a friend of hers. We were in a large crowd and when we turned around, the kids seemed to have disappeared. We had to go back and indicate that I was a diplomat and that these children were with us; yes, they could come in.

In 2007, Bobbi and I went back to Russia as tourists and took a river cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg. I had never realized how many different waterways — rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and whatever — connect the two cities.

One of the stops we made was Yaroslavl. When I explained to our guide that in 1981, I had attended Russian Easter services here, he was quite impressed. I recalled the name of the church, Feodorovskaya. He said that was one of only two churches that were open and functioning at the time. Easter services wherever you went to them, whether in Moscow or outside, were memorable experiences.

Selling our cars was the occasion for another unusual trip. We owned two Russian fiats, Zhigulis. At the end of your tour, you could sell them, usually to third country diplomats, so I sold my two cars, one to a Syrian and one to a Sudanese who came with cigar boxes full of rubles. The embassy accepted these rubles as if they had been acquired as the embassy acquired all of its currency, at the official rate. It is all too complicated to explain except to say that the incentive was to sell your car, get these rubles and have the embassy convert them into dollars for you at the official rate. I could get back everything I paid for my two cars.

The hitch was that the Soviets had imposed new regulations which said I couldn't turn over the cars to these people in the Soviet Union. I had to do it outside the country. It was very complicated but I arranged with the Syrian and the Sudanese that they would meet us across the border in Kouvala, Finland -- at the first place the train stopped after it crossed the border. So on this particular Saturday, Bobbi and I in one car and one of our Foreign Service national employees, Viktor Aksyonov, in the other car headed off in our two Zhigulis. We drove to Leningrad where we had dinner with my colleague, Barbara Allen and took a boat ride on the Neva River. We overnighted there.

The next day, Viktor returned by train to Moscow while Bobbi and I drove the cars out of the country to the train station in Finland wondering whether we would find these guys. Sure enough, they were there. They, of course, were wondering if we'd show up because I already had the rubles and there was nothing to guarantee we would show up with our cars but we did, right on time.

One had the appropriate license plates to put on the car so he could drive back in the Soviet Union as if he were arriving there for the first time. The other guy did not have the right kind of license plates and he was going to have some trouble, we thought. Bobbi and I went on by train to Helsinki and treated ourselves to a nice night in a hotel, a spa and a good dinner because we had completed our mission. We flew back to Moscow.

Our FSN saw us when we were back in Moscow and he was laughing. He said "oh, the next day in Leningrad I saw your two cars. They had made it across the border and were on their way back to Moscow with them." It was one of those complicated but rather delicious ways of living and doing business in Moscow. Less than a week later, Bobbi and our daughters left for the States; their three years in Moscow had ended.

Let me recall another couple anecdotes that I think illustrate what life was like in that unusual environment, these three years in Moscow.

On April 6, 1981, I went off to the center of Moscow to a hotel where you could buy airline tickets. I drove my own car, my Zhiguli, and in those days, you had no problem finding a place to park. I bought my airline tickets and I was on my way back to the embassy. I drove up the street, around the circle in front of KGB headquarters and back down the other side, on the same side as the big children's department store called Detsky Mir.

There was an official vehicle, a black Chaika ahead of me. It's not the Zil, the especially long VIP vehicle, but it's for high officials. Chaikas are probably more associated with KGB.

All I can remember is hitting the brakes quickly to keep from hitting this Chaika. I would stop in time. But before I could do anything, I was struck from behind and pushed into the vehicle ahead of me. This is the middle of the day. Everybody is out walking the streets, there is great clatter. I get out and realize it is a four car accident. There is the

Chaika ahead of me, I am second and I am now sandwiched between another big Chaika behind me and a fourth Chaika which had caused this whole chain reaction.

We stood there looking at each other and it wasn't too long -- because there are police posts on every corner -- that somebody comes up the street. There is a big crowd of gawkers. The three Chaikas were pulled over to the right hand side of the street in the direction in which we were all headed. My car could still be driven although it was bashed in, front and back, and the trunk had popped open. All the traffic on the street was stopped and I was told to do a U turn and pull up on the other side of the street, roughly where I had started when I came out of the hotel. So I pulled my car over there. I think the police wanted to isolate me from the official vehicles.

Once they got me over there, that was it. They were done with me. They didn't want to know anything. My trunk had popped open. We talked before about America magazine, the monthly magazine that we were allowed to sell in the Soviet Union. We kept selling it after the invasion of Afghanistan but the Soviets would say, "Well, we didn't sell very many copies this month. Relations are bad." They never explained; they simply returned the "unsold copies." You'd have 20,000 returned copies that went unsold so we had plenty of magazines to carry around and I always carried boxes of them in the trunk of my car. I could give them away to a gas station attendant or to anyone with whom I wanted to curry favor.

The license plate, D-04 told everybody I am a diplomat and a lot of people knew that 04 was the American Embassy. Nobody cared anything about my plight, my car. They started asking me personal questions and wondered if they could have a copy of America magazine. I gave a couple of people a copy of America magazine and asked them if they might watch my car while I went down the street to a phone booth with the kopeks I always carried with me and called the embassy to say I need some help.

I called the GSO and I remember hearing someone say "Well, he speaks Russian," meaning I could take care of it myself. But a good fellow named Jim Van Laningham drove over and provided me some much needed assistance as I was able to drive the car back to the embassy.

We had insured the car through Ingostrakh so I did the paperwork and turned the car over to them. I didn't have a replacement vehicle and we were down to one car and that was pretty awkward but the damaged car came back to me weeks later looking like new; it had a fresh coat of paint and functioned well enough that I was able to sell it. But I will never forget feeling pretty exposed and helpless. Not helpless but exposed out there in the middle of Moscow.

Q: Did any of those officials in those cars sort of point at you?

BROWN: No, I don't think anyone implied that I was the guilty party. It was pretty clear what had happened. Number four car had hit number three. I was number two and was pushed into number one. I hit the brakes and was not going to hit number one car until I

got hit from behind. It was just a four-car accident. I didn't have any more official contact other than the insurance claim. The police simply wanted to isolate me from the Chaikas. I don't recall that I filed a report with police or anything like that.

Here's another story about airline tickets:

Someone had discovered that in London, you could purchase round trip Aeroflot tickets that would be written London to Moscow and then Moscow to anywhere in South Asia -- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka -- for a very reasonable price. If you used hard currency, you could get these tickets in London. It was a way for Aeroflot to get business from South Asians living in the UK, Indians and Pakistanis who wanted to go home and not spend a lot of money.

So for those of us living in Moscow, you would find a friend in London who would purchase the tickets — four separate coupons — and send them to you. But instead of starting your trip in London, you would begin your trip in Moscow. So the four of us and the five-member David Willis family went to the airport on a February morning in 1980 and flew for many hours non-stop from Moscow to Colombo, Sri Lanka. We flew over Iran. I remember the pilot saying something about "if you look out the window you can see American war ships in the Persian Gulf." I think everybody went over to the right side of that plane and looked out the window.

It was a very comfortable flight. Good food and everything, a lot of Russians going down there for vacation, I guess. We had a wonderful two week vacation. Details elsewhere.

When we went to check in to fly back, we showed our little paper coupons. When we said we were flying only to Moscow, the people said, "Oh, you need a visa for Moscow." We showed our passports with our visas for Moscow and flew back.

We still had coupons one and four, London to Moscow and Moscow to London. I didn't get to take advantage of mine but a few weeks later, Bobbi and our daughters used coupon number four to fly Moscow to London and number one to fly London back to Moscow. So for a very reasonable price, we had two holiday trips out of Moscow, albeit on Aeroflot; one to Sri Lanka, a two-week vacation there and one to London.

The David Willis' were Christian Scientists and they did not take any medicines, no malaria prevention medicines or whatever. We did, we took some precautions. Nevertheless, when we got to Sri Lanka, our younger daughter Christine got a little sick and was running a fever. She lamented "when I grow up, I want to be a Christian Science Monitor" so she wouldn't have to take pills and medicine.

David Willis wrote a piece for the Christian Science Monitor about that trip, relating it to life in the Soviet Union. It was a humorous piece contrasting the world he left and the world he found, this so called third world country. He remarked that he could have written deep analyses of a party congress or changes in the politburo and never received a

tenth of the reaction he got with that human interest piece on travel and contrasting a super power with a third world country.

Another thing I remember about the trip to Sri Lanka is that when we got back, an Embassy driver picked us up with astounding news. I am sure he was unhappy himself but he had to share with us news of the great American victory at the Lake Placid Olympics over the Soviet hockey team. He didn't call it great; he just reported that the Americans had won. He couldn't believe it.

And here's another memorable story.

A year later, it was school vacation time and our older daughter Sarah was in school back in the States so Bobbi, Christine and I decided we would go to Berlin. We had friends there who had invited us to stay with them and on the way back, we would stop and see some friends in Warsaw. It would be about a week long trip. On Saturday evening, February 14, 1981, we headed to the train station with our suitcases, our cooler with food and Christine's school books. Bobbi writes letters so she had her address book and cards and everything else.

Our train was called the East-West Express, leaving at 8:09 pm. We traveled all night and arrived in Warsaw in the middle of the next day. We stepped off the train because we knew we had an hour and a half and needed to stretch our legs a bit. Bobbi said she was going to go call our friends in Warsaw and let them know, reaffirm we would be back on such and such a day.

Off she goes while Christine and I wait on the platform. Our train actually pulled out of the station but it soon returned going backwards. Bobbi hadn't been gone for more than a few minutes when I heard a whooshing sound, steam being released. A little red sign turns to green and a man on the platform says, "Get on, we are leaving."

I don't remember what language he spoke but the message was very clear. All I knew was that we had suitcases, coolers of food and all the other things we had taken with us up there in our compartment. I could not get all that stuff off the train. I had no choice. I said to Christine, "We have to go." She is in tears and I am in tears inside and we get on the train and off we go, leaving Bobbi there out of sight and making a phone call. She did not have her passport, she didn't have her money. She had virtually nothing except her wits, her common sense.

When we recount this story, this is the point where we begin to tell her version and my version. Soon after we left Warsaw, I began to figure out what had happened, that the train had been split in two with one part destined for London and the other going to Paris but both going via Berlin. I concluded that Bobbi would figure this out and decide to get on the second train.

So in Poznan, I explained to an official what had happened and left a written message saying "Bobbi, we miss you and love you." I enclosed some money, 200 zlotys. And at

the border, I left her passport. I left her passport in the hands of border officials saying I think she is on the next train. Off we go, Christine and I, to Berlin. We are met by our friend Paul Smith who welcomes us to Berlin. I say Paul, "it's good to be here but I think we have to wait a few minutes because I left Bobbi on the platform in Warsaw."

Remember this is 1981. It is the period of solidarnost, martial law and everything else in Poland. Bobbi comes back to the platform, realizes that something is amiss. She gets on a train and goes to "our" compartment but I am not there and it is not the compartment she remembered. But the conductor insists that she remain on the train and off she heads. At one point, she was entertained in the restaurant car by some drunken Polish "gentlemen" who wanted to buy her food.

She gets to Poznan and somebody gets on and gives her this envelope that says "we love you, we miss you." When she gets to the border, someone comes on shouting, "Roberta Brown, Roberta Brown." These drunken Poles had already opened the windows calling the same name. The border official comes on and gives her her passport.

It was a long, nervous afternoon. It is a good six hours or so from Warsaw to Berlin on the train. So when the second half of our train reached Berlin and Bobbi was on it, Christine and I breathed a great sigh of relief. Needless to say, the story has been told many times. And Bobbi actually wrote an extended and better version.

Thinking about those years in Moscow, I have a category I call fabric of life. It was those institutions, those places that were part of your personal life in Moscow. They meant so much. As Americans, we were the embassy community, the 25 or so journalists and their families, a few business people and that was about it.

Among the institutions that kept up our morale and in which we were constantly involved was paddle tennis. I think it was Ambassador Stoessel who put in a paddle tennis court behind Spaso House, the ambassador's residence. You played in an enclosed, caged area, a miniature tennis court. It was usually played doubles.

Ambassador Toon loved the game and I and others would frequently get a call from his secretary saying the ambassador was looking for somebody to play tennis during lunch hour. I accepted many of those invitations.

Then when Ambassador Stoessel went to Warsaw, he installed a paddle tennis court there. Paddle tennis was thus very popular among the staff in both American Embassy Moscow and American Embassy Warsaw, so much so that we had annual competitions. The first year we were in Moscow, we went en masse by train to Warsaw and played a paddle tennis tournament over the course of two days. People at the embassy hosted us and not only to play paddle tennis; we went out to dinner in the evening. It was a wonderful morale builder.

The second year, we should be hosting the people from Warsaw but because of the Olympics boycott, the thinking was "you certainly can't have the paddle tennis

tournament here in Moscow" so for a second year running, we went en masse, probably 40 or 50 people, to Warsaw for another tournament, hosted by our American friends.

So you see that even an institution such as paddle tennis could get caught up in international politics!

The third year, 1981, we played host. I am sad to say we were such gracious hosts that unlike the previous two years, we lost badly. By now Jack Matlock, Chargé Matlock, was there. He wasn't much of a paddle tennis player but his wife played. We had a great dinner at Spaso House but I was really hung out to dry as the person who had put together all the pairings and had allowed Moscow the indignity of losing the paddle tennis tournament.

Another phenomenon was broom ball. Broom ball was played among the various embassies. They would take a regular tennis court, put water on it and in the winter, it would become like a hockey rink, except instead of a hockey puck and sticks you used brooms. I never played it. It could be violent. The Finns and some of the other north Europeans took the game very, very seriously. It was fun to watch but not to play.

Cross country skiing. You could go many places in the woods around Moscow and cross country ski. I remember more than one occasion being on my very nice skis purchased, probably in Finland. In the other direction would come a Russian on his homemade wooden skis. He might well be bare-chested, a big burly guy. They loved their cross country skiing. It was another little way to interact with Russians.

Ambassador Watson also felt that to maintain our balance, you should take half a day or part of a day per week and get out of the office, just do something recreational or non-office related. On one particular day, he invited me to go down to a place called Serebryany Bor to go cross country skiing. He wasn't too adept on skis but give him credit, he was out there trying. We were on this partially frozen river and all of a sudden we heard a crack.

Tom Watson said in so many words, "let me go ahead. I am older than you are. If somebody is going to go through the ice, let it be me." Well, he went a little bit farther and we heard another crack. We turned around and got off that ice pretty fast. We were not where we should be on cross country skis.

The Anglo American Canadian School enrolled most of the English-speaking kids, not only British, American and Canadian but kids from Greece, India and Nigeria. It was a wonderful institution.

When we arrived in 1978, Christine was 10 and Sarah was almost 12, a real good age. They were old enough that they didn't need babysitting but they weren't teenagers. Christine did three years of school in Moscow. Sarah did two years, 7th and 8th grades. Because there really wasn't anything beyond 8th grade, we took Sarah back to the United

States and put her in a boarding school, Westtown Friends School, during our third and last year in Moscow.

Westtown is a Quaker school outside Philadelphia where Bobbi had gone to school and where her Uncle Tom was by then headmaster. That was a mixed blessing, she always told us. It was comforting to us to know that Tom was there and could be available but when Tom discovered that his niece had been drinking alcohol one night and had to send her up the road to her grandparents, it was awkward.

One of the most memorable Moscow experiences was Christmas,1980, when Sarah came out with her grandparents, Bobbi's parents, for ten days. We were so active. Bobbi's parents experienced everything from the Bolshoi to Leningrad to meeting our refusenik friends and four-year old Vera singing Christmas songs. It was one of the highlights.

The American dacha at Zavidovo, an hour's drive away, was a large compound with the big dacha and the ambassador's dacha. The big dacha was available for embassy personnel on a rotating basis.

We concluded our three years in Moscow hosting a reception there for the press corps, the journalists and their families. Some 80 people came. We used one of the embassy's two Italian-born cooks to fix a wonderful meal. It was a great afternoon. It was because of events like this that 30 years later, we could meet one of the people from that era and not have to reintroduce ourselves. You knew each other, you knew the children. You had had common experiences together.

In addition to the school and the dacha, you had Spaso House, which was used not only by the ambassador for formal activities but also for everything from the annual Marine Ball to community programs such as plays. There were always people with thespian talents who could do a show. One year they did a very capable presentation of "Our Town" with one of the lead roles played by the NBC correspondent, Gene Pell.

A few weeks later, when Gene Pell was getting ready to leave, the correspondents organized a roast. They put on a play in the snack bar and called it "Nash Gorod," literally "Our Town" in Russian. It was a parody of Gene Pell and his wonderful voice, a big deep bass voice, the kind you would want for a TV correspondent. Everyone howled with laughter. Gene went on to head Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty.

You would never live in Moscow without remembering, usually in the spring, that the Russians reportedly had to clean out the pipes that delivered hot water. So you would go for up to a month in your apartment with no hot water; you'd forget how much you appreciated hot water, especially if you had two young daughters. At Spaso House, at the paddle tennis court, there was a little facility where you could take a warm shower. But it's no exaggeration; for four to six weeks you'd get along without any hot water for dishes, or bathing, except for what you might boil.

Mail day: When I hear complaints about U.S. Postal Service deliveries, I think back to the time when mail came once a week with all the diplomatic pouches from Helsinki. And this was pre-electronic, when you relied on the mail for important documents.

We would get 80, 90 pouches at a time. I don't think there was any other place in the world where American journalists were allowed to use the diplomatic pouch. They got their personal mail through the pouch. They couldn't get it directly. We had to sort it and make sure it was only letter mail. It couldn't be personal packages. We received all the journalists' mail. It could be official stuff, things they would use on the job, magazines, that kind of thing. Mail day was always a big event in the courtyard of the embassy.

Our dog, the wonderful cocker spaniel named Tar that came into our family in 1970 in Algeria and lived with us for two years in Algeria, for five years in the States and for a year in Garmisch, was now in an apartment building in Moscow. That dog introduced us to a lot of visitors. We'd take her out for a walk at night and meet people through the dog.

To get to school, our kids had to cross a busy, multi-lane road, Leninsky Prospekt. It was at least a six-lane highway with a divider in the middle. I guess I should thank my lucky stars we never had any problem. One day, Bobbi walked over there with Tar, turned around and there was no dog. I got home to learn that Tar was missing. We were terribly depressed. What in the world could have happened? We knew the dog had not been struck by a vehicle. So we went to our Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Zieman, who lived not far away. They knew and loved Tar and Yuri put up "dog missing" signs with their name and address on trees.

Late that night, a couple of girls came to their door and said they thought they had seen the dog. We now think what happened was these girls had seen the dog and taken her into their apartment. The next day I went to the pet market to see whether Tar had been kidnapped and was now for sale down there. Bobbi went somewhere else to look, checked at home, and talked to our daughter. What a relief. Tar had shown up at the front door of the building to be greeted with open arms by none other than our militia man. The militia man was down there to 'protect' us and keep Soviets out of our building but he knew our plight and he was as happy as we were to see our dog show up. We think the dog had spent the night with these two girls and the next day they had let her out and sent her home. All we know was she was tired and muddy. We were so relieved.

I got into collecting Soviet stamps. There was a bookstore (Dom Knigi) not far from the embassy where you could purchase stamps and they produced some political but quite pretty stamps. One of my retirement projects is to go to that shelf in my house and sort through the stamps. I've got a pretty complete collection for the late '70s and early '80s.

Those are some of the fabric of life things in Moscow.

I will conclude by mentioning the other thing that really changed life.

I have spoken frequently about our good friend Tom Watson. We got to know him on a personal basis in Maine before he came to Moscow and he treated us wonderfully. It was tense because his general discomfort talking to the press was made all the more difficult by the political situation. Even so, when my parents-in-law came, he arranged a special dinner for us and them on the second floor living quarters of Spaso House.

I went up to his office one day in late 1980 and he had a paper on his desk. I realized what he was looking at were the design plans for his new boat. He had many yachts during his life and he was very excited about his new yacht. He wanted to sail it around the world. He said something to me like "there's nothing to do here." That was pretty much the case; we didn't have anything going on with the Soviets that he could put his imprint on.

He left in early 1981 to be replaced by Jack F. Matlock, whom I had first met in 1973 when he was head of the Soviet desk. Jack came back to Moscow for six months. He put his imprint on things. Boy, did he light a fire under everybody.

He did not live at Spaso House but he used Spaso for all sorts of representational activities. I asked him at one point if he would be willing to do press briefings and he was right into that. He was very comfortable with the press.

One night, at my suggestion, he hosted a dinner at Spaso House for foreign correspondents -- West European, Japanese and others. It was an amazing social gathering. First of all, it was a Spaso House event. A lot of these correspondents had not been to Spaso House or had been there only a few times. They loved being invited with their spouses. A beautiful meal and at the end, Jack answered questions. He did so, on background, but he did so with such confidence and such knowledge of the subject that we were there until late in the evening. The man was one of the most difficult persons I have ever worked for, a tough guy, but such a professional. This was 1981.

Q: Can you characterize his mood towards the Soviet Union?

BROWN: That's a very fair question and I think I can say very fairly that Jack Matlock's attitude towards the Soviet Union, the political Soviet Union, reflected very closely the attitude of the United States government and President Reagan. He was not in any way sympathetic to this evil empire. He abhorred the system and its leadership and the way it manifested itself. He was dead set against what it stood for.

At the same time, long before he became a political officer, he was into Russian literature. He learned Russian at an early age. These people I mentioned earlier, people like Voznesensky and Akhmadulina, he knew who these people were. He knew of their intellectual accomplishments and potential. That was the other part of the world that he cultivated. We had poetry readings at Spaso. He was able to make that distinction.

Jack Matlock was a combination of knowledge and confidence and that's why he was so comfortable dealing with the press.

Walter Cronkite was in Moscow that spring to do some sort of documentary on the Soviet Union. I was chatting with him while Bobbi was driving Mrs. Cronkite from the embassy over to Spaso House. You knew that Jack Matlock wanted to accept Cronkite's request to do an interview but he got a turndown from State Department, from Assistant Secretary Stoessel saying no, don't do it.

About a day later, Jack called me up to his office and showed me a memo that said you can do it if you recognize the obvious pitfalls. I remember to this day Jack Matlock's face. He was pleased. I didn't see all the correspondence but I think he must have gone back and protested a little bit because he had been told it was too risky. He was willing to take that risk and I can remember him sitting on a bench in the circle in front of Spaso House being interviewed by Walter Cronkite.

It was an example of Jack Matlock's determination and his feeling that the press was not to be feared.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time, what were the obvious pitfalls?

BROWN: The obvious pitfalls. You think of Senator Percy going far beyond what the Reagan administration wanted him to say. And Percy wasn't part of the administration. Jack Matlock was part of the administration. For anyone in the State Department, it is easier to say no rather than to say yes. It is the old argument, what do you have to gain from it? Not much. What do you have to lose if you say something that is misinterpreted or just flat out wrong, that opens up Pandora's Box.

I don't know that Jack Matlock ever really got himself in hot water with the press.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union?

BROWN: I was never under any illusion. The idea, and I attribute some of this to the military world, that they were going to defeat us in war, not only defeat us in war but defeat us economically, was simply ludicrous. All you had to do was to see how inept their economic system was, how it failed to function, how it failed to meet the needs of people to know that this was not true. We used to joke that as the West was moving into computers, the Soviets were leading the world in production of carbon paper. Their economic indicators were all in fields that people didn't pay any attention to anymore. I knew, we knew they were not going to outstrip us economically.

And of course, there was this idea that we were being monitored all the time, that they were collecting all this information on us and that the KGB had these great thick files. My feeling was the thicker the files the better because if they ever went to a great war against us and tried to find out something, they would be awash in useless information. I sometimes think that about our own services in this country these days. Sure, there are better ways now of filtering through all that information and listening for key words and

that kind of stuff. But I don't think the Soviets had anything other than piles of useless information and unmonitored tapes, stuff that wasn't going to help them at all.

Q: Was anybody looking at the Soviet educational system? I would think that a smart Russian would do anything he or she could to avoid getting too mired down in this academic world. Did you get any feel for that?

BROWN: Yes. You could sense from talking to people that they did not believe a lot of what they heard, not so much in their educational system but in the pseudo educational system which was the media, what they heard and read in the newspaper, watched on TV. They couldn't hear this or that or see something on TV and then see reality and believe it.

Talking about the basic educational system, I don't know that anybody ever did studies but I felt and I think a lot of other people felt that you still got quality primary, secondary and university education in the Soviet Union in particular fields.

There weren't too many Westerners -- Kevin Klose of the Washington Post was an exception -- who sent their children to Russian schools but all three of Kevin's children went to Russian schools for several years and they got good educations in the three Rs and in foreign languages.

As we all know, the Soviets and the Russians before them, in spite of everything, produced world class intellects in virtually every field, the sciences, mathematics, language, and the arts. I think their educational system was not the weak link. They did do a good job of educating their children.

Q: I have interviewed Beth Jones. Her father was an administrative officer. She became ambassador to Kazakhstan and then assistant secretary for European affairs. She was sent when her father was in Moscow to a Soviet school. Then he was assigned to Germany and she went to a German school. I am not sure if it was East or West German but then she said she came out and went to I think it was Swarthmore and on the first day of school one of the professors said, "Miss Jones, what do you think?" and she realized nobody had ever asked her "what do you think?"

BROWN: Yes that's very true. Sometimes that comment is made not only about schools in Communist countries but even some other more liberal countries.

I assume that the other part of her observation was that she got a pretty good education. I think that Russian education was probably quite sound.

That was our three years in Moscow. It far exceeded our expectations. Initially, I thought it was going to be a two-year assignment. It turned out to be three. When we left in 1981, we did not know that we would return to Moscow. But we were excited as we headed off to what we thought would be a four-year assignment as press attaché in Paris.

Paris, France (1981-1986)

Today is the 26th of April, 2012.

BROWN: 1981 was a transition year. We had just finished an amazingly interesting three years in Cold War Moscow preceded by a year in Garmisch so we had been overseas for four.

Toward the end of that assignment in Moscow, I thought a lot about where I would like to go next. I was intent on staying overseas. Bobbi and I had given serious talk about staying for a fourth year in Moscow, this rather surprisingly for a woman who practically kicked me out of the house when she knew we were going to be going there for three rather than two years. Bobbi, thrived in Moscow. We could talk about the possibility of staying for a fourth year. Ultimately we decided not to.

I still have a little piece of paper on which I prepared a chart of various possible assignments. I listed the advantages and disadvantages, professional, personal and otherwise. Paris was on that list but I thought Paris wouldn't be good for my career because on paper, the position was "assistant information officer." In Moscow, I was information officer, press attaché. Did I want to go to Paris and be an assistant information officer?

Fortunately that was just a paper exercise because without me having much to do with it, I was reassigned as assistant information officer, AIO/Paris. One day I picked up one of those bland cables that came out from Washington with personnel assignments and there was my name assigned to Paris.

My job was going to be press attaché. In some ways, it would seem to be a step down. I was going from being information officer to assistant information officer. But there is at least one thing I did right in my Foreign Service experience. I don't usually hand out advice but if somebody asked me for advice, I would say "if you see an interesting assignment, take it. Don't turn down an interesting assignment because it wouldn't seem to be a good stepping stone to something else." The reverse of that is: Don't take a lousy assignment just because you think it is going to help you out in the long run.

I was being assigned really, forget the AIO title, as press attaché to a key West European embassy and to what would turn out to be an amazingly interesting time and place in the Foreign Service. It was a wonderful five years. I really picked the right five, actually six years to be away from Moscow because it was the period of all the funerals in the Soviet Union and I was in Paris during a time of very active American-French relations.

Late in my assignment in Paris, I got back on the Soviet circuit. I was still in Paris but I will talk more about this later. I went to the Geneva summit in 1985. I was in Reykjavik in 1986 when Gorbachev and Reagan met there. Before the Geneva summit, I spent ten weeks in the Old Executive Office building on the staff of the National Security Council under Jack Matlock, doing public diplomacy preparations for Geneva. So I got back into

things in time to go back to Moscow for my second tour in the late ‘80s but none of that was in my mind when I arrived in Paris in 1981.

Our first four years in Paris, 1981-1985, were a very unchanging period in the Soviet Union. Yes, they were well beyond Stalinism but there didn’t seem to be any flexibility. Arrests were continuing. Our good friends were regularly denied permission to emigrate. The Reagan administration seemed to be on a head-on collision course with the Soviet Union and as we all know now, some awful things were going to happen. Remember when the Korean airliner was shot down? These were not good times and there was no indication of any movement.

As I prepared for today's session, I decided rather than going through all my detailed journals and folders, I would try to recall the five years we spent in Paris from memory and see what jumped out at me; later on, I can go back and fill in some of the details.

Q: Let’s describe not only 1981 Paris but France in ’81. What was the situation?

BROWN: First, to describe my office physically. The American Embassy in Paris occupies a wonderful spot right on the Place de la Concorde, a classic center-city location. Two blocks away is the Hotel Talleyrand where USIS, consular and various other sections of the embassy were located. For at least my first year in Paris, the Hotel Talleyrand was undergoing a major restoration and the normal occupants, including USIS, were in temporary offices around Paris.

But my office, the press office, was in the embassy proper. Look out the window of my mezzanine-level office and you could see the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde. What a heady location. My office was one floor down from the ambassador and the DCM. In effect, I was part of the embassy proper staff. The PAO, my nominal boss, the IO and the cultural section were all several metro stops away doing wonderfully important work but it was USIS work. I was the press attaché, the first line of contact with the journalists.

The other thing that made it interesting was the fact that both countries had just elected new presidents. Ronald Reagan had just been elected president of the United States. He was in his first year, recovering from the assassination attempt; he hadn’t even finished his first year in office. François Mitterrand had been elected president of France that year.

So you had not only a conservative Republican in the White House and a socialist in the Elysée Palace but you also had two very different personalities. Mitterrand probably read more books in a month than Ronald Reagan would read in his life. Mitterrand was a scholar. He was out of that leftist, socialist tradition in France. It was potentially a very uncomfortable relationship.

In fact, if you look back, the two men got along pretty well. They never became personal friends but politically, the United States enjoyed a good relationship with France during those five years.

The key issue -- at the time these words were on your tongue all the time -- was missile modernization and the desire of NATO -- political people are going to tell me I don't have all my details correct, but I know what I am talking about -- to modernize Pershing missiles in Western Europe, to counter Soviet SS-20s directed at Western Europe.

A lot of West European countries didn't like this idea but Mitterrand, in a very famous speech in Germany, basically said we must modernize the Pershing missiles or the Soviets will have no motivation to limit their SS-20s. That single speech did more to bring the United States and France together politically than any other event during the five years I was there.

There were plenty of other things the United States and France disagreed on but missile modernization was not one of them.

Q: This SS-20-Pershing issue, do you have any thoughts on the conflict that must have gone on within the French government to this?

BROWN: There was probably opposition to it within the Mitterrand government. I think that the French acted in their national interest. They were not, technically I have to be careful here, part of the military structure of NATO but they were part of NATO, the political structure. So their voice was heard. If they had resisted on this, then countries that were wavering, such as the Netherlands and even Germany, would not have gone along and the decision to modernize the Pershings would not have gone forward. The French were simply acting in their national interest. They certainly were not acting as some favor to the United States because we know on other issues they would resist.

Quite a number of years later, when President Reagan decided to bomb Libya and requested overflight rights for American planes coming out of England, the French said no and those planes had to take a long circuitous route to carry out their mission; on that and other issues, the French had no problem saying no to the United States.

I think that what made Mitterrand's support on this issue all the more credible was the fact that the French were an ally but did not line up behind the United States on every single issue. If they were a puppy dog led around by the nose, then they wouldn't have had much credibility but because they could be so obstinate, we knew they were acting in their own national interest.

Q: Let's talk about the atmospherics. Who was the ambassador when you arrived?

BROWN: Let me answer that question a little more broadly. When you walk into the embassy in Paris, into the lobby -- and it is too bad the general public can't do it now -- there is a wall listing everyone who had ever been American ambassador or envoy to France. Right at the top of the list were names like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin.

You reminded yourself that whoever your ambassador was, he or she was heir to quite a tradition. Out in the courtyard was a wonderful seated statue of Benjamin Franklin. He got moved one time because they put in a guard gate and had to relocate the statue and he was not quite so visible. I once came back from a July 4th party at the residence where they had given out hot air balloons and I thought too bad that Ben Franklin had not been able to attend the party so I tied the hot air balloons to Franklin's hands. A lot of people came by and took pictures and expressed their approval.

But back to your question. When I arrived, the ambassador was Arthur Hartman. At that point, he was concluding his assignment to Paris and was the ambassador-designate to the Soviet Union. So there was a little joke from his end that he and I were changing places. I never bought into that. I was very modest. Ambassador Hartman was going to Moscow as ambassador and I was coming to Paris as the press attaché but he and his wife Donna were very interested in talking to me about what they were going to find in Moscow. I think he was conscious of the fact that he was not a Soviet expert. He was not a Russian speaker and he was going into a pretty nasty climate there but he was the ambassador.

If you were at a party and you asked someone who didn't know to identify the ambassador, I am sure they would have pointed at Ambassador Hartman; tall, distinguished looking. He was right out of central casting.

Ambassador Hartman had a rather arms length relationship with journalists. He was not inclined to give interviews or talk freely with the press. He took more of the State Department approach that there wasn't a whole lot to be gained. I arrived in September and he hosted a reception on October 6, 1981, to say farewell to the press. Right during that mid-day reception, we got word of the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt. Ambassador Hartman didn't have anything to say on the record but it was a news making event on a day he was saying goodbye to the press.

Q: The Hartmans certainly both in France and in Moscow were very much avant-garde culturally, weren't they?

BROWN: Yes indeed. I will share a couple anecdotes to illustrate that. Ambassador Hartman invited a young, promising pianist named Vladimir Feltsman to perform at Spaso House in Moscow.Feltsman had applied to emigrate and was immediately banned from performing in Moscow. He eventually did emigrate and became a name performer in the U.S. and elsewhere. Until then, his only opportunity to perform publicly was thanks to Arthur Hartman at Spaso House in Moscow.

In 1985, I was called back to Washington for ten weeks to work on the public diplomacy arrangements for the Geneva Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev. I went to Geneva for the summit. Ambassador Hartman came out from Moscow. He called me to his hotel room. He said, "I have something I want to entrust to you." It was a violin. A Russian violinist, Sasha Brussilovsky, had emigrated but was not allowed to take his violin with him. Ambassador Hartman gave this violin to me and asked me to have it delivered to Sasha in Paris, which I did.

I thought at the time here we've got this very high-level east west meeting, this summit. The future of the world was at stake and what did Arthur Hartman risk by bringing out a violin for some unknown violinist? It wasn't going to be Gary Powers and U-2 but he could have provoked an incident. But he did it and he did it I think because he just wanted to help out this guy and he could.

So yes, he did a lot for the intellectuals and artists and dissidents in Moscow during those years.

He was replaced in Paris by Evan Galbraith and I will repeat what I have said a thousand times and something Evan Galbraith said ten thousand times; he was no relation politically or otherwise to John Kenneth Galbraith. Evan Galbraith was a protégée of Bill Buckley of National Review who recommended him to the Reagan administration.

Q: Sort of the extremely articulate spokesperson of the intellectual right wing.

BROWN: Yes and also vulnerable to putting his foot in his mouth too. A French speaking investment banker who had spent time in Paris as a young banker with his wife, Bootsie. He was fond of recalling the various bistros that he and Bootsie had visited when they lived there in the investment banking world.

He arrived in the fall of 1981 and he made my life extremely interesting for four years and I mean that in a very positive sense. We got along well together. He mentions me several times in his book, "Ambassador in Paris."

Let's talk a little bit more about what motivated Galbraith. He came to Paris and in so many words, he said "I am a businessman but I don't want to be a super commercial attaché. I don't want to be a super political officer, spending all my time delivering notes to the foreign ministry. I want to go out and espouse Reaganism and Reaganomics and any opportunity to do that, I will do it. I don't have to check first, I don't have to ask permission. I know what the policy is."

Very early on, we were doing one of the morning press briefings. He had given an interview to French TV in Washington before he came to Paris. The interview was not to air until he presented his letters of credentials. Well, it ran before he was in France but he hadn't presented his letters; they jumped the gun.

I was told to call and make a little protest. I did. I called, I knew the guy at whichever French TV network it was. He apologized. I went back to the ambassador's office and said I had called and talked to him and he apologized. What more can we do? Everybody nodded.

At the end of that meeting, the ambassador asked me to stay behind along with PAO and he basically said what I just said. I want to do press work and I don't have to check with people. I want to be proactive. I want to get out there and give interviews and talk about

Pershing missiles and Reagan economics and he did and it really made my life interesting.

I could say to journalists, “You want an interview with the ambassador? Yes. You want to talk to the ambassador about this subject? Yes.”

Along the way, there were some bumps and there were some things he may have regretted. I didn’t appreciate him saying Foreign Service officers don’t have guts but I have to be honest and say he really made my life interesting. I think overall he did what he set out to accomplish. Probably he advanced the U.S. national interest by espousing what he saw as U.S. government policies.

In 1985, he resigned in a flurry of rhetoric and invectives and everything else we will talk about later. He was replaced by Joe M. Rodgers, a Republican from Tennessee who had been a Reagan fundraiser there. He was ambassador for my last year in Paris. Did not speak a word of French, a very courtly man from Tennessee who, nevertheless, managed to cultivate some pretty good relations with the French during his time there simply because he went to bat for them on issues. But the fact that he didn’t speak French was a handicap and made it a little bit awkward for him.

Anyway, I had three ambassadors.

I shouldn’t mention the three ambassadors without saying that I also had three DCMs. The first was Christian Chapman who was probably 5/5 in French. He had been educated in France and he certainly was a native speaker of French, very distinguished; the name just fit.

He was followed by John Maresca. Jack also had very good French. Jack was not the easiest guy to work for. He reminded me a little bit of Jack Matlock in that respect. Not the easiest guy to work for, neither one was, but I had great respect for Jack Maresca. He was smart, articulate, bought into Evan Galbraith’s approach to the press which was instead of holding them at arms length, we need to try to use them to get our message out.

If I did things right, and I was right most of the time, Jack was very complimentary. If I screwed up and didn’t keep him informed on something, he could come down on me like a ton of bricks. His office was only one floor above me.

Then there was a third DCM whose name was Bill Barrowclough.

As long as we are going down the line, I also had three PAOs. The PAO when I arrived was Jack Hedges. Jack was already into his third or fourth year in Paris. He had much earlier been press attaché Paris (my job), he enjoyed his PAO job and he gave me liberty to operate as long as I kept him informed.

He was replaced by one of USIA's legendary figures, Terry Catherman. Terry was going through a difficult period. He didn't speak French very well and he was hung up about that. For a while, he wanted to keep really close tabs on what I was doing but then he realized that wasn't going to make his life or my life any easier and I kept him informed and that was enough.

The third PAO was Sam Courtney who again was one of the high profile figures of USIA. So I had three prominent ambassadors, three DCMs and three PAOs.

Q: Charlie Wick was the head of USIA. People talk about him as both a difficult guy but also the guy that brought in money so there was a great deal of respect for him for keeping USIA high profile but he was not an easy person to work for.

BROWN: Everything you say is true.

Charlie Wick was the director of USIA. I would have to go back and count but I bet he made at least an annual trip to Paris while I was there. After my Paris assignment, I went back to Moscow and Charlie Wick came out there a couple of times as well.

In Paris, the burden of a Charlie Wick visit fell on the PAO and I can remember Terry Catherman saying he was losing sleep, sweating and everything else worrying about the Charlie Wick visit. I didn't have that problem myself. He added to our workload, certainly. Even when he wasn't visiting, he initiated a project called WorldNet or EuroNet. In fairness, it has to be said that Charles Wick was ahead of his time and a lot of Foreign Service officers were behind the times, dragging our feet, thinking "what is this crazy system of using a satellite to put a newsmaker in Washington in touch with a journalist somewhere out in the field?"

Admittedly, there were technical problems the first few times or you might get someone who was supposed to be a newsmaker and wouldn't say anything. But the technology is so taken for granted these days as a means of communicating that our resistance to it early on leaves the Foreign Service people who resisted open to criticism.

Q: Could you explain what it was?

BROWN: It involved putting a newsmaker in Washington into a studio and inviting journalists into, let's say, a USIA office in Paris. Thanks to the satellite, the journalists could interview the newsmaker. One of the first persons we had was George Shultz. We had a pretty good turnout.

There were technical problems. It wasn't done with the ease that you do a satellite connection these days. You had a language issue. I can talk a lot about George Shultz and my high respect for him, but he wasn't always the most scintillating newsmaker. He gave pretty bland answers. But he was the secretary of state.

The second time around you wouldn't get the secretary of state. You'd get somebody else further down on the food chain and it became awkward every time to round up an audience. It was also hard to attract French journalists when these lower level people personally would likely as not come through Paris; General Walters or Fred Ikle. These people were available in person almost weekly so why trundle over to the USIS office for a WorldNet?

Charles Wick wanted to make sure we were not only getting an audience but getting placement out of this. So it was a challenge to produce the results that he wanted. WorldNet was the global name given to it. Euro Net was the name given to it when you had a European audience.

It wasn't always bilateral. It wasn't always just journalists in France interviewing someone in Washington. You might have three or four or half a dozen posts involved so you'd go around from one post to another. That also added to the logistical, mechanical difficulty. But that was Charles Wick's major contribution in those early years.

Then they tried to get into different types of audiences, an intellectual in with an author. We struggled with it initially for technical reasons, because of our unwillingness to get fully behind it and also because Washington wanted inflated reports on placement and audiences reached.

This was a period of martial law in Poland and we had Mr. Wick's "Let Poland be Poland" project. He wanted us to place this specially created documentary on French TV and we managed to do that by calling in some chips. The French weren't comfortable about carrying a piece of American produced material on the Cold War but one channel did. They ran "Let Poland Be Poland" on a given Sunday night and, of course, we were obligated to report the reaction to it. I don't think it had a whole lot of impact but at least we could say it went on French TV.

With all of this, I do think Mr. Wick was ahead of the curve and I would say a lot of Foreign Service officers were behind the curve; some people dug in their heels and didn't think it was going to work. This was Mr. Wick taking us out of our comfort zone.

The other major contribution was his personal relationship through his wife to Nancy Reagan.

As a life-long, registered Democrat, I always felt we got better support from Republican administrations and from Republican directors of USIA than we did from Democratic administrations and Democratic directors of USIA. Various theories as to why that might be the case, even if you accept my premise.

My basic theory is that Republicans liked the idea of going out there and telling the rest of the world our story. They had no embarrassment at using federal government funds to go to the rest of the world to say "hey, we are a good country and our policies are correct

and our point of view is to be listened to. If we need money to get that message across, let's do it."

Mr. Wick came to Paris many times. Usually my job was to put him in touch with journalists and I remember arranging a couple of luncheons with very prominent, English speaking French journalist contacts. You would hold your breath and hope that Charlie Wick wouldn't say something offensive, stupid or outlandish because he did shoot from the hip. There were plenty of occasions when I had to make that kind of arrangement.

Q: How about French intellectuals. I can't think of any country where the intellectual class has the importance or presumed importance or at least the high profile that it does in France. How did you approach it and what was your impression of it?

BROWN: I am going to be modest in answering that question. My colleagues in the cultural section and elsewhere had more direct contact with the intellectuals per se. You always were aware that intellectuals played an important role when you went to the Pantheon and saw where they were buried or you saw those long, thumb-sucking pieces in the newspaper which I never read, actually. You knew the intellectuals played an important role.

Let me address the subject indirectly. There were more than a few French journalists who were truly intellectuals. Especially in my early years in Paris, I was frequently invited to lunch by French journalists. These were long, two hour, two and a half hour affairs, full course meals, full bottle of wine kinds of get-togethers. A few of the journalists or commentators who invited me out were way above me in terms of intellectual ability. I was doing this in French and my French was good but with a few of these people, I can remember thinking "he isn't going to want to see me again because I am not really on his intellectual level."

I didn't worry too much about it because there were a lot of others who were just plain old practical journalists, interested in a story, interested in the good backgrounder, interested in being invited to some event with an American newsmaker. I felt more comfortable with these people, able to exchange ideas, able to operate on a practical business level. For me, the French intellectuals were out there but they weren't really a direct part of my day to day work.

Again I come back to the point more often than not, I'd call them and say, we have somebody in town who is available for a background briefing on economic or political issues or we can send you to the United States on an IV grant, that kind of thing. That was more the relationship I had with the French press.

Looking at the larger picture, the whole trend of French thinking during the five years I was there was increasingly dubious, skeptical or whatever about the communist model. There was of course the Communist Party in France and tangentially, Ambassador Galbraith got himself in trouble early on by making negative aspersions about the French

Minister of Transport, Charles Fiterman. Mitterrand's government included Communist ministers and Galbraith made critical comments that got him in hot water with the French.

But overall, events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the five years that I was in France conspired to make that model increasingly unattractive to the French left. I was so fortunate I was in Paris for five extremely interesting years in our bilateral and multilateral relationship. During those same five years in the Soviet Union, you had the death of Brezhnev, the death of Andropov and the death of Chernenko.

This was also a period when they exiled Alexander Solzhenitsyn. It was one thing for the Soviet Union to be an unattractive political model but when they exiled their leading intellectual, cultural thinkers, then the Soviet Union in general had no attraction for the French left. This was a period in which the French left was increasingly disillusioned with Soviet-style communism.

Q: How about the right and the Le Pen phenomenon?

BROWN: We didn't have anything to do with Le Pen and we didn't have anything to do with the far left, L'Humanité. We were absolutely restricted from contact with the communists. With the far right, we were not absolutely restricted but we didn't have anything to do with Le Pen and company. Figaro and the Express and those legitimate right-of-center publications, yes. We had a lot of contact with them. The ambassador would be invited to a big luncheon hosted by the L'Express and Figaro enterprise.

My job brought me in contact with the whole gamut of the non-Communist French press – Le Matin and Liberation on the left. L'Express, Figaro on the right and Le Monde, wherever you would place it.

Q: You mentioned you were forbidden contact with the communists.

BROWN: It was an absolute restriction. I could not invite journalists from L'Humanité to a press event. Within the political section, there were contacts with the whole spectrum of French politics but not with the French Communist Party. There were no formal relationships. They were communists and they were in some ways farther left than any other West European communist party.

I do recall an occasion when the French Communist Party wanted to deliver a petition to the American Embassy. I had only been there for a few months and a fellow in the political section, Ted Van Gilder, and I were assigned to the front door to receive this petition from members of the French Communist Party. My picture appeared in L'Humanité, the French communist newspaper, along with an article about the petition.

Q: Did you find yourself chafing under this?

BROWN: No, I didn't. I didn't make the policy. I had plenty to do. I recognized, not that I ever even thought about resisting it, that this was the Ronald Reagan, Evan Galbraith administration and this was perfectly consistent with their thinking, that we would want nothing to do with French communists. You didn't want to do anything to legitimize them.

Did people in the political section have some informal contacts? Perhaps, I don't know. But I don't think they would have wanted to have been seen in a restaurant dining with someone from the French Communist Party.

Overall, I would argue that the early '80s in France marked the decline of influence of the French Communist Party. More importantly, just a general disillusionment among the French left with communism and the eastern bloc.

Q: The invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68 I think really hit Western European communism.

BROWN: On the other hand, despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, people were still talking in the 1980's about Eurocommunism. Part of what happened in the '80s was the inability of the Soviet Union to produce anybody who could articulate, who could speak clearly. It was a sclerotic society. In addition, you had the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn. You talk about intellectuals in France. Well, here was the leading Russian intellectual, an esteemed Russian writer and the Soviet leadership couldn't tolerate him; they booted him out of the country.

Let me turn to a couple of things I have notes on, some personal observations.

First about arriving in France. Bobbi and I both passed through Paris during the summer of 1981 en route from Moscow back to the United States on home leave but we did it in a clumsy fashion. She went with our younger daughter Christine to try to decide where we were going to be living and she found an apartment somewhere in the suburbs. A few weeks later, I went through Paris, decided I didn't want to live in her apartment and picked out one that I thought was better. I put down $1,000, which seemed like a lot of money to me at that time, to reserve it and went on home leave.

After home leave, I came back to Paris ahead of Bobbi and checked into a hotel around the corner from the embassy where I was going to be staying for a while because no housing was ready. Ironically, we felt hard pressed to find anything in Paris as wonderful as the apartment we had in Moscow. Moscow living conditions, you would think, would be awful but remember that in Moscow, we had this spacious apartment on the 12th floor of a building with a view on three sides. Something like that in Paris proper would have cost multiple times my housing allowance.

Another factor at work was that Christine was to be enrolled in the Lycée International several miles west of Paris. We decided, contrary to the advice of a lot of people, not to

look for an apartment on the Left Bank or in the 16th arrondissement but out in St. Germaine-en-Laye.

I went out on the weekend to look at the apartment where I had put down $1,000 and I almost became nauseated. I could not live somewhere where I would have to take a bus and then a train to get to work. I felt confined. I tossed and turned for several nights, talked to Bobbi on the phone and decided to forfeit the $1,000 and start all over again. I was going to wait until she came and do it the correct way.

But I didn't. A couple of days later I went out to St. Germain-en-Laye with information that I had picked up in the embassy's housing office and accompanied by the Reuters bureau chief, Bob Evans, and his wife whom we had known in Moscow. I found this big old airy house with a huge garden a short distance from the RER train line and I was blown away by the place. I'll never forget Bob's wife describing the house as "smashing" in her English accent. This was totally different. It wasn't available for a month but I said to myself "this is where we want to live." The owner, Madame Legras, wisely suggested I wait until Bobbi came before I confirmed.

That house at 3 rue des Bucherons was a huge part of our five-year France experience. We were in a community where we made a lot of friends and acquaintances. Contrary to what the security people said I should do, I would walk every morning from my front door five minutes to the RER, pick up my Herald Tribune and find a spot on the platform where I knew the doors on the RER car would open. It was the end of the line. In 20 minutes, I would be at l'Opera and two metro stops later, I would be at the embassy. Living in the suburbs didn't inhibit my style.

At the end of the day, I would gather up newspapers and other unclassified documents and read them on the return trip home. No, we did not live on the Left Bank but we had a really wonderful French experience. Not only did we have a lot of friends out there, we had a chateau and a huge park, a great place for our dog, a different lifestyle, a different experience. So that is a very strong memory.

The second thought involves where my office was in the embassy, looking out on the Place de la Concorde. I replaced a fellow named Chris Henze. Chris had done a fine job. The first week I was there, Jack Hedges hosted a farewell reception for Chris. It was very well attended, a tribute to Chris and the job he had done. Journalist after journalist came up to me and we exchanged cards and said we will have to get together for lunch. I did not really know what this meant at the time but especially over the first year, I had innumerable lunches as the guest of French journalists. I got a lot of kidding about it as I came back into the embassy after a couple of hours away.

But when somebody mentioned the name of a particular journalist or wanted to have access to somebody in the French daily press, the weekly magazines or the audiovisual media, I had those contacts. My office and I had those contacts.

In my office, I was blessed with five extremely dedicated, long-serving French employees -- Lucette, Monique, Nicole, Michelle and Jacques. Those five were like the starting five on a basketball team. I will never forget them. They were such an important part of doing the job there.

Lucette Beal, in particular, stands out. I wrote an article about her for the USIA magazine. It was a really good piece that captured who she was and what she did. Lucette prepared a daily press briefing for the ambassador. She had come to work for the American Embassy circa 1948 and her office was actually in what became the ambassador's residence. She went to work for the Marshall Plan and occupied a cubicle. Not far from where she sat was a young Foreign Service officer named Arthur Hartman. That was 1948 and I am going out there 30 plus years later. By 1981, Lucette is the chief FSN in the press office and Arthur Hartman is the ambassador.

My first week in Paris reminded me of my first day on the job in Moscow in 1978 when I had three newsmakers. Now I am in Paris and I get a call from the DCM, Christian Chapman, who says Richard Allen, the NSC adviser, is in town and would like to do a background briefing with French journalists. This was my first week on the new job.

I turned to the PAO, Jack Hedges, who suggested two or three names. I turned next to Lucette Beal who at that point, more easily than I, could contact those journalists, all of whom were delighted to come to the ambassador's residence for a background briefing with the NSC adviser. I attended and I did what I do well and what I was experienced in doing from my Moscow days. I took notes. I took good notes and I showed them to the ambassador and DCM. They were put into a telegram and they got me off to a good start. I got a lot of commendations right away for making effective use of this press opportunity. It is always nice to get off to a good start.

I won't attribute all of my success in Paris to those five French employees but they were part of it.

Meanwhile, remember that I had the title of AIO. That didn't last very long. Things were restructured. I became the information officer with a lot of other responsibilities.

As I said, Lucette did this daily press briefing for the Ambassador. She would come in early and cut up all the French newspapers. At about 10, we'd go up to the ambassador's office and do a briefing for the ambassador on what was in the French press. The ambassador, DCM and PAO and anyone else who was interested would attend. Not that many other people attended because I think they found it a little bit tedious. For Ambassador Galbraith, it was a five day a week operation unless there was something extraordinary that called him away. We did it in French. He preferred that.

Michelle Carteron was a generation younger than Lucette. She aspired to do what Lucette did and there was a lot of tension between the two of them and Michelle brought in her contacts in the French press. Things became very competitive.

Monique Barra was a flamboyant type whose contact was in the audiovisual world. She would come running into my office and tell me I absolutely had to meet some particular journalist she had encountered or absolutely had to go to some event, attend a live taping of a show. A very effervescent, ebullient character. We were invited more than once to her home in Auvers-sur-Oise, not far from where Vincent Van Gogh is buried.

Nicole Mazeron prepared the daily written summary of the French press that every American embassy in Western European was required to do. Nicole summarized the French print press, the editorial comments. She would bring this to me in draft. I would correct it.

I always remember the day around 1982 when Nicole brought her report to me in draft and said "we have a new system here. Put a circle around something you want changed and we will take it back out and change it on the machine." Literally, when I arrived, it was all being done on a typewriter. Lo and behold, a couple of years later and they had come up with this thing called the word processor produced by Wang. Wang was the supplier early on to the State Department.

I can remember the novelty when we had the first Wang computer. It was in my office and when I wasn't using it, other people were able to come in and use this fancy device where we could actually change words without retyping the whole page.

Then there was even a stage where once you did that, you took the report to the technology center, pushed a couple of buttons and this whole thing was transmitted electronically to Washington. Wow.

Q: This whole communications thing, you were right on the cusp of it at that point.

BROWN: Cusp but we were still on the slow side.

The fifth employee was Jacques Jacquinet. He was a midget. He was less than five feet tall, probably four feet and so well known and liked. Everybody knew Jacques. He tended the AP and AFP tickers. All day long, he would tear news items off the tickers, photocopy them and like a mailman, in the afternoon, he'd go around and plop 20 or 25 pages on people's desks. He did that early in the morning and again late in the afternoon.

This is the way we kept informed. There were no other ways, except a telephone call, that brought the news any faster than the AP and the AFP ticker. I remember any number of times when there was a news event and I would go dashing into the embassy to get the latest news on the event so we could keep the ambassador and other people posted.

On a spring Saturday in 1982, I received a phone call saying Jacques had died of a heart attack. I immediately went to his home on the other side of Paris and tried to console his widow. It was clear that the Embassy was Jacque's life.

We set up a condolence book at his desk and the outpouring among both the FSNs and the Americans was overwhelming. The ambassador went to his funeral. Partly because he was a midget, people would never forget him physically but that aside, he was a beloved character. He would come into my office late in the afternoon and although, he didn't speak much English, he would say he was "going to take the rest of the day off." It reflected his pride in his work. He was married to a French woman of normal stature. I don't know if he ever had any children. Bless his soul, we missed Jacques. In the condolence book, I wrote that somebody else would take his job. He could never be replaced.

And there was the practical question of who was going to monitor the AP and AFP tickers that were going to keep spewing out paper forever. I interviewed several candidates and eventually hired an Algerian-born fellow whose last name was Choutri.

Q: Did you find the French national employees sensitive to particular correspondents or to events in the United States, something taking a wrong turn or anti Americanism?

BROWN: Lucette was completely objective in her clipping of the French press. If there was something critical of the United States, that was probably the first thing she called to the ambassador's attention. There was no effort to feed the ambassador and the embassy just the good news. Critical information out of the French press was served up.

As far as the journalists we dealt with sure, we were aware of those who might provide a sympathetic hearing. Particularly between Lucette and Michelle, there was a competitive relationship enhanced by the generational gap to try to introduce me to some journalists we didn't know and they might advise that this particular person was fairly critical or not necessarily as inclined as someone else to give us a good hearing.

Q: You have five years, from early Reagan to mid Reagan. Did you sense a greater understanding of Reagan? When Reagan first came in, the far right and Europe was extremely dubious about this character and they learned to live with him. It was a learning experience. Did you sense this change?

BROWN: Was there an evolution on Reagan during that time? Yes, there was. First of all, he's President of the United States. He has to be taken seriously and he didn't bomb the Soviet Union or act rashly. He was conducting reasonable policies. Some policies they would agree with; some they would disagree with.

Overall, the understanding and appreciation of Reagan improved during those five years partly because we were starting from a fairly low understanding and a low appreciation. You'd have to go back and look in detail at editorials and commentaries to give an in-depth answer to that question.

But I was dealing more with the day-to-day kind of stuff. Very early on, a couple of months into assignment, word came to the press office that shots had been fired at the DCM, Christian Chapman. He was the chargé. He came out of his house in the morning

to get into his car and realized that someone was firing shots at him. Christian Chapman was as close to a French intellectual as you could find in the American Embassy, educated in France and the French tradition. But like a good American, he ducked behind his car; shots were fired but miraculously missed him.

He came to the embassy where I asked him for guidance; our phones were ringing off the hook. What had happened, etcetera? I asked if he would be willing to speak to the French press and despite concerns from the security people, he was. I will never forget the scene as we allowed French journalists into the embassy with Christian Chapman occupying a position there on the second floor of the embassy where the ambassador's office was, a very elegant position. He answered questions in both English and perfect French and basically the word that went out was that the American embassy chargé d'affaires had ducked behind his car, the bullets had glanced off and he was safe. That was about all there was to it at that time. No clear cut information on who the assailant was or whatever.

Little did we realize this was thrusting us into a new age. In 1982, anyone who wanted just walked in the front door of the embassy. We didn't have ID cards, badges. If there was any sort of control on who walked in the embassy, it was minimal. Somewhere, not too long after that, we got ID cards. The French resisted this, particularly the more senior employees. Lucette, for example, was accustomed to French journalists coming in and having a chat with someone in the embassy, perhaps the way it used to happen in the State Department. It wasn't just the attempted shooting of Christian Chapman that caused the change but it was part of the whole evolution at that time.

The Christian Chapman incident (which he describes in his oral history) was November 12, 1981. Two months later, January 18, 1982, one of our military attachés, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Ray walked out of his house and was not so fortunate. Someone walked up and shot him once in the head. He was assassinated, murdered right there in the streets. He was married with two children, roughly the same age as my children.
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By that time, Evan Galbraith was ambassador. We all assembled in his office and I can remember to this day, Ambassador Galbraith was very quick except at this point, he seemed to be a bit paralyzed. What should we do? We lowered the flag to half staff. I drafted a statement. He didn't like the statement. He thought it was the bland kind of thing you say every time something like this happened so he came up with his own version. He not only issued it in writing but verbally as well. He said he was "revolted" by the cold blooded murder. And he went ahead with a previously scheduled lunch with President Mitterrand.

The next day there was a funeral service at Notre Dame where Charles Ray was a regular parishioner. My job was to control and advise the French and other press on what they could and could not do in the service. So that was a big news making event.

It was not the only terrorism related incident we would have but it was the only time an American official would be killed while I was in Paris.

Q: Did it become clear later who was doing this?

BROWN: They did arrest somebody, a Lebanese. He was tried and sentenced to jail.

There was another incident a couple years later on a Saturday where somebody from the embassy was coming out of his house and was suspicious about a package under his car. He called the police. The French police came to check it out. It exploded and killed one of the French police and wounded the other.

And in March, 1984, there was a shooting at our consulate in Strasbourg. The Consul, Bob Homme, was struck twice but was not seriously wounded. It was a miracle. If I recall correctly, the shooter turned out to be the same guy that shot and killed Colonel Ray.

The point is that alongside having a great time going out to lunches with French journalists, there was this nasty backdrop that always involved questions from the media. It was a wakeup call to everybody and it was part of a pattern.

I mentioned all these lunches I had with the French journalists. At some point, I decided I would make a list of the restaurants I had gone to. I still have the list. It became an embassy directory of the French restaurant world. I probably should have made more of it than I did. I could have made some money off it or gone into the restaurant review business.

New subject: During my first year, I got a call from the Elysée press person -- basically the President's press person -- inviting my counterparts from five other embassies and me for a planning session for the G-7. You recall that the first G-7 meeting took place in Rambouillet, France, in 1975, hosted by Giscard d'Estaing and then it went to every other member of the G-7 which meant that by 1982, France was due to host it again. So with my counterparts from five other embassies, we went out to Versailles. The French were going to use Versailles for the 1982 G-7 meeting.

At a subsequent meeting, we were asked what the needs were for the respective press corps in covering the G-7. The Germans, Italians, Canadians gave rough estimates of what they might need. The Japanese said they would need something like 22 typewriters, 18 telex machines. They just had it down precisely, very Japanese like.

As for me, I had to say "well, we have asked the White House but they really haven't responded." As we all know, the White House just didn't march with the other countries on these things. The White House press office and the whole White House on any presidential visit had their own way of operating.

Over the course of the next several months leading up to June, 1982, I hosted any number of White House press advance teams and people from the White House transportation office for innumerable visits to the sites, discussions about photo ops and everything else

leading up to President Reagan's visit in 1982. It was the biggest presidential visit that I had ever been involved in and probably ever would be involved in.

I describe this as three visits. There was President Reagan's bilateral visit to France with all the attendant imagery. This was his first visit as President of the United States to France and so it was a state visit with reciprocal dinners at the Elysée and at the ambassador's residence. It was rare to have two official dinners and President Mitterrand came to the residence as a guest. Mitterrand would never have gone to any other ambassador's residence for a dinner but an exception was made for the President of the United States.

There was also Nancy Reagan in France and a whole team with vast resources went into that visit. And finally, there was President Reagan's attendance at the G-7 summit meeting. I worked my tail off in the preparations. I worked very intimately with people in the White House press advance office, including especially with a very good guy named John Dreylinger. I knew every one of the probably 25 photo ops at Versailles. I was intimately prepared for that meeting.

It was also a lesson to me on how the White House big foots everybody else. Yes, I got to stand at certain points along the way but the White House would never entrust anything solely to embassy people. The White House staff, many or most of whom were political appointees, would ultimately have responsibility for everything.

I did make a good impression on Larry Speakes, who was the White House spokesman. He had replaced Jim Brady, wounded in the assassination attempt. Larry Speakes liked me and I liked Larry Speakes. I got high praise for whatever it was that I did, even though it seemed to me at the time I was mostly standing at some place waiting for a photo op to take place.

A couple things stood out from that G-7 meeting. I think it was the only time that Alexander Haig came to Paris as secretary of state. He was something of a show of his own which the White House didn't particularly like.

It was also extremely hot and the press operation was in the Orangerie at Versailles; the Orangerie was a greenhouse designed to allow fruits and tropical plants to grow year round. The working conditions were absolutely atrocious. If the French had hoped to call attention to the magnificence of Versailles, that failed because it coincided with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra Shatila massacres. All news attention was focused on that event and very little on the G-7 meeting at Versailles.

But I do have vivid memories of it, of lost sleep and long days.

Q: How about Nancy Reagan? She was quite a power unto herself.

BROWN: I really wasn't too involved in it. Somebody else did all of that.

Jumping ahead several years, when Reagan came to Moscow and I was the PAO, we had all the various advance teams and specific site assignments. Everybody on the staff was assigned to some particular group or location such as the university, the writer's club, Red Square or wherever. There was a woman on my staff, an assistant cultural affairs officer, and we assigned her to the Nancy Reagan team. She came to me one day in high dudgeon and said that she didn't like this at all. It was sexism. As a woman, she was being assigned to Mrs. Reagan while everybody else was being assigned to President Reagan. I said, "Susan, first of all, a lot of women on the staff are being assigned to President Reagan but somebody also has to be assigned to Mrs. Reagan. Secondly, you're in the cultural section and most of her program will be culturally related. And thirdly, I can tell you that at the end of this event, you will have had the most interesting experiences."

She came to me later, perhaps still offended that she had been assigned to Mrs. Reagan but she acknowledged that she had had very interesting experiences while the rest of us again stood around and waited for things to happen or listened to speeches. She got to see icons and attend cultural events that nobody else got to see.

I don't specifically recall much about Nancy Reagan's program in Paris but there were probably some similarities.

The visit ended on a Monday and we went to Orly Airport, waved goodbye to Air Force One and to President Reagan. I so wished that it had ended on a Thursday or Friday so that I would have a few days to recover. Instead I went right back to the office.

Some of my USIS colleagues and some people back in Washington seemingly forgot that I had just spent five or six days nonstop on POTUS-related activities and they would ask some mundane question about a work related project. I was physically exhausted by the end of this visit. I didn't feel any great wheels-up sense of satisfaction. I had put a lot of time into working with the White House advance people only to realize, come the time of the visit, that my role was pretty minimal. I didn't expect it to be maximal, certainly not involved in substance, but you were never entrusted with any responsibility because the White House wanted to hold all that responsibility to itself.

Was I the only person to feel this way? I mentioned our DCM, Jack Maresca. Jack was a very controlling kind of guy. President Reagan came to France three times while he and I were there. First was 1982, Versailles. The second was 1984; I'll talk more about that later, the 40th anniversary of D-Day. And the third was a quick visit to Strasbourg and the European Community. Jack Maresca was as involved as I was with the White House advance teams for each of the first two visits. By the time of the third visit, he said "I don't need to be here" and he went on leave. He realized that the White House comes in and they just take over everything.

At the end of the Versailles visit, Ambassador Galbraith felt somewhat the same way many of us did about the behavior of some members of the White House staff. We had a wheels-up party that did not involve the White House party. Ambassador Galbraith was

as offended as everyone else by how we were treated and made some pointed remarks about manners that gave all of us a good reason to laugh and to relax a little bit. He did not include President and Mrs. Reagan in his criticism.

For me personally, I had become well and favorably known to the White House press office. A year later, when it was the turn of the United States to host the G-7, the Reagan administration chose Williamsburg, Virginia, as the site. I was invited back to the United States and I attended the G-7 meeting in Williamsburg. My job was to work with the French press, attend their briefings, report back to Larry Speakes on what the French were saying and try to encourage their coverage of something other than just the G-7, the Williamsburg scene, that kind of thing.

What worked quite successfully was that after a couple of days of reporting economic news and politics, a lot of French journalists looked around and wondered "what is this place, Williamsburg?" They were looking for a new story, a new angle. A year earlier, there had been the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Yorktown, just down the peninsula. At least geographically some of them were familiar with that area. There were some good stories about Williamsburg, about William and Mary College (which is where the press center was) and about Thomas Jefferson and I was able to answer a lot of questions and point people in the right direction for interviews and information.

By the way, the White House paid to air condition the building on the William and Mary campus that was used as a press center. I think they had the Versailles Orangerie experience in mind.

I was also assigned to the G-7 meeting a year later in Bonn and in 1986, I went for the only time in my life to Japan. I went again at the invitation of Larry Speakes and company to the G-7 meeting in Tokyo, to cover the French press, report back on what their take was, how they were dealing with the issues. That was heady, that was fun, a good ego trip.

After the G-7, I made a personal side trip to Kyoto where I stayed in a private home and slept on a tatami mat.

Let me mention some of the other newsmakers and activities that kept me busy.

On September 15, 1982, right at the end of a visit from Mr. Wick, we learned that Princess Grace of Monaco had died in an automobile accident. Soon after, we got the word that Nancy Reagan would lead the American delegation to the funeral so I and others, including Lucette Beal, were sent to Monaco to work with the American press who came along with Nancy Reagan. Her press person was Sheila Tate.

On the day of the funeral, September 18, I was directly across from the cathedral as the whole funeral party led by Prince Rainier walked down the street. I was really very moved. I didn't have much of an impression of Monaco prior to that time except as a gambling mecca. Clearly, the whole community led by Prince Rainier was grieving for

the loss of their princess, Princess Grace of Monaco, and I was standing right across from the doors to the cathedral as everyone came by.

November 11, 1982 was a holiday and I got the word that Brezhnev had died. I called the Ambassador. He was having breakfast with Henry Kissinger but he called me back a few minutes later. I went into the embassy. Kissinger was staying at the ambassador's residence. A lot of French knew about the Kissinger visit and there were a lot of requests to interview him so I went to the residence and was asked to coordinate.

I tiptoed into the room where he was meeting with a French visitor. I had never met the great man before and I asked him if he would like me to try to coordinate media requests. To my surprise, he was very cordial and very appreciative. He explained that he had a contract, I think, with ABC and had to do ABC first but after that, he would do any number of interviews.

We used two rooms at the residence. He did the interview with ABC and then we moved him next door to do a follow on interview with a pool of French TV networks and then we moved him back to CBS and NBC. I think he did four interviews quite willingly on his memories of Leonid Brezhnev.

It was the only time in my career I encountered Henry Kissinger first hand. Fortunately in contrast to other people's experiences, I found him quite easy and cordial to work with.

In October, 1983, I had one of my busiest weeks. It was on a Sunday that we woke up and heard about the bombings in Beirut, the Marine headquarters there. 250 American marines killed. The second largest number of deaths was among French so there was an American-French link and the ambassador did not hesitate. He went on French television that same day, didn't check with anybody. I can't tell you at this point what he said but I thought it was very courageous of him to do that. His words must have been along the lines of loss of life, our common loss and that sort of thing.

With him doing that on French TV on a Sunday night, the DCM, Jack Maresca felt confident to accept a radio interview the next day. I went along. I had great admiration for Jack Maresca; he was not an easy guy to work for but very, very professional. His French was far better than the ambassador's. In some ways, his reasoning and thought processes might have been less emotional and more analytical and he did a really good interview. I couldn't tell you today what he said but I do remember those two interviews; the ambassador on Sunday night on TV and the DCM the next day on the radio. We really got our message out.

That was Sunday and Monday and on Tuesday, the United States invaded Grenada. Again, we were up in the ambassador's office, the DCM, someone from the political section and me. Ambassador Galbraith was chomping at the bit. He wanted to go out and make a statement. The problem was nobody really knew what was going on. We didn't have guidance. We didn't know what the whole story was except the ambassador was

sure he did. Everyone was advising him to be cautious about this because we didn't fully understand but he went ahead.

Q: The real concern was Americans on the island, students.

BROWN: We were going to go in and rescue Americans at the hospital and elsewhere. Whatever the case, the ambassador looked at us who were hesitating and didn't have a very charitable view. He went on television and debated Serge July who was the editor of Liberation, one of the left-of-center newspapers and he didn't come out too well. I think he lost the debate. He didn't come out too well on TV and he came out even worse in the eyes of Secretary of State Shultz who was in Paris on Thursday of that week.

I think the ambassador made some statement suggesting that the Grenada invasion had been planned two weeks earlier. He was really off the reservation. When Secretary Shultz arrived on Thursday, I linked up with John Hughes, his press spokesman and it was clear to me with all the body language that the ambassador was going to be disciplined by Shultz for going beyond what he should have.

That was an up week for the ambassador and a downer. I am sure in his view you won a few, you lost a few.

Q: Did the ambassador later acknowledge that maybe he'd gone too far?

BROWN: He later recalled the episode in his book and defended himself, even going so far as to say that Shultz eventually sent him a complimentary letter.But I am sure when he looked in the mirror, he said I should not have been quite so outspoken. Regarding his statement that the invasion had been planned two weeks ahead, he did say he had been misquoted.

Amidst all this, the Beirut bombings, the Grenada issue and the Shultz visit, we had a visit from Director Wick and that was always a full load. He made a speech that we had to record along with the Q & A session. I also set up a lunch for him with two leading, English-speaking French journalists -- a woman named Christine Ockrent and a man named Leon Zitrone. At the time, they were as well known on the French scene as any two network nightly network people are today.

Wick liked me personally but he was wondering during that period if we should have in our Western European capitals a super press attaché, not a career Foreign Service officer but someone from the outside who would really know how to get out there and get home the message. I have always felt good that Christine Ockrent and Leon Zitrone both rejected the idea. "You don't need a super press attaché. We deal quite well with the press office at the embassy, thank you."

We had innumerable high-level official visits. We had three by the president; I don't know how many by the vice president, even more by the secretary of state and just as many by the secretary of defense, to say nothing of many other newsmakers farther down

on the food chain. We had the one Haig visit and that was during the Versailles G-7. About a month later, he resigned to be replaced by George Shultz.

Shultz and Weinberger talked to the press every time they came to Paris. Shultz was bland; Weinberger was outspoken and imminently quotable. But in the long run, I was much happier we had George Shultz where he was and we survived Cap Weinberger.

And then there was December 14, 1982, when Secretary Shultz had not one but two press conferences — and it did wonders for my career.

Shultz' meeting with French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson dealt with East-West issues in general and a gas pipeline on which the US and France were not eye to eye. Cheysson reminded me of Christian Chapman; he was a French version of Christian Chapman, totally bilingual. There wasn't even a hint of the Gallic accent in his English. The follow-on press conference was, in my diary words, "technically successful but substantively bland." The seasoned traveling press filed their reports and called it a day.

Parenthetically, these were really serious journalists. Some of them had been covering the State Department for so many years that they had a longer mental record of foreign policy than the incumbent secretary of state. They were very unlike the White House press corps with a lot of big egos and people looking for a headline; the State Department press corps was a very serious group of people.

I fed some of their reporting to John Hughes, State's estimable press spokesman, which he passed on to Shultz, who reacted negatively. "This isn't what I said at all. They are totally misinterpreting." Shultz was trying to put to rest the idea that the U.S. and the French were not in agreement but that was not the message that went out that day.

John Hughes called to tell me that at the end of their black tie dinner at the Foreign Ministry, around 10:30 pm, Shultz and Cheysson would again meet with the press to clarify things.

John Hughes, I think, was probably the best press spokesman at the State Department that I worked with, a former Christian Scientist Monitor journalist, a very solid individual, in it for the professionalism of it, not for the ego trip and that kind of thing.

The American journalists covering Shultz had gone off for a night in Paris, nice dinners and whatever. We obviously didn't have Twitter, text or even e-mail but somehow, I rounded up as many as I could through their bureaus and went to the Quai d'Orsay.

At the end of the dinner, Cheysson and Shultz, still in black tie, sat down again with the press and talked and answered questions for an hour. I was armed only with my little cassette tape recorder and I prayed that the red light would keep glowing, that my batteries would not die.

By the time I arrived back at the embassy, it was past midnight and I had just decided to go home when the phone rang. It was DCM Jack Maresca saying, "Phil, we have to have that transcript."

I protested, "It's midnight. Can't it wait until tomorrow so I can go home and get a good night's sleep."

Jack was a no-nonsense guy: "No, we have to have it tonight."

In my heart of hearts, I said to myself "let's get it out of the way tonight. I don't want to go home, sleep, come back and face it tomorrow."

We tracked down a secretary from OECD. She sat down in front of a Wang computer in the Press Office and I began playing my tape recorder. I would read half a sentence and half a sentence would be typed. We worked all night long, until 6 in the morning, and came up with a 25-page transcript cable.

The full text is available in State's American Foreign Policy Documents for 1982. I discovered only today that the Brits send a confidential cable reporting on the second "impromptu" press conference.

That effort did a lot to advance my Foreign Service career. At the end of the visit, John Hughes sent out the perfunctory note praising the work of various PAOs. But he tacked onto it: "A special word about Phil Brown who worked straight through the night doing a transcript and who was a superior fellow all around." That message was widely circulated to my betters, including USIA Director Charlie Wick.

It was donkey work, nothing but pure drudgery. It was not creative policy making but it increased my profile and probably my promotion rate. So thank you George Shultz.

Q: Today is the 8th of May, 2012 with Phil Brown.

BROWN: Let's continue with my five years in France. I'll preface it by saying I have a lot of resources to look at -- journals and files -- and once again, I am struck by how fortunate we, I always say we, were to have had this stretch of time overseas. From 1977 through 1990, we were overseas: three very interesting years in Moscow during the Cold War and then, when very little was happening in Moscow, this five year period in France. We took full advantage of it, both personally and professionally.

So what I thought I would do today is to go through and touch on some of these experiences from our years in France, maybe not go into them too much in depth. Some may seem trivial; others were more substantive and most of them in chronological order. I have touched on a number already.

I talked about working as the press attaché at the embassy, the wonderful French staff that I had and Ambassador Evan Galbraith who was very happy to encounter the press. He wanted to be active both with the print press and the audio visual world. He felt very confident. He didn't feel he had to check with headquarters to know what he should say. Most of the time he did quite well and a few times he really got himself in trouble doing it. For better or worse, it made my life very interesting.

I talked about the Versailles G-7 summit of 1982, my first intense experience working with the White Office Press Office, how I got myself on the G-7 circuit and became known to Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman. He liked me, got me involved in subsequent G-7 meetings.

My ambassador in the Soviet Union had been Tom Watson, former head of IBM. We continued our relationship after he left Moscow and after we moved to Paris. It wasn't unusual for him to take his own plane and fly to Paris. We would see him there from time to time. On one particular occasion, he called and said he wanted us to attend a dinner with the board of IBM which was meeting in Paris. At the last minute, he and his wife could not attend but he arranged for us to go to the dinner nevertheless.

We were there with some pretty high rollers. I recently saw the obituary for Maersk McKinney Moeller, the Danish man whose family created Maersk, the big shipping firm. When I saw his obituary, I remembered that we sat with him and his wife at that dinner at a restaurant in Paris called Le Faugeron. That wasn't a typical night out in Paris but it was the kind of thing that made it fun.

A frequent visitor to Paris was General Vernon Walters, who wore so many hats it was hard to keep up with all of them. He was multilingual and bilingual in French and any time he came to Paris, he was good for an interview. We could usually line him up with TV because they loved his outspokenness and his fluency in French.

Another note about people like General Walters or any number of senior officials. I have frequently mentioned Lucette Beal, the senior French employee in my office who had been with the U.S. government since 1948. It was typical of these people like General Walters that when they came to the embassy, they'd stop first to see Lucette and then they'd call on the ambassador or political counselor. It was partly a courtesy, it was partly friendship but I also think they got a reading on what was going on in France from Lucette. I shouldn't say just Lucette because we also had Monique Barra and Monique and General Walters were also very close.

I naturally had a lot of professional contacts at the International Herald Tribune but also friends we knew there in other ways. We knew Charles and Laurana Mitchelmore both through the IHT and the American Church of Paris.

On our first Thanksgiving in Paris, they invited us to their home for dinner and I learned that one of the guests was a singer but I didn't know who other than that she had some association with the opera. Everyone simply called her Flicka. After dinner, I learned her

name was Frederica von Stade, a personal friend of our hostess for that night. Frederica Von Stade was one of the leading sopranos in the opera world.

There was something called the Anglo American Press Association, English speaking journalists, and they had a luncheon that the ambassador attended. He came back very, very pleased with the whole experience. That was good for me and good for my relationship with him.

It loosened him up all the more and so one night early in 1982, soon after the assassination of our military attaché and the beginning of terrorist activities in Paris, Ambassador Galbraith agreed to do an interview for Nightline with Ted Koppel. Pierre Salinger, who was by then resident in Paris and working for ABC, came by the ambassador's residence. I was there to coach the ambassador on what it would be like doing an interview with Ted Koppel. It was awkward because we could see an image of Ted Koppel but only the ambassador could hear his voice. The ambassador had an earpiece that allowed only him to hear the question. So there would be silence in the room and then the ambassador would speak. It created the image of this daft man sitting in the corner of the room occasionally talking to the wall but it worked out and it was just part of the ambassador's increasing level of confidence in doing interviews.

Q: As a press attaché in an extremely important country, how important was the ambassador's connection to the press both French and foreign, did you feel he advanced the cause?

BROWN: He felt it was very important. As I said, he did not want to be a super commercial attaché. He made that point. He was a businessman. He didn't want to be carrying diplomatic notes to the foreign ministry so he was looking around to see what he could best do that would keep him busy. He had a lot of energy and felt that public diplomacy, I think we must have used the term though I don't think he ever thought of it in those terms, public diplomacy was where he could do the most good.

So he certainly felt he was advancing the cause even though, on occasion he got himself in hot water. It certainly gave him a higher profile because people would read his name in the paper and see him on TV. After almost four year, he sort of wore out his welcome and he was not that much of a newsmaker.

But did it really have a major impact on U.S.-French relations? I doubt it. Relations were going to go where relations were going to go because countries like the U.S. and France act in their own best interests.

I was working intensely. During my first year, I thought I would never get a break. It was thanks to contacts with a couple of French journalists, Jean Leclerc du Sablon and Marie-Claude Descamps from Le Matin, that we went off on our first ski trip in France in winter of '82. It was memorable. I learned that these school vacations or long weekends, there was no way around them. Vacations were not staggered. We left in the wee hours of the morning to try to beat the traffic but to no avail.

But it makes a difference when you go skiing with somebody and the next week you invite him or her to a breakfast with a visiting newsmaker at the ambassador's residence. Or if you are calling to discuss something you didn't like in their reporting.

I had a call from Jock Shirley, a mentor of mine, in late 1982, asking me if I was interested in bidding on the job of PAO Moscow for the summer of 1983. That took me aback. I was barely in my second year in Paris. I had given some thought to returning to Moscow but not that soon so I turned him down. I said "no" to Jock. I really didn't want to do it then. They found someone else, Ray Benson.

I eventually did replace Ray in Moscow at a much more appropriate time for me in my career and a more interesting time in Soviet history but I didn't like to say no to Jock. He said something at the time to the effect of: "Well, I will accept your no answer this time but it may not be as easy the next time."

It wasn't too much later that he called and said he wanted me to bid on PAO Brussels. I was not the least bit interested. My quick analysis said Paris has three missions, three ambassadors. Of the three, the bilateral was by far the most important. I was press attaché in a big West European embassy.

Brussels had three missions, NATO, USEC and the bilateral, and the bilateral was the least important of the three. The fact that I would be PAO didn't mean anything to me. One thing I did very well in my Foreign Service career was not to take a job just because it might be a stepping stone to something else. Take a job because it was interesting. So again I said no to Jock and he accepted and I got to stay in Paris.

About that same time, I was pushing to stay in Paris not just four years per the assignment but for five years because my daughter Christine went there in eighth grade and I wanted her to be able to graduate after five years. I was making that case to Washington and I got a call one day saying "send us a letter saying you want to stay in Paris for five years because there is going to be a change of ambassadors and a change of PAOs and issues and other things and oh, by the way, I'd like to stay because my daughter is going to be, for her schooling." So I rephrased it and I did get my fifth year although to be honest, the real reason was the schooling.

Q: You mentioned Pierre Salinger. He was a holdover from the Kennedy administration who was a name. Was that a problem for you?

BROWN: No, it wasn't a problem. In fact it was a big advantage. I could call and talk business with him whenever necessary and he occasionally called me for help on something. He was working for ABC and he would quite happily receive Mr. Wick for breakfast or drinks and I'd go along. He said nice things about me and about the embassy and about how we were getting the U.S. message out. He never undercut us.

It is rather interesting that Wick thought he was going the extra mile because here he was representing a Republican administration but he was willing to speak to this former press man, under Kennedy, an example of how open minded he could be. What I think he liked was associating with a famous name.

Pierre Salinger was a good guy, a friend. He invited me to dinner with him in a restaurant one night. He lit up one of his cigars and I recall that I enjoyed it; ever since my youth, I have enjoyed the smell of a cigar because I had a friend who used to smoke them when we went to baseball games in Pittsburgh.

Salinger was also working with someone else at that time for one of these big coffee table books called Over Paris, Views of the City. I consulted with the man who was working with him on that book.

Let me jump ahead to Sunday, May 20, 1984, for one of the most amazing days I ever had in Paris. To retaliate for our boycotting the Moscow Olympics of 1980, the Soviets decided they would boycott the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984. Late on a Friday afternoon, a couple of months before the games were to begin, I got a call from French TV, TF1, saying they were going to discuss the boycott as part of their regular Sunday night sports programs called Sports Sunday, Sports Dimanche.

They wanted to have a debate, they had invited the Soviet press attaché and now they would like to have a French-speaking representative from the American Embassy. This call came about 3 o'clock so I ran upstairs and explained to the DCM, Jack Maresca. I admitted that I would be nervous but when he suggested they recruit someone from the political section, that got my juices flowing. Jack talked to the ambassador and after very little deliberation, I was assigned to be the American Embassy representative on this program. Since it was the press attaché from the Soviet embassy, I would carry the ball for our side.

And so I did. Maybe it is a good thing I didn't have a whole lot of time to prepare. I spent Saturday and part of Sunday preparing for the debate but it wasn't the only thing I had on my platter that day. By that time, I was also singing in the choir of the American Church of Paris and we had scheduled a special concert that night plus my daughter Christine was in a fashion show. So on Sunday, I sang the Schubert "Mass in C major" with the American church choir. What a wonderful experience that was. We did it by memory, this rather short mass, but we sang it well and then I went to Christine's fashion show.

And from there, I walked to the nearby headquarters of TF1, just around the corner from the American church, and debated the Soviet press attaché, Aleksandr Avdeyev on the Olympic boycott. Bobbi and Christine went along. Mr. Avdeyev, who went on to a very distinguished diplomatic career, was by himself but he could not have been more courteous. Spoke English with us. But when he got on the set, he was a well-trained debater.

French TV offered an interpreter. Of course, Mr. Avdeyev didn't want an interpreter and I remember thinking to myself "I am so glad I don't have to say, yes, I want an interpreter." I did it in French and did very well.

They threw the ball to the Soviet first and he was well prepared. I probably should have interrupted him. He went on for several minutes but then I had my chance and my theme was basically that Americans believe you can have both freedom and security. For the Soviets, it is a choice of either freedom or security. We could absolutely guarantee that their athletes would be secure while at the same time, people would have freedom of speech.

I made reference to my years in Moscow and to the KGB, the Committee on State Security, and how differently they and we interpret security. Obviously, if security is part of the name KGB, then it has a very different meaning in their context than in ours.

I went home and didn't sleep a wink that night. I tossed and turned wondering what the reaction would be. Jack Maresca, the DCM was the first person to greet me and he was indignant, not with me, but he felt that TF-1 had favored the Soviet, let him have more speech time than I had. But the ambassador was 100% on my side, congratulating me not only for what I did but for being willing to go do it. He felt he had set an example for people on his staff; not only he but the DCM and now the press attaché would be willing to go out and do this sort of thing.

I am not sure I would ever want to do it again. It was live TV and I could easily have stumbled. It was a day I will never forget. Ironically, no one taped it at the embassy. It had all come together late on a Friday afternoon so there is no record of it.

Less than a month later, I had another unforgettable day. After weeks and weeks of preparation and on-site visits, President Reagan came to Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day. He came specifically to the Pointe du Hoc where he addressed living members of the units that scaled the cliffs of the Pointe du Hoc on June 6, 1944.

I had worked closely with the people in the White House press office on all aspects of the visit. As I have pointed out, when the big day comes, the White House doesn't pay any attention to the local staff; they take over everything but I had made many planning trips to Normandy and specifically to the Pointe du Hoc.

On that morning, I was fortunate enough to be aboard a helicopter for the trip over to Cherbourg where the press planes landed and where the press boarded buses to wherever they were going. The roads are so narrow and the photo ops were so limited that journalists went to one particular spot and that's as far as each one could go that day.

For the visit, I was at Pointe du Hoc in a bunker that was the CBS base and with me were Walter Cronkite and Mrs. Cronkite. While Walter Cronkite was off interviewing a couple of veterans from 1944, Generals J. Lawton Collins and James Gavin, I struck up a

conversation with Mrs. Cronkite, reminding her we had seen her in Moscow when we were there. She said she remembered. She had a recollection of Bobbi and our dog.

When Walter came back over, she very kindly introduced me to him and we had a brief chat. Then off he went to interview President Reagan at the conclusion of his remarks. So it was a moving day from the helicopter ride in the morning to ending up at the press center in the afternoon.

It is still true that there is no part of France where the American flag flies more prominently than in Normandy on June 6th. In 1984, there were still people who could remember the liberation, D-Day and the subsequent events. Today almost 30 years later, there are not many people who can remember it as participants but the memory is still there and nowhere is the warmth of feeling towards the United States stronger than in Normandy.

This trip to Normandy was President Reagan's second visit to France. The first was Versailles, the second was Normandy. The third, in May, 1985, was a one day/no overnight, symbolic visit to Strasburg to address the European parliament, the first American president to do so. As always, the White House would send out advance teams. There would be opportunities to go look at the sites and everything else connected with a presidential visit.

I was in Strasburg in February, 1985 when an advance team came in headed by Mike Deaver, the president's image maker. A big group of Europeans came down from Brussels to Strasburg to meet with the White House officials and to talk about the arrangements for the visit. Mr. Deaver was too busy even to meet with them. Mr. Deaver did a lot of good things but I don't think that was one of his finest moments.

They had been to Munich – this was the trip that would include the controversial stop in Bitburg -- and one of the White House press advance people was gloating about Munich where nine of them had used their diplomatic passports to buy BMWs at a big discount. Somehow that got under my Anglo-Saxon, Calvinist sense of what is right and wrong and I will now go on record for the first time and say that it was I who passed that information to the Newsweek correspondent in Paris, Scott Sullivan.

It appeared in the Newsweek Periscope section and it led to a White House examination of the issue. The White House concluded that there was "nothing per se illegal or unethical" about this but nevertheless, they rewrote the rules. One or two of the people who bought cars using this method were Secret Service people. It bothered me.

To keep things chronological, let me recall another unusual experience that dates to December, 1984. At some level in Washington, there was concern that we were not getting our message about Central America across to European audiences. This was the period when the U.S. was concerned about the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and their influence on the rest of the region. So along with PAOs from several West European countries, I traveled to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala over a period of

ten days for a first-hand look at the situation there. The idea was that we would be better able to make the case for U.S. policies if we could say that we had actually been there.

One problem arose right away. Along with our concern about Nicaragua, we were holding up El Salvador as a model. But the people at the American Embassy there advised against our travel because of the security situation so we did not go there. It seemed rather ironic that we could safely go to Nicaragua but not to El Salvador.

I'm not sure how much I was able to draw on my experiences in my subsequent conversations and work in Paris but it was a learning experience for me – my first trip to the region, to an area that really was foreign to me and my foreign service experience.

On February 13, 1985, John Vinocur interviewed Ambassador Galbraith. The ambassador had now been in Paris for almost four years. It was one of the few times I did not sit in on the interview; either he didn't invite me or I decided not to sit in.

Out of that came the article in The New York Times in which the ambassador, as Vinocur put it, talked of his "scorn" for the Foreign Service; we did not have a backbone, we weren't courageous. The reaction was swift. The State Department issued a formal statement disavowing Galbraith's remarks. The ambassador received protests from the local chapter of AFSA. There was a lot of hand wringing and soul-searching. His DCM did not know which way to go; whether to side with the masses in saying this was uncalled for or continue to hang on with the ambassador.

The article provoked columns by Flora Lewis, the late esteemed op-ed columnist who lived in Paris. She took him to task.

I would never have imagined but individually Evan Galbraith, DCM Jack Maresca and Flora Lewis, none of whom was a shy character, none of whom ever had any lack of self confidence, all three separately asked me my point of view, my impression, my advice. What do you think I should say or do? After the local chapter of AFSA rose up, Galbraith asked me in so many words, did I make a mistake? He felt that he wasn't talking about physical courage as much as the willingness to challenge, speak truth to power.

Jack Maresca, who was offended by what he had said but was still the loyal DCM, was very uncertain. Maybe it was a tempest in a teapot. I thought some of it had to do with that earlier time with Grenada when we didn't fully support the ambassador going on TV to talk about that event.

Galbraith backtracked and said he didn't mean physical courage. He said he was misunderstood and I don't think he would have looked some of us in the eyes right there in the embassy and said you don't have courage. But it was in the back of his mind. It was a thought that he had, there's no question.

For some of us close to him whose lives he had made professionally interesting, it was hard to turn our backs on him. It was only a few months later that he left his position but I don't think it was necessarily linked to that.

From this same period, March, 1985, here's an example of the type of activity we had all the time. Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger came to Paris regularly and on this particular visit, we arranged for him to meet at the hotel where he was staying with Michael Tatu, one of the best known writers for Le Monde. I was very pleased the next day when there was a front page interview, Michael Tatu interviewing Weinberger and Weinberger putting his views on record.

You could say that anybody could do this. No French journalist is going to turn down an interview with the secretary of defense. Nevertheless, I was very pleased and it redounded to my credit that I was the go-between.

Weinberger had also agreed to do an interview with French TV. I don't remember the subject but it probably had to do with military hardware and during the interview, Weinberger was saying, whether he meant it or not, that the French had a great deal of technical prowess. Something like: "The French are very, very good in the field of technology, wonderful technical prowess. We don't always think of the French in that context but the French have a great deal of technical competence."

It was about at that point that the interviewer got a signal that a camera or the recording device wasn't working and we had to say to Mr. Weinberger, "I am sorry. We didn't get that. Would you mind?"

He said, "No problem." They rolled things again.

And off Weinberger went: "As I was saying, the French have enormous technical prowess and in the field of technology the French are leaders. The technical prowess of the French is unmatched." He didn't miss a beat. We were all smiling but I was a little tense for a moment. I thought he might stomp out of the room but he didn't. He knew it was in his interest to get his views on the record. I was always rather glad that on matters of policy, he was counterbalanced by Secretary Shultz but for an interview, Weinberger was much more interesting.

I mentioned singing in the church choir in Paris. Our rehearsals were on Wednesday night and I would walk from the embassy across the river to the American Church on the Left Bank. The timing was perfect for me. I regularly worked six days. Wednesday was a halfway point of the week. It was a true break from what I was doing. There were always Americans in town studying music so you never knew who was going to be there on a given night. There were always enough people for the tenor section that I didn't have to worry about being alone.

In addition to singing on Sunday morning, we did special concerts. In May of 1985, the Sacré Coeur church on Montmartre dedicated a new organ and our choir was invited to

be part of the celebration. We did some wonderful choral music including works by the French composer Louis Vierne. That opportunity brought balance and spiritual pleasure into my life.

Q: You'd been fortunate because of your obvious interest in cultural life and cultural values both in France and in Russia too.

BROWN: The difference was that in Moscow, it seemed more accessible. Tickets were virtually given to us. It was maybe physically a little closer to us. We lived outside town in Paris so I always had to remember that when the concert ended at 10:30 or 11 o'clock, I'd have a long train ride to where we lived but nevertheless, you are right. The cultural, musical opportunities in both cities were considerable and there was overlap too. Some of the same people you had seen in Moscow, you would see in Paris for one reason or another; either they emigrated or they were on the circuit. In both cities, music provided me a balance to the intense press work that I was doing.

Two and a half weeks after that Sacré Coeur concert, we got word that a TWA airplane (TWA 847) had been hijacked out of Athens and had been forced to land in Beirut. Jewish passengers on board were singled out. That was on a Friday. The plane ended up in Algiers where women and children were released before the plane went back to Beirut. Those freed hostages were brought to Paris and put in a hotel and the call went out that someone needed to be there with them.

I went to the hotel on Sunday. There was a lot of press interest and these people who didn't speak French needed to have someone with them. I spent the entire Sunday with them. I was more than a press attaché. We wished we could follow the details minute by minute but we couldn't. The French didn't have much TV news on Sunday. We watched a midday program but it had just had a little bit of information; then later in the day, we watched a TV program and I remember one of the ladies saying "oh, that's my husband." Whether or not that was the case, it was an emotional experience to be with those families that entire day while they waited for information. I did arrange for one or two of them who were willing to talk to the press.

Eventually the hostages were freed. Vice President Bush passed through Paris on his way to Germany to welcome the freed hostages and later, there was a reception at the ambassador's residence for them. I had the satisfaction of a lot of them thanking me for having spent that day with them. They didn't speak French and they appreciated me trying to keep them as well-informed as I could.

Sometimes you hear of a particular news event and you don't immediately think Paris but somehow no matter what it was or where it was, it often spilled over to Paris.

Q: What about German French relations? Did you get any feel for the press?

BROWN: I can't give you a quick answer about French-German relations. They were pretty good during those years. The process of post-war reconciliation was still underway.

Those were the times when the Germans were buying a lot of property in eastern France, particularly in Alsace, and you'd hear the French say if they'd only realized they could have bought that land in the 1910's and in the 1940s, they might have avoided two wars.

I talked before about the speech that Mitterrand gave on the SS-20 and Pershing modernization and the fact that he gave that speech in Germany was very important and of course, it endeared him to the U.S.

John Vinocur spent much of his career in Germany and then was reassigned to Paris. I asked him, "How are you enjoying being here in France after all the time you spent in Germany?"

He said, "Oh, I would rather be back in Germany. It is a much more interesting news environment there. They are going through a crisis."

I said, "But John, France has crises of all sorts. They've got economic crises, governmental crises, and the liver crisis ("crise de foie") to which they attribute to all their ailments."

He replied, "That's the point. The French always have a crisis so it is not news. When Germany has a crisis, then it is news." And that was why he wanted to be back there analyzing what was putting the self-confident Germans into a crisis mode at that time.

In July of 1985, Ambassador Galbraith left. He had been there for four years and despite bumps along the way, he and his wife had a large number of friends and were sent off with sincere best wishes. Within two days, there was a full page interview with him in Figaro in which he made some blatant comments about French internal affairs. Our chargé , Jack Maresca, found himself being called in to receive a protest about inadmissible statements about French internal affairs.

I remember thinking Jack is going to come back wringing his hands and wondering what am I going to do now? He came back basically laughing saying, "Look, we went through the ritual of their delivering the protest and me receiving it and that's it. That is the end of Galbraith's presence."

Q:Were these things that Galbraith had been stewing over?

BROWN: Interference in French internal affairs. He ran into the same trap early on with the communist minister of transportation, Fiterman. In the Figaro interview on the 17th of July, 1985, he said the French Communist Party should be outlawed and he said he was convinced the right would win upcoming parliamentary elections. He wasn't disagreeing with them on major foreign policy issues.

The irony was he spoke pretty good French and he was always uncomfortable calling himself a 'liberal' in French which meant more of a conservative to them. He could never tolerate anything that looked like socialist or public welfare programs so it might have been one of those issues.

Within days, we had Ambassador Joe M. Rodgers who didn't speak a word of French but had raised a lot of money for President Reagan's reelection in his home state of Tennessee. He and his wife Honey; very, very nice people.

I was very pleased when Jack Maresca, still the DCM, brought him down to the press office to look around. Jack described the press office as "the nerve center of the embassy" and said that we often knew about a news event before anyone else in the embassy. That was how news traveled at that time. We had the AFP and the AP tickers. Journalists would call our office before they would call anywhere else. I felt pride in him telling the ambassador we were the nerve center of the embassy.

Ambassador Rodgers did not want any give-and-take with the press. He was not going into that. If he knew some event would be image creation, that was fine, but he did not want to do what Ambassador Galbraith did, understandably.

But news kept happening. In late July, 1985, Rock Hudson, suffering from AIDS, came to Paris to seek care at the Pasteur Institute. There was a report that he could benefit from an experimental drug offering a cure for AIDS. It became a news event over the question of whether Mrs. Reagan had been involved and whether she had intervened to ask that he be given special attention. She had and eventually, I was allowed to say to the press that Mrs. Reagan was very concerned about the health of Rock Hudson and hoped that he would be able to get the best of treatment in France.

After he left on a charter 747, I was quoted by name in The New York Times saying that the French Defense Ministry had agreed to a request by Mr. Hudson for a transfer to a French military hospital "if his condition warrants it." It was just a one or two day story and Rock Hudson went back to California where he died. Mrs. Reagan's interest in the issue brought it a lot of attention and changed the way President Reagan looked at AIDS.

By 1985, I had an additional number of people working with me in the press office. They had expanded the responsibilities and given me additional staff. Some were Foreign Service officers, others were political appointees who were rather interesting characters. One was a guy named Danny Wattenberg. His father was Ben Wattenberg, the rather well known conservative writer. I don't remember much about Danny.

Then we had a young woman named Sandy Sidey. She had been working right out of college in the 1980 Reagan campaign and ended up with Larry Speakes in the White House press office. She was a good young Republican. Her dad was Hugh Sidey, well-known columnist for Time magazine. Sandy was a delightful person. She didn't ask for any special favors because her dad was Hugh Sidey or because she had worked with

Larry Speakes at the White House. She was quite willing to do all the grunt work of going through the AP or the AFP tickers or running upstairs to get the cables or working on transcripts. She was a real gem. And the French liked her very much.

I mentioned that Joe Rodgers didn't speak any French but one day in September of 1985, I went up to the ambassador's office and was told that he would soon be leaving to go back to the United States on an issue that was described as RITA Ptarmigan. This had to do with competition for a DOD contract on some battlefield communications technology and the French program was called RITA and the British had a competing program called Ptarmigan.

For some reason, the ambassador got it into his head that the French were not getting a fair shake back in Washington in the Defense Department and so he flew back to argue their case. This was a case where you could have had an ambassador who spoke perfect French and who knew Voltaire and all the great heroes of the Pantheon or you could have an ambassador who didn't speak any French at all but who was willing to go back and argue their case in Washington, to in effect to be the French representative in the DOD. They would obviously choose the latter.

I am not sure how the issue resolved itself but it was rather interesting that he decided this was an issue where he would get involved.

We are now in the summer of 1985. I had been in Paris four years, one year to go, and I went on home leave. That was the summer I shaved off my beard. I had had a beard for ten years. I came back feeling very self-conscious and people would say "you've lost weight" or nothing at all or "you were better with a beard."

I was back a very short time when I got a call saying Larry Speakes and company would like me to come back on a temporary assignment to work in the NSC in the Old Executive Office Building on the public diplomacy task force prior to the Geneva summit of 1985.

Recall the situation: Gorbachev has taken over in Moscow and is being touted a remarkable change from his predecessor. He is on the cover of Time magazine. He's a man who not only talks but he talks endlessly. He is now the great communicator. Ronald Reagan is running second. We have to do everything to make sure we get our message out especially with this summit meeting in Geneva scheduled for November of 1985.

I did go back for ten weeks as did Bud Korengold from USIS in London. I lived in a hotel for that entire period and endured awkward, strenuous working conditions. We had very little information technology. Word processors were hard to come by. I recall needing to research an issue. I went to the library in the Old Executive Office Building. It had a clanging, wrought-iron door and endless shelves and the librarian helped me locate a particular book. She pulled it off the shelf but before she handed it to me, she blew the dust off the top and I had to step aside to avoid the cloud of dust.

But the clumsiest aspect of it was simply maneuvering in that NSC bureaucracy and trying to move anything forward. One of the few people who could help us move a document forward was the president's NSC advisor for Soviet affairs, Jack Matlock, with whom I had worked with on several previous occasions. I didn't know it at that point but he was soon going to be my ambassador for three years in Moscow so all in all, it was a good experience.

Q: Did we trust Gorbachev or what was happening?

BROWN: It wasn't a matter of trust. No one at that time was talking about the end of the Soviet Union or the end of Communism. What had people frightened -- maybe that isn't the right word but what people couldn't cope with -- was that Gorbachev was a communicator and because he was a communicator, everyone was falling over him to get the interviews.

People were saying that Reagan had met his match and that the more effective communicator was in Moscow. Forget for a moment that Gorbachev didn't have any better story to tell. Their economy was still in shambles and everything else was going wrong but people were very concerned that by the Geneva summit, we would be out argued by Gorbachev. That is why they created this special staff in the NSC to focus on nothing but interviews that Reagan would give, the timing, what messages we wanted to get out. I was just a little part of this.

I think we were created by the White House press office but Larry Speakes was the one who was instrumental in Bud Korengold and me coming back. They put us in a huge, high-ceilinged room in the Old Executive Office Building along with a couple other people including my Foreign Service friend Gil Callaway.

The problem was we had responsibility but we didn't have any real authority. We couldn't make any final decisions. We could only pass papers forward and make recommendations. USIA people thought it was just great because they had all these ideas on how to get Reagan's' message out. Now, they had three people in the NSC they could turn to. We were inundated by USIA people saying "hey, can you pass on our ideas? Can you pass on our suggestions?" We'd say "yeah, sure. We'll try but we don't have any magic way of getting these things over to the White House" which was still focused on the domestic press. In their hearts, they may have been thinking about getting their message out to the world but on a day-to-day basis, they were still going to focus on the domestic press.

In the end, I went to Geneva on the White House press charter plane and worked out of the press center. Even on arrival, Mr. Wick was being told "oh, the Soviets have their press center up and operating. They are getting their message out. You guys are so far behind the curve. You are not getting it out." That was fairly easily dealt with by putting out a few American newsmakers. Bud McFarland was one of those who were doing a lot of the speaking for the White House at the press center in Geneva and in the end, it looked like unnecessary worries.

On the way back, we stopped in Brussels. Reagan did a quick NATO briefing and on the tarmac there was the first time I actually saw him as part of that assignment. This was the occasion when Reagan returned from Andrews and his helicopter landed on Capitol Hill and he went right before a joint session of congress to talk about his meetings with Gorbachev. Talk about stagecraft and drama. That was midweek.

A couple days later, I remarked to someone in the White House press office that I actually saw the president in Brussels. I had been back in Washington this whole time and I had never really seen him, which wasn't completely true. One day, I was in the White House because I did have access to the press office and was taking some piece of paper over and I realized there was a flurry coming in the other direction and I stood in one of these little stairwells with my back against the wall as a secret service man came by followed quickly by the President, the Vice President and James Baker. When I caught my breath, I realized that I had been that close to power.

But I told the guy at the White House I had hardly seen the president. He says, "Oh, really? We see him every day."

Not long after, I was told that I should come to the White House on Saturday to attend the President's Saturday radio address. Along with Bud Korengold, we were pre-positioned in the Oval Office in late morning when Reagan came in.

There is a myth that Reagan so revered the Oval Office that he never appeared there in anything other than a business suit. That is not true. At least on this particular day, November 23, 1985, he came in casual clothes he would wear around the ranch. He sat down at the desk. A woman gave him some quick advice and Reagan delivered his remarks live. He had a wristwatch and his wrist turned so he didn't have to turn his arm to see exactly the timing and he concluded his remarks. He commented about how he had gone two seconds over but it was that perfect showmanship.

Then somebody said we have a couple of guests here today. So he came over and shook our hands and we got our pictures taken. He did make some jocular remark about "I don't usually come to the Oval Office dressed like this." I responded "well, I don't usually wear a dark suit on Saturday but this is a special occasion." Anyway, I got my picture taken in the Oval Office with President Reagan. I have two photos – one formal pose and one laughing.

After that, I went back to Paris. People there thought I had flown the coop forever. I had been gone for ten weeks but I still had an interesting six months left in Paris.

On January 28, 1986, I was getting ready to go home when Monique came running into my office. They were showing on TV the explosion of the Challenger liftoff from Cape Kennedy. We all know that image. You might ask, "Well, what did that have to do with an assignment in Paris?" NASA had two overseas offices, one in Tokyo and one in Paris. So NASA had a full time representative at the embassy in Paris. The fellow there did not

speak French but he was willing to go on TV so the next day. I accompanied him to AN-2 for an interview about the Challenger and about the shuttle program. He didn't have any inside knowledge or information but the fact that he was a NASA representative gave him a certain cachet. I remember saying to him that I bet the shuttle doesn't fly again for several years. He was dubious. I think I was closer to being accurate in that case.

A couple of days later, there was a moving service at the American Cathedral on Avenue George V in Paris, honoring those who lost their lives in the Challenger explosion.

In mid-February of that year, 1986, there was a big flurry because Baby Doc had fled Haiti; he ended up on Lake Annecy in exile in France. There was a question about whether the French were going to ship him out, send him to the United States. For a couple of days, we handled a lot of press questions on that subject with very little guidance from Washington. In any case, they did not send him out. He stayed on.

Something I was able to do quite often was to invite French journalists to travel to the United States on IV programs, to be involved in newsmaker events at the embassy or to participate in NATO or U.S. military related activities. The aircraft carrier Eisenhower came into Monaco in June, 1982, right after the G-7 summit. We got to invite and accompany journalists on board.

In August, 1984, I was able to invite a small group of French journalists, both regional and national, to go aboard the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. We boarded a twin-engine C-2 in Toulon for its mail delivery to the ship and landed seated backward. We were greeted by Admiral Donnell and given full access to the entire ship. At night, we watched dramatic take-offs and landings. And the next morning, we were in the Captain's bridge as we docked in Toulon.

One month later, we had another newsmaker. Balloonist Joe Kittinger completed the first trans-Atlantic solo balloon flight. He crash landed in Italy and was hospitalized in Nice but he did his press encounters in Paris — at the Ambassador's residence.

Back to the military-related activities, in March, 1986, I arranged to take a handful of journalists to the north of Norway not far from where Norway has a common border with the Soviet Union. We would observe a NATO exercise called Anchor Express. I had a half dozen fellows rounded up to go when I got word that there had been a late season avalanche; 16 Norwegian soldiers on cross country skis had lost their lives in this avalanche in a place called Vassdalen.

If you extrapolate, 16 young men in Norway would be like 1,000 in the United States and to lose their lives on cross country skis where most Norwegians are as comfortable as anywhere was a major news event in Norway, a major confidence shaker. Despite this, we went. I went with these half dozen journalists all the way up to a place called Bardufoss, not far from where the accident had taken place. We had briefings on the NATO exercises and how NATO would be ready if there were any attack from the Soviet

Union but it was all overlaid by the nation in shock and in mourning at the loss of so many young lives in an accident.

Not long after that we had yet another visit from Secretary Shultz. The press spokesman was no longer John Hughes, who I found to be the steadiest and the easiest to work with. Now it was Bernard Kalb, brother of Marvin Kalb, both of them well known journalists from network news. Bernie Kalb didn't have his mind very much on news or on Secretary Shultz. The first thing we did was to head out to one of his favorite art dealers on the Faubourg St. Honoré, someone he knew well and did business with. We spent the morning with that person. It was a different approach to the job than what I found with John Hughes.

On April 15 of that year, 1986, the U.S. bombed Libya in retaliation for the nightclub bombing in Berlin. Tensions had been ratcheting up. There was all sorts of talk about how we might retaliate against Libya but when the news came through, I got an early morning call. We received a lot of press questions, the biggest one being whether the French granted over flight rights? No. Did that affect the mission? Yes, it meant the U.S. had to fly much longer.

This was not looked upon kindly. Not only did it make the mission much more difficult but you had to fly much farther, refueling, a question of the accuracy of your raid and it just seemed to be saying we are not in this together. I think the French were calculating whether they risked more by angering the United States or by angering some of the radical countries.

Of course, you went from there to a whole series of additional questions: Did the United States request over flight? What was the nature of the request? What was the nature of the response? And we were not able to go into any detail on that because we didn't have the information. This was a low point during my time in France in U.S./French relations.

There were ramifications on a personal level. Our daughter Christine was flying back to the United States two days later on TWA to look at colleges and Bobbi was very, very nervous. She went to the airport to put her on the airplane and came back saying she had never seen so much security. That reassured her.

By now, everyone who worked at the embassy had ID badges. When I arrived in Paris in 1981, virtually anyone could walk in but now we had badges. It was about that time, the bombing of Libya, that the word went down to the Marines at the entrance to the embassy that even if a Marine knew you, even if he'd seen you every day for the last six months, he couldn't take that for granted. He had to look at your badge, eyeball you and make sure you really were the person on that badge.

The result of that was there was quickly a long line of Americans and French out in front of the embassy and we remarked that if the Libyans ever wanted to retaliate, we had lined up very nicely for them. They could come by and pick us off one by one. That policy got turned around fairly quickly.

It was during that time that in Le Monde, there was an article headlined "*l'Inquietude des Americains a Paris*," worries and concerns among the Americans in Paris. I had been authorized to talk to a correspondent at Le Monde and to say that yes, we were concerned about security but that we were going about business as usual, that we were not being deterred. We had taken certain measures that we wouldn't detail. I didn't know what those were except we were always told to vary your route to work. Don't come to work via the same route or at the same time every day, a policy I violated everyday because I came in from outside of town. That article in Le Monde caught the attention of a lot of people at the time, in part of this whole context of Libya and terrorism.

Q: Were you picking up discomfort with Islam coming out of Africa?

BROWN: It wasn't a major issue then, no. I referred to the hijacked plane between Athens and Beirut but nobody was talking al-Qaeda. Nobody was talking about radicalized Muslim youth in urban settings in Europe, that kind of thing. That wasn't a preoccupation. Talk was more focused on the PLO or on people like Gaddafi. No one could even tell you where Yemen was on a map. Iran was of course under the same leadership it is today.

Q: Was there any discussion about the absorption of Algerian and Moroccan youth? Later it became a huge problem.

BROWN: Right. Of course, though those are two totally different situations for the French; the Algerians and the Moroccans. People were aware you had these increasingly large numbers of Arab youth in the suburbs of Paris and in other cities and that it was a potential problem but it wasn't yet associated in my mind with terrorism.

There had been a bombing on the rue Marbeuf in the Jewish quarter early in the 1980's but that was not necessarily linked to a group like al-Qaeda or to radicalized Muslim youth. I am not even sure who they eventually determined was behind that.

So there was concern and the embassy was tightening up and there was talk about putting bombproof devices on the wall that was very close to the street but still it wasn't the conversation we had later about radicalized Islam. It seemed to be more a case of isolated incidents and a lot more associated with Lebanon than with Algeria or Morocco.

Q: Did you get any information or feedback from our attachés concerning relations between the American military and the French military?

BROWN: They were good. I think Weinberger in his many visits always had very professional relations with the French minister of defense.

If there were policy disagreements, they were at a different level but on a pure military to military level I think they were very good and very professional.

Q: Did you get a feel for the French political class? I used to watch these people on TV. You didn't see a single dark face in that group and not many women.

BROWN: That's true and also true in terms of the people doing their television news coverage. The term "French political class" is appropriate. Most of the French political leaders came out of the same schooling, the same elite and they loved debates. As vigorous as the debates could be, I would imagine they knew each other very well. This class was a rather small group. These televised debates would draw large audiences that I think in America would draw very small audiences. They had frequent elections. The presidential elections were every seven years. Mitterrand had been elected in '81 and wasn't going to be up for reelection until 1988 after we left. But there were frequent parliamentary elections and elections for local offices. And for most of it, you had divided government.

Q: Did you find yourself sitting around the table with the French and getting into highly intellectual discussions, not the sort of thing we would have in an American setting?

BROWN: Yes, but for me, this did not involve sitting around the dinner table. It was lunches with French journalists. Most of the French journalists I dealt with were pragmatic. They were looking for a good story. They were looking for a good interview. They were hoping this lunch would pay off in being invited to something we were putting on.

But there were a few where the conversations were not so much that, where the French person would do most of the talking. All I would have to do was throw out a little question and the guy — and it was usually a guy — would go on at great length. I remember some of the names: Paul-Marie de la Gorce of Figaro or Henri de Kergorlay for example. The names sounded as august as their ideas. These were primarily idea people. They weren't interested in the next interview or getting a short answer to a short story. In fact, they seemed more interested in conveying information to me. I didn't find them all that interesting. I sometimes found myself out of their league and I'd look at my watch and think I need to get back to those phone calls in the office.

Let me mention another couple of other quick memories of my Paris years.

Ambassador Rodgers was not interested in hard news interviews but 1986 happened to be the bicentennial of the French gift of the Statue of Liberty so he wanted to do anything that was Statue of Liberty related. In fact, he put out some mandate that he wanted a Statue of Liberty event every day.

I was involved in the mother of all Statue of Liberty events. It led to a three-day trip with Ambassador and Mrs. Rodgers to Alsace Lorraine where Bartholdi, the Statue of Liberty sculptor, came from. It went way beyond what I had initially expected. We flew in the Minister of Defense's plane and for three days, we traveled along the wine road through Epinal, Luneville, Baccarat, Colmar and Mittelbergheim with the ambassador being feted with parades, lunches, dinners and gifts in each town.

I had never eaten so much quality food -- six major meals in three days -- with each town vying to outdo the last one. I went along, among other reasons, to interpret for Mrs. Rodgers. Somebody else did the interpreting for the ambassador. It was what he liked, flying the flag, saluting the French, looking back at our long historical ties. He came back very, very satisfied.

On my return to Paris, I found a Superior Honor Award awaiting me for my pre-Geneva work. A few days later, with complimentary tickets from NBC, I went to Roland Garros to watch some of the French tennis open. I still have the seat cushions that I bought. It all brings back wonderful memories.

One of our last trips was to Annecy to visit our older daughter Sarah, a Tufts University student, who was studying at a Tufts' summer program at Talloires on Lake Annecy. She was staying with a wonderful French family who lived in Veyrier-du-Lac. I recall visiting them, looking down at the lake and eating more wonderful French food.

Soon after, on the 11th of July, 1986, I ended my five years in Paris.

For me, press attaché was the best job I could have had in that embassy. Maybe we were not deep into every issue but we were across the board, clued in or somehow involved in virtually every issue. I had wonderful colleagues, both American and French.

Looking back, I recall that early on, Bobbi was at a loss in Paris; she felt uprooted and part of the reason she felt uprooted was that after three years in Moscow, she really missed the place. She missed our wonderful friends back there, particularly those refusenik friends whose fate seemed to hang in the balance and the only way to cure that was for her to go back. She went back in February, 1982, after we had been in Paris less than a year, stayed with her Russian friends for ten days. That was really very, very helpful to her psychologically and otherwise. Then we got to the point where we could make phone calls back and forth and that helped a lot.

We also became very involved, she more than I, in a group that called themselves the Committee of 15. They were French people who were concerned about Russian Jews who were unable to emigrate; they picked 15 families. They would meet regularly and try to put pressure on the Soviets to let these people go. Our friends were added to the Committee of 15, even though they didn't change the name. That didn't matter. It was another way of staying in touch psychologically, very important for Bobbi.

By the summer of 1985, I had been reassigned as PAO Moscow but the position wouldn't come open until the summer of 1987. My friend Ray Benson went out as PAO in 1983 for a four-year assignment and wouldn't be coming home until 1987. So the merry go round had come all the way around. In 1977, we went to the Army Russian Institute in Garmisch for a year of additional Russian language training before Moscow. And now, we would go back to Garmisch in 1986 for a year of brush up Russian which was going to be very, very helpful before another three year tour in Moscow.

Q: Today is the 16th of May, 2012 interview with Phil Brown. Where did we leave off, Phil?

BROWN: I had just completed my five-year assignment in Paris as press attaché. I should correct myself and say "we" because I always emphasize that this was a family affair. Part way through the assignment to Paris, in 1983, the question of returning to Moscow came up. I didn't want to do that. I knew that was too soon.

But throughout our years in Paris, Bobbi said to me in so many words "if you want to go back (to Moscow) let's do it now. I don't want to go back to the States, get settled, be into something and then have to pack up and go overseas." So things worked out. Normally after nine years, I would have been due for a return to the United States but I was assigned as public affairs officer at Embassy Moscow beginning summer of 1987.

And with a year between the end of my Paris assignment and the beginning of the Moscow assignment, it was arranged for me to go back to the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch.

So the summer of 1986, came back to Washington before going on home leave. I tested in French at FSI and was pleased to get a 4/4+ which I thought was deserved. My French was quite good at the time. I also had consultations. One of the first things I noticed was that when you are serving in Paris, everybody in official Washington knows about France or thinks they do.

But very few people knew about the Soviet Union so my consultations over two or three days even before I went back to Moscow were extensive. All sorts of people wanted to talk to the person who was going out to Moscow in another year and I realized that would be the case throughout my Moscow years.

I had been involved in the Geneva summit of 1985 and people obviously could see there was a change. The handwriting was on the wall. We were going to have opportunities in the Soviet Union we had never had before. I don't think we fully realized it but people were gearing up and although it was still a year before I would go out to replace Ray Benson, people wanted to get their oar in and say when you are there we want to work with you on books or exhibits.

Even at that time, we were hearing that the budget crunch was serious. I observed then and throughout the time I was in Moscow, if you look at it in the global sense, USIA was devoting a lot of resources to activities related to the Soviet Union: the Voice of America in Russian and I am not sure how many other languages; the exhibits program, which was personnel-intensive, sending all these young Americans out with the exhibit as it traveled around the Soviet Union; America magazine had a whole staff that published a monthly magazine, including printing and distribution and one or two other activities like performing arts or books that involved resources.

I am not sure whether it existed at that time, in 1986, or whether it came a little later but they actually created an entire office, D/R, that was Russia-related and reporting to the director. It was outside the area office and outside the other parts of USIA and focused solely on programs for Russia.

Where we really didn't have a lot of resources were what we called at that time the GOE, the budget at the post. We had a fairly large number of people in Moscow, a dozen or so assigned to Moscow and Leningrad with all the costs involved in sending people overseas, but we didn't have a large discretionary budget at the post. I am sure I heard about that in 1986 a year before I went to Moscow.

Garmisch, Germany (1986-1987)

But I'm getting ahead of myself because I still had this year in Garmisch before I went out.

At the end of home leave, I flew back to Paris and I have a special note in my journal; as we rolled down the runway at Dulles Airport, I had this rather exuberant feeling. This was really exciting. The Foreign Service was good to me. Here I was heading off on yet another adventure.

As I look back on it, I was extremely fortunate. I was overseas for 13 years in a row from 1977 to 1990. As a consequence I am ignorant of American cultural trends between those years. Every time I do a crossword puzzle and it refers to pop culture of the 1980s, I am really out of it but I served my country overseas during an extremely interesting period.

I flew to Paris, picked up our car in St. Germain-en-Laye, said goodbye again to my friends in the press office and drove to Munich. Munich was the consulate that would handle administrative affairs.

Garmisch was a very different experience this time. In 1977, it was the first time I had ever lived in Europe and I was a newcomer to Europe. The first time was with family, two young children. This time, we had no children with us. Our daughters were in college — a freshman at Bryn Mawr and a junior at Tufts. No Tar; the dog we had taken on so many walks through the beauties of Garmisch, we had buried in our backyard in Paris.

The second time, it was just the two of us. In Paris, Bobbi had gotten into the English language program at the embassy; she was teaching English as a second language to French locals so we were both very busy. Christine was a senior in high school with a lot of French boyfriends, ski trips and other activities.

One night the phone rang and both of us ran to answer because we were so accustomed in Paris to the phone ringing all the time; now we were in Garmisch and things seemed so

quiet. I didn't have a press attaché job. Bobbi didn't have a teaching job at the embassy and our daughters weren't with us.

We did not live in Breitenau, that little enclave in Garmisch where the most Americans lived. We were living on the economy on Hauptstrasse, the main street of town. It was still a beautiful town but Hauptstrasse, across from a car dealership, was a noisy place. So that was different.

The other thing that was different was I now had spent the last eight years in major embassies, including three years in Moscow, which gave me certain credentials. People were interested in talking to someone who had actually had real life professional experience in Moscow.

I learned also somewhat to my embarrassment that my grade, whatever it was then, was the equivalent in the army to a brigadier general; I had to whisper that. I didn't want special treatment. The first time around, my friends jocularly called me colonel because I had some equivalent rank. But I did not want people running around calling me general. They did know I had a relatively high Foreign Service rank and there were certain perks that went with that.

As far as the academic program, I was pretty much invited to write my own ticket. I didn't have to go to any particular classes. I didn't have to take certain exams. The teaching staff at Garmisch had changed in the almost ten years since I had gone there the first time. In 1977, many of the people teaching there were the original cadre who had been recruited as displaced persons after the war in the Munich area, in Bavaria. They were then quite elderly.

By 1986, very few if any of them remained and a new group of people had come in. Some of these people were recent émigrés from the Soviet Union. They brought a newer, younger outlook on things although, since most of them were émigrés, in some cases forced émigrés, it was still a very unsympathetic approach to the Soviet Union. They were yet to be convinced that Gorbachev meant anything.

I was able pretty much to pick not just courses but to have one-on-one work with individual staff members. Much of that concentrated on conversation, reading the press and preparing myself for the Moscow assignment.

There was nevertheless a great deal of continuity from the first time. One cannot go to Garmisch without being impressed by the natural beauty of the area. We did endless hiking and skiing (I bought a season pass) and took full advantage of the cultural life. Bobbi got into scuba diving and took her test to become a certified scuba diver in a lake in Bavaria in the dead of the winter. She passed.

It was also an opportunity to meet some people with relatively prominent names at the time. Vladimir Voinovich was a writer, a satirist who had come out. I am not sure if voluntarily or if he had been expelled. He came to the institute. We attended his lecture

and got to know him and his wife quite well. They were living in the Munich area and this was an opportunity to get to know some of the creative intelligentsia.

Also Americans. Murray Feshbach, who worked for the Census Bureau and was an expert on Soviet demographics, visited. He was typical type of the Americans who came out to lecture. We could take full advantage of that conversation.

We also went as an institute from time to time to RFE/RL headquarters in Munich. In addition to broadcasting in many languages, they had a large research wing and they gave periodic lectures and seminars on Soviet matters. So all in all, it was an opportunity to prepare both language and substantively.

Against the backdrop of this comfortable life in Garmisch, studying Russian and then going out skiing and hiking and coming back and having a conversation with someone in Russian, we were very conscious of news from the Soviet Union.

One of the first things that occurred after my arrival in Garmisch was the arrest in the Soviet Union of Nicholas Daniloff of U.S. News and World Report. Nick Daniloff, whose ancestry was Russian, was picked out for some reason in a tit-for-tat retaliatory way, arrested, held by the KGB and delivered to the American Embassy. There is a whole story; Nick has written a book on it so I won't go into that, but that was a real damper. Just when you think relations were improving, post Geneva summit, you have the arrest of Nick Daniloff; it's pretty disconcerting.

No sooner did that news come across than one day the phone rang and it was the consulate in Munich. The person calling me said, "Have you heard the news?"

I can remember to this day; my knees buckled. Had I heard the news? No, what? The news was that Reagan and Gorbachev would be meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland. That was September 30. I had been there barely a month and the word was that USIA had checked it out with the White House and sure, Larry Speakes would love to have Phil Brown go to Reykjavik to help out with the press.

It was late at night. I said, "If you guys can buy the ticket, I will get myself to Munich." I did and the next day I was in Munich. I flew to Copenhagen and from Copenhagen on to Reykjavik. I was there before any other visiting American. I reported to the PAO who had no idea what to anticipate.

For a little while after the first White House advance team arrived, I was a part of that small group. I went out to a site called Hofdi House which was eventually chosen for the site of the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting. It was a White House decision that the Soviets went along with. They thought it had character. It was the kind of place that would be remembered much more than an office building or some other facility.

So for two weeks, from October 1 through 15, I was in Reykjavik. Because hotel space was at a premium with all these people coming in, I ended up staying with an Icelandic

family which was in itself an opportunity. Ottar Halldorsson was a professor at the university with a wife and two children. At the end of the day, I would often go back to the house and talk to them about what I had experienced in Iceland that day. One morning, I was walking with Mr. Halldorsson when he pointed to a passing car. He noted that the woman driver was Iceland's President Finnbogadottir, driving herself to work.

(Note: In 2020, Bobbi and I visited Iceland and went to the Halldorsson home. Mr. Halldorsson had died but his son and daughter and their spouses and Mrs. Halldorsson graciously received us. Mrs. Halldorsson even showed me her guest book with my signature from 1986.)

Director Wick came out and I was assigned to brief him particularly on Soviet activities, what they were doing in preparation. I also set up a meeting between Larry Speakes and his Soviet counterpart, Gennady Gerasimov, and briefed Speakes on what to expect.

As an aside, there was a fellow on the White House press staff named Dale Petroskey. Like me, Dale was an avid baseball fan. This was the end of the baseball season. We went one night to one of the American TV network trailers and in the wee hours of the morning, we watched the Red Sox-Mets World Series game. Dale went on to become director of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

What the Reykjavik summit will ultimately be remembered for was the Sunday negotiation between Reagan and Gorbachev. Gorbachev made an extraordinary proposal on arms control, getting rid of all nuclear weapons. Reagan went back and forth.

I have this distinct memory of waiting with this very large press corps, particularly with the guys from Newsweek and Time, as they calculated how much it was costing per hour to hold the magazine cover open. They would normally go to bed and print on Sunday but they were keeping it open for this great news that never came. What was going to happen? Was this going to be the big breakthrough on arms control? George Shultz came out of the meeting looking grim. His press conference put a damper on this. The Soviets had made a proposal we could not accept.

I stayed for an extra day on my own and took a nine-hour bus tour of the island. That was my Reykjavik experience. It did wonders for my bona fides back in Garmisch. I was invited to give a lecture and did so one night at the institute to a rather large audience. I began with a few words in Russian but since the audience included spouses and because I simply could not do the entire lecture in Russian, I went into English. The title was "Soviet and American Approaches to Public Diplomacy: Personal Impressions of a Press Office Spear Carrier," which is what I was. I was just one little guy there on the ground but I did have the first-hand experience.

So the Daniloff arrest was a downer and Reykjavik, despite the lack of a breakthrough, was an up. Within days, there was an announcement of reciprocal expulsions of Soviet diplomats from the United States and American diplomats from the Soviet Union. Since they had so many more diplomats in the U.S. than we had there, the Soviets also

withdrew all of the Foreign Service national employees from our missions so that there would be similar numbers. We had these precise numbers of people at the embassies in Moscow and Washington and the consulates in Leningrad and San Francisco.

While some people thought it was great and cheered for it, I felt depressed. I remember seeing a picture in the Herald Tribune of the ambassador's wife, Donna Hartman, serving at a reception at Spaso House. Associated with it was this bravado, "oh, we can get by without foreign service national employees. We really didn't need them anyway. They are just a bunch of spies; cost us a lot of money."

That was not my feeling at all. I knew that Foreign Service national employees are vital to the way USIS operates. We operated everywhere in a very public situation so our foreign service nationals didn't have access to classified information. It depressed me.

In the midst of all this, we heard about Sergeant Lonetree, the Marine guard who had allegedly allowed Russians into the embassy and sold secrets to the Russians about the embassy design. There are books on this subject. It led to the withdrawal of Soviet laborers from the new office building

Another facet of life during that year in Garmisch was travel. One is always impressed by the resources that the army has. In September, before I went to Reykjavik, they put together an observation trip to Yugoslavia. I don't recall if they called it going behind the Iron Curtain but at least you were going to a communist country to see what life is like.

So we took off by bus for ten days. We went down to Bled, Maslenica, Split, Dubrovnik, Sveti Stefan, Sarajevo and Zagreb through what was then Yugoslavia -- what is today Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Even today, it is hard to believe what happened there. At that time, in 1987, if anyone had told you that in less than ten years, there would be a brutal civil war and that places like Sarajevo and Mostar would be in the news for the death and destruction, it would have been hard to believe. This was September and we were going down the coast of Croatia amidst all the vacationers. It was idyllic.

In December, we took a trip to East Germany that wasn't idyllic at all. We went through some grimy little towns but there were also cities that were full of history. We were breathing in the coal dust. It was an eye-opener, a learning experience. Our itinerary included Eisenach, Erfurt, Weimar, Leipzig, Wittenburg, Torgau, Dresden and Meissen.

During that trip, I spent a lot of time with Captain Peter Huchthausen, a Navy captain who was himself en route to an assignment in Moscow. We shared a lot of cultural interests -- literary, artistic, musical – and we found opportunities to visit some of the great art galleries and hear some of the music that was available.

Most memorable was a trip that Bobbi and I took in April, 1987. I went down to Munich on Good Friday and heard a performance of Bach's St. John Passion. Bobbi met me and

we took the train from Munich to Leipzig and another train from Leipzig to Dresden where we rented a car. We went out to a place that a lot of people in Germany had never heard of called Herrnhut, near the border, close to where East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland come together.

This was a really important trip for Bobbi because this is where the Unitas Fratrum, the unity of the brotherhood, has its roots. Bobbi is a Moravian, born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which is one of the two cities in the United States along with Salem, North Carolina, where the Moravians have their largest presence. They came from Herrnhut. Bobbi is descended from Nicholas von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians. And this is where it all began for the Moravians in the United States.

On Easter morning, before the sun had even come up, we were awakened by the sound of the brass choir and on foot, we went to the cemetery to hear the brass choir play. It was a very moving experience for both of us, so unlike anything else we associated with East Germany at the time. It was a truly spiritual experience. We met the bishop and stayed with people there, Johannes and Jutte Kluge. We went back later after the collapse of East Germany. The old East German cars had been replaced by Mercedes and the roads had been paved but Herrnhut maintained its significance.

We retraced our steps back to Dresden and to Leipzig and as we waited on the train platform to go from Leipzig to Munich, there were huge crowds of people. I don't remember what we were carrying in the way of suitcases but we could barely get onto the train standing, let alone find a place to sit. There were large numbers of young East German punks with their wild hairdos and their music and their rather obscene language and behavior. I thought they don't have absolute control over what's going on in this country, that's for sure. These kids got off at various spots along the way. Finally we got a place to sit but the contrast between what we had experienced on Easter morning in Herrnhut and the train that Monday night was rather shocking.

In June, USARI put together a three-week, multi-country trip through the Balkans that took us to in a big circle to Ljubljana, Belgrade, Nis, Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bucharest, Brasov, Cluj, Budapest and Vienna. Again, it was an opportunity for these intelligence officers to observe life in Eastern Europe. It was more substantive than the September trip to Yugoslavia which went down the coast. In this case, we saw Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the ethnic diversity. We had briefings by embassy officials, including one in Sofia by a USIA officer, Jocelyne Green, that made me very proud. We saw poor areas and we saw some that looked quite well to do. It was a wonderful opportunity. My traveling companion was one of the USARI faculty, Jacob Hentov.

At the end of that trip, I came back to Washington. A year earlier, I tested in French and had a 4/4+ and felt really confident; this time I tested Russian. They came out and said you are right on the cusp. Would you mind taking a little more test? And so I went through another test. I think I was tested for close to three hours but finally came out with a 4/4 which was probably generous. My Russian was very good. I was able to do business

in Russian but I also knew my limits and that would always be on my mind as I went back to the Soviet Union.

Moscow, USSR (1987-1990)

Q: Today is the 22nd of May, 2012 with Phil Brown. You went to the Soviet Union from when to when?

BROWN: My first tour was 1978 to 1981. So this was the summer of 1987.

We packed, drove down to Florence where we spent a couple nights visiting our daughter Christine, who was on a summer program. From Florence we drove in a highly choreographed trip back to Garmisch and on to Lubeck. We saw friends there, made a side trip to the island of Fohr in the North Sea to visit a friend of Bobbi's and then took a boat from Travemunde in Germany to Helsinki.It was mid-summer, a lot of daylight in the summer. We then drove from Helsinki and crossed the border and with that, we were back in the Soviet Union. It was symbolically meaningful for us returning to the Soviet Union

We went on to Leningrad and spent two nights there, meeting with people at the consulate. There was a branch public affairs officer in Leningrad and an assistant branch public affairs officer, a young fellow named Ian Kelly, who was there with his wife and two small children. It wasn't too long after that that Ian was transferred to Moscow and became a key member of my staff there. Ian Kelly went on to be the ambassador in Vienna to CSCE and after that to Georgia. It didn't take much brain power early on to see that Ian was a rising star.

Then we drove from Leningrad to Moscow. I remember stopping along the road where a lady was selling flowers. We had a little chat with her, told her we were diplomats, how astounded she was. She was of a certain age and kept saying to us "no more war, no more war" in Russian. It was the typical spontaneous emotion that came from Russians out in the villages.

And late on a Friday afternoon, July 17, 1987, as was my design, we got to the embassy in Moscow where we would begin our three years back in the Soviet Union. I wanted to get there on the weekend so I didn't have to go to work the next day. I would get in the swing of things but not right in the office.

One of the members of the P&C staff came down and saw me because I had called to say I was there. She thought I was one of the contract employees that had been hired to replace the Foreign Service nationals. She was very apologetic.

Thus we would begin our second three-year assignment in Moscow, 1987 to 1990.

An issue for Bobbi and me during our year in Garmisch as we went through the various ups and downs in relations with the Soviet Union was where we wanted to live. The first

time, we lived in a 14-story Soviet apartment building, quite a long drive from the embassy. The question the second time was whether we would live on the new embassy compound, the NEC, or in a similar situation to the first time.

As it turned out, we would live in a very nice, three-story townhouse on the compound; it worked out extremely well. I was within easy walking distance of my office. Our townhouse had extra bedrooms and it was often more convenient to house Washington visitors with us than to put them in a hotel. And most importantly, it allowed us to do representational entertaining.

We were literally a stone's throw from the new office building, the NOB. But because of the Lonetree scandal and the alleged spying, it was pretty obvious we were not going to be working in the new building, which was being taken apart, piece by piece, to try to find the microphones. Right outside our bedroom, they were doing constant work of some sort, looking for microphones in what should have been a modern new office building. And the work would go on all night with noise and bright lights.
This was frustrating, even maddening.

For our work, we were going to be consigned to the wretched old converted apartment building up on the Ring Road for all three years, terrible working conditions.

But the compound did include the snack bar, the school, an auditorium, a garage, apartments and the townhouses, much better living arrangements. On the first assignment, we were happy to be away from the embassy in a Soviet apartment building. This time it was much to my advantage to be within walking distance of my office and to have a townhouse where I could invite visitors to stay.

By now we had a young American woman, Sara Fenander, living with us. We called her a nanny but she wasn't there to take care of small children. She was there to help us out with representational events. I'll talk more about her later.

The big question now was how we would get Soviets to our townhouse for representational events. Things had so totally turned around. It used to be you had to escort Soviets into your apartment building past their militia man. Now it seemed I was going to have to check with American security if I wanted to bring Russians onto the compound. The Soviet militia would let them come in but was I going to be violating rules, our own security rules?

Fortunately it wasn't a long distance from the gate to our front door and we were able to escort people in pretty easily.

The question people always ask is always "how was it different, how did it compare?" It is a daunting task to try to answer that question. The first three-year assignment was full of activities, full of memories. The second was even more so. It was the nature of the

times and it was the activity level imposed on us. I don't have a simple checklist of items to compare.

Early on, we went with some friends to a restaurant (which wasn't something you did very often during our first tour) but by 1987, little restaurants called "coops" were opening. At the end of the meal, we went to Red Square and there was a demonstration by Crimean Tatars. Not a violent demonstration but people were being allowed to protest. That was something we had never seen before; a protest of any sort let alone on Red Square. It set the tone and for three years and in varying ways, frequently at the embassy staff meeting the next morning, you or someone else would say "you can't believe what I saw, what I read, the performance I went to, the conversation I heard." It was a transformative period, no question about it.

This was especially true for someone with the perspective of ten years earlier and who saw people harassed and arrested. By the time we returned in 1987, André Sakharov had returned from internal exile in Gorky. He was back in Moscow. If you didn't have perspective, things probably still looked pretty grim physically. Moscow was still a pretty dirty city; people lined up for food. The newspapers all printed the same articles, especially about political subjects. Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were jammed. People did not have the freedom to travel.

We had wonderful Jewish refusenik friends whom we were very close to on our first tour. They were still there waiting and their prospects for emigrating seemed little better in 1987 than they did in 1981 when we had last seen them. Their situation was pretty much the same it had always been. Yuri Zieman was still working as a janitor at a maternity hospital, hired just because they needed those kinds of people and his wife Tanya was teaching English at home. Their younger daughter Vera, whom we had known as a very small girl, was now 11 years old. We quickly set about pushing their case. We had a lot of friends in the press corps and we would say to them, "Would you like to meet an interesting Jewish refusenik family?"

One woman in particular, Ann Blackman who worked for Time magazine, reported regularly on them. Her husband, Mike Putzel, was bureau chief for the Associated Press. Ann did a lot of stories with these particular friends. It was a year later, right after the Reagan visit, that they received permission to emigrate.

So I use the old cliché about glass half full, glass half empty. It depended a little bit upon what you were comparing it to; for the most part, right from the beginning, the comparisons that we made were "wow, gee. Something has really changed here. Things are changing."

I will say right away if anyone ever tells you that he or she knew at that point that the Soviet Union's days were numbered and that in four years the Soviet Union would exist no longer, ask them to show you where they put that down in writing in 1987.

Q: You are the public affairs officer. What did you see as your priorities or opportunities at the time of your arrival?

BROWN: Let me go to one little detail here. Moscow was the only place in the Foreign Service world where we didn't use the term USIS, U.S. Information Service. We referred to the section as press and culture or P&C, with the cultural section down and the press section up on the seventh floor. Hence P&C Up and P&C Down. I was the PAO. My official title was Counselor of Embassy for Press and Cultural Affairs. It translated easily into Russian. I had responsibility for both the press/information operations and the cultural activities.

I replaced Ray Benson. Ray had had two four-year tours as public affairs officer. One of the last big activities on Ray's watch was a visit by Charles Wick, USIA director. This was symbolic of what was happening.

Mr. Wick had called on many people in the Soviet hierarchy, in government, radio and television and the rest. Back in Washington, he had written follow up letters -- perhaps a dozen of them -- and now action had to be taken on those follow up letters.

So one major part of my assignment was following up and implementing the ideas in Mr. Wick's letters. We were working on those letters for much of the time that Mr. Wick was still in office.

For another, I was working for Jack Matlock. Ambassador Matlock had been back for about a year. He saw the enormous opportunities and he was a demanding taskmaster. He had his own agenda so I had Mr. Wick's letters and Ambassador Matlock's agenda. Matlock wanted, for example, to set up a monthly lecture at Spaso House. This would involve bringing a noted figure from Washington, having that person lecture around a dinner.

Keep in mind that we were doing all of this without any Foreign Service nationals. They had all been withdrawn and they were only gradually being replaced by contractors under the title Pacific Architect and Engineers, PAE. We had none in our operation. Even physically delivering Mr. Wick's letters was done by hand by an American foreign service officer.

I had previously been press attaché. I determined that I was not going to be a super press attaché. I had enjoyed that job very much in both Moscow and Paris but I was going to let the information officer/press attaché do that job and not constantly look over his shoulder. The model for me was Paris. When I went there as press attaché, the PAO was Jack Hedges and Jack in a previous assignment had been press attaché. I very much appreciated that he let me do the job rather than looking over my shoulder all the time.

Another overriding factor was that USIA had created a special office, D/R, which reported directly to the director on Russia. It was headed by a fellow named Greg Guroff. Greg had service in Moscow as cultural affairs officer and he had his own agenda, his

own programs that he was pushing in addition to those that normally came out of USIA -- exhibits, America magazine, speakers, cultural exchanges, IV program.

So we had an unending list of assignments. This was 1987. That year, Gorbachev would go to Washington and in 1988 Reagan would come to Moscow. A presidential visit, especially given my familiarity with the White House press office and the fact that they knew me, was also going to be very time consuming.

We not only had a presidential visit but just about anybody and everybody in Washington wanted to come to Moscow to see what was going on; not only government officials but people in the private sector as well. So we had an unending stream of prominent personalities.

An example of the expanding area of activity was something called the Chautauqua exchange. This had begun in Jurmala, Latvia a couple of years earlier as a meeting of citizens from both countries. It was stimulated by the program in Chautauqua, New York. It was blossoming and was going to become an annual affair.

I had been back in Moscow less than two months when I returned to the U.S. with a huge Soviet delegation to Chautauqua for the meeting there. Some very experienced Soviet hands in the embassy questioned our involvement. “Do you really want to get that close? Remember, these are still Soviets, still Communist Party members.” I argued that it was an opportunity I should not miss to accompany a cross-section of 250 Soviets going to the United States on a charter flight. So I did. I went back with them. So did Rebecca Matlock, the ambassador’s wife.

We flew on a charter flight -- a Soviet-built Ilyushin-86 aircraft — from Moscow to Shannon, Ireland. You refuel, you fly from Shannon to Gander, Newfoundland and you refuel and you fly from there to New York City. By the time we arrived, some of the Soviets were not just tired; they were looped.

We were hosted that very evening at the apartment of George Soros on the Upper East Side of New York. We were a pretty tired group but I went. There must have been 200 people, more than even George Soros’ apartment could comfortably accommodate. I was seated at a table for theater people including some Russian actors and Americans such as Colleen Dewhurst and the wife of Jason Robards.

After a full day in New York City, where I was joined by both of my daughters, we went to Chautauqua for five days of meetings – ABC did its “Good Morning America” show live from Chautauqua -- and then on to Washington, more meetings, a cruise on the Potomac (where I chatted with a bright young First Secretary at the Soviet Embassy named Vitaly Churkhin, who went on to be their UN Ambassador), and a barbecue at the home of Esther Coopersmith.

Many of the contacts I made were long lasting. I remember talking to an official who was in the information department of the Central Committee. I said “I hope we will be able to

continue this contact when we get back to Moscow." He said, "Well, of course. Why not?"

"I will give you several reasons why not," I said. "I know from my past experience, I have had contact with Russians outside the Soviet Union but when we go back, you are operating under very different rules." I was recalling the Vienna summit meeting of 1979 where I talked to journalists and party officials who said "let's talk now because when we go back to Moscow, I won't be able." They were that candid about it.

This was a man named Leonid Dobrohotov. He said in so many words, test me and I did. He became an invaluable contact in the information department of the CPSU.

Back to Moscow (another Aeroflot charter with stops in Gander and Shannon), I could go on and on about my duties and my responsibilities. What we lacked were the resources. We simply didn't have the tools to do all the things that were being asked to do. People would come out from Washington and say "I've got an idea." I would respond: "We have no shortage of ideas. What we need is help in implementing ideas and perhaps weeding out the good ideas from the bad ones."

The one thing I had was a really outstanding staff, especially the younger officers. I sometimes say it was as if P&C Moscow had had about six or seven first round draft picks in the NFL.

Every one had some previous involvement with Russia, either living there as a child, studying there or whatever. In the press office, there were two assistant information officers, Margo Squire and Mike Hurley. In the cultural section, we had assistant cultural affairs officers Rosemary DiCarlo, Ian Kelly, Susan Robinson and a young woman who came out for a year named Ann Lowendahl.

These people were devoted, hardworking and so capable. I am happy to say all of them went on to very successful careers.

What I did best of all was to give them the freedom to do their jobs. I was able to stand between them and the ambassador and the other people who had ideas on how they should do their jobs, to provide a buffer. I represented our section to the ambassador, to Washington, to the visiting firemen and let my youngest staff, the assistant cultural affairs officers and assistant information officers, do their jobs and they did them extremely well.

Q: What about the press? How had it changed or had it changed?

BROWN: When I was there the first time as information officer/press attaché, it was much different from what I would experience in Paris. Paris was a much more typical press spokesman job. By 1987 in Moscow, we were still spending a lot of time with the American press corps and to some extent still defending their working rights under the Helsinki Convention, looking out for working conditions for journalists.

The Soviets, however, were beginning to loosen up a bit, not in a Western sense. We could work with the Soviet media. One of the first activities I recall was the editor of Ogonyok magazine, Vitaly Korotich, doing an interview with Ambassador Matlock. It was an interview that was fairly done. Ogonyok was a weekly magazine that was doing some very interesting stuff. They were publishing materials on the Stalin era and all of a sudden, people were lining up on the day of the week when Ogonyok came out. For them to do an interview with Ambassador Matlock was symbolically important. Little by little, both the press and the audio visual media gave us opportunities to get our point across.

Mr. Wick initiated the U.S./USSR information talks, bilateral meetings in Washington and Moscow on an annual basis. The Soviet side was headed by Valentin Falin, Chief of the International Department of the CPSU. Those talks and the preparation for them was also extremely time consuming, extremely labor intensive. We, of course, would push the argument to the Soviets that there was still an imbalance, that they had so much more access to American public opinion than we had to public opinion in the Soviet Union.

That was the case but notwithstanding, we were getting an increasing number of opportunities to have our point of view put across in the press. I myself did some interviews, not on high political subjects but quite often on the life of a diplomat.

Let me turn to something I did right after Moscow when I went to the Fletcher School in 1990 immediately following my Moscow years as a diplomat-in-residence. I asked myself: "When I look back on my Moscow experience, what jumps out at me? What really strong memories do I have?"

They certainly included the visit by Ronald Reagan. The President of the United States comes and you are at the airport and shake his hand or you're in the Kremlin when he says goodbye to Gorbachev. That's an indelible memory. Or when your wonderful Jewish friends finally get permission to emigrate, that's an indelible memory. I traveled, continued to travel; went to all the republic capitals. Those are very strong memories.

But the common theme that jumped out at me was music, particularly events that left indelible memories not simply for the music but for what they seemed to be saying about politics and the changing climate. I will highlight some of those moments.

Even before I got to Moscow, I heard that someone named Billy Joel was going to be performing there so I went to my daughters and said "who is Billy Joel?" I remember my daughter Sarah saying, "Dad. You don't know who Billy Joel is?"

So I went out and got an audio cassette of this rock performer named Billy Joel. Indeed he was giving two concerts in Moscow right after we got there, within a week of our arrival. I went to the ambassador and asked if he wanted to go to the July 27 concert?

I don't think Ambassador Matlock ever said no to anything as quickly as he did to that. He said, "No. You go. You represent us. I do not want to be involved."

I went and it was an experience. Billy Joel performing in one of the stadiums built for the 1980 Olympics, 20,000 people, packed. The Russians knew who Billy Joel was and it didn't take much advertising, a few posters and word of mouth to attract an audience. When we got there, we had a couple of extra tickets. I remember giving them to some teenage girls and they were delighted.

The thing I recall about the concert is not so much the music, although that was part of it, but Billy Joel's ability to master an audience with a little hand-held microphone. He walked around the place, amidst 20,000 people and a lot of security; by the way, they were a little nervous when he got off the stage and walked around. I think a lot of the Soviets were as impressed by the technology as they were by the music. But I will never forget Billy Joel singing "For the Longest Time," one of his signature tunes. Anytime I hear Billy Joel singing, I am transported back to that concert.

It was loud. I remember that Bobbi put cotton in her ears. We were sitting way in the back. I was representing the embassy but hardly. I wasn't in a prominent position. Billy Joel was there with his wife, Christie Brinkley. The second night, I think, he was unable to really rev up the audience the way he wanted to and he started smashing the piano. If you read newspaper articles, you will see that was picked up by the American press more than the concert itself.

The important thing was that Russians were allowing in an American rock performer. Up to that point, rock was considered decadent. The other part of it was that 20,000 people filled that hall each of two nights for Billy Joel. To me that was as much of a barometer as anything of change.

Less than two months later, September of 1987, the Empire Brass Quintet out of Boston came, a really high quality cultural musical group, five brass musicians. Their first stop was Vilnius, Lithuania. This was one of the first, if not the first, American performing arts group to go to the Baltic States. I arranged with the assistant cultural affairs officer, Rosemary DiCarlo, that we would attend the concert. But on Friday afternoon, we got a call from the Foreign Ministry saying we couldn't go because there were no hotel rooms. We had permission, we had the plane tickets. I said, "Rosemary, we are going" so we got up early Saturday morning, flew to Vilnius and went to the hotel. No, there weren't any rooms but by the end of the day we had worked it out.

This concert wasn't 20,000 people; this was maybe 200 people in a small hall but they were just blown away, to coin a phrase, by the skills of the Empire Brass quintet. The scene afterwards was remarkable. Young musicians came up and wanted to see instruments. The Russians and the Lithuanians have a great history of music but they didn't have access to this quality instruments; the trombone, tuba. The American musicians were very, very accommodating, signing autographs, giving out scores and that kind of thing.

A week later, they arrived back in Moscow and they were pretty worn out. They had been to various cities on an itinerary put together by a Soviet concert agency, Goskoncert, and were now in a dreary Soviet hotel. We were living on the compound in a very nice townhouse that had three levels. I asked the group if they would like to come by on Friday night for pizza and beer. I hardly had the words out of our mouth; were they ever happy to come by for pizza and beer.

And we said if they needed a place to practice, they could use our place. So they came and from our three level townhouse, you could hear tuba on one floor, trombone on another, trumpet from another floor. I loved it. We saw them in Boston several years later and they remembered us well and favorably. They did a couple of great concerts in Moscow. It was one of the first of many times we hosted a reception on the compound. The Empire Brass provided the first occasion for us to invite some Soviets guests after the concert. We did and they came.

Eventually, we hosted many, many events, they came in great numbers and we were able to manage. But initially, it was nerve wracking for us to think that all these years, we had been fighting the Soviets so we could have Russians in to our apartment. Were we now going to be fighting American security? We won the battle.

Another American who happened to be in town at the time the Empire Brass Quintet was Fred Rogers who did the programs on television for kids. Mr. Rogers was there on his own and Bobbi ran into him and went swimming with him.

Fred Rogers and his staff came to our reception that night with the Empire Brass Quintet. I have to guess that he was there because he saw and heard that things were opening up in the Soviet Union. They had always had excellent programs on TV for children. It was a very non-political area to exploit and that is probably what brought him to Moscow at that time.

Another music memory. In November of 1987, we got word the famous violinist, Yehudi Menuhin would be performing in Moscow. He had Russian Jewish connections. He had performed in Moscow a few years earlier and had raised eyebrows because he criticized the human rights record yet here he was coming back in 1987 to perform.

We went to the concert at Tchaikovsky Hall. Americans have trouble understanding that in the Soviet Union, a poet could fill a stadium of 20,000 people and there would still be people outside struggling to get tickets. That was the nature of society there. This Menuhin concert was sold out. I got tickets through connections. I went back stage afterwards to greet him in the name of the American Embassy and he handed me a list and said these were people he would like to have at a reception.

I went to Ambassador Matlock and even though he was going to be in Geneva and there was some question about whether Menuhin was an American, a Swiss or a British citizen, Ambassador Matlock agreed that we could host a reception at Spaso House.

The only way to get the invitations delivered was for me to spend half of Saturday driving around Moscow personally delivering them to people like the sister of Mstislav Rostropovich, to the ballet dancer Maya Plisetskaya and her husband Rodion Shchedrin. A colleague of mine in the embassy delivered the invitation to Andrei Sakharov and his wife.

Then there were people whose names I didn't recognize, the parents of a young Russian named Mikhail Rud; he had emigrated and was playing piano in Paris at the time. I finally found their apartment in a distant part of Moscow and knocked on the door. A lady came and then a man came wearing only an undershirt over his pants and I said, in Russian of course, "Lidya Petrovna, My name is Philip Brown. I'm from the American Embassy." I remember she stepped back as if she had been struck by a bolt of lightning saying "*Bozha Moy*" or "My God." I explained the circumstances. When they picked themselves up off the floor and I handed them the invitation, they actually believed it.

That Sunday evening, these well known figures from the Moscow musical world along with André Sakharov and Elena Bonner and the British, Swiss and Dutch ambassadors and the parents of Mikhail Rud came to Spaso House. For Sakharov it was the first time, perhaps the only time, he was ever at the American ambassador's residence.

The guests also included a couple named Oleg Kagan and Natasha Gutman; one was a violinist and the other a cellist, both outstanding musicians. We knew them from their performances. When they walked into the room, Menuhin was sitting on the couch. They got down on the floor, sat there like children at his knee and talked about how they had heard his performances, his records when they were growing up and studying music; it was as if they were in the presence of their mentor and role model.

Before the evening was over, the African American singer Barbara Hendricks and the composer Sarah Caldwell also showed up. It was a very touching and memorable evening.

We walked out of that evening with a special feeling, knowing that this was one of the events we would never forget. And from the reception, we went to the second half of a concert at Tchaikovsky Hall featuring the violist Yuri Bashmet playing a new work by a Russian composer named Edison Denisov. An artist friend of ours, Boris Birger, introduced us to Denisov afterward. It sometimes seemed as if it was non-stop but it was rewarding.

I knew that events such as the Menuhin reception were having an impact on the elite, the cultural elite; the people who attended had all gone out and talked about this evening, this experience. And I would have an opportunity to mention it to my official contacts.

In April, 1988, we had a visit from Yo-Yo Ma, who was even then a world famous cellist. He gave a special concert at Spaso House. This again was a case where Ambassador Matlock was such a wonderful ambassador to have because he would offer

Spaso House. We would invite an elite group of people to hear Yo-Yo Ma perform. Then Ma did a couple of public concerts.

You think of the Soviet Union as being isolated, cut off from the rest of the world but you didn't have to explain to people who Yo-Yo Ma was. They knew he was one of the world's great cellists even back then.

What I especially remember about his visit was that he was there on Russian Easter weekend and after his concert, he went with us to one of the cathedrals just to be part of the mass of people both outside and inside the church observing Russian Orthodox Easter.

Bobbi mentioned to him that we had a daughter in school in Boston and that she would be there in the spring. Yo-Yo Ma lived at that time in Winchester. When Bobbi went to a concert there in the spring, there were two tickets waiting for her thanks to Yo-Yo Ma. He was, and still is, a genuinely gracious, friendly human being.

President Reagan came in June of 1988. I missed my daughter Sarah's college graduation to be in Moscow for the visit. "Sorry. I'd love to come to your college graduation from Tufts but the President of the United States is here." I don't put it in the category of sacrifice but it was one of those little prices you pay.

One little vignette in connection with President Reagan's visit. Anyplace where he was going to be making an appearance, whether it was the university, the Writers' Club or Red Square, the White House had a team assigned to that location. My staff was all divided up and I was working with the White House press office.

We had an assistant cultural affairs officer, a woman named Susan Robinson married to the consul general and I assigned her to work with Mrs. Reagan's people. Susan came to me one day saying this was sexism, that just because she was a woman working in cultural section didn't mean that she should work with the First Lady, that she should be out among the guys in one of these other spots, the Writers' Union or whatever.

I said, "Susan, I hear what you are saying but really it is not sexism and we have to have somebody work with Mrs. Reagan's staff and you will have opportunities that you won't believe."

Well, the visit came and went and a lot of us who were assigned to various spots did a lot of standing around and were upstaged as always by the White House staff. By contrast, Susan Robinson told me she got to go to the bowels of the Tretyakov Museum to see art works and icons that were never made available to the general public. She got to go to musical and theater events that were specially put on for Mrs. Reagan. Her ego was assuaged and she had opportunities the rest of us didn't have.

They did a special gala ballet at the Bolshoi for President Reagan but it coincided with a meeting arranged by the State Committee on Education and Mr. Wick sent me to it to represent him. I did manage to put my ticket in Bobbi's hands.

Right after the Reagan visit, the New York Philharmonic conducted by Zubin Mehta came to Moscow and did an opening concert in a concert hall. Then they were scheduled to do an open air concert in Gorky Park. Reagan had gone so the embassy staff cleared out. The ambassador was in Germany, the DCM had gone to the States for his son's graduation and I was the ranking person in the embassy.

For a week, I was the chargé and I went to a few cocktail parties and such. I asked the ambassador what should I do and he said "you act as if you are the chief of mission" so I rode around in the Cadillac with the flag flying, including to Gorky Park for the New York Philharmonic concert, feeling somewhat self conscious, I must say. I didn't take to the role too comfortably.

It was an outdoor concert with a little bit of rain at the beginning but by the time they played the Stars and Stripes Forever at the end, the rain had stopped symbolically. It was another big splashy American presentation with Zubin Mehta conducting half the program and a Soviet conductor, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, doing the other half. I did not get to speak to Mehta or make my presence known but I did make sure the car was there with the flag flying so they knew somebody important was in attendance.

That week also marked the millennium of Christianity in Russia; 1,000 years since Christianity had come to Russia and there was a gala concert at the Bolshoi. I still have the program from that and since I was the chargé, I represented the U.S. The invitation came from His Holiness Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia and the Holy Synod inviting us to the festival jubilee meeting on the occasion of the millennium of the "baptism of Rus" at the Bolshoi Theater. It was a wonderful concert with various orchestras and choirs. The first half of the program concluded with Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" including bells and the sound of cannons.

Leading religious figures from all over the world came for this event. Billy Graham was on stage. The church had never been entirely suppressed despite what we heard about the lack of religious freedom. The hierarchy of the church was probably on good terms with the hierarchy of the KGB but still, the fact that they had this splashy event was another example of the changing times. Raisa Gorbachev was in attendance.

A year later, June of 1989, Paul Simon came through on his Graceland tour. This was something he was doing with African artists including Miriam Makeba and they did a big outdoor concert in Moscow. Graceland was the name he had given to this series of concerts featuring African music.

A month later, returning for the first time in 31 years for what he called a sentimental visit, was Van Cliburn who had won the Tchaikovsky competition back in the worst days of the Cold War. He was there because in 1987, when Gorbachev was hosted at the White

House, Van Cliburn came out of retirement and performed at the White House and Gorbachev expressed the desire that Van Cliburn would come to Moscow. His name was still very well known.

On July 2, I went to the concert in which Van Cliburn played the famous Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto that he played when he won the competition. Our house guest that night was Madeleine Albright. She was there on a USIA-sponsored speaking tour. At the time, she was a professor at Georgetown and she ended up as our house guest. There was always an extra bedroom. I still have the thank you note from Madeleine Albright.

The ambassador was in attendance as was Gorbachev. This was one of these theaters that was not well maintained and before the music began, right above where Gorbachev was sitting, there was this terrific explosion. If these had been American secret service people, they would probably have thrown their bodies over him. A light bulb had blown out but other thoughts went through our mind.

At the end of the concert, the ambassador was invited backstage to talk briefly to Gorbachev, not for courtesy sake but to be informed of the death of Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister. Gorbachev simply referred to Andrei Andreyevich but it was clear who he was talking about.

So you had all these elements -- Van Cliburn of 31 years earlier, Van Cliburn of the Gorbachev visit to Washington, Madeleine Albright and the death of Andrei Gromyko. These were heady times and we were very much a part of it.

Q: Did you get any feel from your Soviet contacts that the times were changing for them. This must have been very disconcerting for some.

BROWN: Among the older generation, we saw people who were fearful or who felt threatened by the changes. One family we knew quite well. The grandmother (an eminent translator of American literature named Tanya Kudryavtseva) and friends, one generation older than ourselves, were shaking their heads in disbelief and wondering if this wasn't a little bit too much too fast. But the grandson was already jumping at the opportunities for interaction with Americans and new opportunities. If it were today's world, he would be writing an app for the iPhone but then he was envisioning going into business, being an entrepreneur.

The great masses probably didn't see any great benefit. Their living conditions were still not that much improved. They were still standing in line to get food. Housing hadn't improved.

Q: This brings to mind one of the things about Russia. It is considered a great power but when I think about it is there anything that comes out of Russia that I would want to buy?

BROWN: That has always been one of the mysteries. No one ever questioned their innate intelligence. They produced mathematicians and chemists, great writers, ballet dancers,

sports figures but they have never manufactured a product you wanted to go out and buy. That was certainly very much the case at this time. If we had extra rubles, we'd go to the art market and buy little paintings, stacking matryoshka dolls, a samovar or something that might have a little bit of artistic value but there wasn't a product that I can think of that you would go and buy for its mechanical qualities.

Q: What about on the cultural side?

BROWN: I don't know much about what is happening in Russian literature these days. During the time we were there, there was not to my knowledge any explosion of great writing. There was a lot of stuff being produced. People were writing stuff for the theater. They were publishing in magazines but whether any of it is of lasting quality or being thought of today as having particular artistic merit, I am not sure.

I can think of people we associated with at the time and who we thought of as quality writers. Some of them ended up at George Mason University or various places in the West but where they really stand in the world of literature these days, I don't know. Were we simply giving them more credit than they deserved at the time because they were having an opportunity?

Back to the year 1989 and music. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra came out and offered several concerts. They were very well received. They were conducted by Lorin Maazel. Talk about a brilliant but controversial figure in the world of conducting. Their accompanying artist was the famous Irish flutist James Galway. He wowed the audience with his abilities on the flute.

The orchestra was staying in the Sovietskaya hotel which wasn't very fancy. I was hosting a lunch on a given day for a bunch of educators and people from Washington. Fortunately, for some reason, the lunch wasn't to start until 2 o'clock. It was going to be at my townhouse. Late morning, I got a phone call saying Lorin Maazel and James Galway were sick of the food in the hotel. Could they come by for lunch?

My secretary was a wonderful woman named Anne Edwards. She was born in Wales and a naturalized American citizen and she loved music, having studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London. I said, "Anne, drop everything you are doing. You and I are hosting Lorin Maazel and James Galway for lunch."

Well, she couldn't believe I was serious. But she had been to one of the concerts; she knew they were in town and sure enough, we managed to escort the two of them and a couple of others. We ended up paying for these guys, which we shouldn't have done, but it was worth it for the conversation.

Lorin Maazel was an eminent figure in the world of conducting but on this day, he was dependent upon me for his lunch and Anne Edwards, my Welsh- born secretary was walking on air to be sitting at the lunch table with James Galway.

We Americans were not the only ones bringing cultural presentations. La Scala, the famous opera company from Italy, did several performances at the Bolshoi. They also did a performance of the Verdi Requiem at the Conservatory and that was a tough ticket. On the night of the concert, people were swarming around, trying to get in. Bobbi and I had tickets but there was such a large crowd it was even hard to get in the building. As we were caught up in this mass of people, we saw people in uniform, Russians of course, saying "make way for academician Sakharov." We turned around and sure enough, escorted by two big militia men, were Andre Sakharov and Elena Bonner looking very small behind him.

The crowd did part and let them come through but then you had the same phenomenon as when a fire truck is coming down the street and the cars all go aside to let the fire truck go by. As soon as the fire truck is gone, everyone tries to get behind and make it through the next several lights. All of us went swarming in, including a lot of people who didn't have tickets. I remember because it was the last time I saw Sakharov alive. It was a couple of months later he died. He was such a frail figure.

That night, our guest was a man named Paul Plishka who later retired after many years at the Metropolitan Opera. He had Ukrainian roots and had been singing in Kiev; he came by Moscow and stayed with us a couple of nights.

A month later, in November, 1989, Bobbi and I went to Yerevan, Armenia, for the opening of a USIA-organized children's book exhibit. Ambassador and Mrs. Matlock went along with someone from the political section. This was one year after the terrible earthquake in Armenia that had caused massive destruction and led Gorbachev to cut short a visit to the United States. At the time, that earthquake symbolized a lot of things. Instead of asking for visas to come in to cover the event, journalists simply went across the border between Armenia and Turkey without visas. Aid agencies brought in materials that way. A lot of standard procedures were dropped in 1988 at the time of the Armenian earthquake.

The ambassador didn't want to go there in the immediate aftermath, wisely feeling he didn't want resources devoted to him that should be going to the earthquake recovery, so it wasn't until a year later that he took advantage of our book exhibit to go to Yerevan.

We were staying in guest quarters there. This was where we were when I heard news that the Berlin Wall had been breached and that people were freely moving back and forth by the thousands. I brought that news to him at breakfast. He looked at me skeptically but it was then confirmed through the Voice of America broadcasts.

On one particular night, the ambassador was torn because he was being invited to a concert but he was also invited to a dinner hosted by the hierarchy of the Armenian government. So Phil, never wanting to miss an opportunity said, "Mr. Ambassador, could Bobbi and I represent you at that concert?" "Oh, perfect idea," he says. "Please represent us at the concert." It was perfect from my point of view because I would much rather go to music than to another official dinner.

The concert featured the Armenian symphony orchestra conducted by an American named Loris Tjeknavorian and we were seated in a very special box. At the intermission, we went downstairs and I introduced myself to the conductor and explained the circumstances, that the ambassador could not attend but that Bobbi and I were representing him and we were delighted to be here on this evening and probably we should leave now and go back to this dinner.

He said, "Oh, you can't leave. You must stay." It didn't take too much work to twist my arm to stay. We went back up to our box. After the intermission, the conductor came out and said a few words in Armenian and the next thing I knew, he was pointing to us and we were being asked to stand and everyone in the audience was giving us this enormous round of applause. It was explained to me that he was saying "our guests are from the American Embassy and we want to thank them for all that America has done to help us with earthquake recovery." It was a moving moment. I have never felt more than on that night that I was representing my country, that I was being thanked for all we had done to help them recover from the earthquake.

The conductor himself had amassed the funds so the orchestra could play this concert. He was providing them with the wherewithal, not only the conducting but many of the instruments they used to play the concert. Some of the music they did that night had roots in Armenian musical history. It was very memorable.

Another unforgettable musical evening came in February, 1990, when the National Symphony Orchestra came to Moscow with Mstislav Rostropovich as their conductor. It was the first time he had been back in the Soviet Union since he had been exiled. Years earlier, when he and his wife Galina Vishnevskaya were traveling abroad, his passport and his citizenship had been taken away but in spite of that, he had done well. He was now the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

So his return was a highly symbolic event. I went to the airport with Ambassador Matlock and the Minister of Culture Nikolai Gubenko for his arrival. He was greeted by a mass of journalists and well wishers. I knew his sister and her husband quite well so we were swept up in the arrival of the orchestra. There were press conferences and luncheons in his honor and two concerts.

At the first concert, he conducted the same program as the last time he had conducted on that stage before he went into exile – Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 and Shostakovich. Shostakovich was one of his mentors so there was symbolism all over the place. The audience included in a special box Raisa Gorbachev. He did a number of encores.

All of the encores were by Russian composers until the very last which he didn't introduce at all. He simply turned, picked up his baton and conducted the orchestra in "Stars and Stripes Forever." The message was clear. All the other music was Russian. That's where he came from. What he knew best was Russian music. But the final encore

said something about where he was now. Politically he was now an American, Stars and Stripes Forever. People stood and clapped rhythmically. It was a moving event.

The next night, he not only conducted but he played the Dvorak Cello Concerto, one of the pieces he had recorded and one of the most famous pieces for cello. Then he went on to Leningrad and did another performance there. If you didn't know it before, you knew by then that things were changing in the political world and what better medium to express it than music?

Finally, just a month before we left in 1990, the quadrennial Tchaikovsky competition took place. This is the same competition that Van Cliburn had won in 1958. For all our years in Moscow, this was the first time we had been during the Tchaikovsky competition. We went to several performances and knew that one particular American woman was really outstanding.

We were not at all surprised when Deborah Voigt received the first prize in the soprano competition; Deborah Voigt became a staple at the Metropolitan Opera, one of the leading figures in the world of opera. I later saw her in Washington and again in Pittsburgh and I said to her on both occasions, "I heard you when you sang in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow." She smiled and remembered; it was a stepping stone for her.

So I have recounted my major Moscow musical memories. There are plenty of other lesser Moscow musical memories but you get the gist.

The point I want to make is these weren't simply musical events. These were concerts that said something about what was going on at that time. They had political symbolism that conveyed to the Russians that times had changed.

Q: Did you have American visitors ask what is this all about, being rather skeptical? Did you find yourself saying things really are happening?

BROWN: I didn't find Americans were skeptical about the musical events or any of the other activities that we were involved in. Whether it was a concert or a book fair or a speaker or an exhibit, it was quite easy if you had a particular visitor in town to say "hey, do you want to go out to one of these?"

It was both fun and instructive to include your visitors, whether it was Madeleine Albright or a foot soldier from Washington. There were people who were maybe a little more sober about the changes and who said "yes, but." That wasn't bad to have people come say "let's keep this in perspective. Let's keep their feet to the fire." I think Mr. Wick did that in a funny way through his information talks. There were a lot of people saying "they are just like us; they are just people." Sure, they are just people. That was not a great discovery but the system was still based on very different ideas.

I had an excellent desk officer in USIA named Rick Ruth. He had been an exhibit guide and was briefly in the Foreign Service. When I came back for that first Chautauqua Conference, we had lapel pins with the joint Soviet and American flags; we had given them out on the airplane. The Russians loved these flags and I was wearing one but Rick said he wouldn't be comfortable wearing an American/Soviet flag pin. I thought about it and concluded Rick was right; that Soviet flag still stood for a lot of things that I did not believe and was not comfortable with. It was good to have reminders from time to time that there were still a lot of differences.

Q: Did you see or place more favorable treatment of the United States in the media?

BROWN: By and large, not only in the media but in almost all aspects of our bilateral relationship, things were improving. The way we communicated with each other officially, the number of visitors in both directions, things like the Chautauqua exchanges which involved hundreds of people both ways, the number of people getting visas to emigrate and by and large favorable press coverage. It was still controlled but it was much more favorable especially in connection with the Gorbachev trip to the United States in December of 1987 and Reagan's visit to Moscow in 1988.

Somebody will say that I am forgetting that along the way there were bumps in the road. There were still issues, though there weren't major roadblocks. For most part it was a pretty harmonious period.

Q: But there was a separate entity, the KGB, which tried to screw things up from time to time such as taking a correspondent like Daniloff and others.

BROWN: Yes, as we've discussed before, there was the Daniloff arrest in 1986 right before the Reykjavik summit and right after the Reykjavik summit, with the Daniloff episode sort of resolved, you had the mutual expulsion of diplomats.

We didn't have during my time there anything comparable to that. We didn't have mutual expulsion of diplomats or symbolic arrests. Annoyances and issues would pop up but by and large, this was a period of good, improving relations and of people continually talking about that.

Q: Did you have a positive feeling toward Gorbachev? Did you really feel he was behind making this change?

BROWN: I think people did associate it with Gorbachev and also with his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. James Baker and Shevardnadze developed a very close working relationship so it was personalized to that extent. Not only could you contrast Gorbachev to his predecessors, who were just stumble bums. Gorbachev was out there, active, speaking. Margaret Thatcher said it better than anybody else, "a man we can work with" so yes, it was associated with Gorbachev. He was accessible. The ambassador, if he needed to, could get to Gorbachev. He certainly could get to Shevardnadze.

Q: How did you find Matlock to work with?

BROWN: I always begin by saying I was very privileged to have Jack Matlock as ambassador during my three years in Moscow. He was there for a few months before we arrived and for a full year afterwards. He was the only ambassador we had on our second tour. Outstanding, professional, good Russian, knew the history of the country, had served there at various different levels.

But he was not an easy man to work for (note that I say "work for" rather than "work with"). He was a difficult taskmaster, he could be cutting in his criticisms and he could really squash people's morale but he was a first-class professional.

I used to laugh because he did as much chest thumping as anybody about how we could get along without local employees. "We can do it on our own," he would say and then he would also ask why there weren't more activities at Spaso House such as these monthly seminars. He wanted us to get whole new groups of people into Spaso House.

Then he would come in some morning grumbling because Spaso House was being asked to do so much and they didn't have local employees to help out. "We are doing this with our very limited resources," he would say. Don't we know? Aren't we all operating under that kind of situation where we have more on our platter than we can handle? We don't even have the human resources to deliver invitations.

Q: On the cultural and information side of diplomacy, you relied heavily on the local employees with their connections. You usually get extremely high caliber people.

BROWN: I especially remember our Foreign Service national employees from my first Moscow assignment. Yuri Zarakhovich was the chief FSN for the press section. I earlier recalled some of our experiences together. By my second tour, Yuri was working first for the Associated Press and then Time magazine. When he died a few years ago, Time featured him in their inside cover page for all that he had contributed to their coverage of the Soviet Union.

People used to fret that the Soviet employees were a threat to our security and were nosing around, finding out what we were doing. That to me reflected badly on the American supervision, if that was the case. You used these people where you could and you didn't get them involved if you didn't want to. Sure, if you were working in the defense attaché office or certain other secretive parts of the embassy, you didn't use FSNs directly. In our business, it would have been extremely useful if we had had some of them just to help us out with the mechanical things, drivers to deliver invitations and the like, but we didn't have them and we managed.

Back to Ambassador Matlock, he was a most willing participant in any of our programs. When we had an exhibit opening, he always wanted to go for the opening and deliver a speech. He, of course, would do it in Russian or even try his hand at some other language.

He counted on us to provide the speakers and make the arrangements for what we called Spaso House seminars. Ambassador Matlock wanted to have a once-a-month evening at Spaso House, each event with a whole new guest list, not the same old people, a dinner, a lecture by a prominent American, preferably in Russian but if not in Russian, we would use simultaneous interpreters. We would find people in Washington and elsewhere, pay their way and bring them out to lecture.

At one of those events, the speaker was a woman who had been on Jack Matlock's staff when he was at the NSC and who he saw as a bright, upcoming, future high ranking official in government; her name was Condoleezza Rice. We brought her out as the featured speaker at a Spaso House seminar.

Q: Were these speakers all government people?

BROWN: Government and non-government. Matlock felt there were enough resources in Washington that we could get someone once a month. We'd have experts in economics, politics, occasionally in a cultural field. He didn't want us, quite legitimately, to be inviting the old reliables, people we already knew. He wanted new faces. It was a little hard sometimes because there were people who had come reliably to our film shows or other events during the toughest times and they were no longer on the guest list because we were trying to expand, get new people.

A partial list of those who spoke at a Spaso House Seminar would include Murray Feshbach from the Commerce Department, an eminent scholar on Soviet demographics. Princeton Professor Steve Cohen who was writing a biography of Nikolai Bukharin; this was a subject that would have been completely off bounds a few years earlier. We had Alan Greenspan. I don't know what hat he was wearing at the time.

We also had Marshall Goldman, the Soviet scholar at Harvard. Speaking of Marshall Goldman, during those three years his son, Seth Goldman, came to Moscow to work for a family there as what was called a "manny," a young man to come out to help with the family. Seth didn't have mail privileges so his dad sent things to me and I passed them on to Seth.

A few years later, I was teaching at the Fletcher School and I went down to Harvard to an event chaired by Marshall Goldman. We went around the table introducing ourselves. I introduced myself and concluded, "The most important role I played in Moscow was to deliver mail to Seth Goldman." At that point, eyebrows went up as he remembered who I was. Seth Goldman, in his 20s then, became the owner of the very popular product called Honest Tea. He did not follow in his father's footsteps of being a Harvard professor but he has done well.

But our programs were not limited to Moscow or to Spaso House. No section travelled more than the press and cultural section, partly because we had the mandate, partly because we had the tools, for example, a book exhibit in Novosibirsk.

On my first tour, I traveled to every republic capital except the Baltic states. I made multiple trips to Tbilisi, Georgia. We were urged to go to Central Asia and I traveled to republic capitals like Tashkent, Dushanbe, Frunze and Alma Ata, as they were then called. I went to Khabarovsk and Nakhodka in the Soviet Far East.

The area I didn't go to on my first tour but that I did visit multiple times on my second tour was the Baltics and it was here, more than any other area, where you began to see the seeds of disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the Baltics, more than any other area, they were talking about independence. Maybe not in 1987 but by 1990, Lithuania and other areas were talking seriously about breaking away from the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you feel you were in the middle of a historic moment?

BROWN: Yes, I did. I was smart enough to know that this was a sweep of history. Things were really happening there. There was no country that had a higher priority in American foreign policy during this time than the Soviet Union. There was no place where the changes were more revolutionary, where the stakes were higher, where the opportunities were greater than Moscow during this period.

Bobbi and I regularly discussed whether we should stay on for a fourth year. We didn't but I was not alone. I think many of us in the embassy knew this was a historic period. And again, no one was more aware of this than Ambassador Matlock. He authored a book, "Autopsy on an Empire," which is a definitive work for scholars and journalists on what happened during this period. David Remnick likewise wrote an excellent book, "Lenin's Tomb," covering this period. It has been very well documented in a scholarly fashion.

You knew that momentous things were happening, that historic events were occurring but every new event seemed to outdo the other by such a degree that it still amazed you. It was happening so fast and each new phase was so revolutionary it was really hard to believe it was occurring.

When you think of the fall of the Berlin Wall or what was happening in Czechoslovakia, the question was always the contagion. How were the Soviets going to control this? Change was happening within the Soviet Union but it was still controlled change.

Q: Did you have someone within the Soviet government, an official, not a secret source but someone to ask what is going on?

BROWN: The man I mentioned earlier, Leonid Dobrohotov in the Information Department of the Central Committee, was someone we could talk to about what was happening; you could get an honest answer to a question if you needed to for business purposes.

I think better sources were people like Vitaly Korotich, the editor of Ogonyok magazine or people in the intellectual, creative intelligentsia, because there wasn't that much of a gap between them and the people in the Kremlin. For a big country, there was a relatively small group of insiders. People in the Kremlin knew all the movers and shakers in the media world or in the theater. All you had to do was talk to those people and they could tell you that.

Q: Were American entrepreneurs flooding into the country or did this come later?

BROWN: My notes say something about Frank Perdue, the chicken man. At one point, someone in Washington suggested I might facilitate his entrepreneurial interests in Russia. I managed to persuade people in Washington it was not for me to do. We had many people coming out with ideas.

Q: Anything about films?

BROWN: I went quite often to Dom Kino to see movies and quite often at the invitation of a producer but I am not able to remember the movies that I saw. The excuse that I can use is that a lot of them I saw were not terribly memorable.

One notable visitor was Robert Redford. He came out in May, 1988, to show his film called "Milagro Beanfield War." There was a special showing and enough people knew Robert Redford that he attracted quite a crowd.

After a reception at Spaso House, we asked Redford and his party if they would like to go to a special theater event. It was at the Taganka Theater which was then directed by Nikolai Gubenko, who later became the minister of culture. The show had to do with the life of the singer/songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky. At the end of the performance, there was an appearance on stage by Yuri Lyubimov, who had founded the Taganka Theater. He had been forced into exile and this was his return. He was greeted by applause, cheers, tears and flowers.

It was an experience for Redford not simply to see the play but to see how Russians adored theater and how Lyubimov was being reintegrated into the world of theater. We went to Lyubimov's office. I remember Robert Redford adding his name to signatures on the wall. Famous people had written all over the walls of Lyubimov's office.

The Redford party had an official escort, car and driver. I got in their vehicle and as we were driving back to the hotel, Redford asked, "Where can I get a beer?" I said, "Why don't you come by my place?" So we literally went by my place. Robert Redford came in with me and picked up a couple of beers and I said, "Well, why doesn't everyone come in and have drinks here?" He said, "We'll go back to the hotel" so he took my beer and went back to the hotel. I can never claim that he was in my house for drinks but he did drink my beer.

And then there was a very special night at the House of Cinema. All of the various artists or members of the creative intelligentsia had their own clubs — the Writers' Union, the Composers' Union, the Journalists' Union, the Cineastes' Union and the Dom Kino or House of Cinema. They invited the ambassador and members of his staff to come for an evening, to be on stage, talk and answer questions. So the ambassador put out the call. I am proud to say I was the only counselor who accepted the invitation. There were three other guys, mid-level Foreign Service officers, all with beards, plus the Ambassador's special assistant. I have a picture. That hall was full, several hundred people, and many of them asked questions.

We were on stage for a couple of hours. The ambassador with his excellent Russian answered 90% of the questions because a lot of them were political. At some point, someone wisely said "tell us a little bit about yourselves. Tell us what you do. Tell us something personal about yourself." That is where I made my biggest contribution because I humanized things a little bit.

I said, "I am 47 years old." I told them my birthday was November 7th which, of course, is the anniversary of the great October Revolution and that produced laughter and amusement. I told them I had recently seen on Soviet TV video of events on Red Square on November 7th, 1941, during the war. That happened to be the day I was born and I explained how I looked with great interest and respect at that video of what was going on in Russia on the day I was born. I think they appreciated that.

It was all done in Russian and we got a lot of compliments from the ambassador. He was very pleased with the evening and that he didn't have to carry the entire load. Of course, he wanted to be front and center but he appreciated the rest of us coming along and participating. It was one of my more memorable public diplomacy opportunities.

Q: Today is the 29th of May, 2012 with Phil Brown.

We are now covering the last phase, 1987 to 1990. Going through my notes, I happened upon a newspaper article that really captures what I have been trying to say, what an amazing period this was. It was an article written by my friend Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. The first time I was in Moscow, I was the press attaché and we had about 25 American journalists including Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. Dan and I had the normal kind of professional relationship you have with a journalist but we were also good friends. We played paddle tennis together. Dan and his wife, Candy, came to our apartment for Thanksgiving with their three daughters, roughly the same ages as our two daughters. We were close friends.

So Dan came back to Moscow for a reporting visit. He looked at the Soviet Union of 1989 and he had the same impression everybody else had. My goodness, this place has changed. He wrote an article that captures so much of what I have been talking about. I want to quote a little bit from it.

The headline (Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1989) was "Friendly Soviets Roll out Red Carpet for Americans" and it referred right in the first paragraph to the different world of journalists because Dan knew what it had been like being a journalist roughly ten years earlier. He talked about the changing environment for businessmen and then he referred to the U.S. Embassy saying it has become the hub of a busy bilateral social life. He wrote: "All this reflects the 'new thinking in Kremlin foreign policy' and the change this has wrought in the day to day life for Americans here."

Then he quoted me: "'Four-fifths of what I do wasn't even in the job description three years ago,' said Philip C. Brown, the press and cultural affairs counselor. He is back in Moscow for a second tour after having served here in the late 1970s."

I distinctly remember sitting down with Dan for that interview. It was relaxed. I knew I could be completely open with Dan as I talked about how much things had changed. I made up the quote on the spot but it was entirely accurate. Four-fifths of what I was being called on to do wasn't even in the job description three years earlier.

To quote more from the article, Dan wrote, "Just last week, for example, most of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra showed up at the embassy's theater for the premier of 'Maestros in Moscow,' a video concert of American Soviet compositions and the video is narrated by actor Gregory Peck. Such an evening would have been inconceivable a few years ago, conductor Dmitri Kitayenko said.

"The next night, Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr., an accomplished linguist and expert in Soviet literature was host at a poetry meeting reading for Soviet and other guests at Spaso house, the ambassador's residence. And the day afterward, Matlock gave an unprecedented background briefing, in Russian, for the Soviet press.

"At the famous Tretyakov Gallery, Soviets flocked to see a photo exhibit marking the centennial of America's National Geographic Society. It all adds up, Matlock has said, to 'the most intense relationship since the (World War II) alliance'."

I thought that article really hit the nail on the head. This is what it was like halfway through my second three-year tour.

Q: I wonder if you could touch on the other Russia, the village Russia. Were we trying to reach them and did it make any difference?

BROWN: If you talk purely about village Russia, we were restricted to the area 40 kilometers around Moscow. I do have a distinct memory of going out with our very good Russian friends one day for a picnic in the woods. Not too far from where we were having our picnic, there was a little pond, a natural pond, and boys were sitting there with fishing poles that were not much more than sticks with a line on the end. I thought to myself: "This is the 19th century. This could be Mark Twain" and if you multiply that by thousands of little villages, each with a couple of thousand people, you would describe much of Russia at that time.

Were we trying to reach those people? No, I don't think so. I don't think that most of them were all that concerned about the bilateral U.S./Soviet relationship. They were pretty much concerned with what people in villages are concerned about, their daily routine.

Were they poor? By some standards, yes. I don't think the medical care was good. The teaching may have been pretty good in their schools. Teachers were probably very committed. It was certainly not a big city environment.

In 2006, Bobbi and I went back to Russia and took a cruise between Moscow and St. Petersburg. I joked I had never before been to St. Petersburg; I had been many times to Leningrad but this would be my first visit to St. Petersburg.

It's worth looking at the map of that cruise. We went through some eleven different bodies of water -- rivers, lakes, canals, reservoirs. I would be hard pressed today to name even four or five of them. It is such a complex water route from Moscow to St. Petersburg. On the way, we stopped in a couple of villages. We had left behind the Moscow, the glittery Moscow that you see today with Gucci and all the other luxury stores within a stone's throw of the Kremlin.

You get out to these villages and it doesn't look as if a whole lot has changed. I think the way of life is much as it has been for a long time, both for good and bad. On the good side, relationships are probably simple. Families are close. But in other ways, it is not a wealthy life and a lot of young kids are probably anxious to get out of the villages just as they are in many other countries of the world.

But during the period of 1987 to 1990, I did not make many trips to villages. I went to some pretty remote cities, places where I wouldn't want to live. Two that come to mind are Magnitogorsk and Donetsk, both industrial towns, both a couple hours' flying time from Moscow. They struck me as very grim places in which to live.

BROWN: But back to the article which quotes Ambassador Matlock. He was a tough taskmaster and at times he was too tough, unnecessarily critical of a very hard working staff. But it was a privilege to be there at a time when he was ambassador. No one was more qualified for that position -- as a career Foreign Service officer, as a gifted linguist, as a political analyst, as a full time participant in just about anything (except a Billy Joel concert) and as we learned later, on as a scholar.

Dan Fisher's article referred to a press briefing. The first time I was in Moscow, as press attaché, we had weekly press briefings done by Ambassador Toon and they were *de rigueur* for the American press because you didn't have many other sources and you might pick up some little tidbits from Mack Toon.

On my second tour, Jack Matlock started out doing press briefings for the American press but interest diminished. It didn't have anything to do with the quality of the briefing;

there were simply a lot more sources of news apart from the embassy. So we reached the point where we did them on an *ad hoc* basis. That was an excellent evolution.

Related to that, I remember the case of an American official -- governor, mayor or someone like that -- who made a visit to the American school. He was talking to kids and he asked somebody at the school, "aren't there aren't any journalists?" They laughed and said no. Once upon a time, when an American governor or mayor came to the American school, there would be journalists, American press, but it became so ordinary that no one was interested.

But Matlock did do background briefings and even on-the-record interviews for the Soviet press. That was interesting on several different levels: one, that the Soviet press would come; two, that we had an ambassador who felt comfortable doing it in Russian, though there were times when he was careful and might prefer to say something for the sake of record in English. That, I think, says a whole lot about the change.

Getting back to Dan Fisher's article, he wrote, "American correspondents who were much derided here as 'bourgeois scribblers' are today (1989) being invited to write guest columns for the government newspaper." That was very definitely the case. We and U.S. government officials had access to the Soviet media.

But I want to talk about some other particularly memorable moments from this period.

1988 marked the 30th anniversary of the U.S./Soviet cultural exchange agreement. It dated back to the Eisenhower period and his granddaughter, Susan Eisenhower, came to Moscow for the anniversary. Susan Eisenhower was a fairly regular visitor, very interested in the Soviet Union. There was a ceremony at the Hall of Columns in Moscow. Jack Matlock was on stage. From the Soviet side, someone delivered remarks from Gorbachev and Matlock asked me, "Do we have Reagan's remarks?"

I said, "No, we don't." I didn't know that there were supposed to be Reagan remarks for this occasion.

So I scrambled. My Foreign Ministry contact, Aleksandr Churlin, got on the telephone and took down a dictation in Russian of President Reagan's remarks. Meanwhile, the ceremony was going on. We found a secretary who typed the remarks in Russian. I passed the text to Ambassador Matlock with a note saying here are President Reagan's remarks in Russian. He took them, walked over to the podium and delivered them even though he hadn't had a chance to read them beforehand.

This was an act of faith that the Russians were on our side, that they weren't coming up with their own distorted version of Reagan's remarks. We could hand the text to Jack Matlock and know he could pull this off.

I used to joke that Ambassador Matlock -- who went to Moscow first as a young consular officer in the 1960's, went back as DCM in the 1970's, returned briefly as chargé in

1981, then went back as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary (and he certainly was that) in 1986 for five years -- should really go back to Moscow one more time as cultural affairs officer. He should have done so both because that's where his interests lay and because it would have been good for him to get his hands dirty and see how much work went into putting together some of the programs. He knew his Russian literature, opera and theater. He kept us on our toes.

In addition to the ambassador, we also worked for USIA Director Wick. This was the heyday of Charles Wick's directorship. We felt it in many different ways, not least of which the U.S./Soviet information talks. These were annual talks involving on the Soviet side the head of state television and radio, state publishing and certain counterparts in the United States to try, from the American point of view, to make sure we had more access to Soviet audiences and that we could call them on issues of disinformation when they were putting out something we felt was not honest.

We had several rounds of talks, both in Washington and in Moscow. The Moscow meetings in 1988 marked what I described as the busiest programming week in the history of P&C Moscow. We had virtually every senior USIA official in Moscow at that time, mostly because of the information talks, but because the talks coincided with the Chautauqua exchange in Tbilisi, and the opening of the Information, USA exhibit in Leningrad. And oh, by the way, we had a musical group, the Cleveland Quartet and the musical, Sophisticated Lady; all in the course of one week.

As I have mentioned, these exhibits were not just pieces of paper on a wall. These were multifaceted, three-dimensional displays of American life complete with young Russian-speaking guides. Sometimes it wasn't only Russian; for non-Russian cities, we tried to recruit people who spoke those languages.

Under the Cultural Exchange Agreement, we took these exhibits to six cities around the Soviet Union and the Soviets had the right to go to six cities in the United States. They never came close to matching our programs. For anyone not familiar with these exhibits, the best point of reference would be the Nixon kitchen debate with Khrushchev back in the '50s. That same program was still going strong in the late 1980's.

Over the three years 1987 to 1990, I went to every one of the cities in which the exhibit was staged. I went to a city called Rostov, south of Moscow. The person who came from Washington for the opening was our deputy director, Marvin Stone. Marvin Stone was formerly editor-in-chief of US News and World Report. He was a strong anti-Communist and told me that he could never have imagined coming to the Soviet Union under these circumstances. But I heard him on the phone one night with his wife saying that he wished she had come with him. He called it a real eye-opener of an experience, an experience that far surpassed what he expected.

This was October of 1988. It coincided with the stock market crash. I told Marvin Stone the Dow Jones had gone down more than 500 points in one day and he said what? He was

quite convinced I was wrong and would only believe it when I had a better source. That drop in the stock market crash was going to affect his portfolio pretty seriously.

I went to Tashkent, Central Asia, for the opening of the exhibit and then on to Samarkand and Bukhara. The guy who came out from Washington was not the most scintillating personality. But Samarkand and Bukhara were exciting places to visit. These were Silk Road cities with wonderful architecture, wonderful history.

I was trying to describe Samarkand to this man from Washington. Goods would travel east and west and people would come to Samarkand to tie up their camels and get refreshed. He said, "Oh, yes. I know what you are talking about. It's like Breezewood." He was referring to a place that I know well on the Pennsylvania Turnpike where people come from north and south and east and west, tie up their "camels," get gasoline and go on their way. I thought that was a perfect analogy; Breezewood on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Samarkand on the Silk Road in Central Asia.

I mentioned two other cities. One was Magnitogorsk and the other was Donetsk, two of the grimmest and grimiest cities I can recall. Magnitogorsk is east of Moscow a couple of hours. There was a sign that pointed in two directions; one said Europe, the other Asia. It was true. It was in the Urals and pretty much the dividing line between European Russia and Asian Russia.

Donetsk was down in the coal basin. Both cities were described as the Pittsburgh of their region. Magnitogorsk because back in the '20s and '30s, moguls from Pittsburgh went there to help them establish their steel industry and Donetsk because it was a coal mining area. Having grown up in Pittsburgh, I didn't really see much of my hometown in either Magnitogorsk or Donetsk.

We also went to Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia (Belarus) for the exhibit opening or, if not for the opening, to visit with the guides and see how things were going. Minsk is a city that got wiped off the map by the Nazis. They have Napoleon and Hitler to thank for the lack of any architecture there. That visit coincided with the earthquake in Armenia in December of 1988.

At the time, Gorbachev was in the United States meeting the president-elect, George Bush. He cut short his visit and returned to Moscow to be back home for the recovery efforts following the earthquake in Armenia. It said something at the time. The head of the country was personally involved in this terrible tragedy in Armenia.

Charles Wick was succeeded by Bruce Gelb as Director of USIA and Bruce Gelb and his wife came to Moscow for an exhibit opening. They were with us for an entire week so we needed a variety of activities. We decided he should visit Tbilisi, Georgia. I had been to Tbilisi many times and so I proposed that we do something different. Despite objections and questions from a number of quarters, I got my way. We flew to a city called Vladikavkaz and from there, we took the Georgian military highway to Tbilisi. I had heard about this route from someone years earlier and it fascinated me.

My counterpart in the foreign minister, Aleksandr Churlin, was not keen on this at all. He felt it was dangerous. and maybe he was right. We were picked up at the airport in Vladikavkaz and driven at breakneck speed down the old Georgian military highway to Tbilisi, getting out just once or twice for the view. It was really an exciting trip.

The road was maintained but what I think they were concerned about even then, was unrest in this area. At one point when we stopped to take pictures, I stood so that it looked as if I was standing right on the edge of this cliff though I wasn't; people were concerned. It was an exciting addition to the trip to Tbilisi.

For the exhibit in Moscow, I asked Mr. Gelb and his wife, Lueza, how they would like to visit it. It was in Sokolniki Park, one of the parks outside the center of the city and Gelb was staying at the ambassador's residence. I said: "There are two ways we can go there on Saturday. We can get in the ambassador's vehicle and drive out there with all the comfort and convenience or we can do it the way an ordinary Russian would do it; we can go over and get on the subway."

He said, "I'd love to go on the subway" and so Mr. Gelb, his wife and I walked to the subway, made our connections and arrived with the general public. He really appreciated it. It gave him a better feel for Moscow and, when we got there, for the big crowds. This wasn't the formal opening but there were long lines. He stood in line a while just to get a feel for things. Over the years, I think I found a lot of small ways like this that changed the complexion of a visit or a program.

We also took Mr. Gelb and his wife to visit friends of ours, Misha and Flora Litvinov, in their apartment. Misha was the son of Maxim Litvinov, one of Stalin's foreign ministers and also Ambassador to the United States during the war. It was just a personal call but a chance to meet someone with an interesting personal experience.

And there were two other cities I went to in connection with the exhibit. One was Kishinev, the capital of Moldova. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time. Today, the capital is called Chisinau. This was a republic that was ethnically closer to Romania than it was to the rest of the Soviet Union. I remember it as quite a poor city.

These days, in my current role accompanying international visitors, we occasionally get people from Moldova. There is no reason to be surprised but I would note that some of them are very capable, very committed people. Some of these countries like Albania and Moldova, we used to think were the dark side of the moon. They are still poor but I think one of the things we can be most satisfied about is that with the end of the Cold War, a generation later, there are good, capable, committed people.

I went to Almaty, then the capital of Kazakhstan for yet another exhibit opening and to accompany a senior official from USIA named Michael Pistor. Ambassador Matlock was also willing to three days to go out there because he saw the exhibit as a catalyst, a way to call on local officials.

I should say parenthetically that on an earlier trip I took with him, he called on local officials. When we returned, he complained that there had been no note taker. We in P&C had our hands full with the exhibit and everything else we were doing and were really not in the role of note taking so from there on, he would add someone from the political section to go along and be a note taker.

I remember hearing him boast one time that he had reached the stage where he would be a note taker only for the president. Even for the Secretary of State, he would not be the note taker. Somebody else would. Here's a guy who grew up on the mother's milk of a junior Foreign Service officer's note taking. He had now reached the level where he would be the note taker only for the President of the United States.

The Almaty opening was the occasion where our hosts served the entire head of a beast, perhaps a goat or a cow, including the tongue and the eyeballs and everything else. Jack Matlock played along with this in his toast, likening the body parts to our relationship. Whatever he said, it was vintage Jack Matlock.

There were many other facets of USIA/USIS programming. We used books in several different ways. We participated in book fairs in Moscow. I went one time to the University of Tartu in Estonia and made a special book presentation; we had a nice little ceremony as we gave a book donation to the director. I also went to Novosibirsk in Siberia and to the adjacent city of Akademgorodok, this scientific center, for a book exhibit.

We also brought out or facilitated the visits of individual artists, speakers, specialists. My list here shows the name of clarinetist Charles Neidich, the Dance Theater of Harlem, the Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble, the Beaux Arts Trio, pianist Ruth Laredo, the Aspen Wind Quintet, the Verdehr Trio, Dizzy Gillespie, Joshua Bell. All these individual artists and groups performed in the Soviet Union during this time. If we were not the entire sponsor, we were facilitating. We were very involved in their presence.

We had an evening at Spaso House featuring the U.S. poet laureate, Howard Nemerov and the eminent Russian poet, Bella Akhmadulina. She and Nemerov shared the stage. You have to know how seriously the Russians took poetry to understand the impact an evening like that would have.

The eminent architect Richard Meier came out and met with counterparts.

We also inaugurated a high school exchange program. This is something that had the blessing of President Reagan. Somewhere along the line, he had said he wanted to see thousands of high school students exchanged every year. One of the first schools to participate was Bethesda/Chevy Chase High School, just up the street from where I live right now.

Let me mention the visit of Voice of America Director, Richard Carlson. He was another of these persons whose visit it would have been hard to imagine. The director of the Voice of America, Peter Straus, came out on my first tour but by my second tour, it was a totally different relationship. By now, VOA was not being jammed and Richard Carlson could have meetings with Soviets.

Even more interesting was the fact that the Voice of America assigned its first full time correspondent to Moscow and they could not have picked a better person than André de Nesnera. André was a fluent Russian speaker and a delightful guy. André de Nesnera, I think, was the first person to report the death of André Sakharov. At least that was where I first heard the news.

He and his wife and three young boys lived in a hotel for quite a while and I remember inviting his wife one day to come over and use our washing machine for their laundry. She did and was so grateful; little things like that you could do for people but if you are living in a hotel with three small boys, you really appreciate it.

Speaking of the Voice of America and long before jamming was ended, the name Willis Conover was better known in the Soviet Union than it was in the United States because he did a jazz program on the Voice of America. For many Russians, everything they knew about jazz was through Willis Conover, his programs. Willis Conover was a household word in Russia.

A footnote: The same year I retired, in 1996, I became a licensed tour guide in Washington, DC. For a number of years, at the request of the Meridian International Center, I led Russians on three-hour tours of Washington; they were here as part of the international visitor program. So I would point out the Capitol or the Smithsonian and they would take their pictures.

But when I'd say, "Over here on Independence Avenue is the headquarters of Voice of America, *Golos Ameriki*," that got their attention. They wanted to go in and quite often they would do so later to meet some of the people whose names they had gotten to know over the years.
Another spot that Ukrainians like to visit is the Shevchenko statue on 23rd street. Likewise with the Russian Orthodox Church on Massachusetts Avenue, the Soviet embassy and various other landmarks.

But let me go back to some of the other people who came out to Moscow during that time. Moscow was the place to be and so we had a continuous stream of either high level people or people who had always somehow wanted to get involved in activities there and now had the opportunity.

In 1988, an American theater director was invited for the first time to direct a play on a Soviet stage. It may not seem like a big deal but it was looked upon as a breakthrough. Mark Lamos came out to direct Eugene O'Neil's "Desire Under the Elms" at the Pushkin Theater.

We hosted a post-performance reception at our townhouse and I had no idea how many people were going to come. It seems everyone involved in the project came in our door that night. We pulled out everything we had in the refrigerator and people scarfed it up. It was heady. You had the feeling you were part of something special.

There was a presentation of the Neil Simon play called "Biloxi Blues." There were new productions on Soviet stages. Again, I use the word Soviet deliberately because they were dealing with issues that had not been touched on before. These weren't your classic Russian plays.

A journalist for The New York Times, Felicity Barringer, was sufficiently impressed by this that she wrote an article about American theater coming to Moscow. She called it a "milestone" and used phrases like "Broadway on the Moskva" and "the Soviet theatrical world . . . speaking with an American accent."

You have to understand the importance of culture in the Soviet Union to understand why theater was such a barometer. We went frequently to the theater and we were conscious of what a barometer this was of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, that this was the real reworking of Soviet society. This was a new openness. There was no area where that was more evident than theater.

Some more names: Ted Turner. I don't know what brought Ted Turner of CNN to Moscow but he and all his retinue came. I remember being invited to a reception for him. Father Hesburgh of Notre Dame came for a human rights meeting and we had an opportunity to brief him, have lunch with him. The artist Robert Rauschenberg was there for an exhibit. In Brezhnev's time, Rauschenberg's works would not have been tolerated in the Soviet Union but now he was on a world tour, a peace tour going to countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Jeanne Kennedy Smith, the sister of President Kennedy, came out to plug the very special arts program for disabled, handicapped athletes. Walter Cronkite, whom I had seen in Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, came out for an event in Leningrad.

Bob Hope came back. On my first tour, I walked across Red Square with him, helped him buy blue suede shoes, enjoyed his special show at Spaso House for the embassy community. He came back the second time in the late 1980's. This was a commercial production that they staged on the new embassy compound with lights and cameras. I couldn't get close to him. It involved gags held up on a big card that he would read. Very disappointing.

Many of the people I mention had an agenda of their own. They were there for a reason. They were pushing some project and they thought this would be to their own benefit. Sara Caldwell came out from Boston and wanted to create a festival of American music. It went nowhere and the Russians, as I recall, were rather disappointed. It would have been great to have a musical exchange but Sara Caldwell did not manage it very well.

Leon Uris, the author of Exodus, visited in connection with Jewish literature. He gave me a signed copy of Mitla Pass.

Q: Did you get any feel from your cultural friends about the hemorrhaging of very talented Jewish Russians going to the United States from the Soviet Union?

BROWN: No, I don't remember people expressing that as a concern. They may have thought about it but that would have been only people who had a think tank view of the world. "What's this going to mean to us when all these really good people leave?" I can't tell you that my Soviet contacts ever once said "gee, we are losing our good people." More likely, they were wondering if perhaps they should do the same thing.

But no question. America, Israel and a few other countries benefited greatly from Russian Jewish immigration. The country is much poorer intellectually and otherwise from this loss. No question about it in my mind but I never sensed that people were frightened. In fact, they were probably saying "be gone if you want to leave." I don't think they felt it was ever going to affect them adversely.

What is interesting, and Rostropovich comes to mind, are the cases of those who found fame in the West but wanted to be buried on Russian soil. There are also people who symbolically took a little bit of Russian soil when they left. The talent is gone.

In addition to the steady stream of eminent Americans, we had an unending series of high level visits and exchanges. I came back to Washington for Gorbachev's visit to Washington in 1987. President Reagan came to Moscow in 1988. In 1990, Gorbachev went to Washington again. I did not go back for that visit. We had any number of visits by Secretaries of State Shultz and Baker.

In 1988, before the Reagan visit, the consul general, Max Robinson, who lived a few doors away on the compound, invited us to a reception for human rights dissidents, refuseniks and other people who were trying to emigrate. We made sure our Russian Jewish friends got to that reception. George Shultz was there, Colin Powell was there. I kidded my friends later they were not Jewish enough, they were not pushy enough. "You gotta get in there and introduce yourselves" to Colin Powell and others, I said. Let them know who you are. One way or another, they became very well known and were at the top of the Reagan list when he came out to Moscow a few months later.

We had any number of congressional delegations. Senator Bradley of New Jersey is the one whom I remember best. He made the most favorable impression. He did not come out for show. He really came for substance and he was particularly interested in economic issues. We hosted him at our townhouse for lunch with our Russian Jewish friends but he wanted to know about things like Soviet demographics and the whole economic situation.

Despite his interest in economics, I was quite often the Bradley control officer, partly because his point of contact in Washington before he came out was my friend Greg Guroff at USIA. I did not travel with Bradley when he went to Central Asia — people from the economic section did — but I did go with him on any number of appointments and these were really substantive. He asked deep, probing questions. He came back with a lot of information.

We had visits from other senators such as George Mitchell and John Glenn. Senator Glenn met with the first woman cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, and they talked about space flight. But it was Senator Bradley whom I remember most prominently.

I don't think that any USIS post anywhere in the world was busier or received more attention during this time than Moscow. But not everyone understood that. In June, 1988, the USIA Advisory Commission had a meeting in Berlin, right after the Reagan visit to Moscow. They invited the PAOs from London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, all the traditional West European posts with senior PAOs who were mostly ten years older than I was.

I said to people back in Washington "don't you think they should have the PAO from Moscow? There is no other post that has more going on from the USIA point of view right now. We just had the President of the United States. We have all these programs and issues." So at the last minute, they invited me to attend that meeting in Berlin. It wasn't for my ego that I wanted to go — I had plenty of chances to travel — but I felt they were trapped in old thinking. These guys had to be reminded you might want to have the PAO, not just from Moscow but from Warsaw and a few other places.

I have another category here in my notes called *perestroika* and *glasnost*, different ways in which those concepts came to life. I mentioned earlier that soon after we returned to Moscow in 1987, we went out to dinner at a place near Red Square. When we came out, we observed a demonstration by Crimean Tatars on Red Square. Demonstrations of any sort were unheard of at one time, let alone on Red Square.

On November 7th, 1987, I was one of two people who represented the embassy at Red Square. We were in the grandstands next to Lenin's Tomb for the parade. As I stood there, I thought of the contrast with my first tour when, on this great public holiday when you think people come out to cheer and watch the tanks go by, several of us from the embassy decided to see what it was really like. We found that streets were blocked and you really had to be approved to go anywhere, not only to Red Square but blocks away to watch the parade go by. It was anything but a public kind of event.

In 1987, I had my own pass. I sat on the bleachers next to Lenin's tomb. On the other side was a very attractive young woman, Gorbachev's daughter. Raisa Gorbacheva was also there working the crowd. I couldn't get over to talk with her but for me, it was instructive to see the general secretary's family.

A photograph that always made an impression on me was Gorbachev at the funeral of his wife, dissolved in tears. Many of us will be in tears when our beloved spouse passes away

but as I looked at that picture, he seemed so very human to me. She died in her sixties. To me, the man, Gorbachev, had humanity.

Q: When you were at the embassy were people coming up with their thoughts about Yeltsin?

BROWN: Yes. I remember seeing Yeltsin at the July 14, 1990, Bastille Day reception at the French embassy. He showed up and people were interested in him. By then, he was a well known personality and he probably had had quite a bit to drink. This was well before he basically pulled Gorbachev's fate out of the fire by getting up on the tank but you can imagine this man getting up on a tank. He was a larger than life personality. I think at the time nobody really knew the role he was going to play but you did know he was a force to be reckoned with. Yeltsin had a well-deserved reputation for being a drinker and for being pretty unpredictable. Nobody at the time could foresee what a major role he would play.

The December 2011 issue of the Foreign Service Journal was devoted entirely to the Soviet Union during my second tour. The cover read "When the USSR Fell: The Foreign Service on the Front Lines" and the lead article was by Ambassador Matlock. Other articles quote from some now-released telegrams that analyzed what was going on. Even if they were sending back highly classified telegrams, nobody in mid-1990 would have come out and said flatly -- or did come out and say flatly -- that the Soviet Union will not last. We were still thinking in terms of evolution and still casting our fate with Gorbachev entirely.

Q: Could you give a definition of perestroika and glasnost?

BROWN: At the time people were using these terms, *glasnost* was probably the easier one. Openness, transparency. *Perestroika* would be restructuring with the prefix "*pere*" meaning to redo, to change. It would be the more fundamental restructuring. It didn't mean getting rid of the Soviet Union.

Glasnost is easy to illustrate through examples such as the biography of Bukharin that American professor Steve Cohen wrote. He was given a Spaso House forum to talk about this biography and Bukharin's widow came. This name would not even have been mentioned earlier.

Such as the staging of a play that in Russian we called "Bretski Mir." The English title is something like Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Names like Trotsky were referred to in the play itself.

There was a week of conscience to honor the victims of Stalin (this may have been the occasion for the visit by Father Hesburgh). It would have been in the same context of looking back at the Stalinist period and the horrors of that time.

Some other miscellaneous memories:

Bobbi and I went for a weekend in Tallinn, Estonia. We got in touch with a Lutheran pastor there and he invited us to come to his church on Sunday morning. We accepted and the next thing I know, I am being invited to come up to the pulpit and say a few things which I did spontaneously. I tried to make them appropriate to a church service. I also talked a bit about my country. They were translated and apparently well received.

We were invited that evening to the pastor's home, where we enjoyed a simple but wonderful meal with their family and children. The pastor pointed out that that morning in the pulpit, he had been wearing a blue shirt. He had on a white clerical collar and his coat was black, fairly standard dress for a cleric. But he explained, "A few months ago I could have been arrested for wearing this outfit."

Those were the colors of the Estonian flag. Every time I see the Estonian flag, black, blue and white, I think of that pastor wearing the Estonian flag. He was a man of God in the pulpit preaching his message and wearing the garb of a cleric but he was also very proud of wearing an outfit that could have gotten him arrested a few months earlier.

I mentioned the writer Vladimir Voinovich who wrote any number of satires in the Soviet Union. We had been fortunate enough to meet him in Garmisch the year before we went back to Moscow. During our tour, he came back and there was a whole night devoted to him at the Writers' Union. He could come back and bring his satirical literature to the Writers' Union.

A man named Edward Lozansky – he was born in Ukraine but by 1990 he was living in the U.S. -- came out along with Senator Phil Gramm of Texas. They were going to establish an independent American university in Moscow. I imagined it as a university that would preach capitalism and all the virtues of capitalism.

Senator Gramm at some point quipped that the only reason people go to work in governments is to wield power. I decided I'd had enough of this. I had to bow and scrape for CODELs but I said to him, "That's not why I went into government service. I went into government work because President Kennedy inspired me to do public service." I basically let him know that I was disagreeing with him and was offended by what he had to say. He harrumphed.

Then there was that morning, December 15, 1989, when I turned on the radio and heard that Sakharov had died. It was a moving moment. On the following Sunday morning, there was a public viewing in a building a little outside the center of downtown Moscow. Bobbi and I went. We could have shown our diplomatic cards and gone to the front of the line but chose not to. It was a bitter cold day. I did what Russians sometimes do. I took a newspaper and stuck it in my shoes just to keep my feet a little farther away from the cold. We stood in line a couple of hours just to walk respectfully, silently past the open casket as friends of ours played appropriate string music.

I wanted to walk past Sakharov's open casket after having done it the way Russians did it and then I stepped aside and stood there watching other mourners pass by. The estimates on the number of people there were relatively small but the line was extremely long. It was a fitting farewell to a great man.

It was bitter cold that day. The weather the next day changed radically. It was raining as they took his coffin to a grave outside Moscow.

On our first tour, we went frequently to the old American dacha. By now we had a new dacha. We didn't go to it quite as often. It was closer. There was also an international dacha that we went to more often on the Volga River. We would go there and if the weather was cold enough, we would go cross-country skiing on the frozen Volga.

We'd also go out to a place called Izmaylovo outside Moscow where every Sunday , local artists would come. They didn't have to be approved. They could sell their wares. There was a lot of junk but occasionally if you had a good eye, you could pick up some really nice souvenirs.

Then there was the February day in 1988, Wednesday the 17th. We had a tie line to Washington, a 24-hour telephone line. We could use it also for personal calls but during the day it was limited to official calls. If I recall correctly, P&C was allotted from 2 to 3 so if I wasn't out of town or at some other activity, I would get on the phone at 2 o'clock and talk to my desk officer back in Washington where it was 6 in the morning. Yes, we had telegrams but this afternoon phone call was a very useful tool.

On this particular day I was talking to the desk officer, Rick Ruth, and there was a knock on the door. A woman on our staff named Laura Hodges opened the door and said "Phil, there's a fire on the fifth floor." I relayed the information to Rick, told him I needed to check and put down the phone. I stepped out of my office and I heard one of the information officers, Mike Hurley saying "yeah, I smell the smoke."

I told Rick there was a fire, hung up the phone, put away some papers, locked my safe, grabbed my hat and coat and headed out.

Sure enough, we made our way down one stairwell and I kept hoping we wouldn't come to a door that was locked for some "security" reasons. When we reached the courtyard, we had a view of a raging blaze on the fifth floor and a column of black smoke that went up higher than the roof of the building. Soviet fire trucks arrived and the firemen were allowed into the courtyard; they put out the fire quickly and as it turned out with minimal damage.

That night, we hosted a reception for IREX students and the next day, we went back to work. It was business as usual except for the smell of smoke and the fact that we were invited to wear old clothes.

Somebody could write a small, or not so small, book on fires at or fires related to AmEmbassy Moscow. The building was a horrible fire trap. Everybody got out safely that day. As one of my colleagues said, "After everyone was safe, I was cheering for the fire." He and others would have liked to see the whole building go up in smoke.

It was a fire trap; it was hot, so dirty. We didn't have anybody to come in and clean our offices, even empty the wastebaskets, that kind of thing. It was a wretched place to work. It was one of the many physical challenges of working in Moscow.

A few months later, we went with our wonderful Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Zieman and their daughter Vera, for a last picnic out in the woods before they were allowed to leave; at last, they had received exit visas. Less than a year before that, during the Gorbachev visit, I was in Washington and picked up a copy of the Washington Post; there on page one was a picture of Yuri's older daughter, Galina, who had received permission to emigrate, a picture of her on the front page of the Post holding up a poster saying 'Let My Parents Emigrate'. You look at the picture and you have to pinch yourself for a moment to remember this is someone whom you know very well.

I did come home for Christmas in December of 1988. I flew one day after the Pan Am bombing. If I recall correctly, every embassy received a notice, an alert from Washington that there might be an incident. Our embassy was one of the few that took that and put it in the form of a memo to the staff. As a result of that, a lot of people thought we knew more than we did. I think it was just coincidental but there were questions raised about whether AmEmbassy Moscow knew something.

I flew from Moscow to Frankfurt and on to JFK and I had a copy of the International Herald Tribune with the famous picture of the fuselage on the ground in Scotland. The flight attendant asked me to turn it over so people couldn't see it. And then later, she came back to me and asked to see the article. It was haunting.

We attended the Spaso House wedding of Susan Eisenhower and Roald Sagdeev, one of the Soviet Union's eminent scientists. It took place on the same weekend that Secretary of State Baker was in town but we managed to find time in that high level visit.

I went back to Paris for the dedication of a new organ at the American Church in Paris. I sang in the choir (what a wonderful balance that was to my busy life in Paris) and to go back for the organ dedication was very special. Ambassador Rodgers had been very "instrumental" in fundraising.

As on our first assignment, we were privileged to be in the company of outstanding American journalists. One night, we were invited to a party for Bill Keller of The New York Times. He had just won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting from Moscow.

From 1987 to 1989, we had a young woman named Sara Fenander working and living with us. We didn't have small children but nevertheless, it was very useful to have someone who would help out at receptions and do a bit of the housework. She had just

received a Master's in Russian from Stanford. A very attractive young woman, particularly to the Marines, who picked her out. But Sara was at arm's length with the Marines. She had no interest in that world at all. We gave her a great deal of liberty, far more than we were allowed to under the restrictions at the time, to go out with friends and interact with Russians just because we had a great deal of confidence in her. She had excellent Russian.

We were fortunate that by the time she came, there were any number of people in their 20's who were recruited as nannies or under the PA&E contract. Many of them were very bright, wonderfully outgoing young people. One was the great-grandson of Robert Frost.

Sometime in 1988, Sara and a group of these people went to a part of the Soviet Union, a part of Russia that to this day very few people visit; Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk at the southern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula. It is that peninsula where the Korean airliner was shot down. They came back with amazing stories about salmon and people who had seldom met anyone from outside their own villages. It was a tribute to these people to go out and explore but it was also another example of what you could do at that time.

P&C finally was assigned a couple of these Americans under the PA&E contract. I was fortunate enough to pull away from Spaso House a young woman named Nancy Carney. She came and worked for me for the last six months of my assignment. She was so enthusiastic and so delighted to move away from the situation which she was serving drinks to actually come over and do something of substance. It seemed like the more assignments I gave to her, the more she thrived.

As I thought about saying farewell to people, I recalled that you could actually rent for a night an entire boat, a large boat, and do it with rubles. You could use it as a party boat for a night and I said, "Nancy, could you help me with this?"

She did help me. We did it on two separate nights, once for my official contacts and again for friends. It was summer so the days lasted long and we went out for several hours on the Moscow River to a big, wide bay, called the Bay of Joys in Russian. You had drinks and food. Even my Soviet contacts were awestruck by the fact that I could arrange this. What a nice way it was to say farewell to people rather than just another cocktail party.

We even found time to make a weeklong trip to Ireland. I was pretty casual at that time about travel; I had so many opportunities to travel and I said to Bobbi that I would make this trip only if we simply winged it, no advance planning. So we got on this midnight Aeroflot flight from Moscow to Shannon. All the Russian planes refueled in Shannon and if there were 150 of us on the plane, 148 went on to Havana. Bobbi and I got off, rented a car and had a wonderful week completely spontaneous, unplanned, just going from one B&B to the next and then flew back to Moscow.

The Aeroflot return flight began in Lima, went from Lima to Havana, from Havana to Gander to refuel, from Gander to Shannon, from Shannon to Luxembourg and from

Luxembourg to Moscow. If you had boarded in Lima on Friday, you would not get back to Moscow until Sunday. It was not an atypical Aeroflot connection. Even when it landed in Ireland, it was accompanied by some fire trucks.

Our tour ended on a weekend and on Sunday, we were invited to the Rostropovich dacha. He was not living there anymore but we were friends with his sister and her husband and they said, "Come out to the dacha" and we did. What a lovely place it was -- the furnishings, the furniture, the hangings on the wall.

I have two distinct memories of that day. First was how relaxed I felt. I had a great job but I was pushing all the way for three years and that weekend, I knew I didn't have to go to a country team meeting the next morning. I was totally relaxed.

The other recollection was that out in a corner of the garden was where Solzhenitsyn, with Rostropovich providing him refuge, sat and wrote Cancer Ward. I found it inspiring.

The next day, before we flew Aeroflot to Beijing, we had a meal at the newly-opened McDonald's on Gorky Street. McDonald's was attracting a huge crowd of Russians just because it was the first McDonald's in Moscow. It was like a vicarious trip to the United States. McDonald's soon learned they couldn't put out trays because the trays walked out the door real fast but Russians were lined up outside for the McDonald's experience.

Bobbi and I had decided to come home via China. We flew to Beijing and spent the better part of two weeks there and in Hong Kong. It was great to be able to look at China and think about the Moscow we had left behind. We had a hotel in Beijing that ran circles around any hotel we ever experienced in Moscow.

We had made the arrangements for our trip through American Express in Moscow. We got to Beijing and were escorted up to our room. There was a bowl of fruit on the table. I called American Express and said we are here for our tour. The man said, "Tour? The only tours we have here are going to Singapore" or something like that. I explained how I had made the reservation through American Express in Moscow and his tone changed. He said, "Oh, Mr. Brown, you are the tour." This was one year after Tiananmen Square. There were no American tourists. So for ten days or more, Bobbi and I had a driver and a guide and we were it.

Medford, Massachusetts, Murrow Fellow, Fletcher School (1990-1991)

Q: Today is the 26th of June, 2012.

BROWN: The year is 1990 and I have just finished 13 consecutive years overseas, long by Foreign Service standards. We went overseas in 1977 and we had two tours in the Soviet Union, one in the late 1970s and one in the late 1980s and in between five years in Paris. This was the height of my professional career. I was overseas during the entire Reagan presidency, all during the 1980s and I had seen the enormous changes in the

Soviet Union. When I describe this to people and I mention Paris, they sometimes smile as if that was just wine, women and song. It wasn't! Paris was a very intense job as well.

During the course of one of my visits from Moscow back to Washington, I learned about my next assignment. I had thought that I would now occupy a relatively senior position in the area office, something like European area director. After all, I'd served five years in Paris, six years in Moscow and I was now senior Foreign Service. But I was better served to let the system work and I was assigned to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and to a program there established by USIA called the Edward R. Murrow Program.

At first I was a little bit surprised but as I thought more, it was a wonderful way to come back to the United States. I wasn't coming right back to Washington and to the bureaucracy. (In fact, though I didn't know it then, I would never come back to the central bureaucracy.) We knew the Boston area very well. I would be coming back to teach exactly 25 years after I had graduated from the Fletcher School.

This was where I had met Bobbi and it was two years after our daughter Sarah had graduated from Tufts. It was familiar territory. We had a lot of friends in the Boston area and coincidentally, we had a cabin on a lake four hours away in Maine so it made for a soft landing.

For many years, I had never paid rent. I didn't want to pay rent so I bought a two-bedroom condo at the Watermill Apartments in Arlington, Massachusetts, and commuted from there to Medford where Tufts University is located.

The dean at the time was Jess Salacuse. The Murrow program was headed by a retired USIA officer named Hewson Ryan. He had been an ambassador in Central America and was referred to either as Ambassador Ryan or Professor Ryan.

A soft landing and yet I realized right away that I was among intellectuals and I felt a kind of insecurity. People would ask me questions about the Soviet Union. I had been doing my job really hard for three years and I knew what I needed to do but they'd ask me what seemed like intellectual or philosophical or name-dropping questions. I did feel a sense of insecurity.

I had to go back and say to myself "you did your job well. You can talk about those areas that you know well." I felt this insecurity when I went to my first faculty meeting at the beginning of the academic year. The dean went around the table and many of the professors talked in rather self-serving terms about all the articles he or she had written, the books they were working on and all the intellectual enterprises they had undertaken. I didn't think I had anything to match that.

When it came my turn, I wanted to say with a straight face that I was involved in international trade and deficit financing and then explain that that meant that I had just

borrowed money to buy a Toyota but I didn't dare to do so. I was afraid it might seem disrespectful.

At the end, the faculty members moaned and groaned about how they had to endure this meeting and couldn't wait until it ended. It reminded me of when I was in Moscow. Ambassador Matlock brought out an academic as part of his staff. Peter Fisher was a wonderful colleague who spoke excellent Russian. The first time he came to a staff meeting, he walked out saying "oh, that was so interesting. I learned so much" and all the staff people like me were wondering. Now it was the reverse. Here I was going to a faculty meeting saying "yeah, it's interesting. Getting to know who some of the people are and some of the issues." The faculty members were all groaning that they had to go to one faculty meeting a year or per semester.

The first semester, except for some guest lectures, I was free to do whatever I needed in order to teach a course during the second semester. The Fletcher School is located in an old building that had a lot of charm but was very small and confining when I was a student there. By the time I came back in 1990, they'd put on a shiny new wing but the Murrow Center was still located up in a part of the building you didn't find on your own. If I was going to interact with students, I had to take the initiative, go down to the cafeteria or the library and that kind of thing.

Even when I was there as a student, Fletcher was diverse with a large number of foreign students. By 1990, forty percent of the students at Fletcher were foreign students and there were more women, not surprisingly. There were also, in addition to myself, some military officers and mid-careerists who were there on specialized assignments.

In 1963, I graduated from a small liberal arts college in Ohio, Wooster College and went to Boston to Fletcher School and wow, was my mind opened then. I saw the diversity in 1963 -- foreign students, people from different parts of the United States, people with very different backgrounds than mine. That heterogeneity and that diversity was even more pronounced in 1990. I first went there when I was 21, almost 22, right after I graduated from college and that was not unusual at the time. By 1990, most students had had travel, work or other experience and were a bit older than when I went there.

When I taught the course the second semester, I realized they were like students everywhere. Some were good, some were not as good. Some took it a little more seriously than others. I graded one person's paper real critically one time, not for substance but for grammar and syntax, and she said to me, "Oh, I didn't realize you were also looking at that part of the paper."

Before I began to teach my course in the second semester, I wrote the standard Christmas letter. To quote from it: "We are farther from Washington and the so-called real world here in suburban Boston than we ever were in Paris or Moscow. This is a transition year; one that allows us to evaluate experiences and opportunities we've had, to reacquaint ourselves with America and to prepare for our return to Washington."

Looking back, I think that was pretty insightful. We really were farther away from Washington, DC than we ever were in Paris or Moscow simply because of the nature of the job. It was a transition year, one that allowed us to evaluate the experiences and opportunities. I was smart enough to realize I had had wonderful overseas experiences leading up to that time. That is something that this oral history experience has also allowed me to do.

So come second semester, Professor Brown taught a course, Diplomacy 287, a Colloquium on Public Diplomacy or Public Diplomacy in Practice. I prepared a multi-page, week-by-week outline of what we would be doing. I prepared a reading list. I really went about my work quite conscientiously. I had 22 students and maybe a third of them were foreign students.

Q: Were these foreign students interested in the subject matter despite no particular tie to the subject matter or were you essentially being used as a training institution for foreign schools of other countries?

BROWN: Several of them were practitioners. They were already part of their foreign ministries and they were at Fletcher as a mid-career training year such as I had had at Princeton. Others were basically students.

I said to them, especially those that were practitioners in their own foreign ministries, that I hoped the course would not be simply about how Americans do public diplomacy. One of the things we were going to do was to try to shape a public diplomacy program for your country, to demonstrate that Kiribas could just legitimately as the United States have a public diplomacy program. You wouldn't have all the bells and whistles and resources but you could try to establish the priorities for your country and ask how you would try to address these on the world stage.

So I had 22 students. The course ran from 1 to 3 o'clock on Monday afternoon. It didn't take me too long to figure out that that was not an ideal teaching time. That's what the low guy on the totem pole gets assigned because about 2 o'clock, people begin to fall asleep. They are recovering from the weekend and from lunch. It wasn't the ideal teaching time so I had to adapt to that.

I did a course outline; I had a reading list, a glossary. I gave a mid-term exam and I asked everyone to do a research paper, a report. On the midterm exam, I did something tricky. There was a required question that was worth 35% and then there was "choose two of the following, each for 30%," so that it added up to 95%.

Then I had a 5% required question and it was "who was Edward R. Murrow?" We're in the Edward R. Murrow Center; I am the Edward R. Murrow Fellow but we have not discussed Edward R. Murrow. The answers were extremely varied, all over the board. There were also howls of protest. "We never discussed Edward R. Murrow." "How can you expect us to know who he was?"

My answer, with a smile on my face, was, “Look, guys. Everything in life isn’t going to be delivered to you on a silver platter. You are in the Edward R. Murrow Center. I am the Edward R. Murrow professor. I am simply reminding you to look around the world where you are and ask questions.” In the end, I didn’t penalize anybody for not knowing who Edward R. Murrow was but it was fun to see both the variety of answers and the reaction.

I assigned everybody to do a paper with certain parameters and then I said you will have five minutes to tell us about your paper; again there were some protests. “I have done so much work on this paper, how can I ever present it in five minutes?” Well, in practical terms, we’ve got 22 students in the class so if we are not going to be here well beyond the assigned time, I am going to have to limit you to five minutes.

But more importantly, in your professional career, you are often going to be lucky if you have five minutes to present your ideas. You are going to be lucky in some cases if you have thirty seconds or two minutes with somebody senior so it is good discipline. As I recall, I sat there with a bell or timer to keep people within the five minute limit.

Q: It’s an excellent drill. You are absolutely right. In the real world, OK, you’ve got three minutes to determine how we are going to establish peace with country X.

BROWN: The relevant memory I had was one time with Secretary Shultz in Paris. I had gone to a press conference by his counterpart, Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson. John Hughes was the press spokesman for Shultz. Instead of him taking my information and feeding it to Shultz, he thoughtfully invited me to come in. I wasn’t too used to briefing the secretary of state. I had about a minute to tell him what Cheysson said and I did it pretty well. I answered his questions and that was it. I certainly didn’t have five minutes to sit there and spell out all the details.

In the course, I went through what public diplomacy is and the U.S. approach to it, the tools and a couple of other things but by far the best single lecture that I did was one called “Cultural and Information Exchanges as Elements in U.S./Soviet Relations between 1955 and 1991.” 1955 was the first cultural exchange agreement.

I described cultural and information programs in a political context and how they reflected the political context? How do they affect the politics? Everything from exhibits to symphony orchestras over that period. I thought it was my best single lecture. It was more like a case study and case studies are more than just lists on a piece of paper.

Q: Did you get student questions on how to talk in positive terms about the dark side of one’s country?

BROWN: Inevitably this or a variation on it is the question you get more than any other. What do you do when you are asked to espouse policy that you really don’t believe in? It is a fundamental question that any Foreign Service Officer or employee of any company faces and there are various ways of answering. Do I resign in the case of Vietnam? I used to cite our policy in Central America as one that I was not particularly comfortable with.

But it didn't lead me to resign. It's a fundamental question. How do you personally deal with it when you are asked to associate yourself with or espouse a policy that you disagree with?

The other frequently asked question is "Isn't this just all propaganda? Do you ever tell bad things about your country?"

For the past three weeks, I have been traveling around the United States with foreign visitors invited here by the State Department. This was a group of 24 investigative journalists from 24 countries. Everyone came from a very different background representing different media and different working conditions from Burma to Iceland.

Our primary interest is that they have a changed impression of the United States, that some of their misimpressions of the United States be corrected. We want to correct misimpressions of the United States but not just the bad impressions. Sometimes, visitors have an exaggerated good impression of this country. We want them to understand that maybe in some ways, it isn't quite as good or efficient as they think. If they think that everything in this country operates efficiently and is well organized and nobody is ever impolite, we would like to correct that as well. They are going to meet some impolite people and sometimes, things are going to be badly organized.

I never felt in foreign policy terms or in my job that there was anything wrong with being critical of my country as long as I was fair.

So back to Fletcher. After my course, I turned in the grades and I think I gave only one A and nothing lower than a B, not because of grade inflation but because the students had all done reasonably well. They also evaluated me and I got the results. It was all on a number system. "One" was very good and "five"was very bad. I concluded I had basically earned a B+ for my teaching efforts and I felt pretty pleased with that for several reasons.

One is I am not a career teacher. I was learning on the job. Secondly, these were confidential evaluations. They didn't have to hand them to me. They just filled them out and turned them in. They didn't have to face me as I did when I graded them.

Thirdly, as I said to them very honestly at the end of the course, public diplomacy in the classroom is somewhat boring. I explained that there was nothing I would enjoy more than taking the students and going to a particular country to run a public diplomacy program there. We would go out and meet journalists, visit college campuses, schedule exhibits, bring in symphony orchestras and that kind of thing. Then they would find public diplomacy really quite interesting. In a classroom, it is not the most scintillating subject. I worked as hard as I could to make it interesting. I would be the first to admit it wouldn't be the first course I would sign up for.

Considering those three factors -- I am not a professional teacher, these were anonymous evaluations and the nature of the course -- I was pretty pleased with a B+ grade.

Q: Did you sense any bias or mindset or something of the faculty there towards government?

BROWN: No, none in particular. My time there coincided with the first Gulf War. There were a couple of lectures that were based on international law and thus very critical of U.S. actions but I didn't find a particular bias toward the U.S. government and certainly not towards me personally.

The chief criticism of my course, the area where I got the lowest evaluation, was that the pace was too slow, the workload was not sufficiently demanding. I wished I could have gone back and increased the reading list. Other than that, I don't know how I would have made the course more demanding.

In addition to teaching, I tried to respond to any outside invitations and I did some lectures at other schools. I went to the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard for a similar program and tried to meet with any students who were interested in the Foreign Service as a career. I tried to be ready, willing, and available for those opportunities.

I mentioned Ambassador Hewson Ryan, a very nice man. He was retired. They had a lovely home that reflected his many travels all over the world. I was shocked just a couple of months after leaving Fletcher that fall to hear that he had died of a heart attack. The fellow who replaced me, a longtime USIA pro named Len Baldyga, had to take over and do both jobs. That was my 1990-1991 year.

Washington, DC (1991-1994)

So after 14 years away, it was inevitable that we would move back to the Washington area; we came back to the same house in Chevy Chase we left in 1977. But I was really lucky. Once again I escaped the clutches of the bureaucracy and did not end up in the area office or the USIA headquarters. I became director of the Foreign Press Centers. We had facilities in Washington, New York and Los Angeles.

We were in the National Press Building on 14th Street. Our job was to promote U.S. interests through services to foreign journalists. We offered a wide variety of facilities, briefings, ideas and whatever to foreign journalists, either to those large numbers of foreign journalists who were resident and accredited here or to those who came on short term assignments.

It was more like an overseas assignment than a Washington one. We had several hundred resident foreign journalists and a directory that listed them by country. Some were more active than others, some were obviously better than others but bottom line, there were and are a lot of foreign journalists in Washington. I think the Japanese had the single largest number.

My staff consisted of people responsible for geographic areas. The fellow who did Asia was probably the best person on the staff; he regularly had journalists in his office and on the phone and at our briefings.

We also had an office in New York, not quite as large, but very centrally located in midtown Manhattan, and a one-person operation in Los Angeles. I was in charge of all three Foreign Press Centers.

I had hardly started the job and my predecessor hadn't even left when the U.S. arranged a Middle East peace conference in Madrid. Somebody suggested that it would be useful for me to go. This was the conference where Syrians, Israelis and the PLO came together with President Bush and Secretary Baker. Hundreds of journalists were on hand.

At the time, they thought they were going to make some serious breakthroughs in that part of the world. When I returned and was asked to report on my impressions, I made a list of what I called winners and losers. It turned out to be an attention-getting way of conveying a substantive impression.

I said one winner was the PLO because they seemed to be reasonable. They could do outreach. American-educated Hanan Ashrawi was their spokesperson and she presented a very reasonable and persuasive face.

Another winner was CNN. In the newsroom, everyone watched and many reporters probably reported based on what they saw and heard on CNN. In ten years, from when I first heard about CNN while in Moscow, it had gone from being mocked as "Chicken Noodle News" to virtually the go-to source for news for many international journalists.

The Syrians were losers because they came but wouldn't show the minimal courtesy towards the Israelis or anybody else. That conference was a pretty fast way to start my new assignment.

At the Foreign Press Center, we had what seemed like a well-equipped briefing room and we were constantly trying to bring in high-level officials to brief the foreign press. Foreign journalists are important but they are never going to be treated as well as the American press, whether it be at the White House or State Department or elsewhere around town.

Over the course of my three years, we brought in a long list of people. Among the best known names were the late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, White House advisor David Gergen, Labor Secretary Robert Reich. But that was atypical. More often we'd get somebody farther down the bureaucracy. We would also get people from think tanks who came in not to express an official position but who were experts on a given subject. If you were lucky, you got them to come in on a subject that was in the news, maybe health care or how the Supreme Court operates. One of the people we brought in was a man named Anthony Fauci. The attendance was small; little did we know what a household name he would become.

We had hangers on, people who found the Foreign Press Center to be an easy place to hang their hat. There were certain journalists who would not come except in the rarest of circumstances but by and large, quality journalists used that facility.

We had a librarian, Miriam Rider, who had done traditional library work; now she was able to do something called "search." She could take a term or a subject and do a quick search for it. It says something about the period we were going through that this was a new feature that only our librarian could offer. People were lined up at her door to use Lexisnexis as we exploited this new technology.

One thing that I pushed was organizing for foreign journalists to visit cities around the United States. I did it partly because I enjoyed it and partly because I thought it was important. Foreign journalists often would have the means to travel within the U.S. but they didn't enjoy the access that we could get, particularly if we had a group. We could arrange access that was really more important to them than the cost of the plane fares and the hotels.

For example, I reached out to my ambassador in France, Joe M. Rodgers from Nashville, Tennessee. While in Paris, he used to brag about Nashville, the new south and what a wonderful city it was and I imagined that was the case so I called him. I described my position and asked, "If I could bring a group of journalists to Nashville, would you be able . . ." I think I went that far in the sentence and he said, "I am right here. You can bring a group of foreign journalists here. I will set you up with my friends in the business world and academic world."

We took some 20 journalists to Nashville for, I think, two nights and three days. Because Nashville was then an American airlines hub and Joe Rodgers had good connections, we didn't have to pay for travel. We stayed at the Grand Ole Opry Hotel. We went to the Rodgers' home one night in a gated community for a large reception. We talked to business and civic leaders. We went to Vanderbilt University. We went to one of the Japanese car factories. We were very, very well treated over a period of several days, and of course, we had a night at the Grand Ole Opry.

And there was a payoff. The correspondent for The Times of India wrote an article headlined "Nashville, the New South." The tone was "Here is a city I had never known before and with all these wonderful resources and changes," etcetera. We had several articles like that. No journalist was being forced to write these articles. We didn't show them the seamier sides of Nashville but it was a win-win situation. Ambassador Rodgers asked some of his friends to cooperate. They were very happy to do it.

I have a long list of similar trips that I set up or asked people on the staff to set up. 1992 was a presidential election year and we went to Atlanta and Chicago to help journalists cover the primaries. I remember being in the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago for the 1992 primary when Hillary and Bill Clinton came out to cheers. He had won the primary. After the cheers had died down and everything was over, I went to a bar on the top floor and

who should come wandering in late in the evening but Bill Clinton to talk to some journalist friends. We had a couple of foreign journalists there and he chatted with them -- typical Bill Clinton.

The Foreign Press Center would also set up facilities at the conventions to help foreign journalists.

We went to San Antonio when President Bush organized a drug summit there. We took journalists to Los Angeles less than a year after the riots; we went to the corner of Florence and Normandy in the center of Watts to see what had happened but also to see what had improved, what changes were being made.

Our office was on the eighth floor of the National Press Building and on the top floor is the National Press Club. I went up one night to a reception featuring the very young mayor of Phoenix, Arizona. His name was Paul Johnson. There weren't many people at the reception. I introduced myself and went through the same spiel. I am in contact with foreign journalists. If I could bring a group of foreign journalists to Phoenix, could we work together cooperatively? He passed me to an assistant and we took a group of people to Phoenix for meetings with a cross-section of local leaders. They even arranged for us to fly up to the Grand Canyon.

Of course, the foreign journalists were watching TV because they've got to be careful they are not missing some big news story and the visit to Phoenix and the Grand Canyon coincided with the Waco Branch Davidian siege. Several of my poor journalists were inside watching and reporting on that when they could have been out looking at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.

We also went to Brownsville, Texas, right across from Matamoros, Mexico. This was at the time of NAFTA negotiations and there were all these cross border activities with manufacturing done on the Mexican side. I discovered that Brownsville, Texas is the poorest city in the United States or at least has the highest level of poverty of any major city in the United States.

We went to Detroit with a group of Mideast journalists. I did not realize that Dearborn, Michigan has the largest Middle East population of any city in the United States. These guys from Lebanon, Israel and Jordan got to Dearborn, Michigan, and thought they were home because there are so many Arab-Americans, Arab cuisine and the like.

One beautiful day, I took a group of journalists out on the Chesapeake Bay just to report on environmental issues. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation arranged for it. It was a story idea the journalists might not have had on their own. They didn't have to worry about the organizational aspects of it and they had a nice little story.

In 1994, our Los Angeles Foreign Press Center arranged a program based on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bomb. We went to Los Alamos, to another facility in Albuquerque, New Mexico and then to a place outside Carlsbad, New Mexico called the

“waste isolation pilot project.” We went way down underground in these limestone caves where they could store low-grade nuclear waste.

For an enterprising writer, one who could convince his editors it was an interesting story, they had extraordinary access. They had access to closed door laboratories. They could never call on their own and say, ”I am so and so from a foreign paper and I’d like to come out and interview you.” But as a group and with us setting it up and providing the local ground transportation, they had an excellent program.

We also set up a facility in Seattle, Washington, for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting and in Vancouver when Yeltsin and Clinton had a summit meeting. These are examples of things we did outside the Washington office. I guess one reason they have stuck with me is that they just made my job interesting while over on the other side of town, people were shuffling papers and doing the bureaucratic things.

After I retired, I went back to the Foreign Press Center with a group of visiting foreign journalists. A couple of resident foreign journalists talked to the group. One was from Africa, one from Mexico. One of the questions for them was “how do you go about covering the United States?” Consistently the answer is "it is overwhelming. There is so much information here. There are policy makers, there are academics. There are think tanks, everything else outside the beltway. The question is not access to information. It is how you whittle it down and focus on what’s really important and of course, satisfy your editors back home."

Q: Did you find interest in what you were doing on the part of the State Department?

BROWN: We were part of USIA. Today, the Foreign Press Center is part of the State Department. It was an uphill battle. You had to work to convince State Department to take us seriously. From our facility, journalists could monitor the daily White House and State Department briefings. It may have just been audio. We were just getting into that facet of technology where you could sit in one place and monitor a lot of other briefings. We also had transcripts available. One stop shopping is not an overstatement. There were a lot of things you could do right from the comfort of our offices there.

But it was always an uphill battle to get people to come over from State Department. Some bureaus and some people were more willing to speak than others but part of our job was to remind people that foreign journalists are an important audience.

I enjoyed the job. I enjoyed working with foreign journalists. I had a good staff. I had the opportunity to go to New York from time to time and see similar programs there and a couple of times I went to Los Angeles where we had the one-man operation.

Before the G-7 meetings, President Clinton would do an interview with seven journalists, one from each of the other six countries plus somebody from the European community, and we could get involved somewhat in picking the journalists. I managed to go along on

at least one occasion so I have a picture of myself against the wall in the Oval Office with the journalists in a horseshoe facing the president.

I especially remember Clinton's demeanor. He was sitting with the journalists arrayed on either side. Each journalist would get one question and maybe one follow-up. Clinton was so good. He would turn and look that person in the eye and he would come up with a really well-crafted, articulate, quotable answer. For three or four minutes, it seemed as if that journalist and Bill Clinton were the only people in the room. The eye contact was there, the focus. Clinton really knew how to do his side of the equation. The journalists walked away saying "in my exclusive interview today with President Clinton, he told me." It was perfect. Much better than some other presidents.

Two years into the assignment, in 1993, I was beginning to wonder, what's next? I had now passed 50 years of age. I knew my days in the Foreign Service were numbered. I was in the senior Foreign Service so I was up against time in class. I really felt I had had a wonderful Foreign Service experience and I didn't want it to end on a low note. I didn't want to end up in some uninteresting job. I was looking at some overseas assignments. A colleague came to me one time; he was our area director for Latin America. He said, "Phil, would you be interested in PAO Mexico?"

My first thought was I don't know anything about Mexico. But there would be the chance to learn Spanish and I could learn the requirements of the job. I saw him about six months later and told him I was really thinking seriously about the assignment. He said, "Forget it. I am taking the job." He was the area director for Latin America.

RPO Vienna (1994-1996)

Then someone asked me about RPO/Vienna. I hadn't ever given it much thought. RPO stood for Regional Program Office. Historically many organizations, government and otherwise, had set up offices in Vienna to serve programs in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, given the proximity, the ease of working in Vienna. Of course, I was familiar with RPO from my Moscow years. It had provided us programs and materials. If you wanted a brochure printed, if you wanted some technical support, you could find a really competent staff in Vienna.

So I mulled it over and I accepted it. It was a challenge because Bobbi was now settled in Chevy Chase. She had a teaching job at Sidwell Friends School. She did not want to pack up and move overseas again. We agreed that I would go by myself and she would stay here and do her thing.

At the time, I put down on paper two pages of thoughts about the job, what it meant for me. Why I was doing it and what the challenges and what the prospects were. It worked out. It stands up pretty well. It did not turn out to be four years. I was only there for the better part of two years before I retired.

In July, 1994, my last year at the Foreign Press Center, there was a presidential visit to Riga, Latvia. President Clinton was going there and the Lithuanian and Estonian heads of state were coming in to meet with him. The White House was shopping around; they wanted some staff. They needed people to go to Riga to help out with press operations and people were turning it down. It was the wrong time of the year. I accepted.

Basically what the White House did was to rent central Riga for a few days. We, the U.S., paid for everything. We purchased rights to the center square. There were outdoor activities. Of course, the Latvians loved it. They were in the news and we injected a lot of dollars in the economy.

So I asked to go through Vienna on the way back. I wanted to see the job and I am so glad I did. They had set aside an apartment for me in a place far from the center of town. I would have needed a car and I would have been isolated. I knew I didn't want to live out there. They said there is nothing else we can think of right now. Nothing available so you'll have to live in a hotel.

So when I got to Vienna, I did live in a hotel for well over a month but I ended up with a wonderful apartment on Josefstaedter Strasse, an easy walk from our office, just up from the Ring Road. I was near the old historic part of town and for 21 months, I took full advantage of that.

I had an apartment with a mansard roof. At first, I thought I would be ducking my head all the time but it had great charm. I could lie in bed and look through the skylight right up to the sky. The downtown location, city center location was great.

One challenge was the fact that I didn't speak German. I wished that I had worked harder on that. I learned enough German to order meals and do the basic necessities but not having conversational competence was a handicap.

One of the ways Bobbi and I stayed in touch was e-mail. This was the first time, 1994, that email was taken for granted. We both got the user IDs that we use today.

RPO was housed in a building that had been -- at one time I think prior to or during the Second World War -- a hospital run by a Jewish family with a big garden in the back. They lost the hospital during the war and after the war, it was turned over to Americans. It was part of our diplomatic presence in Vienna.

There were many multilateral organizations in Vienna. During most of my Foreign Service career, talk about "the agency" meant the CIA. In Vienna, the "agency" meant the International Atomic Energy. They had a huge presence there.

We had an embassy but I was really not part of the bilateral mission at all. Never in my Foreign Service career overseas, except when I was in Garmisch studying Russian, did I have less involvement in the bilateral relationship. No evening activities. I was not involved in the bilateral program at all.

RPO had an outstanding staff of some 40-50 Austrian employees, many of whom had served there for many years. I informally restructured the operation so that I met with three of them every day – Hannes Schmiedt, who handled all the budgetary and administrative support that we gave to the field; Marie Stephen, who headed the unit that provided program support to the field; and Joe Kocsi, who directed the printing operation.

Marie was Czech-born and educated and I recall going to Prague with her one time in connection with a meeting of the USIA Advisory Commission. She was going to offer them a side trip and when they turned it down, she and I went instead to the town of Cesky Krumlov. What a treat it was to go there with someone like Marie. I made return trips with both Bobbi and my parents.

Once again, I did a lot of traveling. One of my jobs was to go to all the posts served by RPO, meet with the PAO and see what their needs were and how we could help. By now, we were setting up embassies in all the constituent republics of the former Soviet Union so I went back to many of those capitals that I had been to when I was in Moscow. I also had a chance to return to Moscow, my first trip back there in five years.

In addition to going back to Moscow, and in spite of budget cuts, I was still involved in presidential visits. President Clinton went to Ukraine in May, 1995, to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I was there when he was in Kiev. I was smart enough to say to myself, on the one hand you are just a little cog in the big machinery but on the other hand, outside my hotel, I watched this victory parade marking the 50th anniversary of the Second World War with all these elderly Ukrainian veterans bedecked with medals. I thought a lot about what this meant to the people of Ukraine.

I was present when Clinton visited Babi Yar, the spot outside Kiev where in 1941, Jews were massacred. The Russian poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, wrote a poem called, Babi Yar. Jews were lined up and shot and the bodies fell into a mass grave. Clinton, wearing a yarmulke, made appropriate remarks. Again, I thought to myself "here I am this guy who grew up in western Pennsylvania and now I am standing on this historic site near the President of the United States."

The ambassador to Austria was a woman named Swanee Hunt. She was the daughter of H. L. Hunt, the oil magnate from Texas. She was part heiress to that fortune. He was a very conservative Republican, she was anything but. She was a Clinton appointee, very progressive in her ideas and particularly focused on women's issues. This was also the time of the war in the Balkans and she became very, very involved in raising money to restore the library in Sarajevo.

She had a staff meeting at her house one day, at the residence, that I was invited to attend. Something I said caught her attention and from that day on, she included me in the country team meetings and treated me very nicely, as if my opinion counted. Up to that point, RPO had not really been a part of the country team. I appreciated that.

But the elections in 1994 produced a big shift and a government shutdown. Al Gore came out with his reorganization of government plan and all of a sudden, our mission changed. Printing and publishing were passé. Budgets were being cut. It seemed almost as soon as we had the opportunity to open libraries and cultural centers in Eastern Europe and beyond, we were being told they were no longer needed. We'd won the Cold War; we needed to save money, etcetera, etcetera.

One of the issues that came up on my second tour in Moscow was an agreement for reciprocal cultural centers. We had long, lengthy negotiations and an agreement, if I recall correctly, was signed in 1990 at the Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Washington. There were negotiations about the diplomatic status of the building and the people working there. We all felt it was important that we have a cultural center in Moscow.

Six or seven years later, when we had carte blanche throughout Eastern Europe, the feeling among some was "we don't need cultural centers now. They are wide open societies. Why are we spending all this money on bricks and mortar?"

It is true they are expensive and in some countries they can become targets but there was another element at work, the idea that we had won the Cold war. We didn't need to worry about any of these things anymore.

Our RPO mission was changed to include training for some of the newly hired Foreign Service national employees in Eastern Europe and that seemed to me a very legitimate enterprise. We'd bring in these very bright, very talented people we were hiring from everywhere from Riga to Vladivostok and give them training. That was good to see but on the other hand, it was hard to swallow cuts and reductions in some of the more traditional activities.

RPO was faced with severe staff reductions. I now had 30 years service, I was over 50 years of age and I was thus eligible for retirement so when a telegram came out offering retirement, I decided to accept.

Before I left Vienna, I put down my thoughts in a two-page paper that I titled "Challenges and Resources: Some Parting Thoughts." In it, I contrasted my second tour in Moscow, where we had enormous challenges but very limited resources other than the excellent staff and RPO Vienna, where we had wonderful resources but where the challenge was primarily to fend off ideas such as moving the operation to Vilnius (to save money) and demands that we reduce the excellent staff.

The penultimate paragraph read: "And so, to my USIA colleagues, especially to those assigned to the world's hot spots, to those FSOs and FSNs struggling to keep ahead of the game and wishing for just a bit more support, I say count your blessings. When it's all over and you look back, you will probably have achieved most of what you sent out to accomplish and your sense of satisfaction will be great. At the same time, pity your

colleagues who have the desire and means to take on a demanding assignment but who don't have the challenge."

Washington, DC (1996)

I came back to Washington at the end of March, 1996. I did a month-long transition course at the Foreign Service Institute. My official retirement date was May 31, 1996.

I tried to leave without bitterness but neither did I part with any great sense of gratitude to the institution or to its leaders. I had not the slightest desire to change places with people in senior positions nor did I miss the work after I retired. I really felt that the leadership of USIA at that time was the most ineffective we had ever had.

Director Joe Duffey had no devotion to the institution. As much as people maligned Mr. Wick during the Reagan years, he believed in what we did. He sought out resources and once his view changed on the Foreign Service, he loved us. We were his guys out there in the field. One day, he'd want to fire us all but the next day he'd be singing our praises. Joe Duffey had no loyalty to the institution and showed no respect to people who had made it their career.

I came back to Washington somewhere in the year before I retired and a lot of senior people were at a meeting chaired by Mr. Duffey. He told two anecdotes and then he said "those are two stories in search of a theme and I am not sure what the theme is." I thought "why are we wasting our time?"

I have a number of friends in the military, one of whom retired about that time. When he retired as a general, they had a ceremony at Fort Myer with all the military protocol. I didn't even get invited to the USIA director's office to shake hands. I didn't want it. We weren't given any respect for what we were trying to accomplish and did accomplish. I am not talking just about myself.

They gave us a month long transition course in which they talked about everything from health benefits to financial and career planning. And they asked "What are you going to do for a second career?"

At some point, somebody asked who had a résumé. Many hands went up, including mine. "Throw them out," they said. So we rewrote our résumés, we imagined the job we would like to have and we did model job interviews. We did our elevator presentation. You are riding an elevator and need to make your pitch in 30 seconds so we practiced that.

I took my résumé and wrote letters to various organizations and said I would like to do public affairs work for an environmental organization. I picked out a few in Washington and for the most part I got no response. There didn't seem to be much respect for my résumé or my experience.

In one case, a fellow did say his organization would be doing a presentation at the National Press Club and invited me to come and observe. So I did. I don't know what organization it was, Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth, they were rolling out their report and a few journalists were there taking notes. At the end, the guy went around to see which journalists were there. I am sure he was going to do follow-up work on the reporting and I asked myself if this was what I wanted to do. Basically, my feeling was "been there, done that." I had been doing public affairs work much of my career and in fact under more interesting circumstances. I had no interest in it.

So if someone had called me up and said "Mr. Brown, we want to hire you as our deputy public affairs person. Please report on Monday morning for a 9 to 5 job," they would have called my bluff. I did not want that at all.

Meanwhile, just by chance, I picked one of these free newspapers that advertised a place near Dupont Circle that offered courses on everything from collecting wine to improving your health. There was one titled "So you want to be a travel agent." Well, I've always loved to travel so I bought a ticket and went to the talk. At the end, they give a little test and I remember one of the things on the test asked what is LAX on a baggage ticket? I knew that's Los Angeles airport and I think I got nine out of ten or 19 out of 20 on the test. I tested well but I came out thinking I don't want to be a travel agent. This was not interesting even though I had done very well on the exam.

But I looked a little further in the brochure and found a talk called "so you want to be a Washington DC tour guide" and I went to this lecture by a woman named Jeanne Fogle and wow, was it interesting. It grabbed my attention. She gave us a little exam, most of which had to do with the history of Washington. I think I got 1 out of 20 correct. But the fact that I knew nothing about Washington made it potentially interesting.

She cited three aspects that appealed to me: you are constantly learning, you are working with people and you are self-employed. You can set your own schedule. Since I was about to go off to two months in Maine where we have a cabin and I wanted to be able to follow my own schedule, this really appealed to me.

In the fall, I signed up for Jeanne Fogle's once-a-week tour guiding course at Northern Virginia Community College. The first Saturday was in the classroom but on subsequent Saturdays, we would meet somewhere downtown and play tour guide. I loved it. You'd have to prepare for a site and do your whole spiel with Jeanne and others critiquing.

Jeanne would say, "We need a volunteer" and my hand always went up. I was one of her star pupils, if I do say so. I became a licensed tour guide in Washington. I joined the Washington DC Guild of Professional Tour Guides. I participated in many of the educational programs of the guild, learning more than I ever needed to know to be a guide but gaining a deeper appreciation of the city and the area.

For the better part of ten years, particularly in the spring, I led people around the city, quite often groups of 8th graders but sometimes adults and occasionally special tours. But

at a certain point, I realized two things. One was that I was spending more time on the administrative parts of guiding than on substance. Where could you meet your bus or what was open and when, how long were the lines going to be? This became even worse after 9/11/2001. Secondly, I kept going back to the same places over and over and I was getting tired of taking people to the Lincoln Memorial and to Mount Vernon.

That led me to a two-week program at the International Tour Management Institute (ITMI) in San Francisco to become trained in tour directing. I eventually became a Tour Director for Trafalgar Tours -- leading weeklong coach trips out of Washington (Historic Highlights) and Boston (Fall Foliage) and even one into the Canadian Maritimes -- with seniors, very demanding work. Over five plus years, I led more than 30 such tours.

That in turn led to contract work with State Department, periodically accompanying groups of international visitors on their two and three week visits to the United States.

When I was overseas, one of the things I did in every post was to identify young, upcoming future leaders to send on the International Visitor Program. I was on the sending end. In retirement, I found myself on the receiving end.

It is not tourism which means you do sit sometimes through some fairly boring presentations but on other occasions, the speaker is dynamic and there is meaningful communication. The programs take me to parts of the United States that I would not visit otherwise and in addition to the foreign visitors, I meet some interesting Americans. Each group is different. The participants come from different countries. Each project has a different theme and a different itinerary.

I have just come back (2012) from New York, Boston, Minneapolis and Denver with a group of 24 investigative journalists from 24 different countries. In Minneapolis, I was telling our visitors that Germans and Scandinavians settled in this area back in the 19th century. What‘s the biggest immigrant group in Minneapolis right now? Somalis. And Hmong.

I could tell that the fellow who set up our local program there was not Scandinavian or German and so I asked. Turns out he was born in California. I said, “What is your background?” He said, “My father is Ethiopian and my mother is Austrian.” I said, “That’s what America is all about.” The diversity of this country.

The theme of another program was combating human trafficking. That’s an issue that was hardly in anyone’s mind ten years ago. Prostitution and forced labor. But it is an issue that has become a very important part of foreign policy.

In 2000, the United States passed very important legislation on human trafficking. Hillary Clinton put it at the top of her priorities. There is now an annual report that the State Department does, the Trafficking in Persons or TIP report, which evaluates the performance of every country around the world including the United States. Countries can be suppliers, transit countries or consumers of human trafficking.

It could be Hispanics in Colorado, Chinese in New York City. Miami is a major transit point. Americans are addressing the subject from many different perspectives, from legislation to NGOs that are involved in working directly with victims. Human trafficking in the formal sense is people moving across borders but there are also people dealing with human trafficking where the victims have not been moved across borders. At the NGO level, you find quite a number of groups and people heavily involved.

I was with a group of people from 19 different countries, from Trinidad to the Seychelles, from Estonia to Tunisia. We spent several days in Washington at the federal level.

In Washington, it was four of the five federal agencies that are most involved; State, Justice, Labor and Health and Human Services. We also had a meeting with the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is an NGO and we had a talk by a woman from American University who is an expert in the field.

Then we split into three different groups and I went with a 1/3 of the group to Denver, Colorado. The others went to Minneapolis and Phoenix.

People ask "why Denver?" There are very engaged people there at the nongovernmental level dealing with this issue of human trafficking. And on any assignment, we leave the major cities of the east and west coast to visit some the interior – Chicago, Des Moines, Memphis, etc. From Denver, we gathered in Miami for a couple of days of programming.

In Colorado, there is an NGO called the Laboratory for Combating Human Trafficking. They have something called the Colorado Project doing research on it because Denver is at the intersection of two interstate highways and has become a transit point for people being trafficked.

We went to a shelter for women who have been trafficked, prostitutes. Were they exactly, in a formal definition, victims of human trafficking? Perhaps not because they hadn't been moved across borders but it is a place where women who have been rescued, as it were, have a chance to start life over again.

We talked to a police officer there about awareness training. The police are prosecutors and they look at prostitutes as criminals and are trying to redefine this so that a prostitute is not simply a criminal but may be a victim. There are programs that provide assistance to victims of prostitution.

In Miami, we met with the other major federal agency, Homeland Security and with ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and their task force there. There were perhaps too many meetings with task forces and office visits and not enough occasions to talk to the victims but we did have a meeting with a Hispanic man, a Mexican American, I believe, who's involved with labor there. He made a very contentious case about what happens to migrant laborers. I say contentious because a lot of visitors didn't accept his point of view. He really presented his point of view quite forcefully.

Two weeks, very concentrated, but at the end, I am briefly a mini-expert on the subject. The people who came are all involved in the subject back home so they went back with a lot of new knowledge and contacts.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of Interview.

Chevy Chase, MD (1996 - 2021)

My oral history interviews took place in 2012 and covered my 30+ years in the Foreign Service, 1995 - 1996. I have now edited the transcript twice, trying to ensure accuracy, to clean out the excess verbiage and to reduce repetitions. At the end of the final interview, I talked about my transition to tour guiding as a licensed Washington DC tour guide, tour directing for Trafalgar Tours and liaison work with State Department International Visitors (IVs).

In the next few pages, I would like to take a broader look at the 25 years since I retired, a quarter century that has brought me to my 80th birthday.I will do it by category.

Family - One year after I retired, our first grandchild was born. Over the next six years, we were blessed with four more grandchildren. Sam, Allison, Christopher, Matthew and Ben have been a source of joy and amazement. Today (2021), they are spread out from Mouans-Sartoux (France) to Madrid to Howard County (MD) to Richmond (VA) to San Francisco with lots more plans up their sleeves. That they are such close friends I attribute partly to the many summers when we gathered together at Pitcher Pond.

I should not forget to mention their mothers, Sarah and Christine, and our respective sons-in-law, Steve Margolis and Fabrice Scardigli.

Beginning with the death of my father in 2002 and ending with Bobbi's father in 2016 (at age 102), we also marked the passing of our parents. We miss them but are grateful that they lived to see great-grandchildren and that they did not suffer long, extended periods of illness and/or disability.

Pitcher Pond - Someday, we will sell our house in Chevy Chase. I trust that we will never (at least not in my lifetime) dispose of our beloved lakeside cabin in Maine. It holds so many memories.

Personal Travel - In addition to our summer sojourns in Maine and annual visits to Christine in France with various side trips in Europe, we have had some remarkable opportunities to see the world. I would make special note of Barbados (several visits), Costa Rica, Portugal, Argentina, Antarctica, Russia, Galapagos, Baja California, Norway, trans-Atlantic on the Queen Mary 2 and Iceland.

Without Bobbi and under various auspices, I traveled to Ireland (more than once with my brother Paul), Cyprus, Costa Rica, Kenya, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Caribbean, Morocco, India, Greece and Vietnam.

Tour Guiding - After a first year (1996) with Guide Services of Washington, I worked primarily for World Strides (Mary Ellen Pauli) over the course of some ten years. I did a few assignments (including the Presidential inaugurations of 2008 and 2012) with People to People, conducted any number of Sunday IV tours for Meridian, accepted occasional French-language tours and took on spot requests from time to time.

Tour Directing - This was an especially demanding transition. It involved a two-week ITMI course in San Francisco, knocking on the doors of various companies before a woman named Liz Cosenza invited me to work for Trafalgar and very demanding assignments (I was an administrator, educator and entertainer) working with paying customers and hoping for tips at the end of the assignment. Yes, another learning experience and an occasionally gratifying one but when I stopped after five years, I did not miss it.

Liaison - It has been great to work for State Department without having to go to the State Department. In the year of the pandemic, I was hoping to take on my 50th assignment. Each one was different — different themes, participants from different countries, different itineraries, different durations. As with anything involving people, travel and schedules, there were challenges and the occasional complication but I cherish the memories and feel confident that I contributed to my visitors' experience in the US. I stay in touch with many of them and have even visited some of them overseas.

Music - I have a number of outside interests and activities but none counts for more than music — choral, symphonic, chamber, opera. Despite my limited training and talent, I have sung in our church choir and I have experienced multiple stage performances with Berkshire Choral International (BCI). I have had success publicizing Chevy Chase Concerts, the church's free concert series. I have no regrets about the many dollars I have spent on live concert performances.

Covid - There is no understating the gravity or the impact of Covid. For me personally, all 2020 activities on my calendar — from concerts to an IV assignment to a trip to St. Louis for Sam's graduation to a trip to Alaska to a B week — were cancelled. The stock market plummeted. Bethesda became a ghost town. A vaccine seemed years away.Not long after the disease emerged, I wrote:

There are only three things that could make life worse: (1) For one of our closest family members to fall ill or suffer harm; (2) For some worse affliction to befall us, one that would endanger the freedoms, goods, services and financial security we currently have and (3) the reelection of Donald Trump.

As it turned out, none of the above happened, our finances actually improved, we had three “normal” months in Maine, Biden was elected and inaugurated and thanks to Zoom and the creativity of many arts institutions (ranging from the Metropolitan Opera to Smithsonian), life was reasonably fulfilling. We observed CDC advice on mask wearing et al but unlike some people our age, we did not go into hibernation.

But my love of travel, the satisfaction of IV assignments and the joys of choral singing were all casualties that could not be replaced. As soon as vaccines were approved, I organized a family river cruise in Europe. No one really knows what the long term impact of Covid will be but without ignoring the terrible death toll, the economy did not collapse and handled properly, America may emerge stronger.

Technology - So what would our years abroad be like if we had had even a fraction of today’s technology? What if we had had email instead of letter mail? What if we could have taken unlimited photos and always have had a camera with us? What if our bosses back in Washington had been able to reach us anywhere at any time?

I’ll take the easy way out and say that there would have been both pluses and minuses.

Addendum 1 - VOA

VOA – A Biased, Sentimental Recollection

Even amidst the barrage of news in 2020 — the pandemic, the presidential election, race relations, climate change, environmental disasters -- the Voice of America also made headlines. While multiple reports of outside interference may not have commanded the attention of the general public, they always interested me, partly because of the potential damage to VOA's well-deserved reputation for objectivity but also because of the soft spot I have in my heart for VOA.

My first-ever Washington DC job was in 1964 as a 23-year old summer intern at the Voice of America. I had spent the previous summer as a volunteer (Operation Crossroads Africa) in Nigeria; I had quite a bit of journalism experience and I fit in well as a news writer on the Africa desk, a small cadre of individuals who would pull copy off wire service tickers and other sources and adapt it for broadcasts to Africa.

The 1960's were a period of change and upheaval in Africa; everywhere from Ghana to Congo to Rhodesia, there were headlines. The newsroom was a miniature United Nations with various language services. It was a great learning experience and I truly provided a useful service. And big picture, I was also constantly reminded of — and became a true believer in — VOA's charter:

1. VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

2. VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.

3. VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.

Married and finished with my graduate studies, I returned to the Africa desk the following summer and worked at VOA until entering the Foreign Service in December 1965. It was exciting to meet the new Director, ex-NBC newsman John Chancellor. He was to VOA what Edward R. Murrow had been to the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) — a full-fledged newsman committed to truth and objectivity.

When asked for my Foreign Service assignment preferences, I said Africa — which did not leave me with much competition from colleagues looking to serve in Europe. I was assigned as a Junior Officer Trainee in Dakar and eventually spent a total of six years in Senegal, Cameroon (both Douala and Yaoundé), and Algeria.

During these years, we relied on shortwave VOA (and the BBC) broadcasts to keep us informed. It was a reliable source of information, both in dark times (the assassinations of

Martin Luther King Jr and Robert Kennedy) and the exciting moments (Apollo landing on the moon). Especially in Douala, we were keenly interested in reports on the civil war in the Biafra region of neighboring Nigeria.

VOA embedded itself in my memory bank in other ways. One was a visit to Dakar by the late ethnomusicologist Leo Sarkisian. Based in Liberia, Sarkisian became a household name on the continent through his "Music Time in Africa" broadcasts on VOA. Less known was that Sarkisian was also a skilled portrait painter. When we organized an exhibit of his paintings in Dakar, the reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

By the 1970's, the world's attention had shifted from Africa to the Soviet Union and I asked for an assignment to Moscow. Again, there was very little competition for this hardship post and I got my wish. In fact, between 1977 and 1990, including six years at Embassy Moscow, first as Press Attaché and secondly as Public Affairs Officer, the Soviet Union was the highlight of my Foreign Service experience.

While there were perhaps a few more news sources in Moscow than we had in Africa in the 1960's, we were nevertheless reminded both directly and indirectly of the invaluable role of VOA and of Radio Liberty. Whether it was American hostages in Iran, the 1980 presidential election, or the shooting of President Reagan, VOA was our go-to source for accurate reporting.

We could hear VOA in English but the Russian-language broadcasts (still exclusively using shortwave) were jammed. Ditto Radio Liberty. But jamming was concentrated in urban areas so when we traveled to areas like Central Asia (Tashkent) or the Caucasus (Tbilisi), one of our assignments was to see if we could hear VOA Russian (or one of the other many languages in which VOA broadcast). Sometimes accompanied by a VOA monitor, I would sit in a public area like a park and try to tune in VOA.

Peter Straus, Jimmy Carter's appointee as VOA Director, visited in 1977 but was not allowed to meet with Soviet authorities. But we did assemble a group of American and other journalists in our apartment for an animated dinner conversation with him.

The mood was much changed by my second Moscow tour in the later 1980's. Soviets could openly listen to and cite VOA English as a source of information and opinion.I was in Armenia in November 1989, when VOA reported the breach of the Berlin Wall.

And then one day, amidst the Gorbachev reforms, VOA Russian could be heard loud and clear in Moscow. Without warning, jamming had ended. We sent an "Immediate" cable to Washington with the important news. Russia's halt to jamming VOA was an important confidence-building measure.

More changes ensued: VOA received accreditation for its first Moscow correspondent and they sent a great fellow named Andre DeNesnera. Andre was a fluent Russian speaker and a delightful guy. To my knowledge, he was the first Western correspondent to report the death of Andrei Sakharov.

VOA Director Richard Carlson was given a visa and met with Soviet officials. We also took him to meet some of our Jewish refusenik friends. These were people whose fate was often reported by VOA Russian.

After I retired, I became a licensed Washington DC Tour Guide and would occasionally do city tours for State Department-hosted International Visitors. If the group included individuals from the former Soviet Union, I always made it a point after we looked at the Capitol and headed down Independence Avenue to call attention to VOA headquarters.

For these individuals, "Golos Ameriki" was as much a landmark as any other site in Washington. They wanted to go in and quite often, they would do so later to meet some of the people whose names they had come to know over the years.

On several occasions in recent years, I have escorted groups of State Department-hosted International Visitors, usually journalists, on their visits to VOA. In every case, the visitors seek out VOA reporters from the various language services, often someone they know personally or whose voice they recognize.

Times have changed. My overseas recollections were in a pre-Internet, pre-CNN, pre-social media era. Shortwave broadcasting is a relic. But VOA and its sister services still have a large worldwide audience. The size of that audience reflects trust in its objectivity and honesty — in contrast to so many other international broadcasting services.

Trump-era anguish at VOA's honest, objective reporting is not unprecedented; over the years members of Congress and other administrations have called for more controls on VOA reporting. I will continue to follow the back-and-forth but not as a neutral observer. VOA occupies a special place in my memory bank and I'm biased in its favor.

Addendum 2 - Douala, Cameroon
1967 - 1968

En route from Dakar, we stopped in Liberia for several days. The justification might have been "consultations" at the Voice of America; they had a large facility in Liberia. We stayed with Bobbi's friends from Oberlin, Dr. Ron Hilty and his wife Nancy. Dr. Hilty confirmed that Bobbi was pregnant.

My single dominant memory of Monrovia was the contrast between the road behind the city, with its large ante-bellum mansions, and the rest of the areas in which people lived. The big homes were owned by Americo-Liberians, the people who (mis)ruled the country and would later be ousted.

We arrived in Douala on a Tuesday. The reason I know that is because we flew on Pan Am and only one of their three weekly flights from New York City to west Africa continued on to Douala; it would arrive on Tuesday and depart on Wednesday. Flying in, I was impressed by the dense rainforest.

My boss from Yaoundé, Fred Quinn, and the Cultural Affairs Officer, Charles Dawson, were both there to greet us. Our house, not far from the airport, was a single-level dwelling with a porch, living room, kitchen and three bedrooms. The bedrooms had air-conditioning but the other rooms did not. In fact, the kitchen did not even have screens on the windows and bugs and other insects could come and go as they pleased. We had a large front yard enclosed by a hedge. During part of the time we lived there, a goat mowed the lawn for us. The goat disappeared along about the same time as the Muslim holiday of Ramadan.

My base of operations was the American Cultural Center in the center of the town. It had a library and we had some five Cameroonian employees and a French secretary.

There was also a two-person American Consulate. The Consul was an African-American man named James Parker; his wife's name was Odessa. They were about a generation older than us. Jim had been in the Foreign Service long enough to remember when facilities in the State Department were segregated. By the time we met him, he was very protocol conscious and quite formal, though he also had a hearty laugh. While we were still in Douala, he would be transferred to Yaoundé as DCM.

Jim’s replacement was Michael Phelps Evans Hoyt, who had just gained fame as a virtual hostage (he was forced to eat the American flag) in Elizabethville in the Congo. He had a lively wife and four children.

The vice consul named Mike lived across the street with his French-born wife.

After several delays caused by mechanical problems with a vehicle, I headed off soon after we arrived in Douala with either Fred and/or Charles (I can't remember exactly) on a

trip north from Douala to visit schools and other institutions. It was the first of many such trips that I would take.

As I recall, the paved road could take you about as far north as the town of Nkongsamba where there was a small hotel which served a decent omelet for breakfast. Our destination would usually be Bamenda, which had a respectable hotel. North of Bamenda, there was a circular route through towns such as Wum. It would be an exaggeration to describe what we traveled on as a dirt road; it was often a mud road with huge potholes and one could travel only a few miles in any given day. The compensation was the scenery (some say the area reminded them of the American West) and the comfortable heat and humidity.

This was West Cameroon, the former British Cameroons, and as such, it was the English-speaking portion of the country. Many of the schools were still run by British or Irish priests. They would welcome us warmly. I can recall sitting outside with them as they listened to soccer matches on the BBC.

The other area that we frequently visited was that part of West Cameroon next to the highest peak in West Africa, Mount Cameroon. The 4,100 foot high mountain was (is) an active volcano. To get to that part of West Cameroon, you could take a short flight from Douala to Victoria or you could drive north from Douala, cross the river on a perilous ferry and drive back down the other side of the river to Buea, the capitol. It was an interesting area to visit because of the overlay of British colonialism; those who did not speak the King's English instead relied on something called pidgin English..

The small plane made three round trips daily across the marshes from Douala to Victoria. On one occasion, I recall arriving at the airport in Victoria hoping to take the last flight of the day back to Douala, only to find that it was fully booked. However, I knew that on such occasions, an extra flight was sometimes added and I asked if this might be the case. "I'm sorry sir," said the man at the desk. "We've been advised not to fly additional flights because of the bad condition of the aircraft." Notwithstanding, when I was told that there was indeed a place on the plane, I opted to fly and made it home safely.

During my stay in Douala, the American Ambassador, Robert Payton, and several others hiked to the top of the mountain. I was always a little disappointed that I had not been invited to accompany them.

Excluding the French, there was a very small expatriate community in Douala. There was a Pan Am representative who had a swimming pool. Jim and Odessa Parker had a nice house and frequently entertained. Bobbi recalls that it was at one of their dinner parties that she first experienced “pele-pele,” the maddeningly hot spice that Cameroonians used on their food; she cooled her insides with ice cream.

Many of the American visitors would arrive on the Tuesday Pan-American flight and we would often go to the airport to greet it. While there, we might drink the local soft drink called "Pschitt." Visitors usually stayed at the Hotel Cocotier. With its bar and swimming

pool, it was the closest thing to a top-quality hotel and evoked images of tropical life. (Note: The hotel still exists as Le Meridien.)

I can't go any further in describing our experience in Douala without citing the single dominant memory -- the intense heat and humidity. Mount Cameroon was only a few miles away but you seldom if ever saw it; it was constantly enveloped in clouds. Annual rainfall totaled 200 inches.

Douala is Cameroon's seaport but it is not on the ocean; it is located on the aptly named Wouri River, which provided no relief. Any intense activity was exhausting and I am not talking only about Europeans. The Africans, many of whom had to do physical labor outside, would sweat profusely. Along with the heat and humidity would go intense tropical downpours. They might momentarily clear the air but this lasted very briefly.

In addition to the heat outside, Bobbi had her own little oven inside. Pictures of her and Sarah as we took a walk in a rainforest or of Sarah playing with stones in the driveway clearly showed how hot it was. Bobbi would use our VW straight back to go to the market to shop. She recalls vendors throwing fruits and vegetables into the car and of once inadvertently locking the car with Sarah inside.

In addition to my trips to visit schools, I had the cultural center to operate and some local officials to visit. But to be honest, it was not a full-time job and I was bored. This was the only time in my Foreign Service career when I felt seriously under employed. At one point, Fred Quinn found some useful activity for me in Yaoundé and all three of us went there and stayed for several days with Fred and his charming wife Charlotte in their home.

A few specific memories:

- We had a visit from a USIA-sponsored musical group known as the Junior Wells Band. Junior Wells was an African-American blues singer from Chicago. There were probably three or four other musicians in his group and we arranged for them to perform in Douala and elsewhere. They felt cultural shock. One evening, they were sitting on our porch when our "guardian" came up the driveway. Junior Wells and his friends, who certainly must have known rough neighborhoods in Chicago and elsewhere, quickly came into the house, fearful of this strange individual.

  There was one hall that could be used for performances. It had a metal roof and I recall going there once when a formally-dressed German chamber music group was performing. During the concert, kids on the outside started throwing rocks that made a terrific sound as they crashed onto the roof.

- African visitors to the Cultural Center frequently asked about going to the United States to study. I would patiently explain how difficult this was and refer those

few who seemed qualified to the Institute of International Education (IIE) and its scholarships. I never remotely imagined that any of them would succeed.

One day, a young Chinese man came in and asked about studying in the U.S. I was ready to go through the same drill when he explained to me that he had the money; what he needed was guidance. I immediately took a special interest and learned that he was Winfred Shen, one of some 30 young men from Hong Kong who were working at a factory near Douala that made enamel pots and pans. I invited Winfred to have dinner with us and in turn, he invited us to the factory. The young men, who were sending their earnings back to their families, allowed themselves only one luxury – a Chinese cook.

We went into the dining room with its long wooden tables and flypaper hanging from the ceiling and were treated to a gourmet meal. We stayed in touch with Winfred and eventually went to his wedding to an American woman in New Jersey in the early 1970's. He now lives in Los Angeles.

- Douala is where I also became acquainted with Vietnamese food. Thanks to French colonialism, there were several Vietnamese restaurants in the city; French volunteers (cooperants) teaching in West Cameroon often came to Douala on the weekends for the food.

- Our primary source of news was the Voice of America. It was through the VOA that I learned one morning in April that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. As a white man living in an African country, I felt absolutely no fear for my safety or any animosity directed at me. We set up a condolence book at the Cultural Center and used an open courtyard behind it to show a film about Martin Luther King on the wall.

- This was also the period of the Civil War in Nigeria, the time when the western region sought to break away from the rest of the country. We were aware that many refugees from Western Nigeria were fleeing into Cameroon. And at night, we could hear the sound of propeller airplanes that we presumed were taking supplies and matériel into West Cameroon. On one occasion, we had a visit from Irish priest who lived in Nigeria. As best I can recall, he was bringing out cash for safekeeping in Cameroon.

Bobbi departed sometime in April, returning to Bethlehem to await the birth of our second child by Caesarean section; naturally, she took Sarah with her. I had not been in the United States – I had not talked with my parents – for nearly two years so it was with great expectation and anticipation that I left Douala on the Pan-American flight on the morning of Wednesday, June 5, 1968, bound for New York City and extended home leave.

This was the milk run and our first stop was in Cotonou, capital of Dahomey. It was there that I first heard that in Los Angeles, Robert F. Kennedy had been shot and seriously wounded. I heard similar reports when we reached Dakar and eventually in New York.

I took a bus from Kennedy Airport to the east side terminal and perhaps a taxi from there to the west side where I got the last bus of the night to Bethlehem. On arriving in Bethlehem, a man at the station told me that my father-in-law had already taken Bobbi to the hospital. The baby that was not supposed to arrive for another several days had come. Christine was born at virtually the same hour that Robert Kennedy died.

My memories of the next few days are a bit vague. We were renting a place on Church Street in Bethlehem. I visited Bobbi at St. Luke's Hospital and saw Christine for the first time. The major news was the funeral of Robert Kennedy on Saturday. My mother and sister came from Pittsburgh to help out. This was especially useful since Bobbi's mother was also in St. Luke's hospital for back surgery.

I cannot remember the circumstances of my return to Douala except that it preceded Bobbi's return. Along about the first anniversary of our Douala assignment, I was offered the job of Cultural Affairs Officer at the embassy in Yaoundé. I did not hesitate to accept. We packed our household effects ourselves and flew to Yaoundé for the next stage of our lives.

Addendum 3 - Yaoundé, Cameroon
1968-1970

I don't think it is an overstatement to say that leaving Douala and moving to Yaoundé saved my Foreign Service career. We'll never know for sure. But what is certain is that we were happy to leave behind the heat and humidity of Douala, the small international community and the relatively uninteresting job.

This is not to say that it wasn't hot in Yaoundé. But it cooled at night and you could sleep. There was a reason why the Germans created this capital in the upland area of the country. We also found many more American and international friends our own age and older. Ambassador Robert Payton and his wife and three sons presided over what seemed to be a happy group of staffers. And most importantly, as Cultural Affairs Officer, I had a real job, one that I could grow into and enjoy.

We had a large single-level house with a garden that included everything from banana trees to lizards. Like most foreign occupied homes, it was fenced in. It was located on a dirt road with several other houses occupied by Americans. It was a short drive to the embassy but since we had only one car (the reliable Volkswagen straight back), I often took a form of public transportation to return home.

The house faced toward the setting sun and given that we were close to the equator, the sun set each night at about the same time – 6 pm.

As CAO, I replaced Charles Dawson and soon after we moved, Fred Quinn was replaced as PAO by Howard Calkins. Howard and his wife Hester were a generation older than us. Not long after he arrived, he received the tragic news that his son had been struck by an automobile and killed. Howard and Hester returned to the States for a lengthy period, during which time I was the acting PAO.

We had a dedicated group of Cameroonian national employees, headed by David Lobé. My FSN was Paul-Henri Nkot. In one of our albums, we have a photo of all of the Cameroonian staff who work for USIS along with their names.

I was soon joined in my ground level office (across from the USIS library) by a young woman named Cynthia Fraser. Cynthia would go on to a distinguished career with USIA and we would see her in Paris, Washington and other places.

Jim Parker also moved from Douala to Yaoundé to serve as DCM. The head of the Econ section was a fellow named Jim Bishop, married with three small children. Jim was by far the brightest and most outgoing staff member. Though my age, I thought of him as a role model, someone who reached out and knew many Cameroonians.

Soon after I arrived in Yaoundé, I was advised that time was running short if we wanted to send a journalist named Daniel Mongué on an IV grant. Daniel was editor of a weekly newspaper called La Semaine Camerounaise. I acted promptly and we sent him to the

United States. We have several photos of Daniel and his children and his vintage car, perhaps a Mercedes. Looking back, this was one of the first of many times when I would be involved in the international visitor program.

Other aspects of the job included a French language book program, occasional performers and speakers and contact with the limited number of Cameroonian journalists. In addition, I would often make field trips along with a driver named Simon. We would visit schools where we would leave sets of American books contributed by US publishers, show films and otherwise fly the flag.

We also took a couple personal trips over dirt roads to a beachside town called Kribi. I believe that it had a sandy beach but don't remember much else.

Ambassador Payton traveled frequently but I don't think I ever accompanied him on one of his trips. We were heavily involved with and influenced by his interest in black and white photography. Our staff photographer developed his film and he would send pictures to local officials yet met while traveling. Several of us, myself included, became interested in black and white photography and I have a number of such photos to show for it. When Ambassador Payton departed, we organized an exhibit of his photos that attracted a great deal of attention among guests at the reception.

Though we were happy, this was not an easy time to be representing the United States. The assassinations in 1968 of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were horrifying. Year by year, America's involvement in Vietnam was deepening, the body counts were growing and though we were far from the protests back home, we were aware of the turmoil.

The one really positive element during this period for someone representing the United States was the Apollo space program. We were regularly supplied with films depicting the development of the space program, including the 1968 flight to the moon featuring Astronaut Frank Borman reading the Christmas story and culminating in 1969 with the moon landing of Apollo-11. I remember being in the embassy on Sunday, July 20, listening intently to the Voice of America for news of the landing. We showed the Apollo films to any and all and before the showing, I would use a detachable model of the Apollo Saturn rocket to explain the process. I could do the job equally well in French and English.

And then came the day when we were to receive a moon rock, an actual piece of the moon brought back by one of the Apollo missions. As I recall, it was to be delivered by one of the diplomatic couriers and then we would put it on display for Cameroonian visitors. I joked in a staff meeting that even if the rock did not arrive, we would put a "moon rock" on display. It was a joke but in fact, most visitors were underwhelmed when they saw the rock underneath a hard plastic globe.

We also had a French-speaking specialist from Washington named Samir Zoghby who lectured on the Apollo space program at the university and elsewhere.

Part way through our time in Yaoundé, Ambassador Payton departed and was replaced by a career diplomat named Lewis Hoffacker. I didn't envy anyone trying to replace Bob Payton and to his credit, Lewis Hoffacker did not try to be another Robert Payton. Instead, he set about doing what he knew how to do best.

Not long after Ambassador Hoffacker arrived, in early 1970, we had a major event in the life of an embassy – a visit by the Secretary of State and his wife. William P. Rogers and Mrs. Rogers came to Cameroon as part of a 10-country visit to Africa, reportedly the first time that an American Secretary of State had ever visited Africa.

I was fortunate enough to be assigned as the control officer for Mrs. Rogers which gave me an opportunity to visit cultural and artistic venues. We were hosted, if I recall correctly, by Pere Mveng, the Cameroonian priest and specialist on African art. All I know for sure is that I had the more interesting assignment.

On the night that he arrived from Douala, Secretary Rogers came to the Embassy's recreational facility for an informal get-together. That site – with its swimming pool, volleyball court, snack bar and small American school – provided us many hours of weekend relaxation and fun with other Americans. But we will never forget the occasion when Sarah fell or jumped into the pool and cut her lip so badly that we had to leave Christine with friends and rush Sarah to the Peace Corps doctor. By good fortune, that woman doctor was in and able to sew up Sarah's lip. It was a harrowing experience.

Speaking of the Peace Corps, we had a number of friends among the volunteers and several of them visited us for a hot shower.

Other Embassy friends included Mike and Judy Phelan, a young couple who lived across the street. We will always remember the story of their flying to the Presbyterian hospital in Ebolowa on a stormy night for the birth of their first child.

At the end of our street lived the Greek family named Vourakis. He worked in the embassy and had a young son named Aki. It was from them that we acquired the wonderful German Shepherd that we called Pele Pele. He was amazingly gentle with Sarah and Christine but enjoyed tearing up our garden, chasing lizards and, what he got out of the yard, chasing goats and other animals. When it came time to move to our next post, we reluctantly gave Pele Pele to the Polish–American businessman (ITT), Henry Boguslawski.

From 1968, when I returned to Cameroon from the United States until summer, 1970, when we went back, I did not see or even talk to my parents. We did not have a telephone in the house and there was no question of making an international call from the embassy. Any communication that we had was by letter.

Bobbi was more fortunate. Marjorie and Cassard came for a visit at Christmas time, 1969. It was on this occasion that we left Sarah and Christine in the capable hands of our

friends Paul and Nancy Dekar and went off with the Kaesemeyers to visit the Waza game park in northern Cameroon.

We had an excellent visit with the guide and driver, all sorts of splendid scenery and even a chance to see elephants at a watering hole. Everything went fine until the time came to fly from Maroua back to Yaoundé. That was the point where our Cameroonian Airways plane had a flat tire and there was no spare tire. We ended up spending a night in the airport until a French military plane flew in from Fort Lamy, Chad, with a new tire. Obviously, during this time, we had no way of communicating with Paul and Nancy and could only hope for the best.

By the way, the plane in which we flew back served also as a cargo flight for beef; freshly cut slabs were hung in the front part of the plane, separate from the passenger section. Bobby's father wrote an article about their visit, especially the trip to northern Cameroon, for his company newsletter.

Another of the interesting personalities in Cameroon was Father Luitfrid, a Swiss priest who operated out of a small monastery on Mount Febé, the hill that overlooked Yaoundé. Father Luitfrid was dedicated to preserving African art and operated a small museum. He was also passionately interested in the Apollo space program. We later saw him in Zürich, Switzerland.

Speaking of African art, we (Bobbi) purchased numerous pieces. Many a day, I would return home for lunch to find a trader peddling his wares at our house. I used to joke with Sarah and Christine but I would someday pay for their college education by selling these objects. That never happened but some of what we purchased was good enough to be evaluated and held for a brief time by the Smithsonian's African art museum.

In retrospect, Cameroon lived up to its reputation as "Africa in miniature." It was Muslim in the North, Christian in the south and animist everywhere. It had a multiplicity of tribes. Once a German colony (we occasionally encountered elderly people who spoke only German and their tribal language), it later became partly a French trusteeship and partly a British trusteeship before being reunited as the Republic of Cameroon. It was arid in the North and tropical rain forest in the South with a variety of climatic zones in between. It had very few paved roads and virtually no railroads. The only international airport was Douala and virtually every flight went to Europe.

President Ahidjo, a Northerner, ruled without opposition. But during the time we were there, the country was outwardly stable and free of the violence of the years just before we arrived. The US had a small AID mission and a military attaché and the normal complement of embassy officers but otherwise, we had very limited interests beyond stability. The French were still the primary influence in the country.

In the spring of 1970, I received word that I had been assigned as BPAO in Tangier, Morocco. We left in midyear and headed back to the States, to Westtown, Pennsylvania, in particular to prepare for our next post.

Addendum 4 - Algeria
1970-1972

We spent exactly two years in Algeria – from August, 2000, to August, 2002, the last leg of our six year-experience in French Africa.

Bobbi and the kids, Sarah (4) and Christine (2), met me in Paris and we flew to Algiers where no one picked us up at the airport. On our own, we took a taxi to the Embassy and introduced ourselves.

The Embassy flew the Swiss flag. We were the American Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy, a fiction we had played since the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Algeria, like many of its Arab neighbors, wanted to have things both ways – pretending they had broken diplomatic relations with the friend of Israel but actually maintaining the contact they needed, especially for their growing oil and gas industry. This was the only country where I never met my Ambassador.

The Interests Section was headed by Bill Eagleton, an experienced Middle East hand. He and his new (second) wife, Kay, occupied an elegant, official residence called Montfeld that they generously opened to the staff. We took frequent advantage of both the small swimming pool and the clay tennis court.

The small staff included Fred Galanto (political), Ed Keller (econ), Richard Castrodale (consular), Oscar Reynolds (admin), Bob Francis (CIA), Dick Devine (commercial), two USIS, some communicators and FSNs. Alan Davis replaced Galanto in year two but otherwise, the staff was very stable. Our daily morning meetings in Bill Eagleton's office gave me a feeling not only for my own work but for the overall picture of US-Algerian relations.

My assignment was cultural affairs officer (CAO). I shared a ground-floor office with my assistant, an attractive, recently-divorced young French woman named Christiane Moulin. (Christiane, who had studied at Rice University, eventually moved to France with her new husband; we visited her there, both in Paris and near Bordeaux, during the 1980's).

My (PAO) boss was an eccentric, jazz-loving guy named David Burns. While on a trip abroad (perhaps to Vietnam), Dave bought a string bass; to bring it back, he purchased a second seat on the airplane. His wife, Sandy, was a teacher and she and Bobbi hit it off well. They had two sons. Dave was replaced right at the end of my tour by Howard Simpson (he arrived by boat from Marseilles with his wife and four daughters).

At one of our early meetings, Fred Galanto said something about an upcoming trip to an area known as the Tassili, deep in the Sahara in southern Algeria. It sounded interesting, I inquired and next thing I knew, Fred and I were flying to the oasis town of Djanet. From there, we hiked up to the Tassili plateau, where with a small group of Europeans and

local guides, we camped out for a week, looking at 2,500-8,000-year old wall paintings done at a time when this now dry and rocky area was tropical and home to animals. It was an unforgettable experience.

We later bought and still have two Tassili paintings (rupestres du Tassili) on canvas done by a Frenchman named Georges le Poitevin. One of the paintings is the same as the illustration in a May, 1959, article in Horizon magazine called "Surprise in the Sahara." The story was that he had done tracings directly from the paintings themselves, perhaps using water to enhance the colors.

While we were on the trip, news came (I don't know how) of the death of Charles de Gaulle (November 9, 1970).

The Algerian press carried a steady stream of anti-American propaganda. President Houari Boumedienne cozied up to the Soviets and Black Panther exile Eldridge Cleaver enjoyed free housing just up the street from the Embassy. At least once, a hijacked American plane landed in Algiers. I remember playing tennis with Bill Eagleton as he would check his watch to see if he could play one more set before going to the airport in connection with the hijacking. He would eventually fly to Paris with $1,000,000 in cash given to the hijackers and then turned over to us by the Algerians.

But the reality was that the hijackers would be put into the back of a police van and the red carpet would be rolled out for the President of the Export-Import bank. The Algerians wanted to present one face to the world at the same time they need U.S. financing for their pet projects.

We traveled frequently. In retrospect, given Algeria's recent bloody war of independence, its overt hostility to the U.S., the dawning of the era of hijacking, the lack of even basic services on many desert routes, the ages of our children and Algeria's later civil war, we made some remarkable voyages. We certainly did not live behind high walls.

There were short, day trips with Bobbi and the kids to places along the coast such as the beach at Zeralda, the Club des Pins or the Roman ruin at Tipasa, less than an hour west of Algiers. On a Sunday, we might go east to Tizi Ouzou, heart of the Berber country and its women in colorful dress. I especially recall one trip there with Bob and Judy Francis. I also had a memorable hike in the Djurdjura mountains where we saw snow even in June. South of Algiers, there was Chrea, where the kids saw snow for the first time.

Marjorie and Cassard visited in the fall of 1971 and with them, we all took a several day trip eastward, stopping in Constantine (Ted Van Gilder was the consul there) and at the Roman ruins in Timgad. (I remember straining to listen to AFN and the Pirates beating Baltimore in the World Series while we were on this trip.)

With Glen Cella, the consul in Oran, I took a week-long driving trip (we started out sharing the driving but Glen had grown up in New York City and didn't learn to drive until late so I ended up doing all the driving.) We went eastward and then down to the

desert towns of Ghardaia and Laghouat. I drove back alone on May 1 (1971 or 1972) while Glen continued on to Tamanrasset by plane.

Glen was replaced by Bob Maxim; he and his wife had been forced to evacuate Nouakchott, Mauritania, when we were in Dakar.

In the summer of 1971, Jannet came to visit. Mother and Dad took her to the airport in New York and she flew via Paris. Imagine my distress when I went to the airport and she was not among the passengers getting off the flight. There were several flights a day from Paris so I went back for later flights but to no avail. There was no thought of calling. Mother and Dad had dropped Jannet and gone off on vacation. What's more, even if I might have called, there was a telephone strike in the U.S.

Twenty-four hours after Jannet was due to arrive, I decided to go back to the airport one more time and there she was. The date Mother and Dad had talked about was the day Jannet would leave the U.S. I had understood it to be the date she would arrive!

On August 11, 1971, the five of us got into the same Volkswagen straightback that we had during our entire time in Africa and drove west along the scenic coastal route. (Note: I kept a diary for the first portion of this trip.) After a long delay, we crossed the border between Tlemcen, Algeria, and Oujda, Morocco, where we spent the night. We drove on to Fez, where we stayed for three nights in a quality hotel (though they accused Bobbi of stealing a bathrobe). Besides touring the town, we took a side trip to see the stunning mosaics at Volubilis.

Next stop was Tangier. My original assignment, when we left Yaoundé, had been as BPAO in Tangier. Less than a week before we were to leave, it was changed to CAO Algiers. We were distressed at the time but it worked out for the best. Tangier would have been a quiet backwater; Algiers allowed me to see the full cross-section of U.S. interests in an important country.

We went from there to Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in north Africa and sailed from there to Algeciras, Spain. This was an internal trip and thus less expensive. En route, we had a view of Gibraltar.

We stayed in Seville and Cordoba en route to a five-day stay in Madrid where we put Jannet on a flight back to New York. But not before Jannet and I, on Sunday, August 22, went to a bull fight at the Plaza de Toros in Madrid (we still have the poster). Our next stop was San Sebastian, where Bobbi made contact with the parents of Peter Alonzo. Our return trip took us back through Madrid and to Grenada, where we visited the Alhambra.

With little Spanish, we nevertheless managed to eat properly by relying on three words – sangria, gazpacho and paella. Por favor! Bobbi coped with the late Spanish dinner hour by feeding the kids their main meal of the day late in the afternoon and not worrying about dinner.

We crossed the Mediterranean from Malaga to another Spanish enclave, Melilla, and from there back across the border into Algeria. Along the way, we had purchased a hi-fi set at a PX. Not wanting the Algerian border officials to ask questions, we covered it with a blanket and suggested to the kids that they make a fuss if anybody started poking around. As it turned out, the border crossing was fast – in contrast to the long delays when we left.

Someone house sat for us while we were away. Among their responsibilities was taking care of the newest member of our family. We acquired a black cocker spaniel puppy from a Frenchman soon after we arrived. When we visited the pound, he tried to sell us another dog but we were attracted to the cocker. Not for sale, we were told. Her mother had not taken care of her so he had done so and was too attached to give her up. But perhaps when he saw we would be a good family, he relented. (We had left a German Shepherd, Pele Pele, behind in Yaoundé and were determined not to do that again).

When we got the new dog back to our house, repair work had just been completed on the open terrace. There was fresh, black tar. From there, our new dog had her name. Tar, born in 1970, would live until 1985 and be buried in the backyard of our home in St. Germain-en-Laye, France.

My job was, as they say, "interesting and challenging." At one time, before the break in relations, we had a USIS library in Algiers. The contents of that library were in the dark, gloomy basement of our house. Occasionally I would find a way to give away some of the books.

My biggest and most substantive project was to renew a program that flourished in the 1960's under which Algerians were sent to the U.S. to study. Many of these individuals now populated the Algerian gas and oil industry and several of them had brought back American brides. After much effort, endless phone calls and meetings, I succeeded in arranging for six young men to go off to the U.S. for university study.

We had a lot of contact with two young, recently-married English teachers, Tim and Mary Ann Decker. Tim was from Minot, ND. Also with Dorothy Young; she was from Rumford, ME. An older gentleman from a university in Florida, Dr. Elton Smith, was a Fulbright teacher at the university. He played a mean game of tennis; I don't think I ever beat him. He was replaced by David Stryker.

From time to time, we could bring in performers or well known Americans. Among the former were a Paris-based guitarist named Steve Waring and a black jazz artist named Hal Singer (the kids called him the "Singerman"). They would perform at a small downtown theater run by a man named Hassan Bel Hadj. I arranged an IV trip for Bel Hadj (and met him in Princeton while he was on his trip).

USIA also sent us a group of basketball stars. Oscar Robertson was a last-minute drop out but we did get Kareem Abdul Jabbar, who had just changed his name from Lew

Alcindor. He came with his wife and stayed on the small Embassy compound across from Montfeld. Along with him were his Milwaukee Bucks coach Larry Costello and a French-speaking ex-UCLA basketball player.

Among the Algerians with American wives, we got to know a physician named Zachery Brahmi and his American wife, Fran. Zach had to be careful about his contacts with Americans but they did invite us to his hometown of Bejaia (Bougie during French times). They eventually emigrated and today live in Indiana.

Our home was a huge, three-story structure shaped like a ship with a coal-burning furnace in the basement/garage. Built by a Frenchman who presumably loved the sea, it was located just down a busy, winding road from the Embassy.

It sat above a large garden; to go from the gate of the garden by which one accessed the property to the third floor required three flights of stairs. From the third-floor terrace, there was a dramatic view of the city. In the distance, on a clear day, you could see the mountains, sometimes with snow on them. Over the wall behind us was what had once been an elegant villa; it was now abandoned.

Sarah and Chris began school in Algiers. We took Chris to a privately-run play school and Sarah went to kindergarten at the Anglo-American School located on the property across from the Embassy. Both girls enjoyed playing on the jungle gym that we set up outside the house. When they were ill, we had house calls from Dr. Ould-Aoudia. Our maid was a stout woman named Doudja (phonetic). We also had a gardener.

Late in our tour, we joined the Rowing Club, situated on a pier in the bay of Algiers. It provided us a number of pleasures.

But there were also downs. Bobbi returned to Bethlehem in early 1972 to have her tubes tied. Naturally, she took the girls with her. I was somewhere in Europe when they had to find me to give my permission for Bobbi's surgery!

In April, 1972, just after I came back from a two-day pouch run to Rome, we took yet another trip into the desert. We went west (details are in my diary) via Taghit, where we climbed the enormous sand dunes. In Timimoun, we collected sand roses. And in Ghardaia, we carelessly asked for bottled water (l'eau en bouteille) and got tap water put into a bottle. Within hours, Bobbi, Sarah and Chris were all ill. We cut short our trip and drove directly back to Algiers. We drove nearly 2000 miles in eight days. En route home, I recall one emergency roadside stop where a long camel caravan passed as Bobbi and the kids were doing whatever they had to do.

I had hoped they would feel better once we got home but not so and we all eventually flew to Paris and the American Hospital. Once I had them in the hospital, I returned to my job in Algiers. Marjorie Kaesemeyer came to Paris and helped out until Bobbi could return. She was in Paris for more than three weeks. The whole affair cast a pall on our relationship and brought our generally healthy years in Africa to a sad end.

We sold our trusty VW, disposed of other goods, left Algiers (Bobbi and the kids preceded me) en route to Princeton, NJ, where I would be a mid-career fellow at the Woodrow Wilson School.

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Note in 2006: Virtually all of the above was written from memory and thus reflects what stuck with me after 34 years. On March 10, 1972, following a reception at Montfeld attended by Nicholas Katzenbach, I began keeping a diary. From that, a few additional pieces of information:

- There are lots of names and lots of activities that I have no recollection of. Among the names I do recall are Malcolm Kerr (the Kerr family stayed with us), John Crawford (American lawyer based in Paris)

- The plane hijacking occurred June 3, 2002. Bill Eagleton recalls the experience in later interviews. The Kabylie hike was June 4, 2002.

- My journal says our best Algerian friends were Benganas, Bel Hadjs and Brahmis. I recall the Benganas but can specifically say how we got to know them.