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

AMBASSADOR RAYMOND BURGHARDT

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Initial interview date: June 19, 2019

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is June 19, 2019. We are beginning our interview with Ambassador Raymond Burghardt. We always begin by asking your date and place of birth.

BURGHARDT: I was born on May 27, 1945, in the Peck Memorial Hospital, which no longer exists. It was in Brooklyn. I'm proud to have been born in Brooklyn. I am a sixth-generation New Yorker.

Q: Interesting. Are there other siblings in your family?

BURGHARDT: I was an only child.

Q: My next question, you mention you're sixth-generation. Have you done ancestry work to see where your forebears came?

BURGHARDT: My father did a lot of ancestry research. Nearly all my ancestors came from Germany, both from north Germany—Protestants—and from south Germany, the Catholics. One segment, the earliest to arrive in America, came from France. They were from Alsace-Lorraine, from Nancy to be precise. Some had clearly French names; other surnames seem German. But they thought of themselves as French. They were the first who came.

Q: Were they Protestant?

BURGHARDT: They were Catholic. The first arrived in New York in 1822: my triple-great-grandparents and my then ten-year-old double-great grandmother who went on to be a somewhat well-known person at that time. She was a pastry chef, later the chief chef at the famous Delmonico's restaurant in New York. She went on to found her own restaurant. She lived to be ninety years old, which shows you all those French sauces aren't so bad for you. She was born in 1812 and died in 1902.

Q: Are there stories passed down from her to you?

BURGHARDT: There are many stories passed down, family stories, although not from her. Some of them I think are relevant to my career. My forebears on my mother's side were not very adventuresome. They all came to New York in the mid-nineteenth century and nobody ever moved anywhere else. Even on my father's side everyone stayed in New York City, with the exception of my parents spending two years in North Carolina [as my father called it, the Bible Belt; they didn't really like it]. With that exception, my parents' retirement in Sarasota, Florida and one great-grandfather who briefly lived in Albany for reasons we've never figured out, my direct ancestors on all sides never lived anywhere in the United States except New York City.

But on my father's side they were somewhat more adventurous. There was a great-uncle Will, who went to the Alaska gold rush, to the Klondike, an engraver who came back with an engraved walrus tusk that's hanging on my wall in Honolulu, which I can't move outside the state because it's ivory.

More importantly, there was a sister of my father's paternal grandmother, Aunt Emma, who went with her husband to Shanghai for many years during the '20s and '30s. They ran a business exporting furs from Manchuria to New York. In those days among families in New York [maybe anywhere in America], people lived near each other. On both my mother's side and father's side, the cousins and uncles all were within a few blocks of each other. So after Aunt Emma returned to America, she lived next door to my father's family in Queens. He was regaled by her stories of China and was all his life fascinated by Asia and China. He went on to have one of the world's great collections of Chinese stamps. He did it twice. He collected them, including envelopes with letters and stamps and so forth, sold the whole thing, got some other kind of collection, and then did it all over again. I got one of the major dealers in the United States to take on the sale of the collection after he died.

I think that had a strong influence. My father was a real internationalist before the term existed. He had a deep interest in the rest of the world and a special fascination with Asia. He was the first person in his family to graduate from college. His father had an accounting certificate that I think was less than a full college degree, from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. That grandfather was also involved in politics in New York. He was a district party leader in Queens, overlapping into part of Brooklyn, Republican Party district leader. There also was an uncle on my father's mother's side, Joseph Strack, who was a member of the New York City Council, and later a New York State Assembly representative. He was a Democrat. At one point he also was the city's commissioner of markets.

Q: Like fish markets?

BURGHARDT: All the food markets. In the distribution of ethnic occupations in America, in New York the Germans did food. My mother's mother's family had a prosperous wholesale grocery business. They were pretty well off. My maternal grandfather's family were butchers. My grandfather was a butcher, later a partner in a successful Upper East Side butchery/general food market called the Madison Market, with a branch in East Hampton. But he thought of himself as a butcher, very much a blue-collar guy.

My father was a chemical engineer, graduated from NYU [New York University], with bachelor's and master's degrees. He was in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] to pay for getting through college. When the war came he ended up doing a lot of work in a laboratory. He almost was shipped out to fight against Rommel in North Africa but it didn't happen. He was a lieutenant in the engineer corps but he didn't go. He first worked

on a project to design explosives, doing work that was pure chemistry, developing an explosive that embarrassingly later I read in the press was something that was used by terrorists around the world, but was invented for the U.S. Army to use during the Second World War in artillery aimed at German tanks. He held a patent for it. Then later he worked on a very special project. The U.S. decided to build the first two penicillin plants in the world—one in California to produce for the Pacific war and one in Princeton, New Jersey for the European theater. These were projects of the U.S. government but using private American companies. My father was part of the team that designed the plant in Princeton. They had to invent the process to manufacture the drug. My father later wrote an article about that experience, which was published in a chemical industry magazine.

Then the war ended and he was sent to Germany to be in the occupation force, part of a team including Soviets, Brits, and French, to do an assessment of the German pharmaceutical industry and decide what to do with it. That led to a career in pharmaceuticals. He was heavily involved in the U.S. projection of manufacturing overseas. He spent his whole career designing factories overseas and eventually was the head of overseas manufacturing for the E.R. Squibb Company.

Q: Why at that point in the post-war would an American company feel it needed to have overseas production?

BURGHARDT: There were tariff barriers in overseas markets and the American companies were trying to get behind those barriers, to manufacture locally. Shipment costs were greater than they are now, so that was also a factor.

Q: They must have been among the first large—

BURGHARDT: They were; it was revolutionary for American industry. My father took his first overseas trip to do that kind of business in 1954. Great photo of my grandmother and mother at Idlewild Airport [now JFK] to see him off, everybody all dressed up. It was on the Pan Am Clipper plane that went all around the world. He got a certificate for flying around the world because it was such a rare event. On that trip he spent a lot of time in India, particularly Calcutta. He also spent a lot of time in his career in Japan as well as in Iran, Latin America—he went everywhere. He went to more countries than maybe I did in my life. The special thing about him was that he loved it and he got deeply into the places. He was very intellectual. He'd go to India and be fascinated by Hinduism. So he'd read the *Bhagavad Gita*. And then he'd tell me, "You should read this, too," and I did. He had deep respect for other countries and cultures. He was interested in the art and history and culture and religions and food of the world. There's a marvelous collection of photographs of his time in Japan that my oldest daughter, who now lives in Japan, has digitized. My mother joined him for a long time in Japan. My maternal grandparents lived with us, so my grandmother took care of me during that period.

Q: Oh, you stayed home?

BURGHARDT: Yeah. They didn't move there; they went for several months.

I was brought up in the New York suburbs. In 1947, at the age of about two and a half we moved from Rego Park, Queens, to Pearl River, New York in Rockland County.

Q: How far from the city is that?

BURGHARDT: Nineteen miles from the George Washington Bridge. We lived there from the time I was two years old until I was eleven. I went to the Pearl River public schools from kindergarten through fifth grade. We moved there because the Lederle Laboratories was there, part of American Cyanamid, a big chemical and pharmaceutical company. It was a great place to be brought up. We would constantly go do things in New York. You had the sense of being close to the city, though Pearl River at that time still had some rural aspects to it, dairy farms and things like that; not any more. And then we moved to New Canaan, Connecticut; again my father moved to be closer to a new job he had at the American Cyanamid's laboratories in Stamford.

We always moved to the suburbs to be close to his work and then he would almost always end up working back in Manhattan. I sometimes said, "Dad, if we'd stayed in New York we'd never have had to move anywhere." It was the thing those days; upward mobility included taking your family to the suburbs. New Canaan was and is a pretty high-class place, among the best public schools in the country. It was a great place to go to school and to play lots of ice hockey.

Q: Was it a dormitory community for the city?

BURGHARDT: Yes. And then they moved from New Canaan after my sophomore year in high school, which was something I didn't particularly like. We moved to New Jersey to a town called Kinnelon in Morris County. Our home was in a gated community called Smoke Rise. The public schools were considered not very good there so they put me into a prep school called Blair Academy in Blairstown, New Jersey, in Warren County, which borders Pennsylvania. I graduated from there.

Q: Before you go on to college, were there any educational experiences or extra-curricular activities that were formative or motivational for your subsequent career?

BURGHARDT: I would say yes, definitely. When I was ambassador to Vietnam I did an interview about that with *Columbia College Today* as well as with the Blair Academy magazine. Two things: First of all, the high quality education in both New Canaan and at Blair Academy. Good grounding in history, the English language, and how to write well. I always wanted to write. I was interested in writing short stories and thought maybe I'd become a novelist. I would say that throughout my life that affected how I related to the Foreign Service experience. The interpersonal relations and the emotional aspects as we carried out diplomacy with contacts, sources, foreign leaders, colleagues—all that

fascinated me. That was particularly fascinating in going back to Vietnam after twenty-eight years; we'll get to that later. I also was the president of something called the International Society at Blair Academy. We studied international events and discussed them. And we invited people to speak. Just to tweak the liberal teachers, I invited William F. Buckley and he came. (laughs)

Q: I used to watch Firing Line and I grew up wishing I could speak as well as he did.

BURGHARDT: So I had dinner with William F. Buckley at eighteen years old, at Blair Academy. I remember vividly, he had just come back from a trip to South Africa. What was pleasantly surprising was that he articulated as only he could a very negative view of apartheid and was certain of its ultimate demise. He said it was a completely contrived and artificial system and it couldn't possibly survive, and explained why. Of course he was right, and that only deepened my respect for him. The only time I ever saw him later was at Reagan's funeral.

So those things had an influence. But I would say my father had the biggest influence. He was a big factor in my interest in international affairs and in politics and economics. I was brought up in a business family. He considered himself a scientist, professionally. But he was also involved in the running of a big business. Though he always considered that secondary in his self-identity, I would say.

He was a good father. He shared his experiences. When he took trips he would take a lot of pictures. We'd see the pictures and he'd tell the stories. He wrote a lot of letters. He talked about his experiences, so it was shared. I was an only child so there was a lot of time together. He gave important guidance. I'm leaping ahead a bit but the most important guidance he gave to me came in my first year in the Foreign Service. I had been brought in with the condition that for my first assignment I would go to Vietnam with the CORDS [Civil Operations and Rural Development Support] program, working in the provinces. During that year, I came to have an even deeper feeling that the war was an utterly misguided effort. This conviction grew the more I learned about our conduct of the war and about Vietnam. We had a year of not only language training but also area study about Vietnam. Secondly, I realized that my draft status had changed so if I dropped out of this program, I still wasn't going to get drafted. So I thought, The hell with this, I'm going to leave and go to law school. I wanted to stay in Washington, so I applied to George Washington and Georgetown. Georgetown had me on their waiting list but ultimately accepted me. Then my father sat me down.

Q: This is before going to college?

BURGHARDT: This is after being in the Foreign Service. I'm sorry. I'm leaping ahead. The point is to show my father's influence at a critical moment.

He sat me down and said, "I understand how you feel about the Vietnam War; I think it's a misguided effort also. And I'm your father so I'm worried about your safety going to

Vietnam. But listen to me about two points. First of all, you have been to Latin America and Europe and you've seen those areas; you haven't been to Asia. In your lifetime, Asia will be the most important region in the world, certainly the most important for American interests. So you owe it to yourself to see Asia. You won't understand its importance unless you go. You'll be there, you can travel to other places while you're in Vietnam, and you'll understand what I'm talking about. Then there's another point. In my generation it was important to have been in the military during World War II. I didn't fight in the war, but I was in the military and in the occupation. It was a credential that was important. It may be less important in this case because the war is so discredited, but I have a feeling it will still be of some value. So you might think about that."

So I listened to the old man and I took his advice. I wrote back to Georgetown and said no thanks, and stayed in the Foreign Service and went to Vietnam. When I was sworn in as ambassador, with my parents there, I told that story to Rich Armitage who was swearing me in and to everybody else who was in the audience. I only leap ahead to tell that because it shows the profound influence he had on me.

Q: So let's go back. You were in the International Society in high school. Were there other influences or reading or travel in high school that had an impact as you look back?

BURGHARDT: Considering what the rest of my life looked like, I was remarkably homebound until I was in college. I never crossed the Mississippi. I never went overseas except to Bermuda on a trip with my parents. Then between high school and college I made a trip to the Bahamas to visit a prep school classmate whose parents lived on Harbour Island. That was very exotic. I ended up taking a mailboat between Nassau and Georgetown on the island of Grand Exuma; I was the only white person on the boat. I had great conversations with the other passengers. It seemed like a very foreign experience, even though it wasn't very far off the coast of Florida.

Q: Was the boat under sail or engine?

BURGHARDT: Engine. Chugging along.

Q: While in high school, you're already thinking about your major or your direction that you'd like to study. How did you make that decision?

BURGHARDT: When I was in high school I was really interested in literature and in being a writer, and churning out probably not very good short stories. But I was always very interested in history. I would say I was interested in political science but you don't study political science in high school. It was history. Not only American history, but ancient history—these were good schools. The prep school even had a course on British history, which was a little obscure for high school, but there was a British teacher, an Oxford guy, who taught it and it was quite enlightening. It was looking at a totally different political system, the parliamentary system, and looking at another country's history. I never thought of this before but I think that was probably a valuable experience.

Q: When you applied, you applied principally to East Coast schools?

BURGHARDT: For college? I only applied to two colleges.

Q: GWU [George Washington University] and Georgetown?

BURGHARDT: No, that was for law school, which I never went to! It's my fault, I'm leaping ahead—I'll stay chronological!

With my parents we did drive out to Oberlin, Ohio to look at that college. I should mention another thing—I played the clarinet, and have played avidly since I was nine [classical and jazz] and at times I was pretty good at it, so music was an important subject for me. So we took a look at Oberlin, which was and still is excellent in music. But being dyed-in-the-wool New Yorkers, that option did not impress us.

So I applied to only two colleges. I was a good student, third or fourth in my class at Blair. I applied to Princeton and to Columbia. Princeton was mostly to keep my parents happy. I got into both. I decided I'd already been to prep school in New Jersey so I didn't need to go to Princeton. That's not an original line; some famous writer said that. So I went to Columbia. I had an English teacher at Blair Academy, Arthur Spring, very bright, a good mentor who had gone to Columbia. He was an influence. It was the right choice. I stayed at Columbia for four years as an undergraduate and then for another year at the School of International Affairs, now called the School of International and Public Affairs [SIPA]. Am I getting ahead?

Q: You are because we do want to spend a little time with you in college.

BURGHARDT: Okay.

Q: You get there, you're disposed to following a major—

BURGHARDT: I'm a brash young guy with a lot to learn!

Q: But you had been thinking about English, about writing. You get to Columbia, and then what?

BURGHARDT: The freshman year I signed up to be an English major. Columbia is a great school for general education. Better at it than Harvard or most other Ivy League schools. Everybody takes something called Contemporary Civilization, which is all social sciences and history. They also take Contemporary Humanities, which is more in the literature realm. Columbia has been teaching these courses with various upgrades and modernization for a hundred years. The Contemporary Civilization course got deeply into everything from Plato and Aristotle to Lenin and Stalin. The history of Western thought, including political thought of course. That really opened my eyes. It gave me another

framework on which to put the interest I already had in history, and to tie it to current issues that I'd always been interested in. I also found that some of the English study was pretty dull stuff. Reformation drama and so forth, and I thought I don't want to spend four years reading this stuff. Also, their courses tended to be too early in the morning. (laughs) I'm serious! This is a nineteen-year-old making important decisions, so—maybe not on the most solid basis all the time.

So I switched majors to political science, which at Columbia was and still is called government. At Columbia that also meant you were required to take a fair number of courses in sociology, economics, and anthropology. I also took a very useful course on political philosophy. In later years in China and Vietnam, I often remembered how Professor Wolf had emphasized that the core principle of Leninism is that the Communist Party must always monopolize power. I'm sure Xi Jinping would agree. And I continued to take history courses. One of my most influential professors was Henry Graff, who was a leading expert on two subjects: the American presidency and American diplomatic history. Graff's course on American diplomatic history was enormously influential, brilliantly taught, and a real introduction to the kind of issues I spent my whole life working on.

My senior year the government department allowed me to take Graff's senior seminar, even though it was not in their department, to fulfill my senior seminar requirement. I wrote about an American diplomatic history issue, about John Quincy Adams and decisions related to how we dealt with Latin America in the years immediately after it liberated itself from Spain. Fascinating period. I was already very interested in Latin America. I had studied French in high school and college and was rather dismayed at the poor progress I was making. I thought, "Maybe I need to start with another language and do it a different way." By this point, the last two of my college years, I was already interested in the Foreign Service. But I worried that maybe I wasn't good at languages. So I paid my own way to take a summer course in Spain. My parents had money but I was always working after-school jobs, interesting jobs in New York that Columbia arranged. For example, I worked for a couple of guys who raised funds from private individuals ["angels"] for Broadway plays. They even offered me a permanent job. That was a summer job that became an after-school job.

Q: Any big name productions?

BURGHARDT: Yeah. This was the '60s and I met many famous producers, directors, and stars. The firm, which was across the street from Carnegie Hall, regularly held mini-productions in their offices to attract investments from their clients. The stars were there to sing and act.

Anyway, I had my own money so I enrolled in a beginning Spanish language course at the *Universidad de Menendez Pelayo* in Santander. To this day that university is well known for its summer language courses for foreigners. I did that the summer between junior and senior year, and it was a success. I totally immersed myself, living in a rented

room in the home of a gruff guy who was in Franco's "*Guardia Civil*" (Civil Guard). One day he even told me to get my hair cut. I also spent some time in France and in Italy. I belonged to a fraternity at Columbia, basically of dissolute preppies, called St. Anthony's Hall or Delta Psi. One of my fraternity brothers was Italian, so I visited his family in Florence. They had a magnificent garden designed by Raphael. They had to hire twelve gardeners to maintain it year-round, which even for them was a financial strain. To get from Italy to Spain, I thought, Why not take a ship from Genoa to Barcelona? So I did. I was in steerage with a whole bunch of Italians going on to Argentina and Uruguay as emigrants. It was interesting. I thought it was a great adventure.

Q: This is before you graduated college. You're demonstrating a fair amount of resourcefulness and independence.

BURGHARDT: I think that was fairly typical for my generation. My senior year, I got very serious in my studies—finally. Sophomore year had mostly been kind of a sophomore slump. Junior year was okay, but wasn't going to get me where I wanted to go next. So senior year, I got serious. My sophomore year I had taken a follow-on course from the Contemporary Civilization/Humanities requirement. The optional follow-on was called in those days Oriental Civilization. It was taught by a team of world-famous professors, led by Theodore de Bary, who was one of the country's great experts on Asia. The professorial team included important scholars I engaged with later in life, including Doak Barnett for the China portion. They taught segments on China, Japan, and India [Southeast Asia got short shrift in those days]. That course was my first great plunge into learning about Asia. At that time I was more interested in Latin America but that course made me see there was another very interesting part of the world. Then senior year, I took a course from a professor of Polish descent named Seweryn Bialer, a highly respected scholar whose course compared the Soviet and Chinese political systems. Brilliant course. So in my senior year I was now into the study of international relations.

Q: I had a question the professor on oriental studies took because obviously at this time, you're talking about Communists in control of China—

BURGHARDT: The Cultural Revolution was about to begin, probably started while we were taking the course, yeah.

Q: With that going on while you're studying it, what approach did the professor take? More modern? Were they looking more at persistent trends and traditions in Chinese thought and government that might be seen even in—

BURGHARDT: It was the latter. They looked all the way back, from Confucianism on. Same with how they taught about Japan and India. They wanted you to have a deep appreciation of the countries, not only of contemporary events. I know we talked about contemporary events, because I remember an incident when I raised my hand. The courses were given for some reason over at Barnard, with lots of young women in the class. I remember I asked a question [and I didn't know Chinese yet] about "Mayo Say

Tung." The Barnard student next to me gave me a withering look and said, "Is that like bacon, lettuce, and tomato with mayo?" As somebody who went on to become fairly fluent in Chinese, that was an unforgettable moment. Maybe it was inspirational! (laughs)

Q: So by the end of university you've had exposure to a lot of major world regions. You changed from the focus on English to—

BURGHARDT: There was a course on European politics, too. A course caught by a junior professor at the time, Mark Kesselman, later fairly well-known in his field. We studied British, German, and French political systems. Hugely valuable for my entire career, because I learned all about how those election systems work, with proportional lists, et cetera.

Q: You had all of these interesting experiences, and you're approaching graduation. Where are you thinking of going next? Grad school? Work?

BURGHARDT: I was thinking of graduate school. Many of the courses I'd already taken were in the Columbia graduate school, which is the way it works there. For example, I took a graduate-level course on the Latin American economic situation and another in the law school about comparative legal systems in Latin America. I wanted to stay on at SIPA. I applied there and to my dismay, I didn't get in. So I applied to George Washington [GW] and did get in. I went to Professor Bialer at the end of the year, after graduation, to pick up my paper from him. He said, "You were one of the two best students in my class; great paper. What are you doing next?"

I told him I was going to GW. He looked at me as if to ask, "Why are you going there?" I explained, "I applied to Columbia and I didn't get in."

He said, "They have a real cap on the number of people they take from the undergraduate college. How did you do overall this year?"

I told him I had done very well. I was on the dean's list. I told him the courses I had taken and the results.

He said, "That sounds good. Call the registrar's office and have them send me your record. I'll see what I can do."

The next morning I was at home in New Jersey, in the kitchen, my mother listening to my phone conversation. I called up the registrar's office and said, "Professor Bialer wants my record; could you please send him my transcript?"

They responded, "He already called and got it."

I said okay.

They said, “Hold on. Burghardt? There’s something else about you. [Pause] Oh yeah, you’ve been admitted to SIA. Congratulations. We’ll send you the paperwork.”

I was speechless. So that’s how I ended up going to graduate school at Columbia instead of GW.

My father—great advice as always—said, “That teaches you two lessons. One is, yes connections really can help in life. But they can only help if you have the credentials and you’ve done the work.”

Q: Let me go back. You graduated what year?

BURGHARDT: From college in ’67.

Q: At that time, the counterculture was well underway.

BURGHARDT: There’s a complete revolution going on. Columbia has endless demonstrations against the war and so forth. My girlfriend in college, Ann Gyorgy, now known as Anna Gyorgy, went on to become one of the world’s leading anti-nuclear activists. She was a Barnard student who was very active with SDS, Students for a Democratic Society. I was vice-chairman of the Young Republicans. I was vice-chairman because the conservatives controlled the organization, and we moderate Rockefeller Republicans were only allowed to have the vice-chairmanship. She and I were called the political odd couple, which we were. It would probably not have worked out in the long run. She went on to join the Venceremos Brigade, cutting sugar in Cuba. She lived at a famous commune in western Massachusetts, then went on to do all this anti-nuclear activism and wrote books and lived in Berlin.

Why am I mentioning this? Yes, there was a great deal of political and social ferment. I was involved in organizing some of the counter-demonstrations against the demonstrations. That was support of the war—although I had doubts about it. I also got involved in some political campaigns in New York, Upper East Side liberal Republican state assembly campaigns and so forth.

Q: You were busy. You got into SIPA.

BURGHARDT: Between college and grad school, I was an exchange student. Project of the Americas, run out of Davidson College in North Carolina, sponsored exchange programs between Latin America and the U.S. Students would live with families, in my case in Ecuador, and they also did other countries. I spent almost the entire summer in Quito and Guayaquil, and went around the country to Cuenca, Esmeraldas, and other areas. We met an extraordinary range of leading figures in government, business, and the arts. I also joined a radical political leader in his travels through remote areas of the Andes where he spoke at rallies of indigenous Quechua people. That experience gave me an appreciation for the deep social divides fueling political unrest in Latin America and

much of the rest of the world. The summer in Ecuador really deepened my Spanish language skills. Fortunately, I also had taken a Spanish conversation course during my senior year. At the end of the summer, a group of Ecuadorian students came to the U.S. and I helped to arrange their program in New York, including housing them at my fraternity and bringing one of the students to spend the weekend with my parents in New Jersey.

In grad school, I took a seminar course run by Professor Douglas Chalmers, an expert on Latin America who later became chair of Columbia's government department. I wrote my seminar paper about a populist leader I had met, Assad Bucaram, then mayor of Guayaquil, who was challenging and defeating the established political parties in Ecuador.

Q: That was a year-long program?

BURGHARDT: The program in Ecuador was two-and-a-half months.

Q: That brings you to SIPA in '68?

BURGHARDT: September '67.

Q: Now in SIPA, you do have to focus. Where did you put your concentration?

BURGHARDT: SIPA had required courses for the first year; then you became more specialized in the second year. They had regional institutes. I was in the Latin American institute. In addition to Chalmer's seminar on Latin America, I took Thomas Schelling's general course on classic international relations theory. And I had a job as a research assistant in Columbia's Research Institute for the Study of Communist Affairs [a wonderfully Cold War name], headed by Zbigniew Brzeziński. I helped a visiting Indian scholar, Bhabani Sen Gupta, to write *The Fulcrum of Asia*, a study of Sino-Soviet competition in South Asia. Sen Gupta was a wonderful man, respected as both an author on international relations [in English] and a popular novelist and playwright in Bengali. Working with him kept me engaged in the study of Asia while my classes focused on Latin America.

I only lasted a year in graduate school. In the spring of 1968, the U.S. government announced there would be no more military draft deferments for grad school students. In December 1967, I had taken and passed the written Foreign Service test. In April 1968 we had the Columbia demonstrations, huge demonstrations, similar to ones happening that year in Paris and Mexico. In the middle of that upheaval, I was called to Washington to take the oral exam. Most of the examination was about what was happening at Columbia. Later I realized that they were testing my skill as a potential political officer. By felicitous coincidence my father also happened to be in Washington on business with one of his colleagues. So I stayed with him at the Madison Hotel. Fortunately, I was able to celebrate with him that night because they told me right away I'd passed the oral exam.

My father and his good friend and colleague, Charlie Savage, took me to dinner at Blackie's House of Beef, which no longer exists.

I had a business trip to Washington last year and stayed at the Madison. They asked, "Have you stayed with us before?"

"Yeah, I stayed here with my father in 1968."

"We don't think there'll be any record of that." (laughs)

The fellow who told me I'd passed the oral exam said, "Here's the good news. You passed. You're going to be on the list. You have to go through the physical and security clearance, but you'll be on the list. Here's the bad news: President Johnson has frozen government hiring across the board. We won't be able to offer you a job now. But I know about the draft. Here's what I would recommend. Go into the Peace Corps. Your draft board will probably give you a deferment. While you're in the Peace Corps, at some point we'll open the list up, and we'll let you know."

To make a long story short, I went back to Washington with my mother and my new girlfriend who later became my wife, and I applied to join the Peace Corps. Left Columbia after a year and never did get the master's degree. But I have always maintained great relations with Columbia; I go back there and speak quite often. So in 2004, thirty-six years after dropping out of SIPA, my friends in the faculty and administration there said, Why don't you come back? You can finish the degree and we'll give you life credit, and you can teach some courses. But I had better offers when I left the Foreign Service, so I didn't do it. Also, my friends and mentors were asking, What the hell do you need a masters degree for at this point in life?

In the summer of 1968 I joined the Peace Corps. My girlfriend, Susan Day, a Mount Holyoke graduate, was a student at Columbia Teachers College. She brought me to sit in on her anthropology class with Margaret Mead, an adjunct professor at Columbia. Susan's MAT program was only twelve months, so she finished that. She decided not to go into the Peace Corps but she wanted to go to Colombia. She taught high school at the *Colegio Colon Americano* (Colon American College) in Medellin. I managed to maneuver to get assigned to Pereira, capital of Risaralda Province, south of Medellin. It still was a hair-raising plane flight or almost a full day bus ride away, although we also met at some towns in Risaralda Province closer to Medellin. We spent a year doing that. I had a great job in the Peace Corps. I advised cooperatives throughout the province of Risaralda, both consumer and producer co-ops. The program was sponsored by the Coffee Growers Association to help people diversify. It was a great adventure and did wonders for my Spanish. Five years later we visited some of the villages where I was helping the cooperatives and the co-ops still were in pretty good shape.

In the spring of 1969 I received in Colombia a letter from the State Department informing me, "We can now admit you into the Foreign Service. Guess what? Your first assignment

will be to go to Vietnam to serve with a provincial advisory team, and we'll be seconding you to the Agency for International Development for this program."

So I would go from the Peace Corps to the war corps. This sounded less than ideal. I went to meet with the American consul and his deputy in Medellin. He was a pleasant but completely clueless fellow with the unforgettable name of Cabot Sedgewick. Like central casting old-school Foreign Service. His deputy was far more with it. But they had no idea what to tell me. Their best advice [which turned out not to be true] was to accept it, because "if you turn them down, they won't offer you anything again." There was in fact that hint in the letter: if you don't agree to go to Vietnam, don't expect to get another invitation to join the Foreign Service.

So I quit Peace Corps, and had to pay my own way back to New York. Susan and I were married on August 2, 1969 and I showed up at Main State to begin my Foreign Service career on August 15, 1969.

Q: When you got into Washington to start in the Foreign Service, was there A-100 [orientation class] in 1969?

BURGHARDT: Yes.

Q: What was it like?

BURGHARDT: A lot of it was probably not very much different than now. What was dramatically memorable was that there were three categories of people in that A-100 course: Those who had been told, "You must go into CORDS if you want to enter the Foreign Service," and we said yes. Second, those who had turned down a CORDS assignment and nevertheless were invited to join the Foreign Service—to the astonishment of those of us who had reluctantly agreed that our first Foreign Service assignment would be in CORDS. And third, people who hadn't been asked about CORDS at all. Those may have been only the two women in our class [CORDS was almost a totally male organization], or one person who was a minority entrant, a Puerto Rican man.

So there was a revolt as we found out more about what CORDS really was like. That included spending a week at Fort Bragg firing M-69 grenade launchers and other weapons. We also began to understand that while it was technically correct that we would be seconded to USAID [United States Agency for International Development] for our CORDS assignments, the CORDS organization was in fact part of MACV [Military Assistance Command Vietnam]. The provincial and district advisory teams were thoroughly interagency, with people from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, State, USAID, CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and sometimes other agencies. Some province senior advisors, the team leaders, were military and others were civilians, including FSOs [Foreign Service officers]. The head of the entire organization was Bill

Colby from the CIA, who reported to the MACV commander, General Creighton Abrams.

We were real troublemakers. We ended up—a core group of us, those going to CORDS—having a meeting with the director general of the Foreign Service. Ultimately, we had a meeting with Bill Macomber, the under secretary for management. This became a mini-crisis for State Department leadership because we were typical people of our generation who were causing trouble within the State Department. It was getting picked up in the press. What finally happened? They slightly gave in, in two ways. The first concession was directed toward those who had rejected the original letter offering an assignment to CORDS, but who nonetheless were brought into this A-100 class, and then assigned to CORDS! There were at least two people in that category: Larry Pope, who went on to be ambassador to Chad, and another, I believe named Mark Heilbrenner. They had a clever solution for them: All right, you don't have to go to CORDS. But you're assigned to the consular section in Embassy Saigon.

Larry got it. He said, "All right, good work guys, I can't turn that down. It's a regular Foreign Service assignment. It just happens to be in a war zone." So, Larry went to Saigon and went on to have a brilliant Foreign Service career. Mark quit the Foreign Service, and later regretted it.

But out of all this ferment came the concept of bidding. There had never been bidding on assignments before, certainly not for junior officers. Our revolt inspired the then-Office of Personnel and leadership right up to Macomber to change the system of first-tour assignments, and to open it up to bidding. The whole bidding system in the Foreign Service developed from that. So, we like to think of ourselves as a historically important class. Nineteen sixty-nine to '70.

One memorable event during the training was the incursion into Cambodia ordered by President Nixon in the spring of 1969. A large group of FSOs, including many of us preparing to go to Vietnam, signed a letter to Secretary Rogers expressing our protest against this action. We were summoned to a meeting with U. Alexis Johnston, then under secretary for political affairs. Johnson began by berating us for our impudence in writing directly to the secretary and for the embarrassment to the State Department from press reporting on our letter. He then asked us to introduce ourselves and state our current assignments. He was visibly shocked that most of the miscreants in front of him were studying Vietnamese in preparation for working in provincial advisory teams. Fortunately, the department never took any action against us.

Q: But then did you accept CORDS?

BURGHARDT: Yeah. I went through the training. It was at FSI [Foreign Service Institute] then in Rosslyn. I was living in Georgetown so I walked across the bridge and back. Most of it was studying Vietnamese, although there was first a long course on Vietnamese area studies and rather boring presentations about how CORDS worked.

Then Susan and I flew to Vietnam, arriving October 5, 1970. Assignments to Vietnam were unaccompanied except for a handful of the highest embassy officers. I tried to get my assignment broken or to get assigned to the embassy because we'd just been married. Nobody was buying that. But I had found there was a loophole. If your spouse had her own job, they could approve her being there. They still had to approve it, but it tended to be okay. The parents of one of my fraternity brothers lived in Saigon; his father was almost certainly a spook. They had lived there a long time. He ran a business in Saigon. He'd been in the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] during World War II. They were interesting people. My friend said, "My mother will get Susan a job over there. My mother basically runs the USO [United Service Organizations]. The USO has a call-home service for the GIs. We can get her a job there." Susan knew a lot about phones; her father was a telephone executive and also an engineer. She had summer jobs as a telephone operator on Cape Cod. She knew a lot about how the phone system worked and also about the equipment. Her father ran the training school for people who worked on telephone equipment in New Jersey. He was a great guy who loved to teach so he taught her all about phones.

Susan just showed up with me in Saigon. The AID fellow who met us at the airport was shocked, "Oh, hi—you're here too." She confirmed the job with the USO people and then went to Singapore to live with two wives of other people in my class who had arranged to be safe-havened there. She stayed in Singapore about six weeks until the military and embassy bureaucracies in Saigon approved her to live in Vietnam. She ultimately ended up in charge of the USO's call-home service. Occasionally she even flew up-country to our military bases to install phones. Susan was with me in Saigon all during that war period. That was very unusual. But it was totally approved. Our first child was born while we were in Vietnam. Susan had to go back to the East Coast to give birth, but our daughter Helen spent most of the first six months of her life in Saigon.

Q: Were you trained in Vietnamese?

BURGHARDT: I learned Vietnamese in a nine-month course at FSI in Arlington. On the way to Vietnam we stopped in San Francisco and in Honolulu to visit friends. First time either of us had been west of the Mississippi except for my Peace Corps training in California. En route to Vietnam our group of CORDS trainees was brought to Taiwan for a one-week course on land reform. It turned out to be kind of a boondoggle. I was the only guy there with his spouse. For the other male members of the group, it was a boondoggle of another sort. We quickly got the picture. It was my first introduction to that aspect of Asia. The experience of seeing underdeveloped Taiwan in 1970, exporting agricultural products and cheap clothes, was useful decades later when I spent a total of almost thirteen years working on Taiwan.

Got to Vietnam. I made pleadings for an assignment in or close to Saigon because my wife was going to be working there. This went right up to the top, right up to my meeting with Bill Colby, head of CORDS and later CIA director. They were good about it. They

assigned me to Gia Dinh Province, which surrounded Saigon. Today's Ho Chi Minh City is simply Saigon plus Gia Dinh. The initial assignment was as a refugee affairs adviser. Lon Nol had just seized power from Sihanouk in Cambodia and carried out a pogrom against the large ethnic Vietnamese population in Phnom Penh. They had fled down the river and come by the thousands into camps that were in Gia Dinh, the suburbs of Saigon. There was a program of feeding and taking care of them and administering the camps, run by an agency of the Government of Vietnam [GVN]. Like every part of the Vietnamese government, that agency had American advisers.

So at twenty-five years old, I was in charge of the aid for thousands of refugees, the food and money we gave. It was a pretty heady responsibility for a twenty-five-year-old. I had a Vietnamese assistant, Mr. Nguyen Ba Ngoc, who became a life-long friend; in 1975 he and his family fled to Minnesota and then to Houston. Later CORDS added to my job description "urban affairs adviser." That never really had a lot of meaning to it. There was no job description and no counterpart Vietnamese official in the Gia Dinh Province government. Frankly, the whole advisory effort seemed somewhat lame. I didn't feel like I had enough to do. I traveled around the province a lot and tried to do what I could to be useful. I worked on my Vietnamese.

Then fortunately after a few months on the Gia Dinh Province advisory team, the embassy contacted several of us in CORDS to be interviewed for moving into the embassy. It turned out this was the way the embassy staffed itself. Early in the war the department had been training people explicitly to come to the embassy. But after a while, they discovered it was better to let USAID pay for the training. This was an early introduction into how the State Department funds itself. They got USAID to pay for nine months of language training, and pay to fly us out there. Then they said, Thanks, we're gonna take that guy for the political or economic section. This was done on a large scale. The training that USAID paid for was two months longer than the time I worked for them. After seven months, I transferred to the political section, starting in May 1971.

Q: By this time, Tet [Offensive] had happened.

BURGHARDT: Long before that. Tet was '68.

Q: Was the current status of the war, which was not going particularly well an issue in the background that affected your job?

BURGHARDT: The period from October '70 when I got there until the spring offensive of the NVA [North Vietnamese Army] in 1972 was a relatively calm period. Even after that spring offensive ended I would say during the entire period up to when I left in April of '73, it was remarkably stable. Much more stable than what young officers working in Iraq and Afghanistan experienced in later generations. They issued you a Jeep, actually an International Harvester vehicle when I was in CORDS. I regularly could drive all around the countryside. Several times I drove way down into the Mekong Delta and back. It was not safe to drive north. Driving into the mountains in the direction of Da Lat or up

the northern coast was not too safe. Though at one point with my wife we drove between Hue and Da Nang. Sometimes that could be dangerous; we were lucky that day. Only once, driving on the southern coast near Ham Tan, between Vung Tau and Phan Thiet, not too far north of Saigon, I was unlucky and someone opened fire on us. We knew it was a dangerous road. We were in an open Jeep but we were wearing helmets and flak jackets and carrying M-16s. Someone opened fire from the rubber plantation alongside the road. That was a very common scenario. Fortunately, they didn't hit us. I remember, the driver was a sergeant and I said, "What's that?" He said, "Get your fucking head down!" (laughs) So I got my head down. As many of the things I'll talk about involving that early period in Vietnam, there are interesting links that occur later when I was ambassador, even the same people or mirror images, including that story.

The danger got quite bad during spring '72. Several provinces were taken over by the NVA. They were eventually forced out or partially forced out, but it was a bad period. It was a period that showed poor performance by the ARVN [Army of the Republic of Viet Nam]. There was a lot of analysis including by people in the political section using our sources about poor performance of the military. This was not what General Abrams wanted to hear or wanted reported out of the embassy.

I was in the political section, in the unit covering internal affairs, the largest of three units. In internal affairs there were maybe seven of us, mostly pretty junior. Our unit chief was first John Sylvester, who later served in Japan. About a year after I went to work in the embassy, Sylvester was replaced by Calvin Mehlert. He's an interesting character and I'll come back to him later. We were quite a unique group among the hundreds of thousands of Americans in Vietnam. We were seven guys [all men] who every day were out in the field, either in the provinces or in the city, and we were dealing with Vietnamese at all different levels, in civil society as well as the government, and doing it in Vietnamese. We often had the feeling that we were the only people in the American mission in Vietnam who were dealing in Vietnamese every day with a broad spectrum of Vietnamese people. It was a strange feeling. Our experience gave us serious doubts about how this was going to end. We all believed that the government led by Nguyen Van Thieu was profoundly weak, with no base of political support.

Let me give you my job description. The religious organizations in many ways functioned as political parties. The political parties were a joke, but religious organizations were important components of civil society. They were well organized. I was assigned to cover the Catholics, who were relatively conservative. A lot of them had fled from the North in '54, but not all. I also covered the Cao Đài, an indigenous and unusual religious organization centered in Tây Ninh Province, northwest of Saigon, in a strategically very important area on the border with Cambodia, right next to the Parrot's Beak area where the Viet Cong had major headquarters. Then sometimes when my colleague Jim Nash was out of the country or otherwise occupied, I filled in for him and covered the Hòa Hao, another indigenous religious group, very anti-Communist, centered in the Mekong Delta. In addition, I followed student organizations including radical student groups, getting to know many of their leaders, and veterans' organizations.

Q: When you say radical, you mean more or less sympathetic with the North?

BURGHARDT: Very opposed to the Thieu government, and somewhat sympathetic to the North or to the NLF. In those days, there were people who were not Communist but still believed in the National Liberation Front and its cause. I know some of these people who ended up jailed by both governments—first by the Thieu government, and later by the Communists.

This was an unusually structured embassy, with even more layers than usual. Ellsworth Bunker was ambassador, for whom I had great respect. The deputy ambassador was first Sam Berger and later Charlie Whitehouse. Both interesting people, although neither of them knew anything about Vietnam before arriving there. Neither had I before I got there, but at least I had studied about it for a year. John Sylvester had worked in the provinces and did know something about Vietnam. Mehlert spoke perfect Vietnamese, as well as being one of the two best Chinese speakers in the Foreign Service at the time. So Mehlert was also deeply into the society and understood the place and in that way was a great leader, and also wanted us out. He would see us in the office and say, "What are you doing here? Get out, you can write stuff up after hours, go out and talk to people." Literally. So we did.

I also covered III Corps, the area surrounding Saigon. I reported on the domestic politics and other things going on in III Corps, which also was where the Cao Đài religion was centered.

Q: Quickly, Cao Đài was one of these indigenous religions that had a messianic figure?

BURGHARDT: The messianic figure was really the founder of the Hoa Hao. The Cao Đài have an eclectic religion. One of their saints is Victor Hugo. There is a little bit of Buddhism, a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and Christ and Muhammad and everybody. They're still very unusual. They have elaborate robes and hierarchy and their own extensive terminology, which I mastered more or less. When I went back to Vietnam as ambassador twenty-eight years later, I reconnected with some of the Cao Đài leaders I had known before. I revisited their Tây Ninh headquarters once. They welcomed me like an old friend.

Leaping to the later period of my tour in Saigon—the Paris peace agreement came into force in January 1973, and I was there when that happened. Three major things happened in the last year or so while I was in the political section. One was the lead-up to the Paris peace agreement. The second was the immediate aftermath and how we covered how it was being implemented. The third was that I was sent to Haiphong for the minesweeping operation. To this day, the Haiphong adventure is probably the most bizarre thing I did in almost forty-six years in the U.S. government.

The lead-up to the Paris agreement: President Thieu was resisting the agreement. Even within our own government people like John Negroponte in the NSC [National Security Council] staff thought it was a bad deal for South Vietnam. [I first met Negroponte when he visited Saigon as an NSC staffer, probably in 1971.] The main objection to the Paris agreement, both in South Vietnam and among some in our government, was that it allowed a substantial North Vietnamese military presence to remain in some areas of South Vietnam. At some point, Whitehouse the DCM [deputy chief of mission] called all the political officers into a meeting. He explained the state of the negotiations. This was revealing a lot of secrets to some very junior officers.

Whitehouse told us, "You need to know all of this because you guys aren't going to be just reporting officers now. I'm going to make you operational. You are all now directed to go and see your counterparts and contacts and to explain to them why this is a good agreement, and to strongly encourage them to pressure the Thieu government to go along with it."

Mehlert dubbed this Operation Big Lie. Most memorable and most important in terms of the mission was my meeting with Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh, the leader of the Vietnamese Roman Catholic Church. Incredibly, I—twenty-seven years old, almost twenty-eight when I left Vietnam—was the point of contact with the head of the Catholic Church. That's the way the embassy was staffed. What did the political counselor and political minister counselor do all day? I don't know. But they didn't see people like that. They only saw people in the government and other Americans. So I met with Binh and made the pitch. Binh was skeptical, but he heard me out. I think we later heard he had encouraged Thieu to go along.

I can tell my follow-on story now or later. That meeting with Binh figures in an emotional moment during my time as ambassador, my first meeting with his successor. This is the great thing about having been there for two-and-a-half years during the war, then going back for three years as ambassador, twenty-eight years later. It was like picking up the thread of a story after twenty-eight years. In a way, it was.

That was Operation Big Lie, leading up to the peace accord. Then after the agreement was signed or in the lead-up to it, the embassy and the department decided that we needed to staff Vietnam with lots of people who could monitor how effectively it was being carried out or being violated throughout South Vietnam. Some of us who would have rotated at that point were told, "Forget it, you're staying here." A two-year tour became two-and-a-half years. I didn't care, that was fine; I knew it was going to be interesting.

The decision to expand the staff happened even before the agreement. They foresaw the need. Dozens of officers who had moved on to other assignments were brought back from all over the world and assigned to every province in South Vietnam. The nickname for these temporary assignees was "the peace consuls." One friend came back from Zurich, another from El Salvador. But before they all got there we had to cover the really critical

places with those of us who were on the ground. So I was assigned to cover Tây Ninh, the Cao Đài's area. It was a strategically critical province. If Tây Ninh fell to the Communists, Saigon would be basically indefensible. Between Tây Ninh and Saigon was the province of Hau Ngia, which was totally infiltrated by VC [Viet Cong]. The Viet Cong headquarters was right across the border from Tây Ninh in Cambodia. So I spent long periods of time in Tây Ninh January—March 1973, often for one week or longer. Most of the time I stayed in the governor's guesthouse. I had very good ties with the Cao Đài as well as all the government people. The Cao Đài were fence sitters. The Hoa Hao down in the delta were fiercely anti-Communist, because the Communists killed their leader. But the Cao Đài were not reliable. It was an interesting story.

I covered all that and thought that I did a pretty good job, writing what I thought were relatively useful reports. Then at one point I'd written a report in which I had incorporated a lot of CIA reporting. It was quoted right in there, so the thing was highly classified. Among other subjects, it discussed how the province chief and his lieutenants had sold some weapons to the VC. Then I found out from my friend Jim Nach that Mehlert, our boss, had handed a copy of my report to a former Cao Đài general. Until the early 1950s the Cao Đài had its own army; all that's covered in *The Quiet American*. So this guy worked right in President Thieu's office. Mehlert gave him a copy of the report because he thought he needed to understand what we were concerned about. I said to Jim something profound like, "Holy shit. The last time I was up there, there was a cool atmosphere in the governor's office. Now I'm glad I didn't have an 'accident' driving back." I blew up at Mehlert, and said, "This is unforgivable, a stupid thing to do, and dangerous, not to mention illegal."

Mehlert didn't even bother being defensive. He just said it didn't matter. The general couldn't read English very well.

My response: "You've got to be kidding me."

I was glad at that point that I wouldn't be going back to Tay Ninh. That was toward the end of my stint to cover that province. FSO John Lyle arrived from Zurich to replace me in Tay Ninh.

Then I was given a third assignment, to go to Haiphong. The Paris peace agreement included an annex in which the United States undertook to remove the mines we had laid in Haiphong harbor and the inland waterways, essentially the delta of the Red River. The navy—at least the mine warfare experts—saw this annex only after the agreement was signed. The headquarters for mine warfare was and is in Charleston, South Carolina. The commander of mine warfare, Admiral Brian McCauley, reportedly said, "Who the hell signed this thing? We don't remove mines. There is no way to remove mines. They're down there. They're staying down there at the bottom of the ocean. We can sweep them; we can determine that the batteries have died; we can blow up any that are still alive. But no-one's going to remove them."

This was a major screw-up. The U.S. explained all this in the initial meetings with the then DRV, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, as the now-SRV [Socialist Republic of Vietnam] used to be called. Our explanation was met with considerable skepticism. There would have to be new talks to decide how we were going to carry out the minesweeping operation. Some of this story, mainly about the sweep itself, can be found online. There are some good websites about Operation Final Sweep. McCauley was a Yale classmate of Whitehouse, and he called him: "Hey Charlie, I'm really going to need some help on this. We spent the war floating around out there in the bay or flying in the sky. We don't have anybody who speaks Vietnamese and we don't know anything about Vietnam. I'm going to need some of your guys to be interpreters and the liaison guys on the ground."

Over the course of about two months from February through April there were I think three two-man teams of us who went to Haiphong; I was in the last group from March through April 1973. I took an Air America flight to Da Nang, and then a helicopter picked me up and flew me from one ship to another, hop-scotching across the Tonkin Gulf. Got to the *New Orleans*, the headquarters ship, met with navy people, and then the next day went with them by helicopter to Haiphong for the talks. The headquarters of the Vietnamese navy was and still is in Haiphong, not in Hanoi. Haiphong is a hundred kilometers [sixty-one miles] east of Hanoi. Two Foreign Service officers were assigned to the task force at any time. I replaced John Malott, who went on to be ambassador to Malaysia. We overlapped for a couple of days and then he left. I was there with another guy whose name I can't remember who later became consul in Songkhla, Thailand and left the Foreign Service after that. The only other Americans on the ground in Haiphong were two marines who operated our radio. The four of us were quartered in the Duyen Hai Hotel [it's still there]. It was a very modest hotel. The navy guys all stayed on their ships and flew in for the day for the talks. By the time I got to Haiphong the Vietnamese had accepted that we would sweep, not remove. So the navy used sleds that were dragged by cords from helicopters back and forth in the Tonkin Gulf and Haiphong harbor. To sweep the inland waterways, essentially the Red River and its delta fingers, they used remote-controlled unmanned boats that were specially designed for this purpose at a navy facility in Panama City, Florida.

Q: The sleds exploded what was down there?

BURGHARDT: During the entire operation, only one mine exploded. One. For the others, the batteries had died. The talks were business-like. Even in those circumstances. Remember we had just fought a horrible war, and many of us on both sides were sure the war would start again. But the Vietnamese were very pragmatic, as Vietnamese usually are. They were dealing with this issue. One thing I learned, a life lesson, from this whole experience: mining a country's harbor is a very effective means of warfare. It really screwed them. They were paralyzed. All that bombing we did was a waste. The mining is what got them to sign the Paris peace agreement. Nixon made a mistake to wait so long to do the mining; should have done it much earlier. It would have saved a lot of lives and ended the war earlier. Well, would have brought about earlier a peace agreement and American withdrawal.

Q: Because enough of their supplies—

BURGHARDT: Almost everything. That was the only harbor they had.

Q: But even the land bases—

BURGHARDT: That wasn't so much. That didn't bring in the Soviet supplies. Chinese supplies came in over the land border, but the Soviet stuff all came through Haiphong.

A quick memory of that experience: an incident. One day we were doing the inland waterways, way out in the countryside, in the Red River delta. That day one of the civilian experts from Florida who designed the drone boats was with us. He was proudly showing off his nifty gadget. High-level Vietnamese and American officers were present at this demonstration, including Admiral McCauley. At one point when this thing was out in the middle of the Red River or some estuary or tributary, it died and the remote control device couldn't restart it. Of course it started drifting downstream. There was a SEAL [navy sea, air, and land team] who was with us. He dove into the river, swam out to the drone that was being carried toward the sea—not too fast but still moving right along. He wrestled with it in the water, got it started again, and swam back to us. That really impressed the Vietnamese—both the physical and technological prowess. That was my first experience with the unbelievable skills of a U.S. Navy SEAL.

We were kept under a kind of house arrest. They didn't let us wander the streets, telling us it would be unsafe for us to go out because "the people still are angry because of your bombing." We could see one entire square block near the hotel that obviously had been leveled by our bombs, but otherwise we saw very little damage, certainly less than I expected. We did get out a lot to go to talks in the city at the Navy Headquarters and to go to the sites in the Red River delta or in the harbor. We had actual minesweepers ships come in a couple of times. We were stuck in the hotel after work. But the Vietnamese were very friendly. The guys who were our guards would play ping pong with us. Of course, we spoke Vietnamese, so we'd chat with them, the usual kind of bullshit, talking about girls and stuff, sports. It was an interesting experience.

At some point there was a pattern established that once every week we'd go back to the mother ship for meetings. The *New Orleans* and then the *Vancouver*. Some of these ships are still operational. After three weeks, the third or second time this happened, we were called back to the *Vancouver* and it was supposed to be a normal back to the ship, so I only brought enough stuff with me for overnight and left stuff in the hotel. In the middle of the night, I was awakened by a noise. I was in the officers' quarters, and I heard this noise, and thought, That sounds like an anchor being pulled up. So I wandered out into the hallway. Some others had come out to the hallway and I asked, "What's going on?"

One guy said, "I think we're underway." Then there was a loudspeaker announcement. Nixon had called off implementation of the Paris Peace Accords. He declared the North

Vietnamese had violated it too much in moving troops and other actions, so we were picking up our marbles and going home, and there would be no further implementation of the peace agreement. In the morning daylight, I was able to see one of the most memorable sights of my life, of this entire flotilla with the *Constellation* aircraft carrier and all the support ships in formation moving through the Gulf of Tonkin. This was really a picture of American power. I said to myself, Wow. But I also asked, "What the hell's happening?"

We were going to Subic Bay. "I don't want to go to Subic Bay."

"Oh, you're going to have a great time, you've never been to Subic, the girls are great."

"My family is back in the U.S. I have to get ready for my next assignment. I need to get back to Saigon, check out and get out of here." I put my foot down and finally they arranged for me to fly back. I took a helicopter to the *Constellation*, then after one night another to Da Nang, and then Air America to Saigon. I checked out, flew back to the States and went on to Guatemala. Concerning the clothes left behind in Haiphong, we'll pick up that story later when I travel to Hanoi in March 1982, with Rich Armitage, on one of the first official trips to Vietnam after the war.

Q: Was this in fact the end of your tour?

BURGHARDT: I departed Saigon at the end of April 1973, exactly two years before Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese army. I did not get back to Vietnam until 1982.

Q: So this is—

BURGHARDT: It's '73. I took a refresher course in Spanish for three weeks. There was one other student in the class: John D. Negroponte, who had been fired by Kissinger from the NSC for his opposition to the Paris peace agreement and who was assigned to head the political section in Quito, Ecuador, which was quite a comedown from the NSC. He dealt with it very gracefully. Of course, it wasn't bad preparation to later be ambassador to Mexico.

Q: Is there any story about how it ended up that you were going to Guatemala?

BURGHARDT: Yeah. After the experience in Vietnam, I thought Asia—my dad was right, it's an interesting part of the world. So the department said, That's right; you're going to go to Paraguay.

I said, "Why Paraguay?" Even when I was studying Latin America at Columbia I didn't care about Paraguay. They said, You speak Spanish, you're going to Latin America. But they relented on the choice of post. So I went to Guatemala. I was kind of neutral about that. My parents had been there as tourists and said it was an interesting country.

It was a two-year tour. I was in the political section. My generation of FSOs, who were sent to Vietnam with CORDS, is unique in that many of us never served as consular officers. The issue never arose. To this day I don't know a lot about consular work. I ultimately learned a fair amount about protecting Americans and worked on a lot of disasters over the years. I also learned something about immigrant visas because of being involved in refugee issues. I never did become very expert about non-immigrant visas.

Guatemala was going through a lot of political violence. Even then. I was there from '73 to '75. I began as the third man in a three-man political section. Bill Pryce, later ambassador to Honduras, was my boss. The ambassador was first William Bowdler, who left after a few months, and then it was Frank Meloy. During my first year, John Dreyfus was the DCM, good guy, a gruff guy. During my second year the DCM had the surname Andrews. I can't remember his first name.

I was in charge of reporting on the opposition, as junior political officers often are, which was then the Christian Democrats. I befriended a lot of people, some of whom became important later on. A young guy named Vinicio Cerezo [which means "cherry"] later became president of Guatemala while I was at the NSC working on Central America. In the 1970s he was a mid-ranking official in the Christian Democrats whom I met with constantly. Danilo Barillas, then the party's secretary general, was one of the many people I knew who was murdered over the years. I also got to know Manuel Colom Argueta, who was the mayor of Guatemala City and considered a fair-haired boy who could become the first Social Democratic president. That didn't happen; he was murdered not long after I left Guatemala. It was a place of incredible violence.

The embassy was downtown when I started out. In the middle of my tour we moved to its present location in an area just outside the city center. When it was downtown, you would hear gunshots in the middle of the day. "What was that? Did you hear that?" Usually without leaving my desk, after three or four phone calls I could get the story. Then the next day, you'd read about how the murderers had thrown the bodies in a ravine. They even had a verb for it—*embarrancado*, dumped off the *barranca* (ravine).

They had some unusual ways of talking about murders, both political and non-political, including among family members. *Manifestando su inconformidad, senior Sanchez mato su hermano con múltiples machetazos*. (Translation: Expressing his unconformity [disagreement] Mr. Sanchez killed his brother with a number of machete blows.) It was so bad that I remember an incident that showed the effect this kind of work can have on you. In the middle of the tour, I went to a friend's wedding in Chicago. My first night in Chicago, I remember I was awakened by nightmares about people being murdered in political violence. I had not had those kinds of nightmares in Guatemala, but being away from it, the weirdness of life in Guatemala obviously had struck me. Being back in the States and realizing I'd been in a really violent place. The violence had not affected me personally, but—I realized how I had come to anesthetize myself to it.

The second year I was the labor attaché. Some fellow was assigned as labor attaché and in the end, his assignment was broken and he went to Chile. It was too late to find anybody else. So then they made me labor attaché. I moved up to number two in the section. I think I got promoted also about that point to FS-06. Then Don Johnson, later the ambassador to Mongolia, came to replace me as the number three officer in the political section.

Q: I believe Don Johnson worked in the Operation Center.

BURGHARDT: Probably. Good guy. Johnson worked in Spain too, and in Beijing. In later years I saw him on official trips to both places. I replaced Chuck Brayshaw as the labor attaché. The only time I did that function but a good experience. I actually got to have supervision of an old union guy, a World War II vet who had been captured and kept in a POW [prisoner of war] camp in Manchuria. He worked for the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations] in a program called AIFLD, the American Institute for Free Labor Development. That was the Latin American branch; there was another one in Asia. They had a contract with the department. They advised labor unions to keep them from becoming red. During the Cold War the labor world was divided between a free world labor confederation, basically dominated by the AFL-CIO, and a Soviet-bloc confederation. There may also have been a third social democratic confederation. We wanted to keep the Guatemalan unions in our confederation. That was interesting work. I had a kind of supervision over the AIFLD fellow even though he was old enough to be my father. He was a nice guy to work with.

Q: So he would be the one to go out into the field to talk with the various labor leaders and so on, and report to you?

BURGHARDT: He had a budget and I was in charge of making sure his activities made sense in terms of our political goals. That was kind of an introduction to management. He was encouraging, training, and helping these people; he may have provided financial help too sometimes. I got to know the labor leaders. For example, I befriended an impressive labor leader out in Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean coast, a really funky town. He was black, as a lot of people are there. A few years later he was murdered too. It was mind-boggling, the number of people I knew who were murdered.

One of the big political events that happened while I was there was a presidential election. The thug in charge, General Carlos Arana, got re-elected but there was a serious challenge from the Christian Democrats. Their candidate was General Efrain Rios Montt, always known as *El Loco* (Crazy). Definitely exhibited some wacky behavior. He was an evangelical-Christian. In Guatemala the Christian Democrats were the more liberal party. They chose a military candidate hoping that would give them some protection. We thought he was going to win, but the military stole the election from him. The joke in Guatemala was, “Some mornings you turn the radio on and all you hear are marches; that means it’s happened again,” and that’s exactly what happened. It was a form of coup d’état. About ten years later Rios Montt did become president, the result of a more typical

coup. My first reaction when that happened was, "Well, they stole it from him so it's fine that finally he got it." But in fact the outcome was horrible. Rios Montt presided over possibly the most murderous period in Guatemala's long murderous history. We knew he was out of his mind in 1974.

That may be enough for Guatemala. A lovely country except for the unbelievable, horrible violence. And with millions of good people who deserved better. That's all I wanted to mention about Guatemala.

Q: By this point, your kids are school age?

BURGHARDT: Our first daughter was born October 1, 1972, while I was in Saigon. Susan went back to the Cape Cod Hospital and Helen was born there. Then Susan and Helen came back to Vietnam for several months before departing while I was in Haiphong. So Helen was with us in Guatemala, learning Spanish before English. Then our second daughter Caroline was born June 29, 1975. Susan had to go home from Guatemala to give birth in the States because otherwise we would have been stranded there after childbirth, plus no one had a high view of hospitals in Guatemala. We already had the experience of a very Catholic doctor refusing to abort a conception that we knew was going to be trouble. He refused to abort the fetus, which fortunately then aborted naturally. We didn't want to deal with Guatemalan gynecologists. Experiences of the Foreign Service. Meloy held me in Guatemala for a third Fourth of July party; I missed my daughter's birth. Meloy was such a sweetheart I couldn't turn him down; in those days you did those things.

While in Guatemala I decided I wanted to go back to Asia. This was the time when we were normalizing relations with China. In fact, in 1971 I saw Kissinger during the secret trip. I met him at the Fourth of July party in Saigon. One of his aides, a Columbia classmate, introduced me to Dr. Kissinger. From Saigon Kissinger went on to Pakistan and then Beijing. Nixon made his trip in '72. Cal Mehlert, my boss in Saigon, was brought out of Saigon to be Secretary of State Bill Rogers' interpreter. Going back but worth mentioning, Mehlert was very anti-Communist, and his wife was safe-havened in Taiwan. After the trip to Beijing with Nixon, Mehlert came back to Saigon but a few days later visited his wife in Taiwan. At that point ['71], he went hiking in the mountains with Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-Shek's son, and briefed him thoroughly on the president's trip to China.

Q: Was that—

BURGHARDT: No, that was Mehlert, the same Mehlert who gave my cable to the Cao Đài general. He was reckless.

Q: Wow. He was not fired after that?

BURGHARDT: No. I'm not sure how many people knew. He told us. We didn't rat on our boss. He said, "I went hiking with Chiang Ching-kuo for a week. I gave him everything I knew."

How to get back to Asia? The admin counselor in Saigon when I was there was Ernie Colantonio, who then went on to become the executive director of EAP [Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs]. Good contact. So on a trip back to Washington I made my case to him on why I wanted to get back to Asia. The State Department had to staff up on China experts. I spoke Vietnamese. Vietnamese is structurally unrelated to Chinese but 70 percent of the words come from Chinese, so it's quite helpful.

Q: There are cognates between Vietnamese and Chinese?

BURGHARDT: Yeah, as there are between Korean and Chinese. Seventy percent of the words were borrowed from Tang Dynasty Chinese. They have consonant endings that Mandarin Chinese lost over the intervening centuries. So, in many cases, the Vietnamese words sound more like Fujianese or Cantonese, or even like Korean. So *Lian he guo*, which means United Nations in Mandarin, becomes *Lien Hiep Quoc* in Vietnamese, and *Yon Hap Kuk* in Korean.

Colantonio bought it and I got assigned to study Chinese for two years, FSI followed by the language school in Taiwan. Then an onward assignment to Hong Kong.

I was assigned to language study in 1975. Almost a year in Washington at FSI. There were several of us whom our teachers referred to as "retreads," Vietnamese speakers who were learning Chinese. By that point, Saigon had fallen. Just happened that year in April 1975. One of the guys in my class was Doug Ramsey, who had been held prisoner for seven years by the VC. John Modderno and others whom I had known in Vietnam studied Chinese at the same time.

The second year was in Taichung, in the middle of Taiwan. That was a good program. The first year in DC was from '75 to '76, second year in Taichung '76 to '77. I remember that year in Taichung there was already a sense that the U.S. in the near future was going to break relations with Taiwan and establish relations with the PRC [People's Republic of China]. So that cloud hung over the atmosphere and our relationship with the teachers.

When the school moved to Taiwan from the mainland in 1949 or '50, it was decided to locate the training program in Taichung, about a hundred miles from Taipei, so the students wouldn't be constantly dragged into embassy work. That was smart. One comment about the experience in Taichung that is relevant to my later work in Taiwan: The school had an excellent program in which at the beginning of the academic year, we met with people from the local chamber of commerce, Taiwan business leaders. Then we were paired up with a businessman and we lived with his family for one week. If we hit it off, we would get together regularly during the year. I hit it off well with the family I was assigned to. So I took business trips with him to Kaohsiung, we got together for dinner,

and he came over to our house. We did things together on the weekends. It was a great experience. I got to know his family well and also the family of his best friend whom FSO John Modderno had lived with. They were native Taiwanese, not from mainland families that had come over in 1949. So I came to understand how they thought about mainlanders, about Beijing, about the governments of Chiang Kai-Shek, who had died the previous year [1975], and son, Chiang Ching-kuo. All of that was very valuable in my later years, stuff that was sometimes quoted back to my friends in Beijing: "Don't tell me that the Taiwanese' thinking was influenced against unification by the current president and his government." They always thought that way. They just couldn't say it out loud during the years of marital law.

In July 1977 I transferred to Hong Kong. I was a China watcher. We were still doing a lot of reporting about China from Hong Kong.

Q: What were the principal ways Hong Kong interacted with China if at all?

BURGHARDT: In this period we had an interest section in Beijing, but not an embassy yet. The embassy was established on January 1, 1979, roughly in the middle of my time in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, we had really brilliant Chinese employees who could look at a photo in the *People's Daily* and say, "Oh, well this guy is standing next to him because they were together in the Third Field Army in the late '30s, everybody knows that. And the fact he's standing in that position means he's moved up in the ranks. That's interesting because his mentor, who's to the right, has also moved up—" It was all spot on. They had it. Our most important consulate analyst was Vincent Lo, who later went on to do a lot of work for the CIA when he moved to the States. He was brilliant at it. But there were others who worked for the newspapers, the press in Hong Kong, and there was a Hungarian Jesuit priest, Father Laszlo Ladany, who was famous among China watchers. Ladany and his staff also did textual and photograph analysis, publishing their findings in *China News Analysis*. All from open sources. And especially valuable during this period immediately after the Cultural Revolution, when Deng Xiaoping took power and began China on its course of "Reform and Opening." Deng's rise to supreme power began when he returned to high party positions in July 1977, just at the time I arrived in Hong Kong. For the next eighteen months he systematically increased his control, pushing aside Hua Guofeng, Mao's chosen successor. By December 1979 Deng was China's de facto top leader. A large part of our job in the Hong Kong political section was to analyze these developments and their importance for the United States.

Our task was not limited to textual analysis. Part of our job was to cultivate all of the PRC figures in Hong Kong. That included the people with Xinhua Press [New China News Agency], which included not only real journalists but also intelligence service people who had Xinhua cover. One of my contacts was a guy named Szeto Keung, whose title was Chief Reporter of Xinhua. He knew that we knew exactly what he was. He was from the Ministry of State Security and his job was to keep track of foreigners in Hong Kong. We would kid him; we'd ask, "How's that reporting coming along?" He smiled.

Then there were *Wen Wei Pao* and *Ta Kung Pao*, two PRC-controlled newspapers, and their staff. Fei Yi-ming, the publisher of *Ta Kung Pao* was an important figure, very close to the mainland. He would often provide useful insights into what was happening in China. We interacted with the Bank of China people, who were PRC employees, with people from Chinese trading companies. I developed contacts among people who were close to PRC people, sympathetic. My best Chinese friend in Hong Kong and a valuable contact for many years after Hong Kong, was named Chan Lai. He was vice president for real estate at the Hang Seng Bank, one of Hong Kong's most important banks. He had been expelled from Hong Kong as a radical student during the Cultural Revolution, for demonstrations and other radical behavior, and had graduated from Wuhan University on the mainland. That was a very unusual resume. So he had good red credentials. His grandfather had been a close associate of Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China and a revered figure in both Beijing and Taipei. That family background probably helped Chan to return to Hong Kong after college and eventually rise to an important position in a key financial institution. Chan was a "red capitalist," maybe more "light pink" by the time I knew him. As bourgeois as they come, he loved good food and the good life; he seemed to have a wife in every port. He had deep knowledge of how things worked on the mainland, especially how they worked in the PRC's apparatus in Hong Kong. He provided many introductions. For many years after living in Hong Kong, Chan continued to be a valuable source of insights on everything from cigarette smuggling out of Subic Bay to, you name it, how the North Korean office in Macau raised money for the government in Pyongyang. He was a great friend who unfortunately died of diabetes in 2002.

The third thing we did was to regularly visit the mainland. The office in Beijing often needed help. They had a very small staff. So they would bring us up to help out. For example, when Deng made his historic trip to the U.S. in January 1979, less than one month after normalization, the embassy planned to send beforehand a series of messages. One was on the internal political scene; they brought me up to write it. The pattern we had was that on the way there and back, we took the slow train. We would stop in places of interest.

Q: And they let you?

BURGHARDT: We would visit the local authorities and communes, factories, and universities. I made three lengthy trips into China from Hong Kong. My very first trip was in January 1978. That was really early, before Deng Xiaoping had made any of his changes. It was still the Hua Guofeng period, the interregnum between Mao and Deng. The Cultural Revolution had really just ended. One place we visited on that trip was Changsha in Hunan Province. Mao's nephew was the party secretary, a holdover from the Mao era. Mao was a Hunan native. We wanted to see if the nephew's continued rule in Hunan meant that the economic reform measures beginning to be seen in some provinces were still being resisted in Hunan. We did see some evidence to support that assessment.

On the same trip we visited Wuhan University and the steel plant there. My traveling companion was Bill Sharpe, the treasury attaché in Hong Kong. He was a generation older than me. He came from Pittsburgh and worked in the steel mills there as a summer job. He was shocked at the condition of the steel mill in Wuhan—guys throwing hot ingots across the floor at each other. He said, "John Lewis would never have allowed this in Pittsburgh even in the 1930s" [Lewis was the labor chief].

So China was still then everybody in blue and gray. Few cars. We saw a steamroller in Tiananmen Square, a real steamroller with a worker feeding coal into it, a stovepipe, and a plaque on it saying it was built in Birmingham, England in 1925. China in those days was like a museum of the industrial revolution.

In my last year of three years in Hong Kong, my job changed. There was a position in the political section of the Vietnam watcher. That officer followed events in Indochina. It was a little odd, but that officer had performed a useful function since 1975. The guy who handled the job, Charlie Lahiguera, was transferred out, and right around that time the Chinese invaded Vietnam, in February 1979. Beijing seized land deep into several northern provinces, but had a much tougher fight than they expected against the far more battle-experienced Vietnamese forces. After six weeks, the Chinese withdrew but kept the border closed. They announced they were punishing Vietnam, or as Deng put it "teaching them a lesson" for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia a few months earlier. Vietnamese forces had overthrown the murderous Cambodian Pol Pot regime, which had foolishly provoked Vietnam with incursions into Vietnamese territory.

Just after that, the Vietnamese had their own pogrom; they expelled all the Chinese that they could. There was a big Chinatown in Haiphong in northern Vietnam, maybe a hundred thousand; they were nearly all kicked out. From Haiphong they fled east. Some went to mainland China and ended up there, unable to go anywhere else because of the international rules on refugees. They were considered to have landed in a safe place. But many more went to Macau, the first non-PRC port they came to, and others further east to Hong Kong. So large refugee camps started to be developed in Macau and Hong Kong. This was a major humanitarian problem. The U.S. government undertook to help the Portuguese government in Macau and the British in Hong Kong to support these camps. Eventually there was a full-time refugee officer from USAID who was assigned to Hong Kong, but it took her a long time to get there, so I was made in charge of this work, the managerial part of providing aid to the refugee camps and also interviewing people [using my Vietnamese] to find out why they left, what had happened, what were the conditions. Vice President Mondale stopped in Hong Kong during an Asia trip to visit one of the refugee camps in the New Territories and to meet with the British governor and other officials to discuss the issue. I was the main control officer for Mondale's visit. I remember accompanying him to the refugee camp in the New Territories and attending his meeting with the Governor of Hong Kong, Murray MacLehose.

Q: Were these refugees also accepted in other countries—Europe, the U.S.?

BURGHARDT: Eventually some were but not too many. Remember they were almost all ethnic Chinese. The other waves of Vietnamese refugees involved ethnic Vietnamese and they migrated in different directions. A lot of them headed to Indonesia and Malaysia and some ended up in the Philippines. This ethnic Chinese migration in 1979 was kind of its own self-contained eastward migration—I take that back—there also were small numbers of ethnic Chinese who fled from minor ports in the Mekong Delta and ended up in Southeast Asian camps. Many of them ended up in Australia eventually.

During that period I worked closely with the British government in Hong Kong. That was something new, something that had not been part of the duties of a China watcher. The FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] had an office in Hong Kong headed by David Wilson, who later became governor of Hong Kong. His deputy, Iain Orr, a Scot, became a good friend. I worked closely with Iain concerning our support for their management of the refugee camps, and both our governments' development of policies to deal with the refugee issue. The British came up with a program that they called Orderly Departure, which would bring Chinese family members out of Vietnam and resettle them in Hong Kong. The UK [United Kingdom] had diplomatic relations with Hanoi. The purpose of this program of course was to create an "orderly" alternative to dangerous refugee flight. I reported on this and I remember recommending that maybe the U.S. could do something similar for Vietnamese refugees. Ultimately our program also was called Orderly Departure and in some ways modeled on one the Brits set up to deal with the Sino-Vietnamese fleeing and being pushed out of Vietnam.

One other thing I'll mention. On my last trip to mainland China from Hong Kong, in early 1980, I went to Kunming in Yunnan Province, bordering Southeast Asia. I traveled down to the Chinese border with Laos. I wanted to see how China's closing of its borders with Vietnam and Laos had affected the lives of people living in those border areas. I found that the closing of the border had caused great hardship to the ethnic minorities in that region who had always been accustomed to free movement from one country to another.

Q: While you were there, was the Golden Triangle already established?

BURGHARDT: Yeah, it was already an issue. I made a lot of contacts in Kunming. I visited twice and saw those people again on the second visit. A few weeks later I received in Hong Kong an anonymous letter from someone in Kunming saying, "You got those people in trouble." An early lesson, you've got to be careful. Although some of my CIA friends say, "It's their job to be careful. It's your job to collect intelligence." (laughs)

The other issue I covered—a somewhat unlikely one—was Tibet. During that period, the Dalai Lama was in touch with the Chinese leadership through his older brother Gyalo Thondup, who spoke fluent Chinese, spent years in China and was known by the Chinese leadership. In the 1970s he lived in India but could visit China at a time when the Dalai Lama could not or would not. In the late '70s, after Deng had taken over and China had begun a new era, the Dalai Lama and PRC leadership decided to have talks, to see if they

could reach some kind of agreement. Gyalo Thondup was the negotiator for the Tibetans. He first met with Deng Xiaoping on a trip to Beijing in 1979. Gyalo Thondup was very close to an American who lived in Hong Kong named John Dolfin. John is a great China expert who for many years in Hong Kong ran the Universities Service Centre. During the dark years when it was hard to visit China, American and European scholars would go to that organization on Argyle Street in Kowloon to do research on China, including interviews with refugees and exiles. What's left of the Universities Service Centre moved in 1988 to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. John also was a Tibet scholar, spoke and read Tibetan and was close to many important Tibetan exiles. Gyalo Thondup told Dolfin in meticulous detail everything that happened during the talks with the PRC. Dolfin then told me and I reported it all, to the extent that seven years later when I was in Beijing as political counselor, once or twice with everyone's agreement I went back to Hong Kong and follow-up debriefings on where things stood in the Dalai Lama's brother's interaction with Beijing.

Q: With the Dalai Lama's older brother?

BURGHARDT: I never met him. I did it with Dolfin.

On a personal note those were in many ways the greatest years of our lives. Our kids were at a wonderful age, small kids. My oldest daughter went to the British school there. My wife taught at the American school. My youngest daughter was in a Montessori school. We lived in a consulate-owned house, something very rare in Hong Kong where almost everyone is in an apartment. We shared the house, at 32 Repulse Bay Road, with another consulate family who lived on the top floor. We had a lawn. The last two years we had a sailboat, shared with two consulate colleagues, moored below our home in Deepwater Bay. It was a great life. The work was terrific; the friends were great. To this day Hong Kong is one of my favorite places in the world. I go back at least once a year. I have lots of reasons to go to Asia on somebody else's money and I always stop in Hong Kong. Love the place and still have a lot of good friends there. I went on to greater things career-wise but probably never was happier than I was in those years in Hong Kong.

Q: To go back a second, other than the mainland news service, what were the other contacts between Hong Kong and the mainland?

BURGHARDT: At that point in the late '70s into 1980, Hong Kong was a British colony and run by Lord MacLehose, the governor, assisted by David Wilson, later governor and then his political adviser. Even going back to the [United Kingdom]50s and '60s there was always some presence of the PRC in Hong Kong. You have to remember, the UK very early—I believe in 1950—broke relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan and established relations with the PRC. Britain from the very beginning understood that continuing to manage Hong Kong was going to require recognizing and doing business directly with Beijing. Britain had a very different relationship with China than we did in the '50s and '60s, even into the '70s. They had normal diplomatic relations. Though that relationship was very strained at times, particularly during the Cultural Revolution in the

’60s when there were riots and demonstrations against British rule in Hong Kong, inspired by Red Guards and other radicals. The Red Guards also sacked the British embassy in Beijing. When we were there, all that was past history. The Chinese presence in Hong Kong always consisted of this infrastructure of the Xinhua [New China News Agency] office, which also housed the intelligence service, the two mainland-controlled newspapers, the Bank of China, and there were trading companies [many that still exist] that were mainland agents to buy and sell things and do business in Hong Kong. As China’s development and opening to the world accelerated from 1978 on, that whole business-sector presence—later private but at the beginning all state-owned enterprises—grew exponentially.

In addition there was always an office in the Happy Valley area of Hong Kong, near the Xinhua offices, of the Chinese Communist Party. It’s an office that’s still there, the official representatives in Hong Kong of the Communist Party. We didn’t meet those guys but we met everybody else. Maybe I met them once at some event.

British and PRC officials engaged in Hong Kong as well as in Beijing. They had to. Hong Kong was dependent on the mainland for water. There were goods shipped back and forth all the time. Starting when I was there but accelerating in the years immediately afterwards, companies based in Hong Kong started to do their manufacturing across the border in Guangdong Province. And there were constantly issues of criminals fleeing across to one side or the other, and people who were illegally in Hong Kong that should go back to the mainland. These were daily issues. Plus a lot of the food came from the mainland. You couldn’t grow enough food in Hong Kong to feed all those people.

During our last year in Hong Kong, while I was covering Indochina issues while still being a China watcher, dealing with the Sino-Vietnamese refugees required frequent visits to Macau. This was something I hadn’t done before. I was made one of the four officers in the consulate who were accredited to the government of Macau, which is covered from our consulate in Hong Kong—still is. I would have to deal with the Portuguese officials there. They were always very courteous but dealing with them did present some language difficulties; they only spoke Portuguese; the closest thing I spoke was Spanish. They often understood me better than I understood them.

The Catholic Relief Service [CRS] was very important in running the camps in Macau. There were wonderful priests whom we dealt with, who were a pleasure to work with. One of the most famous, widely known throughout Asia, and when he died a few years ago got a prominent obituary on the back of *The Economist*, was named Father Lancelot. That was really his name, Father Lancelot Rodrigues. He was from Malacca. He had a multi-ethnic background. He was famous for his *joie-de-vivre* (joy of life). He was a man who loved to sing, play guitar, drink wine, eat good food, tell jokes, and have a merry time with his friends. But he was also a man of big heart who sincerely worried about the refugees and other people who were in need in the world. Long after the refugee problem ended, he continued to do humanitarian work within the Chinese mainland and in Macau. He was a Jesuit. These people were a pleasure to work with. It was an honor to have done

so. The last time I saw Father Lancelot was in 1999, just as Macau was about to be handed over to mainland China. My wife and I simply showed up in his office to say hello on a visit to Macau from Hong Kong. Typical of Father Lancelot, he invited us to join him for lunch that day with a large group of the Portuguese-speaking diaspora, people from Angola and other former Portuguese colonies, who were all about to leave Macau.

The last point to make—one of the people I worked with closely in Hong Kong to try to understand what was going on in Vietnam, before we had a presence in Vietnam, was Nayan Chanda. For many years he was an important reporter and later the editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a late, lamented, wonderful magazine. He now runs the Yale global online magazine. Nayan became a great expert on Vietnam; he and I collaborated a lot in exchanging information on what we could learn about what was happening there. Over the years I've had great relationships with journalists at many posts, including some I got to know during the war in Vietnam. People like Peter Osnos, who was the Saigon bureau chief of *The Washington Post*, to this day a friend whom I see occasionally in New York. Also Craig Whitney who was the *New York Times* bureau chief in Vietnam during the war.

A story: Talking to Peter years later over lunch together in New York, I said "You're only two years older than me; how'd you get to be bureau chief in one of the most important bureaus in the world at such a young age?"

He said, "Ray, you know the answer. People who get chosen to do the jobs that I did or you did in war zones are young people who can run fast. Ben Bradlee was not going to get his ass shot up in Vietnam."

Next job to talk about: I came back to the State Department in Washington in 1980 for the only assignment I ever had in thirty-five years in the Foreign Service that was actually in the State Department building. Proving that contrary to conventional wisdom, it's not necessarily as essential as many people will tell you it is. We'll come back to that. It probably is essential to have a good assignment in DC; my NSC assignment I think showed quality is more important than just spending time in Washington. I was in the Department's East Asia and Pacific Bureau [EAP] at the end of the Carter administration and beginning of the Reagan administration, from 1980 to '82. When I first got there, the assistant secretary was Dick Holbrooke and his DAS [deputy assistant secretary] for Southeast Asia was John Negroponte. That helped to solidify a life-long relationship with Negroponte whom I went on to work for two more times, and was my principal mentor while I probably was his principal protege. It also solidified a life-long friendship with Holbrooke. I never worked directly for him again but we interacted many times over the years, including while he was the chairman of the Asia Society.

The Office of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia Affairs, which changed its name while I was there to Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea Affairs, was an odd office. Holbrooke had created a lot of small offices in EAP. Coming in as a thirty-five-year-old assistant

secretary of state, he didn't want a lot of graybeard office directors who would feel superior to him. By slicing up the bureau into smaller offices, he could have younger and more junior people as office directors. It took years for the bureau to reassemble itself in a more conventional fashion. The office director was Desaix Anderson. I was his deputy. We had two other officers and two secretaries.

At this time one of the oddities of this office was that we only had diplomatic relations with Laos, there only at the chargé level, and it was the least important of the three countries. A lot of what the office was engaged in was putting pressure on Vietnam.

Q: This is what year again?

BURGHARDT: It's 1980 to '82. Vietnam had invaded Cambodia at the end of '78 and had expelled, overthrown Pol Pot.

Q: That would make sense because the Chinese—

BURGHARDT: Invaded Vietnam in early '79 as punishment for that action by Vietnam. So at the end of '78, around Christmas time, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and overthrew Pol Pot. In fact, just after that happened I took one of my trips to China in January 1979. When I boarded the plane in Guangzhou, as I entered the plane, sitting in the first-class cabin was Ieng Sary, who had been Pol Pot's number two. He smiled at me. I remember it sent the greatest chills down my spine. It was as if I was seeing Goebbels or Himmler, the face of evil.

The U.S. position was that Vietnam had overthrown another government. Opposing the Vietnamese rule of Cambodia was a Cambodian coalition that consisted not only of the Khmer Rouge but also a truly democratic component with respectable political leaders, especially the former prime minister, Son Sann. I hosted a reception for Son Sann at my home when he visited Washington. It was a very odd coalition of forces.

Q: Weren't there a few Sihanouk—

BURGHARDT: And Sihanoukists. A three-way coalition of democrats led by Son Sann, Sihanoukists, and the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk had stayed on as a figurehead during the Pol Pot years. Our Cambodia policy was widely criticized not only in the United States but around the world. We essentially followed the lead of ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations], our friends in Southeast Asia, who very strongly wanted to take this approach to the situation in Cambodia. We deferred to them, at some cost. In the fall of 1981 there was a major conference at the UN Headquarters in New York on how to deal with the Cambodia issue. I was part of our delegation, led by Secretary of State Al Haig. The U.S., China, and the ASEAN dominated the conference. The three-way Cambodian coalition, largely in exile but with some camps in western Cambodia, continued to hold the country's seat in the United Nations.

Our Cambodia policy included a squeeze on Vietnam, including strong economic sanctions. Maintaining those sanctions was a big part of my job, which involved a lot of interaction with Treasury, Commerce, and the business community.

Until a year and a half before I got to this office, until the events of late ’78 and early ’79, we were moving toward normalization with Vietnam. For Holbrooke this was going to be one of his great achievements. Then, Brzezinski and others in the Carter administration instead moved forward with normalization with China, which happened on January 1, 1979. Normalization with Vietnam was put aside, which was a big disappointment to Holbrooke. Holbrooke on his last day in office on January 19, 1981 went around to all the offices in EAP to say farewell. He came to ours last and he said, “I visited all the other offices in EAP; now I have to visit this one, too.” Typical Holbrooke. “We didn’t get all the things accomplished here that we wanted to,” and maybe he also said something nice.

Other things that happened in that office: In the second year there under the new Reagan administration, we had John Holdridge as the assistant secretary, career China expert. Negroponte stayed on for a while then left to go be ambassador to Honduras. He was replaced by Dan O’Donahue, a very difficult person to work for. O’Donahue was the classic case of what’s known as a screamer. Like many of my bosses, he was a protege of Phil Habib, but he didn’t get the part about having a warm and humorous personality, unlike Holbrooke, Tony Lake, Negroponte and most of the others.

The POW/MIA [prisoner of war/missing in action] issue was prominent during that period. There were still people in Congress who believed POWs were being held in Vietnam or elsewhere in Indochina. We had conflicting intelligence on that. What really caused problems was that defectors or exiles who had been involved in Vietnam’s dealing with remains of POWs had provided credible intelligence that Vietnam was still holding the remains of Americans. That was clear. That unfortunately reinforced the more weakly based suspicions that there were still live POWs.

Q: During the Carter administration when I was in high school and college, you could buy these POW/MIA bracelets with the name, rank, serial number of someone believed to still be unaccounted for.

BURGHARDT: Right. During that whole period and in my later years also I had a good relationship with the League of Families of POWs/MIAs, and with the founder and leader, Anne Mills Griffiths.

At one point we had received several reports that POWs were being held at a camp in Laos. This was the first time in my career [this is no longer classified], I wrote a finding on the need for intelligence action. We sent a clandestine team into Laos to look. They didn’t find anything.

In March 1982 the Reagan administration was looking to start again the process of normalization with Vietnam. The McCain-Kerry report had come out; that was a major

step in dealing with the POW/MIA issue. We were no longer going to try to find POWs; we were going to try to find MIAs. A few members of Congress hadn't given up on this but the administration had. It was decided to have talks with Vietnam about the MIA issue, which could be the first step toward normalization.

In March 1982, Rich Armitage, later assistant secretary but then still the Defense Department's DAS for Asia, led the team. I was chosen to accompany him. The office director was Desaix Anderson, a great officer, and his boss was Dan O'Donahue. I had not worked much on the MIA issue, but for some reason they chose me. The EAP leadership probably didn't want the office director to go because they were trying to make it low key. We gathered in Bangkok and then flew to Hanoi, to the military airport at Gia Lam, outside of Hanoi. We traveled in the King Air prop plane of our defense attaché in Bangkok. Our attaché pilots stayed in Hanoi and flew us back. In Hanoi, we met with the Foreign Ministry and various government agencies for a couple of days of talks, relatively cordial. Going back to my Haiphong experience, on the flight up I told Armitage the story about leaving my laundry behind in Haiphong. I had filed a claim for it; no one ever does this, but I did and I was paid by the State Department, reimbursing me for personal items abandoned in Haiphong. Much later, I was in Guatemala, maybe a year later, and got a call from the embassy mailroom. "Hey, Senor Burghardt, we have a very strange package down here for you. It's from our embassy in Saigon."

It was a package with all of my clothing that I had left in Haiphong. All had been neatly washed and folded, and there was a bill from a laundry on Dien Bien Phu Street in Haiphong, stamped with all kinds of waivers—they had waived the cost of washing these clothes. So I told this story to Armitage. Armitage said, "I've got my ice-breaker."

We arrived in Hanoi and at the beginning of the meeting, Armitage said to the chief Vietnamese on the other side of the table, probably a deputy foreign minister, "I brought this guy with me; he owes you some money for a laundry bill. I brought him so he can finally get this off his conscience." Vietnamese are wonderful, great sense of humor, very pragmatic. So they're smiling.

I tell the story. Then the Vietnamese official takes all this in and laughs, thinks about it, and he says exactly the right thing. "That was a long time ago; I'm glad you've come back to see us. I think it's time to let bygones be bygones." Perfect.

That was the first moment of one of the first meetings between U.S. and Vietnamese officials after the war ended in '75. One month short of seven years after the fall of Saigon. It took another thirteen years to fully normalize relations. We were halfway there three years earlier, in the Carter administration, but to fully normalize took another thirteen years after 1982.

That's all to say about it, really. Our interpreter we brought with us was Jean Andre Sauvageot, earlier known as Jean then changed his preferred name to Andre. He speaks the best Vietnamese of any non-Vietnamese who ever lived. Perfect Vietnamese. He rose

to colonel in the Special Forces. He continues to be deeply involved in Vietnam, doing business there. We stayed in a hotel called [in Vietnamese], the Victory Hotel. Right on West Lake in Hanoi. It was one of only two hotels open. Cubans managed the hotel very poorly, and it was not in great shape. The first morning there, Rich Armitage announced he had killed a rat in his room. He said, "The Cubans make great cigars; who the hell thought they could run a hotel?"

That covers it about my time in that office.

Q: Even then back in the early '80s, there were no other topics of importance like the fate of Amerasian children and so on?

BURGHARDT: All those subjects we knew about. The whole thing was on this trip—I didn't explain—on this trip to Hanoi we were put on strict controls by the leadership of the department, especially by Dan O'Donahue and Holdridge. We were not there to negotiate normalization of relations. What they particularly did not want us talking about was Vietnam's presence in Cambodia, how we would resolve that issue—nothing but the narrow issue of MIAs. When we got back to Bangkok the embassy put us up at the guesthouse that is on the grounds of the ambassador's residence and provided staff to help us send out our reporting message. And as a joke, I did a two sentence draft which I showed Armitage. It began, "Carried out in-depth negotiations on a wide range of issues; details to follow."

Armitage died laughing and said, "Even as a joke I wouldn't send this because Dan would probably have a heart attack and die, and then it would be our fault." (laughs)

Q: Something like that goes into history—

BURGHARDT: Here's another example of that: During my years in Hong Kong there was a message sent worldwide asking for reactions at each post among political figures, the public, toward our plans to build a military base in Diego Garcia. Remember that? The most famous response was from Ambassador Osborne in Rangoon, who was known to be a great wit. His entire response was, "The Burmese think Diego Garcia is a cigar." (laughs)

All these issues, we knew about them and knew they would have to be resolved someday, but no one had authority to deal with them at that point. The contact between the U.S. and Vietnam, such as it was, was handled by people assigned to Vietnam's UN mission in New York. In their New York office they had one or two officers whose real job was to deal with the United States. They were the people we talked to before we made our trip to Hanoi, to go over the agenda and plan for the trip. They handled arrangements for our visas, which were issued to us at the Vietnamese embassy in Bangkok. They were also people who talked to the administration if we had other issues, and also dealt with American humanitarian organizations that were friendly toward Vietnam.

There were a number of organizations that thought our policy was terrible, and who were pressuring the administration to lift the sanctions—the Mennonites humanitarian aid agency and many others; we would interact with them and many probably thought we were ogres. Hanoi's setup in New York was exactly the same as the North Korean arrangement today, where they have people at their office at the UN whose job is actually to deal with the United States.

Q: The Vietnamese had no protecting power in Washington doing anything for them? Everything was done through New York?

BURGHARDT: Good question. I don't know if they had a protecting power; I don't think so. I think I would have remembered that. Le Van Bang, who was assigned to the New York office to deal with the U.S. was named their first ambassador to Washington when we finally normalized relations. Then later when I went to Vietnam, by that point he was the deputy foreign minister and was my main point of contact.

Q: I only ask, sometimes maintaining that fiction has value; other times, not.

BURGHARDT: If something happened to an American in Vietnam who needed help, I think it was our friends the Swedes, just like in North Korea.

I should mention one other event during our 1982 trip to Hanoi: After we finished writing our report in Bangkok, I traveled to Vientiane to brief the Lao government on our POW-MIA discussions with the Vietnamese, their allies. We felt that Laos, with which we still had diplomatic relations, was even less cooperative than Vietnam on the MIA issue. So the purpose of my briefing was to encourage the Lao leadership to be more forthcoming. I recall that it did have the desired effect, at least for a while. Travel to Vientiane was quite exotic those days: an overnight train from Bangkok to Nong Khai in northern Thailand, then a small ferry across the Mekong to Thadeua, where you were admitted by Lao immigration and an embassy car brought me to Vientiane. To get back to Washington, I first had to return to Bangkok by the same route.

After we all had returned to Washington, Armitage and I were called to testify before a Congressional committee [I don't remember which one] about our trip. I remember that Anne Mills Griffiths, head of the POW-MIA Association was in the audience. With the exception of my confirmation hearing nineteen years later, that was the only time I testified at a formal Congressional hearing. Of course, throughout my career I had countless informal meetings with members of Congress and their staff.

Now I'm going to Honduras.

Q: From the department to Honduras—

BURGHARDT: How did that happen? It was 1982. I was paneled to go to Bangkok. I was going to be in the political section, as the number two, the officer who dealt with

Indochina-related issues, Southeast Asia regional issues. Great job, replacing Tim Carney in a job Desaix Anderson had before him. I was really looking forward to it.

John Negroponte had been named ambassador to Honduras and had already gone there in November 1981. Honduras was a hot spot. The whole Central American conflict had begun. It was a proxy war, the U.S.-Soviet proxy war in Central America. The Sandinistas who had taken control of Nicaragua in 1979 were a Marxist-Leninist political movement strongly supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union. The U.S. was supporting a politically-mixed collection of rebels who opposed the Sandinista government. Most rebel bases were in Honduras. I had served in Guatemala, I knew Central America. I spoke fluent Spanish. Negroponte considered me his lieutenant. He asked me to go with him to be chief of his political section in Honduras. That was going to be a stretch assignment; I had just been promoted to 02 and it was an 01 job. I was dubious about this, and I got a lot of pressure from EAP people to stick with my assignment to Bangkok. Desaix Anderson commented in his Mississippi accent, "Ray, I think there is a question of the inherent importance of certain countries, you know? The inherent importance of Honduras is pretty low."

He had a point. But several factors led me to agree to go to Tegucigalpa: my respect for Negroponte, my interest in being involved in something that was then a subject of great attention from Washington [whether it deserved it or not], plus the fact that it is very hard to say no to Negroponte. He was going to get my orders changed. And he did. In the end, with my concurrence, but in those days people could do that even without your concurrence. So I went to Honduras.

Negroponte spoke pretty good Spanish. The DCM was Shep Lohman who did not speak any Spanish at all. Shep was a central figure in State Department history on refugee issues. Negroponte knew him from the Indochina work on refugees. He was a good man. Negroponte wanted somebody who was seasoned and mature to be a DCM who would administer the embassy. Negroponte's idea was to pair hiring Shep with hiring me, the younger guy who was a political officer, spoke good Spanish and knew Central America. It was a good team; it worked. It meant I often had to interpret for Lohman, which was a bit odd, but that was all right. In fact, three of us on the staff—myself, Chris Arcos, a Latino who was the public affairs officer, and the army attaché whose name I forget, took turns as the interpreters for CODELs [congressional delegations], for visiting officials. We did it all the time. That's the only time in my career in which I did so much interpreting. It meant by the time I left Honduras and was tested by FSI, I got 4+/4+ in Spanish [just short of 5/5 which is university-educated full fluency]. If only my Chinese and Vietnamese could have ever approached that.

What did we do in Honduras? Small country; big American presence. It's the kind of place where—as a thirty-something political counselor—or "political attaché," for some reason locally that was the term they used—I knew President Suazo very well. I knew General Alvarez, the head of the military. I knew Jaime Rosenthal, the political boss in San Pedro Sula in the north—all the political figures, all the people who became

presidents for the next twenty years. I was frequently in their homes, their offices, we were together at social functions, there was just this intense, intimate weaving together of the embassy and the establishment there. Doctor Bob, as we called President Suazo [he was actually a country medical doctor], firmly supported the American position. Reagan thought he was great. The Hondurans tolerated the Contra bases being in Honduras. That made us a little easier on aid to Honduras. I would never have admitted that at the time. It may have influenced us to take a more positive view of Honduras, yes. No quid pro quo, though!

In the end it was a rather short tour. I was there from the summer of ’82 until I left in early March 1984. I would often go to Washington accompanying Honduran officials; Negroponte wanted me with them. On one of those trips, when I was accompanying the Honduran foreign minister, the department got the idea to move me to the NSC. The first person to suggest the idea was the head of the Central America desk. We were in the ARA [Bureau of Inter-American Affairs] front office, and the director, named Shaw, was staring at me. I said, “What’s up?”

He replied, “You’re going to be an important guy. I see who needs to go to the NSC to fill the vacancy there.” (laughs)

That’s exactly how it happened. I had barely returned to Honduras when Negroponte informed me, “They want you to fly back there next week and be interviewed by Bud McFarlane [Robert “Bud” McFarlane, the president’s national security advisor].” I was an 01 by that point. I flew back to Washington. I’m not sure there was another candidate. They wanted someone who knew Central America, and it was important to them that it was somebody Negroponte respected, because Negroponte was the key guy on the ground in Central America. So I started at the NSC very soon. My family was still in Honduras. My wife was working there as well as caring for our elementary-school age children. So it was arranged that I would first be on TDY [temporary duty] to Washington for several months until I was formally transferred after school ended. It was an unusual arrangement. In a surprise twist, on March 31, 1984, during a visit to Tegucigalpa in my NSC role, the Honduran military—supported by President Suazo—ousted General Alvarez as military commander. Negroponte called MacFarlane to ask that I stay on for a few days to help him figure out what had happened. So I spent one week back in the job of political counselor, contacting all my old sources and analyzing this dramatic development. Of course, it was also nice to be back with my family for a week. Predictably, conspiracy theories appeared in the Latin American press surmising that the timing of my return to Honduras indicated I must have been involved in the coup!

The NSC Latin America office consisted of Constantine Menges, a political appointee, a scholar and fellow graduate of Columbia, a bit older than me, and in poor health—super-high blood pressure. He died not too many years later. He was intensely rightwing. I mean, I’m relatively conservative but this guy was off the deep end. In fact he had two nicknames in Washington. Tony Motley was the assistant secretary for ARA who was a real character, brought up in Rio de Janeiro. He and Constantine couldn’t

stand each other; he called Constantine, “Constant Menace,” or the better name, “Menges Khan.” (laughs)

The office had Constantine as senior director, me the number two in the office, and Jackie Tillman, a protégé of Jeane Kirkpatrick—three officers plus two secretaries. Later it grew. Philip Hughes joined us, who later became the political appointee ambassador to Barbados. Constantine didn’t want me to have any authority really; he viewed me as a threat, a plant from the weak-kneed State Department. He assigned me to deal with South America and the Caribbean, so at the beginning I did that. I had been there just a few weeks when I got a phone call, I think from John Poindexter, the deputy national security advisor. The White House and State Department had decided that I would work with and travel with Harry Shlaudeman, the newly named special envoy for Central America. They did not want Constantine involved. There was a group of countries called the Contadora Group, Contadora being an island off Panama where the leaders of the four countries first met. It included Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico. Then there was the Contadora Support Group, four other countries including Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Peru. For the next two years we were constantly visiting these countries, seeking a peace agreement. What would a peace agreement look like? We also visited the Central American countries. It was constant motion: first with Shlaudeman, beginning in late March 1984, then with Phil Habib for the last year.

One of our early trips in 1984 was scheduled to be to our four Central America friends [Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica]. The night before the trip, I got a call at my temporary apartment in Georgetown from Bob Kimmitt who was executive secretary at the NSC. He said, “Ray, I know you’re making this trip tomorrow. It’s maybe more important than you realize. While you’re packing I recommend adding another pair of underwear and another shirt. You’re making one other stop. The other country that you weren’t going to visit is also in Central America.” He obviously meant Nicaragua.

I said, “Oh. Does Constantine know about this?” I don’t think Constantine even knew I was going to Central America at that point.

Bob said, “Constantine will find out when he finds out.”

I said, “This is a pretty unusual chain of command we’ve got.” [On paper Constantine was my boss.]

Bob said, “This is the way it’s going to work. Ray, you seem like a pretty smart guy but I’m not sure you’re getting it. You are not to take orders from Constantine on anything under any circumstances. You work for Bud and John and when necessary, for me. Not for Constantine.”

I said, “Okay boss. I get it.” I remember I sent my wife a note saying, “This job is utterly fascinating but not really reassuring.”

On that trip we went to Managua first and there was a surprise addition to our group: George Shultz. We literally walked into the room in the presidential palace and there was the secretary of state. (laughs)

That meeting on June 2, 1984 turned out to be between Secretary Shultz and Daniel Ortega, the head of the Sandinista regime. Let me give you a little bit of background, which in retrospect I could see had been probably a precursor of where the administration was going, in wanting to get talks going with Nicaragua. Just before I was to leave Tegucigalpa to take the job at NSC, in February 1984, our ambassador in Managua, Skip Gnehm, knowing that I was about to be transferred to the NSC staff, contacted Ambassador Negroponte and said, "Here in Managua they're going to have a huge bash. A lot of people are going to come from around the world to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary [February 21, 1984] of the death of Sandino, the hero of the revolution. If Ray came, there are various social events we could bring him into and he could meet all these players. We in the embassy could also give him our thoughts because he's never been to Nicaragua and he needs to see it."

Everyone agreed, including the department, and I did that. I was introduced to Ortega at a social event. I was authorized to tell him I was going to the White House from the embassy in Honduras. Also at a reception I met one of the key figures in Castro's government, known as *Barba Roja* (Red Beard) [Manuel Pineiro], who was the head of intelligence for Castro. He had been an important supporter and mastermind of the Sandinista revolution. We had a fascinating conversation, all of which was duly reported by both him and by me. That kind of contact with a high-level Cuban official was very rare in those days, even for the staff of our "Interest Section" in Havana.

Going back to the meeting three months later in Managua with Shultz: They may have given me a heads-up just before the meeting that Shultz was going to be there, but it was still a surprise. The main point of the meeting was to reach agreement on having direct negotiations between Nicaragua and the United States on the possibility of a negotiated solution to the Central American conflicts, specifically the Contra War. An agreement was reached that we would have such negotiations, and that they would be between Victor Tinoco, the deputy foreign minister of Nicaragua, and Harry Shlaudeman, President Reagan's special envoy and a former assistant secretary for Latin America. Those talks were held, nine rounds, eight in Manzanillo, Mexico. They were sponsored by Mexico and hosted by them. Manzanillo was the capital of a state that was governed by the girlfriend of the president of Mexico. The food was great. We had the president's chef cooking for us, and we had the meetings in the governor's villa. I think the Nicaraguans came there to meet us most of the time.

For the first talks, for some reason we weren't ready to have them in Mexico so we met in Atlanta. We had suggested Miami; the Sandinistas didn't like Miami, they thought it was full of their enemies. They were probably right; Miami is full of right-wing Latinos. Then we did the later meetings in Mexico. The eight meetings in Mexico were held from June 1984 until January 1985, when they were suspended for lack of progress. There were a

couple of high-level U.S.-Nicaraguan meetings later in 1985 to see if the talks could be revived but those efforts were unsuccessful.

Q: Were these meetings reported in any public documents?

BURGHARDT: The Manzanillo talks were public information. The Mexicans knew about it, so it would have been difficult to keep secret. And it was in our interest to demonstrate an American diplomatic effort to resolve the conflict.

These talks were in parallel with the whole Contadora process. This was the direct U.S.-Nicaraguan component. Obviously when I was in the NSC no negotiated solution was achieved. If you want to look forward, during the George H.W. Bush administration there was a negotiated solution. The Sandinistas agreed to have elections, they lost and they handed over power to the opposition.

Q: With the exception of the Defense Ministry, they kept the Defense Ministry.

BURGHARDT: Yeah. It wasn't a totally satisfactory solution but it was still pretty amazing that they peacefully left office. Of course, years later the Sandinistas were reelected to power.

On other things about my time at the NSC—

Q: One question. These parallel talks with Shlaudeman and so on, they obviously didn't prosper, but do you remember what were the sticking points?

BURGHARDT: What comes to mind is a memorable comment of Harry Shlaudeman as we were eating dinner one night. We were eating a wonderful *robolo a la valenciana* (red snapper cooked in Valencian sauce), when Shlaudemen said, "Ray, twenty years from now neither of us will remember a word we or Victor Tinoco said, but I'm going to remember this *robolo a la valenciana*."

I remember at one of the first talks, a heavy who traveled with Tinoco who was probably from security forces, a tough guy, asked to have a private dinner with me. On both sides we hoped that private discussion might find areas of agreement but we were too far apart. At all times these meetings were quite courteous, although too many of them were just reading talking points at each other. Sticking points were—our position was that the Contras had support within Nicaragua, that there were dissidents and opposition political figures within Nicaragua who were more on the side of the Contras than the Sandinistas. This was a civil war in a country with a lot of discontent underneath. It would be a very unstable place to rule unless they figured out some way to deal with that. We were trying to negotiate them into some way of having elections or having shared power, that was the goal. Ultimately it was achieved [at least for a while], but they weren't ready for that then.

In October 1985 Menges was fired and I replaced him as special assistant to the president and senior director for Latin America. I held that position for about a year and a half. That was heady stuff for an 01; I was promoted to the Senior Foreign Service in October 1986. My counterpart at the State Department was Assistant Secretary Elliott Abrams at State. In March 1986 Philip Habib was appointed by Reagan to replace Shlaudeman as special envoy for Central America. Habib continued his predecessor's mission to seek a negotiated solution to the Nicaraguan conflict, traveling south to meet with the leaders of the Central American and Contadora countries. I accompanied him on all his trips along with John Hamilton, director of Central American affairs at the State Department.

We should not go too much further without mentioning the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver North. We all knew he was doing things to keep the Contras funded. Some of us knew that there were warehouses in various places including one outside of New Orleans where weapons were coming in. How he was doing it, where the funds came from, I didn't know and I didn't need to know. He once handed me a piece of paper and then took it away, saying, "No, you don't want to see that." Ollie and I worked together quite a lot. For example, we both accompanied Bud McFarlane, the national security adviser, on a trip to Central America. My role on that trip included being Bud's interpreter.

There was an implicit relationship that while he was keeping the Contras funded, part of my job was to keep Honduras content. I'm not sure we put that down on paper anywhere, but that was understood. I wouldn't have thought then and wouldn't think now that there was anything wrong with that. If you have an ally who is carrying some of your water, you want to keep them content, especially if it's a weak country. We weren't making them do something they didn't want to do; the Hondurans hated the Sandinistas and were afraid, as Doctor Bob would put it, that political cancer would metastasize over the border into his country—the cancer of Leninism as he saw it.

The vice president, George H.W. Bush, was often quite active in Central and South America. I accompanied him on, I believe, seven trips. He was a pleasure to travel with. There were trips to inaugurations in Honduras and Costa Rica. We went to Brazil to a very weird inauguration in which the president-elect, Tancredo Neves, died the night before he was to be sworn in. It was really from natural causes. That day they decided Vice President-elect Jose Sarney would become president. So Sarney was sworn in as president, something he didn't know was going to happen the day before. On the way there we stopped in Grenada. We were still dealing with the aftermath of the American invasion of Grenada, which happened before I came to the NSC. I did spend a lot of time on Caribbean issues, and that included solidifying the new government in Grenada. The vice president was with us on that stop.

The vice president was also very good at entertaining and meeting with Latin leaders who visited Washington. There were at least three Central American presidential visits I remember while I was in Washington: two presidents of Honduras, Suazo and Azcona, and also President Arias of Costa Rica. I prepared for those visits, participated in the pre-briefs with President Reagan as well as the meetings he had with those leaders. I took

part in countless policy discussions on Central America, including several NSC meetings chaired by Reagan.

One memorable one: I was sent to Central America on my own—I don't remember why we didn't use Habib—to explore certain points and where we were going to go. I came back and we had an NSC meeting in the Situation Room for which I was both the note taker for the meeting and a speaker. I gave a presentation to the president, the vice president, secretaries of state and defense and CIA director about the findings of my trip, where we were with Honduras and other countries, and what was happening with the conflict.

There was serious factional rivalry in the administration. There was a hardline group including Weinberger, Bill Casey, Kirkpatrick, versus people taking a more moderate approach to things—Vice President Bush, Secretary Shultz, McFarlane, and Poindexter. Constantine was aligned with the hardliners and I was in the more moderate camp. The more hardline people were dubious about any diplomatic solution or negotiations. They wanted to go full speed ahead with supporting the Contras any way they could. Everyone thought the Contras should be supported but some people were willing to bend the rules more than others. At one point I was sent to meet privately with Casey at his office in the CIA to try to reassure him that Habib was not selling out the administration's position on Central America. It was a one-on-one meeting. I may have made some progress.

One other adventure occurred while I was at the NSC: We had Ferdinand Marcos in Hawaii in exile, after being overthrown in the Philippines. Habib's last mission before taking over the Central American job had been as one of a series of envoys Reagan sent to the Philippines. In March 1986, at Habib's first meeting with Reagan about his Central America appointment, which I attended, he began by discussing the Philippines; the second half of the meeting was on Central America. Habib, whom the president loved for his brashness and abruptness and frankness, began by saying [and having been born in Brooklyn myself I can do this accent], "Mr. President, your friend Ferd Marcos is a crook!"

The president laughed. "Really, Phil?"

Phil said, "Yeah. His wife's a bigger crook. They looted the place. They robbed that country blind." And then he explained the whole thing, all the corruption.

Reagan trusted Habib. I spent one year traveling with him all over Latin America. After I left the NSC on January 3, 1987, I was not yet scheduled to start a Chinese language refresher course or otherwise prepare to go to China. Habib still wanted me to help him out. So I was briefly assigned to work for him in his special envoy office in the State Department. I accompanied him on one last trip to Latin America, and a special trip in which he went to Europe. We were concerned about European criticism of our Central America policy. So in late January 1987 I accompanied him to Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, London, and Paris. Habib was superb. He knew everyone and could get

to see the top leaders. It did help. We met with Chirac when he was prime minister, with Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez of Spain, had a memorable meeting in Italy with Giulio Andreotti, then foreign minister, in his office in an unmarked building, nobody else there but him. I would sum it up as follows: in southern Europe, Chirac's response was typical, "I understand what you are trying to do." They saw it as a proxy war with the Soviet Union and had no objection. In the north, the Brits, the Germans gave us a rough time, especially the Labor people in Britain. One guy actually greeted me with, "I know who you are" when I introduced myself. He said, "You're a sidekick to that rascal Ollie North," which was not accurate, but quite a greeting from a top British political figure.

Back to Marcos: Marcos was getting nervous because there were a lot of lawsuits being brought against him in the United States. This was in March 1986, less than one month after Marcos fled Manila for Hawaii. The legal risk was looking scary to Marcos, so he was seriously considering leaving the United States to seek exile somewhere else, beyond the reach of American law. This had been discussed at the highest levels and the idea had been raised that maybe Panama would take Marcos. Panama had taken the shah; they had taken other exiles over the years. By this point Poindexter had replaced McFarlane as national security adviser. Poindexter was a nice person but the ultimate example of the Peter Principle. He called me in to talk about the Panama plan for Marcos. I replied, "This is a terrible idea." We were already discussing how maybe at some point we would have to get Noriega removed from the leadership of Panama; he was trouble. Now we were going to do something to be more indebted to him? "This is a really bad idea."

The answer was, "I understand, but this is what the president wants you to do." The message was not only are your objections overruled, but you're going to lead the mission to persuade Panama to agree.

Q: Does Marcos begin to come down with cancer?

BURGHARDT: I don't know. Not yet. He wasn't known to be sick yet. He died in Hawaii during his exile there.

I am provided with my own jet and I'm allowed to bring along two people. I bring John Hamilton, head of the Central America office at State, a good friend who had been a colleague on all the trips with Shlaudeman and Habib, and I bring a military officer from the Defense Department whom I trust. We fly to Panama City. Bill Pryce, my old boss in Guatemala, is the chargé there in a gap between two ambassadors. We go in to see—there is a president there, and it tells you something that I can't remember his name because Noriega was in charge. The president was a figurehead [Eric Arturo Delvalle]. We go into the Palace of the Swallows, a beautiful colonial building in the old city of Panama. Only two people were there, the president and Noriega. Long discussion. I'm persuading them. They're agreeing to take him, but they want to put it off for a while. They want to make sure they have their ducks lined up domestically; they want time. Then begins this hilarious exchange with Noriega. He has three objections. He first said, "They still have to pack stuff."

I replied, “I think they’re packed; I think Imelda’s even got her shoes packed.”

He laughs. He said, “They need to get a plane ready to be able to pick them up.”

I said, “I think the plane’s at Hickam Field. It probably has the engines going already.”

Then Noriega laughs again and looks at the president as he’s thinking, “Do I dare say this?” He can’t restrain himself. He says, “*El señor Marcos necesita más tiempo para escribir unos cheques*” (“Mr. Marcos needs time to write some checks”).

It was totally shameless. The president turns white; he can’t believe that even Noriega would have said something so *sin verguenza* (shameless).

I replied, “That’s for you to manage among yourselves.” We left.

During the visit I had been in close contact with Marcos’s daughter Irene and her husband Greg Araneta, who were in Panama to make arrangements. Years later I met them occasionally when I was assigned as DCM in the Philippines. “Hey, remember the old times in Panama?” They’d even picked out where he was going to live. It was up in the mountains near the Costa Rican border, a beautiful region, very isolated. I remember the son-in-law said, “My father-in-law is actually a simple guy, he doesn’t need a lot of luxuries. I guess everyone knows my mother-in-law is different, for her maybe it will be a little rough.”

I got back to Washington. People are congratulating me. I’d achieved a success. Within twenty-four hours, it fell apart. The word was leaked by somebody, probably Delvalle, and there was a revolt in the Panamanian senate. They viewed it as a money making, pocket lining scheme by Noriega and there was a complete revolt, which showed his power did have limits. The government had to back down. Completely fell apart. (laughs) From my point of view, that was a good outcome.

We haven’t really talked about Ollie North and my relationship with him. I worked very closely with him. He headed what was the political-military office. He was involved in a lot of things that had nothing to do with Central America, including a lot of crisis preparation work like doomsday scenarios. But he also was very involved in supporting our friends in Central America. Very often he and I had to send joint memos about things involving Central America. Nothing nefarious, but just all kinds of stuff that he insisted on being involved in. That was a bit of a challenge for me because he always insisted on being in the loop on anything involving Central America. Poindexter tolerated that.

Ollie was a charming fellow but dangerous to work with. He would regularly do things like send a memo through after I’d left for the day and simply put my initials on it. I started to complain and Bob Pearson, then the NSC deputy executive secretary, began to look out for me. Bob would check and call me to verify if I really had signed the memo.

Eventually he put a stop to it. But there were still some memos that went through with my forged initials, which caused me some trouble later.

Ollie was really somewhere between amoral about these things and also delusional. I often tell the story of being with a group of NSC people chatting in the hallway as people chat in the hallways of offices in the morning. One of the group was Vince Cannistraro from the CIA, who was then head of the NSC's intelligence office. Ollie walks up, starts telling us about things he did the day before including a meeting with the vice president where various decisions were made. Walks away. We're all kind of quiet. Vince looks at us and said, "None of that happened."

"What?"

"None of that happened. Let's just start with the fact that the vice president was in California all day yesterday. There's no way Ollie met with the vice president yesterday. Didn't happen." Then he picked apart the whole conversation.

Then [I think I said this], "You know what the scary part of the whole thing is? I think he believes it happened."

Vince said, "Yeah, that's right."

The Iran-Contra scandal blew up not long after that conversation. I remember a very similar group of people standing in the corridor, and Vince Canistraro [his office was right next door] said, "Did you hear what happened? Did you hear what Ollie's been doing?" He hadn't known about those activities. Vince described the tale of the cake brought to Iran by Bud McFarlane, Israeli arms sold to Iran to raise money for the Contras. It was just nuts. We thought Vince was pulling our leg but it was all true. There were tense meetings and weird sessions in the Sitroom [Situation Room] and at the NSC morning meetings. Then it all fell apart and Poindexter left and Ollie left.

There had been a deputy national security advisor named Don Fortier, who was very effective and very good at riding herd over Ollie. At a typical morning staff meeting at the NSC, Ollie would have three ideas he would pop off—I'm only slightly exaggerating—of which two would be whacko and one would be a good idea. The guy's strength was he was imaginative and could come up with really good ideas. But just as often or a little bit more, he came up with ideas that were deeply flawed. Dangerous. Fortier would knock down the bad ones. I can still hear him, "No, no, Ollie, no, stop. Don't go down that road." Or if he liked it, it would be, "Keep going."

Fortier got very ill, died of liver cancer, so he wasn't around to keep Ollie under control. Poindexter was a horrible manager. He named someone eventually as acting deputy who was okay, but not Don Fortier, and he took a long time to even name the acting deputy. This is not original, other people have written about this; this is when Ollie got off the rails, totally off the rails. That was a long period, more than a year. So in 1986 all these

people left the NSC just before Thanksgiving. For a while the rest of the staff stayed on and I was still there through November and December. Then finally the new leadership came to the NSC and Frank Carlucci, the new national security advisor, decided the best thing was to clear out the whole place. I didn't care because I was leaving; I would have left within about two months anyway. Nearly the entire staff was replaced. I was replaced on January 4, 1987 by someone who was very much a political appointee and who didn't last very long. A couple of weeks after I left the NSC, Colin Powell, who came in as Carlucci's deputy, asked me to come to his office in the West Wing. We had met several times before. I'll never forget Powell's opening words at our meeting: "What the hell happened here, Ray?" I replied along the lines of what I just told you.

The only other thing I would say is that the investigations into the Iran-Contra thing did affect me. I was called twice to testify to grand juries. The focus of one of the meetings was to read into the record my official notes of an NSC meeting chaired by the president about Central American subjects; that was pretty straightforward. The other was about what I knew about what Ollie was doing. Lawrence Walsh and his group once asked me to testify before them. Some of those sessions even happened long after I had left the NSC, while I was serving in China. I had come back to Washington for other purposes. I was never a target, never a subject, never hired a lawyer. I never felt under any threat, but it was a bit of a load to bear. The State Department lawyers would give me advice that was helpful, including for the grand jury meetings. But they could not go with me into the grand jury meetings; that's the rule, that's the way the law works. Apparently I never said anything that got me into any trouble.

But it did affect my career. When the Clinton administration came in, they were skeptical of someone, even a career officer, who had been so closely involved in the Reagan administration's work on Central America. Something similar had happened when the Reagan administration came in and had targeted people who had worked on Central America during the Carter administration. So Central America was a dangerous issue to work on, a bipartisan danger. My career went parallel for about six years during the Clinton administration. They were excellent assignments and had some real value in later years, especially my tour in Shanghai, but they were not immediate steps up the ladder.

The assignment to Beijing in 1987 predated that period and was very much my own choice. I had made two trips, oddly enough, to the Asia Pacific region while I was doing Latin America at the NSC. Like the trip with Habib to Europe, it was to keep our allies informed and as supportive as possible. The first was to China, Australia, and Japan in December 1985. In addition to explaining our Central America policies to these countries, there were other goals. In Tokyo I spent some time talking to Japanese officials about coordinating our aid to the Caribbean and Latin America. In Australia the legislators attacked me about our very protectionist sugar policy, one that is hard to defend. It was an interesting trip. About one year later I went back to Australia. There was a specific request by a member of the Australian Senate for me to return to Canberra for more discussions about Central American policy.

During my visit to Beijing I hit it off well with Ambassador Winston Lord, who had arrived there about one month earlier. We already knew each other. Just before I was moved up to senior director at the NSC, I had been accepted into senior training. I didn't want to do the National War College, which is the most typical senior training assignment. I'm a New Yorker and I liked the idea of going back to New York and being at the Council on Foreign Relations, which was also an option. So I applied for that, went to New York and met Winston who was then president of the council. He agreed and I was accepted. Then I got a call two weeks later from Poindexter, who informed me, "I talked to Mike and we broke that assignment, you don't have to do that anymore" [Mike meaning Mike Armacost].

"What?"

He said, "Yeah you don't have to go do that thing in New York."

I noted, "I really wanted to do that."

John said, "I'm going to promote you instead." That's when he fired Constantine.

I called Winston. He congratulated me. "You don't have any choice." Winston had worked at the NSC for years. That's the way it is.

In Beijing Winston made full use of my visit, including hosting a lunch with key officials. We got to know each other better. The next year, Winston informed the department that he wanted me to be his political counselor in Beijing. He liked the idea of someone who had solid China experience, but who had also done other things, someone who wasn't just a China hand. As a former NSC staff member, he also understood the value of that experience. I had just been promoted to the Senior Foreign Service, so I had the necessary rank for the Beijing job.

The ambassador to Mexico, a political appointee, asked me to be his DCM. Habib thought I was out of my mind to accept political counselor in Beijing instead of DCM in Mexico. But I spent a lot of time thinking about it and concluded that, number one, Asia really is more important than Latin America. I had my fling in Latin America. I wanted to get back to Asia. Political counselor in Beijing is one of the great jobs in the Foreign Service. There's a clear pattern, which over the years has continued; the political counselor in Beijing is a step to the top. I can't think of any other counselor job where that's been so clearly obvious. Plus, I had a sneaking suspicion that after all this mess, I needed to get out of Latin America. That I would be blocked from policy level positions in Latin America, and I better clear out. Alex Watson confirmed that a few years later when he was assistant secretary for Latin America. I had an exploratory conversation with him and he came back to me to say, "I don't think so Ray, you better stick with Asia." Anne Patterson, his deputy, looked into it and said that I would encounter opposition among Democrats in Congress if nominated for an ambassadorship in Latin America.

To Habib's chagrin, I declined the offer from the ambassador in Mexico and went to China. It was a key decision point. From some people's point of view, not logical. Just like going to Latin America instead of Bangkok had been seen by people earlier as not logical. But definitely no regrets about either decision.

I got to China in June 1987. I was there until September 1989. From May 20, 1989 when DCM Peter Tomsen left—also the day that the government declared martial law—through late July 1989 I was the acting DCM. In fact, Jim Lilley, who replaced Lord as ambassador in early May, referred to me as the "interim DCM." He said, "You're not the acting, you're the interim. It's different."

I noted that I didn't think the State Department had that title, but "you can call me whatever you like, boss." Lilley had asked me to stay in Beijing for a new tour as his DCM, but I'd already been asked by Don Gregg to be DCM in Korea and they seemed appealing, new, and different. After Tiananmen I was pretty burned out on China. So Lilley got the department to extend my tour three months to be his "interim DCM" and asked me whom I thought he should name. I suggested Lynn Pascoe, who took the job. It was all very congenial.

I had a fabulous political section in Beijing. They were stars. My wife used to say they were like a stable full of the finest race horses. I can name three who became chiefs of mission—Dave Shear, who went on to become assistant secretary of defense and one of my successors as ambassador to Vietnam—

Q: Also known for his outstanding Chinese.

BURGHARDT: And a fabulous guy, a close friend. Jim Keith, ambassador to Malaysia, DAS for China and Taiwan. Bill Stanton, director of AIT [American Institute in Taiwan] after me. Maybe I'm forgetting some people. John Aloisie, Michael Ceourvorst; it was a very talented group of people. And we did great work, at an important time.

China was in a relatively liberal period. The leadership was gradually separating the functions of the party and the government. FDI [foreign direct investment] was coming in, there was some intellectual ferment, salons where people were exchanging ideas. The party secretary was Zhao Ziyang, who had been one of Deng's protégés. Zhao had begun the whole change in approach as party chief in Sichuan, breaking up the communes and allowing more private sector activity. That became the model for the rest of the country. Beginning in 1980, he served as prime minister. In the years just before I arrived in Beijing, Zhao had served as premier under Hu Yaobang, another Deng protégé who was the party general secretary. Hu stepped down just before I got there in '87 and was replaced by Zhao. The party elders thought Hu's reform measures had gone too far. Zhao Ziyang was similar but Deng was more comfortable with him. It was a very exciting period. The embassy was cultivating lots of interesting Chinese figures, including some far-thinking economists.

There were village-level elections, the first step in political liberalization and the only step that was ever taken. Never went any further. Even elections for village officials were eventually rolled back in many provinces.

One of the big events that happened early on in my tour occurred in October 1987. We heard there was a lot of ferment going on in Tibet. We learned there were going to be some demonstrations. You had to get the government's permission to travel, so I applied for permission to go to Tibet. Somewhat to my surprise, they gave it. So I went and my wife went with me.

Driving into Lhasa from the airport we saw demonstrators being beaten and hundreds marching through the streets. This continued for days: tear gas, demonstrations, chanting; turmoil. At one point, the demonstrators stoned police and burned down a police station. Several people were killed, I believe both demonstrators and police. I can't remember what sparked it, but it was basically discontent with the government not letting them practice their religion the way they wanted to. Some demonstrators were calling for Tibetan independence. A large group of American and other journalists were there at the same time, mostly American. I was joined in Lhasa by Scott Ballard, an FSO who was our political officer in Chengdu. Scott, a very capable officer, was later my political section chief in Hanoi. Scott and I worked together to cover the Lhasa demonstrations and the provincial authorities' treatment of the foreign press. It was like nineteenth century diplomacy because we had no normal means of communication with our embassy. We had no consulate in Lhasa. There were no cell phones. The authorities took down the phone system that did exist. We sent messages back through tourists and other people who were flying back to Beijing. They dutifully passed our hand-written messages to the embassy.

We had to make decisions on our own, without any consultation with the embassy or Washington. The provincial government kicked out all the foreign journalists. I remember a bitter session in which the government called the journalists in to be chastised and notified of their expulsion. Scott and I insisted on being there for consular protection of the Americans, by far a majority of the journalists. There was a heated argument between one of the officials and Eddie Gargan, the *New York Times* reporter, who responded to the Chinese official in an aggressive manner. On the last night some of the journalists carried on at a great party. It was a hoot. After they all flew out, Scott and I called on provincial officials to protest the way they were treated and their being expelled. We got that on the record.

But then, somewhat surprisingly, we were allowed to continue to stay in Tibet for a total of almost two weeks. After the expulsion of the journalists, for the most part Scott and I explored reporting opportunities separately. Susan and I went on a tour, on our own, to some temple way out east of Lhasa in the valley of the Tsangpo River. We also followed demonstrations that continued for a while in Lhasa and visited temples throughout the Lhasa region. I was able to sidle up to monks and have conversations. It often happens in

China that when there's a chaotic situation, the authorities take their eyes off you. That happened in '89 also, after Tiananmen for a couple of days. For our visit to the important Drepung Monastery in the outskirts of Lhasa, Susan and I just got our rented bicycles and road out there. Nobody was with us. I got pretty good at detecting surveillance, which was nearly constant as I moved around the Beijing area.

That was one major event early in my Beijing tour. It was fascinating to me because I had followed the Tibetan issue a lot in my time in Hong Kong. During the rest of my tour in Beijing, the Chinese government prohibited travel to the Tibetan Autonomous Region [TAR] by diplomats [and most other foreigners]. But it remained possible to travel to ethnic Tibetan regions in neighboring provinces. In November 1988 I visited the Tibetan areas of Gansu and Qinghai Provinces, east of the TAR, a region the Tibetans call Amdo. It's the Dalai Lama's native region. Despite the careful attention of my official Chinese minders I was able to have good conversations with monks at the important monasteries in those areas. I reported that while tensions existed over the Tibetans' ability to freely practice their religion and customs, the situation seemed much less tense than in the TAR. One reason for that more relaxed atmosphere appeared to be the long history, especially in Gansu, of Tibetans, Han Chinese, and Muslims living and doing business together in the same villages. Unfortunately that relatively peaceful atmosphere did not survive and violent Tibetan protests broke out in Gansu ten to fifteen years later.

While I was in Beijing we had good contacts. My whole section did. Even though I was political counselor I developed contacts at the level of university students. That proved especially valuable after Tiananmen. One interesting contact was Fang Lizhi, an astrophysicist who was an outspoken critic of the Communist Party leadership. Fang and his wife later sought refuge in our embassy days after the Tiananmen massacre and stayed there for a year before we negotiated their exit from China.

Q: Can you give us more details on the embassy's interaction with Fang?

BURGHARDT: In June 1989, at the end of the six weeks of demonstrations that were not only in Tiananmen Square in Beijing but also throughout China. The event I want to talk about occurred on June 5, shortly after the massacre on the night of June 3-4. I was [as Jim Lilley called me] the "interim" deputy chief of mission. I got a phone call in my office on the morning of June 5 from McKinney Russell, our public affairs officer—a very distinguished and experienced guy. McKinney said, "Ray, there are four people here in my office, including a Chinese gentleman you know very well. I think you better come over right away."

I wasn't sure what he meant, but I went over to that compound right away. In his office was Fang Lizhi, who was [he's since passed away] an internationally respected astrophysicist, his wife Li Shuxian, a material physicist, and their son, a student at Qinghua University. They were accompanied by Perry Link, a well known American expert on China, a Princeton professor. I knew he had been a long-time friend of Fang

Lizhi. Fang had been a very outspoken critic of the Chinese Communist Party and was something of a hero to students and intellectuals in China.

Q: And because his name these days is not as well known as it was back in the '80s and '90s, what were his principal objections to the way the Communist Party ran China?

BURGHARDT: Fang was a deep thinker; as people told me later, all astrophysicists are. He saw the party's approach to the world as not being based on objective evidence, but just on ideology. He saw the importance of having more liberal thinking and the ability to express one's views as essential for the progress of science. During the time of the demonstrations and their aftermath he was denounced by the authorities as one of the "black hands" behind the demonstration. We knew in the embassy and most in the government itself knew this wasn't really true. He had never gone to the demonstrations himself. He may have been one of the intellectual heroes of demonstrators and indirectly had something to do with their fervor, but it was really a stretch to blame the demonstrations on him.

There he was, accompanied by Perry Link. We had a long conversation. To me it seemed as if he really wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Seeking asylum in the embassy was certainly one of options he was considering, but he was somewhat undecided.

To correct what I told you earlier, in fact I did know from what McKinney Russell told me on the phone that his visitor was Fang. Before walking to McKinney's office in Compound Two, I discussed with Jim Lilley, the ambassador, what I was about to get into. It was clear that if I could talk Fang out of seeking asylum, Lilley would be happiest with that outcome. He was not excited about having China's most famous dissident residing in the United States embassy. Lilley reminded me of what happened in Budapest with Cardinal Mindszenty, who ended up spending over ten years in the embassy and ultimately dying there.

Q: No he did get out, I forget under what terms, but he did get to the U.S.

BURGHARDT: But it was over ten years. Lilley reminded me of that and said, "You might want to mention that to Fang."

In the conversation with Fang, I did mention that. "This could be the outcome; you have to think about this." I also said, "Frankly, what I'm worried about, and I think you should be also, is that you seeking asylum at the American embassy will be a godsend to the Chinese Communist Party, which will use that as a propaganda tool to say that you and the Americans were the instigators of all the demonstrations. We know that is not true but it's the story they will tell. You need to think this through."

Ultimately, he said that he had a room he could use at the Jianguo Hotel which was right down the street, a room booked by Jay Matthews, *The Washington Post* reporter, who was somewhere else and told Fang he could use it.

We parted ways. They went to the hotel and we agreed to stay in communication. I said, "If you have new thoughts about all this, let us know."

During those first two or three days after the massacre, the atmosphere in Beijing was chaotic. People like Fang could go out in the street and walk around. The authorities weren't fully organized yet to be picking people up in a targeted way.

I went back to the embassy and of course told my boss what had happened. We then immediately communicated with Washington. A few hours later [due to the time difference with Washington] I got a call from Jeff Bader who was then—he went back and forth over his career between the White House and the State Department—I think he was then at State; he may have been the deputy director of the China office. Jeff called and said, "Interesting report. I understand what you did and why you did it, but Jim Baker is not too happy about it. He's worried, and now the president is worried, that if the Chinese go into that hotel room and grab him [this is on a secure phone] then it will look like we kicked him out and left him to the dark forces to seize. We want you to go to the hotel. Tell him that we want him to understand that if he wishes to seek asylum, that he would be welcomed by the president of the United States."

I said Roger that. I told Jim Lilley. He was not going to argue with his friend George Bush about that. He understood. By this point it was nightfall. I think the original meeting at the embassy was late morning into afternoon. The situation was growing more chaotic. We didn't have any Chinese employees working at the embassy; they all had vanished. I don't think they could get to the embassy if they wanted: the city was really starting to close down. We got an embassy van. The RSO, Fred Krug [good man], drove it to the Jianguo Hotel and McKinney and I were in it. I called the Fangs and said, "We're coming to pay a visit." The embassy then had three compounds. One we still have, the compound where the ambassador's residence is. At that time USIS [United States Information Service] was also there. Importantly for this story, the embassy's medical unit was there. We went through the darkened streets; you could hear gunfire in the background. Really a nightmarish atmosphere.

We pull into the Jianguo Hotel. It had a back entrance that led right to the street where the ambassador's residence was, very close. We got to Fang's room. The first thing I notice is all their suitcases are by the door. I will explain the situation. I don't think Perry Link was there. We put them in the van. They huddled on the floor to make sure no one outside spotted them. I had positioned Jim Keith, then part of our star-studded political section, to be at the compound to open the gate because there were no FSNs [Foreign Service nationals]. We radioed ahead saying, "Jim, we're on our way."

Q: Once again, no cell phones.

BURGHARDT: No cell phones but we did have walkie-talkies. We brought Fang and his family in on the ambassador's instruction. This first night we brought them to the

residence. I guess Jim and Sally Lilley were there; I'm not sure. Anyway, they settled in at the residence first, maybe a night or two. The medical center was a long, narrow building. It had two rooms. We took one of the rooms and put beds in there and rudimentary cooking facilities. We then devised a way to seal that off. The public story was we were creating a facility where people who were ill could stay overnight if necessary. That's where Fang and his wife and son stayed. Jumping ahead, Fang and his wife stayed there almost a year. The son left after a month or so. It was rather courageous. They among themselves decided he would be okay; that the authorities didn't have anything against him. He hadn't participated in the demonstrations, hadn't done anything except be their son. He was a smart kid, a student following in their scientific footsteps. He went back and nothing happened to him. He may have ultimately left China. They didn't nab him.

Fang and his wife stayed there, in this very small area for a very long period of time. The admin officer for the USIA operation in Beijing and his wife, who also worked at the embassy, undertook the housekeeping and the feeding of the Fangs. I was the Fangs' communication with the outside world. They couldn't use the phone. Every day I would visit them. It was a very odd but in some ways quite wonderful experience. I would be in my office and sometimes let it go until the afternoon then think, "You have to go see the Fangs." I went over [it wasn't far]. It was like I was transported into another world for an hour or two. He was a brilliant man with an infectious sense of humor. He wasn't dour, very ebullient. We'd start talking about the current political situation in China and then move on to the situation in the world. Then we'd talk about economics, then physics, art, and maybe we might end up in outer space. People later told me astrophysicists were all like that, that's how they talk, how their minds work. I learned an enormous amount from him. I tried to keep him up to date. I brought him newspapers and magazines. I also took letters out for him. On at least one occasion I brought their letters to Hong Kong to mail them. I had a couple of reasons to go to Hong Kong. Once, I acted as a courier, even though I was DCM, to bring classified files to the consulate in Hong Kong. There may have been a second trip before my tour ended. And I probably brought their letters out when I stopped in Hong Kong on my final departure from Beijing on September 15.

Q: The letters they were writing I imagine were to colleagues around the world, but if they are to people in China, wouldn't they—

BURGHARDT: They weren't to people in China.

And I bought stuff for them. I literally bought them underwear and shirts and things like that in Hong Kong, brought them back to Beijing and gave them to the Fangs. It was that elementary. The Fangs' hiding place was known only by a handful of people at the embassy and we believed that the Chinese authorities were uncertain precisely where they were within our three compounds. We occasionally staged fake van movements between the compounds to maintain any possible Chinese confusion. At one point I arranged through a reliable friend in the American business community for the Hash House Harriers [a popular activity among expats in Asia, often described as "a drinking

group with a running problem"] to jog through the path behind Compound Two so this friend could give me a report on how much security presence the Chinese had there. He only spotted one plainclothes cop. In addition to keeping the Chinese security apparatus confused, we undoubtedly were also motivated by a desire to maintain our sense of humor during a stressful period. The month after I left, embassy personnel held a Halloween party in which several people showed up in Fang Lizhi masks.

The Fang incident happened June 5. I left on September 15 and was replaced by Don Keyser. I was going back to the States to get ready to go to Korea. Bill Stanton, who worked for me in the political section, took over the job of taking care of the Fangs; he did it much longer than I did.

Q: At the time you were doing this, what was the understanding of what was going to happen to them? Was there some idea they would be safe enough to return to China or that we would spirit them to the U.S.?

BURGHARDT: There was talk of spiriting them out. There were never any really credible scenarios of how we could do that. It was generally assumed it would have to be negotiated, and it was. Long after I left, almost exactly one year after they entered the embassy for asylum. In June 1990 they flew to the UK and were briefly at Cambridge University, a face-saving thing for China which didn't want them to leave directly for the U.S. The next month they went to Princeton University in New Jersey to be with their friend Perry Link. In 1992 the University of Arizona in Tucson invited Fang to be a tenured professor of physics and astronomy. Arizona has one of the world's greatest observatories. Leaping ahead, from 1996 to '97 I had what I call my "year of living aimlessly," though in fact one of my most enjoyable years. It was between the Philippines and Shanghai; later we'll talk about why that happened. One of the things I did was participate in a State Department outreach trip to Tucson. I was asked to go because I was free and they wanted an East Asia specialist. I got together with the Fangs in Tucson. Later when I was in Taiwan, three or four years later, I saw the Fangs in Taipei. They were invited by Academia Sinica, a Taiwanese think tank scientific organization. We stayed in touch through letters, messages, and Fang sending me his memoir, until Fang died in Tucson in April 2012.

Going back a bit, I'm not sure whether I mentioned that when President George Bush came in February 1989, we invited Fang Lizhi and his wife to the Bush's Texas Barbecue banquet at the Great Wall Hotel. The government blocked the roads to make sure they didn't get there. That same evening the Fangs held a press conference attended by hundreds of journalists who were in Beijing for Bush's visit. Fang protested their exclusion from the banquet and called for China's leaders to respect human rights. Of course the Chinese leaders were furious about this embarrassing development, blaming both Fang and the U.S. government. The next day, at a conversation in which I was on the sidelines, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft placed most of the blame on Ambassador Winston Lord for having put the Fangs on the banquet invite list. That was a

valid point but the embassy also had carefully pointed out how that invitation would likely be controversial and the NSC staff nevertheless agreed to include it.

As political counselor I was constantly followed around Beijing. The security agents would begin the surveillance by calling ahead as I left our residence compound. You could see them pick up the phone, so when we got to the second ring road, from then on a car would be behind us. We would go out to the Western Hills for a picnic on Saturday and they would follow us. My kids came with us sometimes. They were in boarding school in Massachusetts because there was no English-language high school then in Beijing, but they visited a lot. Once we were way out in the Western Hills at a famous temple; on a high spot there you can look down on the parking lot. I remember my youngest daughter who's very smart and observant [she's an artist] said, "Hey, Dad, come here. See those guys? They're the same guys who were behind us yesterday." On another occasion, when we made a wrong turn on the way back to Beijing, the result was nearly a head-on collision with the surveillance car!

Tiananmen: Hu Yaobang, the liberal party leader who had been deposed, died on April 15, 1989. Students wanted to show how much they respected him. They knew he'd been overthrown for being too liberal. Plus that time of year is traditionally for the grave sweeping ceremonies when people honor the dead. There was a similar demonstration in April 1976 after Zhou Enlai died, which turned out to be the beginning of the end for the Gang of Four, the radical extremists led by Mao's wife. Mao died a few months after the spontaneous mourning for Zhou. It was an initial, significant sign of discontent. That historical resonance and memory was also there in 1989. Zhou Enlai, like Hu Yaobang, had been just under the top leader, but more liberal than the top leader.

So many of us went to watch this student commemoration for Hu. Word spread quickly among the Chinese about this significant development. And then it went on for six weeks, demonstrations that kept getting bigger and bigger.

There has been a lot written about the demonstrations. I have my own speech I've given about it. I don't want to repeat everything that's been written about all the stages of the demonstrations. There are some things I can shed some new light on, but I'll just tell you, the embassy covered it very closely. I resented it when the *New York Times* reporter Nick Kristoff [and his wife, Sheryl WuDunn], in one of his books claimed the embassy didn't really know what was going on; that's absolute B.S. He knows it. We were there all the time; we had terrific sources and we really followed it well.

We rented a room in the Peking Hotel, which overlooks Chang An Jie, the main street of Beijing, at the north side of Tiananmen Square. That was our downtown observation point. My officers were in the square every day, day and night all the time. I personally went there regularly and to other gatherings on the streets to get a feel for it, to talk with the people there. It wasn't all in Tiananmen Square; people would spontaneously gather at other points. Our consulates covered very well the demonstrations going on in many cities throughout the country, including in Shanghai and Chengdu.

We had good intelligence, and much of it was British, which has been declassified recently so we can talk about it now. Days before the massacre, the army staged a fake attack on the square in which nothing happened; the troops kind of dissipated and nothing happened. But we knew they were going to hit the night they did hit.

We knew why. This is the part that was recently declassified, which put the government's action in even worse light than what the public had earlier known. Beginning in late May, the demonstrations were dissipating, getting smaller and smaller. It was dying out. In a meeting of the leadership on June 2, some of the party leaders said, It can't end like this. It has to end in a way that everyone knows they can never do this again. It has to end with bloodshed. We have to go in and break it up, with force. So it was gratuitous. The action was to teach a lesson. We had that intelligence at the time. My memory is that Deng did not preside over that meeting. There was another meeting immediately afterward in which he endorsed the decision to use force.

Teaching a lesson is one of the party's concepts. The attack into Vietnam in 1979 was said to be "to teach a lesson"; we used to call it the Educational War. So this was to teach a lesson. We knew the attack would happen on the night of June 3.

Mark Mohr, who worked for me in the political section, and I went to the square. It was a bit much for me as the interim DCM to go to the square, but I couldn't resist. Lilley was mildly critical of me doing it at first but in the following days, when he considered the value of our first-hand evidence, he wasn't. We were in the square and could hear when the tanks were coming in from the west. The students told us the tanks would be arriving soon and we better get out of there. Then we could hear the grinding sound of the tanks destroying the pavement and picked up our speed. We ran toward the Peking Hotel, jumping over bushes and smashing bicycles to get to the hotel entrance.

We got to our embassy room in the hotel and from the balcony could see the north side of Tiananmen Square. More importantly we could see the boulevard where the tanks were coming in. Later we learned that they had already killed a lot of people along the boulevard [Chang An Jie] further west. They were just randomly shooting at people. A couple of weeks later I met a man I knew who told me his grandson had been killed, a student out on the street just looking at the scene.

What we saw from the balcony—a lot of the lights were off in the square at this point. We saw dimly that crowds of students—and other people involved besides students at this point—were crazily throwing rocks and bottles at the soldiers who were marching in holding guns with the tanks behind them. Then when the soldiers opened fire, in the illumination from the guns you could see bodies drop. We saw that twice, maybe at twenty yards distance. Because the street is at an angle from the hotel, we couldn't see it any more after those two times, but we could hear the gunfire further to the east. The next day when Li Peng, the evil prime minister, said, "Nothing has happened" (mei shi), we commented, "Well, factually we can say that isn't true."

At some point we got out of the hotel. Our bikes were gone; we had ridden our bikes because there was no other way to get there. [A week or two later they finally let people go into the square area. I went in the DCM car along with Mark Mohr to see if we could find our bikes. We knew we weren't going to find them, but this was a good excuse to survey the scene. The driver was razzing us [he was a good guy]; "I don't think you're going to find your bikes." Finally there was a truck and workers were throwing mangled bikes on top of it. Our driver said, "Oh I think we've finally found your bikes."]

So we had to walk back, about two and a half miles through dense crowds of angry and distraught people. Then we regrouped at the embassy and started reporting everything back to Washington. Other people out in the street were bringing in stories. And Mark and I had also seen a crowd attack a tank. They fire bombed it, and the soldier came out of the tank, burning.

On June 4 we sent officers to hospitals to see if they could get some idea of the number of wounded and dead. There was a consular cover—see if there were any Americans in distress. There was—one guy, a Chinese-American, and it was ironic why he was injured. He had seen people beating a soldier [there were more than one of those incidents] and he went to talk to them. They weren't students. A lot of toughs and other people got involved in the last weeks of the demonstrations. He went to stop these people from beating the soldier. Of course, since he was Chinese they turned on him and beat the shit out of him. He ended up in the hospital. That was the only American casualty. But our officers saw lots of bodies in the hospitals. Nobody ever got a count. Certainly hundreds, maybe more than a thousand. The British figured two thousand; we think that's maybe too high.

On the morning of June 7 Lilley called for a general meeting at the embassy. One of the main subjects was the plan for possible evacuation of dependents the next day. Everyone was there, including family members. While at the meeting, we heard gunfire from the direction of the diplomatic housing compounds. We learn that an incident is occurring. The government claimed that there was a sniper firing down from the diplomatic housing compound. So troops that were conveniently located in the street were firing up at the sniper. This was complete bullshit. Later it was determined that all the firing came straight from the other side of the street and came in parallel to the building. There never was a sniper. There's a great story that the Bangladesh ambassador went in to see Vice Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen and brought a whole stack of books with him. The story is he put them in front of Zhu, pointed out the bullet holes going straight through the books, and he said, "It is possible that the laws of physics are different in your country than in mine, but I do not believe so. For shots to have been fired from the street, it seems very unlikely that they would have entered and exited the books at precisely the same level to the ground." (laughs)

We again had good intelligence, in this case after the fact. We learned the leaders had decided to do this because they had seen foreigners taking photographs of people being

arrested and shot in the general clean-up campaign that went on for days after Tiananmen. They decided they didn't need people taking photographs of this stuff and they wanted to get foreigners out of town for a while. According to the report, the group used a four-character Chinese saying that translates as, "First shut the door; then beat the dog." Meaning, if you're going to do something dirty, keep it out of sight. They staged a fake sniper incident and not only shot up the diplomatic residence compound a few blocks from our embassy, where all kinds of diplomats lived [not just Americans], but also shot up the nearby CITIC Building, then the main office building for foreign businesses. Miraculously no one was injured. Unbelievable. There were really close calls. There was a story of the wife of Bulgarian diplomat whose father, a former military officer, was visiting. She heard the shots and in a normal bad reaction, ran to the window. Her father tackled her and said, "Get down, those are guns." Then the bullets went right through the window. There were kids in the apartment of the RSO [regional security officer] and the Chinese nanny kept them from going to the window. Many people had souvenirs of bullets in their apartments.

Most American embassy dependents were evacuated on June 8. My wife and Sally Lilley, the ambassador's wife, left together on a commercial flight the next day. They spent a few days in Seoul and Tokyo before going on to the States.

Not too long after the dependents departed, perhaps two week later, Secretary Baker asked Jim Lilley to make a quick trip back to Washington. As an old intelligence officer, Lilley told me he preferred that no one except me know that he was leaving. I explained to him that State Department regulations required that while he was out of the country, our messages had to have my signature. With his permission, I consulted our administrative counselor on that. She firmly agreed. Lilley relented. He flew off, we sent messages ending with my name, and predictably I got an inquiry from the China desk: "Dick Solomon [the EAP assistant secretary] wants to know where Jim Lilley is?" I replied that they might want to look upstairs on the seventh floor [the secretary's office]. The purpose of Lilley's trip was to consult with President Bush and with Baker about sending National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft to Beijing to ensure that key areas of bilateral strategic cooperation could be preserved despite this crisis. Our main concerns were what were known in the embassy as "The Program" and "The Project." The Program, dating to the earliest days of normalized relations, was a network of monitoring stations we had set up on the Sino-Soviet border to detect Soviet nuclear tests. The Project was our collaboration with Beijing to send equipment through China to the mujahideen fighting the Soviet-controlled government in Afghanistan. Lilley returned to Beijing after a few days and Scowcroft arrived immediately after that, accompanied by Deputy Secretary of State Larry Eagleburger. I was aware of their visit but had no involvement with it. It soon became public information.

During the lead-up to the events of June 4 and in the weeks afterward, we had regular meetings of the deputy chiefs of mission of the "Five Eyes" [U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada] to exchange intelligence and our plans for evacuation, demarches

[messages delivered to the Chinese government], et cetera. As I have mentioned, the British had particularly useful intelligence.

At the time of the Tiananmen massacre I had already been assigned to go to Seoul and under the original plans would have left at about that time. But there was a hold-up. I was going to replace Stan Brooks, the DCM in Seoul, who had been named director of the American Institute in Taiwan [AIT]. Taiwan goes through a rather complicated unofficial agrèment process. They've actually rejected two proposed directors in the past. They were holding up Stan for a while. And my replacement as political counselor, Don Keyser, was held up getting to Beijing for reasons involving his son. So I stayed on in Beijing. Lynn Pascoe showed up about the third week of July to replace me as DCM and I reverted to being political counselor. Immediately after Pascoe arrived, I went back to the States for a short vacation. Then I returned to Beijing for a new stint of about six weeks as political counselor. Spouses were allowed back. My wife briefly returned to Beijing in August and we packed out, but I stayed on until September 15. My wife moved back into our house in Great Falls, Virginia and the kids went back to school. Typical chaotic Foreign Service life.

My last six weeks in Beijing was an interesting period because we had to reconstruct a relationship that was totally poisoned. We reached out and reconnected with a fair number of contacts. Some were willing to talk and meet. I was glad I had that kind of coda to my time in Beijing, and was able to help Lilley and Pascoe until Keyser got there. When Keyser finally did show up, uncharacteristically we overlapped. Lilley had just been ambassador to Korea so he knew it well. He said, "For your next job—and it would also be useful for us—make a trip up to the Korean area on the border with North Korea." He was referring to the majority ethnic Korean region in China's northeastern provinces bordering on North Korea. Some commerce with North Korea is based in that area and there are a couple of institutes that study the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea]. Lilley encouraged me to, "Look into all the Korea activities, meet with the think tanks, go with our guys from the consulate in Shenyang, and report on all that. Also you can visit the famous sites like the mountain on the border; you'll dine off that for weeks in Seoul." It was a great trip that was both interesting and useful.

There is one more thing about my time in Beijing I should mention, which has a lot to do with why I was named DCM in Korea. The State Department thought that we should establish an information channel with North Korea, using our respective political counselors in Beijing. I was told about this in Washington as I was preparing to go to China, but nothing happened for a while. It finally started to be acted on after I had been there about a year. When I went back to the States for a summer vacation in '88, on the way the department arranged for me to stop in Seoul. I met with people at the South Korean Foreign Ministry and Unification Ministry. I was introduced as the American who was going to talk to the North Koreans. I listened to them. That was my first serious introduction to Korean issues. As political counselor in Beijing I had met with Chinese counterparts about Korea issues. One of the great things about being political counselor in Beijing was that I had to engage with the Chinese Foreign Ministry about Korea, the

Middle East and other hot spots. We would meet with Chinese counterparts to present U.S. views on UN Security Council votes. One of the key issues very definitely was North Korea, so I wasn't totally unfamiliar with the subject.

I ended up having four or five sessions in Beijing with the North Korean political counselor. It's been written about, including in Don Oberdorfer's book *The Two Koreas*. The meetings were always held at International House, a sort of club for foreign diplomats run by the Chinese government; American diplomats rarely visited it. But it was convenient, a neutral ground and the Chinese controlled it [so they could listen in]. I remember the first session, in December 1988, was with Mr. Sung. He seemed pleasant, very professional. They all were professional, not pounding the table, not shouting nonsense. Just exchanging views. We were not negotiating. We were only political counselors in Beijing. It was a way to exchange information and views and make sure there were no misunderstandings. The talks continued for a few years in Beijing after I departed and then were shifted to New York.

Mr. Sung lasted for two sessions and then he disappeared. At the end of the second session he informed me he was leaving. He was emotional. He said to me something I'm sure was not in his talking points, "I will always remember our meetings. Together in a small way, we made a little history."

I said, "Thank you, I'll always remember you, too."

Then for the third meeting, Mr. Kim came. Mr. Kim was a real son of a bitch. (laughs) Sung obviously was too nice. So Mr. Kim was professional but he had no smiles. I had two or three sessions with Mr. Kim.

One of my last sessions with the North Koreans was on May 15, the absolute apex of the demonstrations. It was also the day Gorbachev arrived. That was a very famous aspect of all these demonstrations, that in the middle of them there was the visit by Gorbachev to meet with Zhao Ziyang, his counterpart and, of course, with Deng Xiaoping. The world press descended on Beijing for Gorbachev's May 15-18 visit and they stayed to follow the demonstrations. There had not been a Sino-Soviet summit for decades. The Chinese had their suspicions about Gorbachev, but it was a very important, historical meeting. Both sides hailed it as restoring party-to-party relations. Later on, only in recent research, it's been seen that the top leadership held off on dumping Zhao Ziyang until after the Gorbachev visit. On May 19 Zhao Ziyang went to the square and had his tearful meeting with students. The next day, May 20, Zhao was removed as party general secretary and martial law was declared.

When Gorbachev came, the city was completely log-jammed by demonstrations. By that point, reporters from *People's Daily*, professors from universities, even some government officials with signs identifying their work units were in the streets—not just students, mass demonstrations. McKinney Russell, the PAO [public affairs officer] and an old Soviet hand, and I went together to hear Gorbachev's press conference. It was supposed

to be held at the Great Hall of the People on Tiananmen Square. We got there with great difficulty on our bicycles and were told the event had been switched to Diao Yu Tai, the state guesthouse way outside the city center. McKinney recognizes all the reporters on the Soviet press bus and even their handlers and he chats them up in Russian. He talks our way onto the Soviet press bus. An interesting end of cold war moment. After the press conference, McKinney does more schmoozing of the Soviets so they give us a ride back to the Great Hall of the People. We then biked back to the embassy.

I remember the meeting at the International Club that morning before all that happened. I was with the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] political counselor. It was a gorgeous day. I said, "It's a beautiful day."

Mr. Kim was not a man of much pleasantries, but he said, "Yes, beautiful day."

I said, "A beautiful day for a visit by President Gorbachev. A beautiful day for massive demonstrations." No response. (laughs)

One of the curiosities was that at the first meeting we had to rely on their English-to-Korean interpreter. I went back and briefed everybody and said this was not a great arrangement. Jim Brown, who to this day is the State Department's leading English-to-Chinese interpreter said, "I speak Korean, too." I asked why. Jim said, "Oh, I just learned it."

So I suggested, "I think you should come along with me. You don't have to interpret but at least you can catch if there are any mistakes." So that's what we did. He caught mistakes all the time. He was very valuable. Mind boggling language skill.

Q: Should we pause here?

BURGHARDT: I think we've done Beijing.

Q: Today is June 20, 2019 and we're resuming our interview with Ambassador Raymond Burghardt as he prepares to go to Korea as DCM. What year is that?

BURGHARDT: I went to Korea in 1990. I came back to Washington where my family had relocated the previous fall. I was able to take a little bit of Korean language, but not very much. Then went out to Korea in March or April of 1990.

Q: As DCM, you were not concerned that not being fluent in Korean would be a problem?

BURGHARDT: Most—maybe all—of the previous DCMs had not been either. Korean being a one-country language, it was tough to fill the ambassador and DCM positions with Korean speakers. People did go back to Korea for second or even third tours, but not so much at that level. Fortunately that changed in later years. So you were usually getting

Japan hands or China hands, like me. I did have some Korean but not much. Interestingly, because Korean, like Vietnamese, borrows a lot of words—maybe most of its words—from old Chinese, ancient Chinese, after a while the brain starts to process it. The longer I was there, the more I found I understood much of what people were saying. Unfortunately, often I would get the nouns but not the verbs. Sometimes I got the whole meaning, but very often it was incomplete.

Q: In Chinese, was your dominant dialect Mandarin? Could you speak Cantonese as well?

BURGHARDT: I only spoke Mandarin. Mandarin is the national language in both the PRC and Taiwan. It is based on the Chinese spoken in north China. Nearly everyone you would deal with would speak Mandarin, both on the mainland and in Taiwan. Not in Hong Kong where the first language of most people is Cantonese, which is not understandable to a Mandarin speaker. In Hong Kong, I was mainly dealing with Chinese who were Mandarin speakers, who worked with the mainland. Or if they weren't, they probably spoke English.

Throughout China's heavily populated eastern coast there are regional dialects that linguists consider as distinct from each other as the Romance languages—Cantonese, Shanghainese, north and south Fujian dialects, et cetera. When I was in Shanghai [this goes ahead], sometimes people would ask, "When are you going to learn Shanghainese?" My wise-ass response was, "When my Mandarin is perfect, the next day I'll study Shanghainese," knowing I'd never reach that day. It wouldn't have made much sense because even in the two hundred million-person consular district, most of those people don't speak Shanghainese; they speak some other dialect. Nearly every county in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang has a distinct dialect. Shanghainese wouldn't have been very useful.

On to Seoul: It was my longest assignment overseas; it lasted for three and a half years. A three-year assignment was extended by six months. Most of the assignment was during the George H.W. Bush administration. I was deputy to Don Gregg. Gregg had been Bush senior's national security advisor when Bush was vice president, and was close to him. Gregg and I knew each other from my time on the NSC staff. He was at the morning staff meetings every day and we had traveled together many times on the vice president's plane. Gregg was an unusual choice for ambassador because he was a career CIA officer. He had served in Korea before, as CIA station chief and earlier. He had strong credentials. He had been very involved in an episode that resulted in saving the life of Kim Dae Jung, the opposition leader who later became president. During Gregg's service as ambassador and especially in later years when he was president of the Korea Society, it became clear that he was very liberal at heart. He very much supported North-South engagement and an accommodating American policy toward that. In the range of American opinion on Korea issues, particularly North Korea, you would have to put Don Gregg on the left side of that range. Somewhat surprising.

Don Gregg is to my knowledge one of only three career CIA operations officers who became ambassadors. The other was Jim Lilley, ambassador to Korea before Don Gregg and of course ambassador to China as well, and also very close to George H.W. Bush. The same sort of link in both cases. The third was Frederick Vreeland, who became ambassador to Morocco, also under George H.W. Bush. I believe that all three first developed close ties to Bush when he was CIA director.

Don and I got along very well. He was a wonderful person to work for, very kind, and our families got along well. Our youngest daughter lived with us in Korea and graduated from high school there, the Seoul Foreign School. Oldest daughter was off to college but came and visited. My parents also visited Korea twice during our tour there.

We were in Korea at the time when Roh Tae-woo was president. He was a man with a military background but was elected president in a fair and democratic election in 1988. Roh was the first democratically elected Korean president. So the internal political situation was going through an important transition period. South Korea had just come through an era of great turmoil. Roh's predecessor, Chun Doo-hwan came to power in 1980 in a military coup, arrested opposition leaders, and brutally repressed student demonstrations in the southern city of Kwangju. The large-scale protests were set off by the arrest of Kim Dae-jung, the leading opposition figure and a native of that region of Korea. As presidential candidate in 1987, Roe Tae-woo distanced himself from his mentor Chun Doo-hwan, advocating and eventually instituting free elections, legalization of opposition political parties and a new more democratic constitution. Despite this political progress, during our time in Seoul the city still was often racked by violent demonstrations. Clouds of tear gas regularly blew into the downtown embassy housing compound where we lived. During one demonstration at our embassy, a firebomb thrown into the chancery grounds seriously wounded Koreans waiting in line for visa interviews. Students broke into the ambassador's residence in late 1989, shortly before I arrived in Seoul, and briefly held Ambassador and Mrs. Gregg hostage. Among other grievances, radical student groups opposed the U.S. military presence in Korea, then numbering forty-three thousand [now at 28,500]. In addition to all this political ferment and progress, it should be noted that Korea has undergone two decades of extraordinary economic growth. The 1988 summer Olympics in Seoul were the country's moment to show its progress to the world.

The Roh Tae-woo administration also was an interesting period in north-south relations. In the early nineties, a dialogue began between the governments in Seoul and Pyongyang. This is when Kim Il-sung was still reigning in the north. That dialogue made a lot of progress. There were meetings at the level of national security advisers. In 1992 many agreements were signed between the north and south. Until the most recent period in north-south relations during the past two years, it was probably the biggest spurt of rapprochement Anther period of warm relations did occur during Kim Dae-jung's rule in the south; in 2000 he was the first South Korean leader to visit the north. Nineteen ninety-two is sometimes forgotten now, but it was a high point of north-south

interchange. Following this intra-Korean progress, and making sure Washington understood it, was an important task for the embassy.

A number of north-south family exchanges occurred. There were agreements about nuclear issues. One of the major policy actions while I was in Korea was to remove the American tactical nuclear weapons that were based there. That was done because already North Korea's desire to develop nuclear weapons was a controversial issue; they had taken some steps in that direction. Our own military based in Korea, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, really didn't want the American weapons there anymore. They were difficult to maintain. There was danger involved in maintaining them. We paired that with the diplomatic-political argument to take the high road. One day Gaston Sigur, who had been EAP assistant secretary under Reagan, visited Seoul. Gaston was now at George Washington University, no longer in government, but still highly respected and influential in the new Bush administration. Don, Gaston, and I had a long lunch conversation. The subject was whether it was time to remove the American nuclear weapons based in South Korea. We concluded it was. The next step was to get the formal concurrence of the U.S. forces commander. I forget the name; he soon left and was replaced by Robert RisCassi. This was probably in '91, before the '92 north-south agreements. I wrote the message and in my thirty-five years in the Foreign Service it was the only time I wrote a State Department cable that was classified top secret. That was because it was talking about deployment of nuclear weapons, which is a top secret subject.

This message of this cable did not come as a shock to the leadership in Washington. Being a smart ambassador, Gregg had paved the way with informal communication. He knew it would get a favorable reception. I don't remember if it was favorably received by 100 percent of the people; there may have been somebody who didn't like it. In the end at least there was concurrence, and the operation was carried out. Later it led to a wider policy decision under George H.W. Bush that removed nuclear weapons from many of our ships also. I'd have to check that but there was a wider policy that worldwide reduced the deployment of American tactical nuclear weapons.

Q: Here it is, the end of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union is collapsing. How does the George H.W. Bush administration generally regard North Korea? What's the general policy?

BURGHARDT: I'll come to that. I forgot an important aspect, which was we had to make sure the Korean government was comfortable with the removal of the tactical nuclear weapons. That was a hugely important step in the process. That included the Korean military, which was still a powerful force. This was ostensibly a civilian government but the military was still an important player. So we initiated a series of meetings held in Honolulu at Pacific Command headquarters. We met in the windowless J-5 [plans and policy] conference room, a kind of a SCIF [sensitive compartmented information facility]. South Korea's military high command traveled to Honolulu for these meetings. I always went with them. Don wanted me to be the embassy representative at these meetings. Our defense attaché probably attended as well. Paul

Wolfowitz, then the under secretary for political affairs at the Pentagon, led the U.S. side. Cheney was the defense secretary. I attended some annual U.S.-South Korean military pow-wows where Cheney was there, but he wasn't directly involved in these talks.

As I recall there wasn't acrimony, it was pretty friendly. The South Koreans wanted to be assured. Lots of contingency scenario discussions. They were satisfied, so we went ahead with it. How much good will it won from North Korea is highly debatable. We didn't really count on that either, we had a lot of reasons for doing it.

Going back to your question, you're right that all of this was happening with the backdrop of dramatic developments in Europe, changing the whole world strategic picture. The situation in North Korea was frankly something of a sideshow. For Pyongyang, the most significant effect of a changed Soviet Union was what that change meant in terms of how much support North Korea could count on from Russia. How much was it tied into the COMECON [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] trade system; once that collapsed, what did it mean for North Korea? Moscow's support did decline and that hurt the economy in North Korea somewhat. It also stimulated a lot of unusual North Korean schemes to increase income through weapons sales, selling information about nuclear technology, smuggling narcotics, liquor, and cigarettes. My memory is that Vietnam also was very tied to COMECON. The collapse of that trading system and of the Soviet Union led to a profound change of Vietnam's direction in the mid-'90s, including the normalization of relations with the United States, Europe, and other countries, and opening the economy. It was a profound shock and they reacted with the pragmatism for which the Vietnamese are famous.

In the case of North Korea, none of that happened. Zero. Totally opposite picture. There were a couple of reasons. One was the determination of the Kim dynasty to hold on to power. Also, the North Korean economy was always much more dependent on China. By the '90s a very high percent of trade and aid was with China.

Toward the latter half of my time in Korea, we became much more concerned about North Korea's development of its nuclear program. I remember that being particularly the case during the six months or so that I was chargé in 1993, which was now the Clinton administration. This was a major issue during that period. The new administration directed that all political appointee ambassadors, including Don Gregg, had to leave post by March 1, 1993. By coincidence, literally the previous day the new president of Korea was sworn in, Kim Young-sam. He was the first elected civilian president of the Republic of Korea. It was an important political milestone. Clinton chose Jim Laney as the new ambassador but it was unclear when he would arrive, so my tour was extended to serve as chargé.

I stayed in Seoul until August 1993. It was a busy period. I remember the first day I was chargé. That morning I gathered with the country team; Don had left the previous day. We looked at each other—Hank Hendrickson was the political counselor. It was a very smart team of people. There was a sense of, are we up to this? This is pretty heavy stuff.

Korea's an important country, and we were kind of the junior team. Plus we had this new government and we didn't know these people very well. But there was one person on their team I did know—Han Sung-joo, the new foreign minister, a very fine person. As we were sitting in the ambassador's office the phone rang and my secretary said it's the foreign minister, Han Sung-joo. Han said to me. "I'm sitting here in my new office [it was his first day on the job]. I was wondering what to do next, and it seemed to me that the logical thing was to call the American chargé."

I said, "You can't imagine how welcome your call is. We're feeling the same way." We were off and running after that. One of those great moments. Our relationship with the new government was excellent. President Kim Young-sam was very kind. I had access to him when I needed it and he invited me to things. It was the same with the national security adviser and defense chief. So I immediately found I was able to operate as a chief of mission, even though everyone knew it was a temporary stint.

Going back to North Korea: We knew in early 1993 that they were developing nukes at a faster pace than we'd thought a year earlier. There were key people in the Clinton administration with whom I dealt about that issue. I visited them in Washington during at least one trip back there during those six months and again when I returned to Washington in August. One was Joe Nye, who was then chair of the National Intelligence Council. This was an important issue for him. Early in the Clinton administration, while I was chargé, Bob Gallucci was named the chief U.S. negotiator with North Korea on nuclear issues. The issue of North Korean nuclear weapons development really took off as a major concern some time at the end of '92 and the beginning of '93, according to my memory. We were very fortunate in the embassy that we had a science counselor; Ken Cohen, who was a nuclear engineer. He actually knew what he was talking about, unlike the rest of us. He could explain the whole thing, where they were and what it would take and what they were missing.

The other big thing that happened during those six months was that the president of the United States came to Korea. It was Bill Clinton's first overseas trip as president. He visited Korea and Japan. It was unusual for a president's first overseas trip to be to Asia. It was also Hillary's first trip as first lady. My wife and I took care of them. Susan spent a lot of time with Hillary. Hillary was nervous, very concerned not to make a false step, which was totally understandable, and a bit charming in its own way. She handled everything very well. Clinton of course was Bill Clinton, Mr. Personality, and everybody loved him. There was one major fiasco that was no one's fault. The plan was they would stay in an American hotel, a Hyatt. The visit was in the second half of July. On the Fourth of July the hotel in which they were supposed to stay blew up—really. There was a huge explosion. On Independence Day. Terrorist attack? Well, it wasn't. It was just some boiler or heating system. How do these things happen? But they happen.

Suddenly, where's he going to stay? They went ahead with the trip. The solution was to put up the president and first lady in the empty ambassador's residence, which worked out fine. I had not moved in there. I had a lovely house in the compound right next door.

There is a guesthouse on the residence property that dates to the nineteenth century. It was the original American minister's residence and office when we were accredited to the Kingdom of Korea in the late nineteenth century. That was available for some staff, and we found hotels for other people. But the Secret Service was spooked by what happened at the hotel, even though everyone thought it was an accident. They wanted him some place really safe, and the ambassador's residence was really safe—surrounded by a lot of grounds and most of the surrounding streets were routinely closed off.

As an example of one of the strange things that can happen in life, the director of presidential security for the Secret Service at that time was my prep school classmate, Rich Miller. He came with the Advance Team and we had a good laugh over that. Rich said, "Look, the cool thing is to ride in the car with the president during the visit. I'll make that happen." The president's car arrived on its own plane, the crazy way we do things. After I greeted the president and first lady at the military airport, the car drove up and they entered. Rich gestured to me to enter the car. So I got in the back. There's a jump seat, so I'm facing the president. There's a Secret Service driver and Rich in the bodyguard seat, me facing the wrong way, and the president and first lady.

At some point Rich said, "Mr. President, you should be aware that of the five people in this car, two are high school classmates."

So it's all explained, and the president's reaction is, "That's quite a coincidence!" (laughs)

He asked, "How many were in your class?"

We said, "About eighty."

"Well that's really a coincidence!"

He had a cooler he traveled with [all water and soft drinks] and he reached in and it was literally an ice-breaker. He turned to me and asked, "Would you like a drink?" Of course. That's the way he is, extremely friendly and gracious, instantly likable. It was a great trip. Among other things, he went of course to the DMZ [demilitarized zone] that divides North and South Korea; everybody goes to the DMZ.

Warren Christopher was secretary of state and he stayed on for an extra day. We had some business issues involving Amway being kept out of the market there and he wanted us to help them. I said, "Can I tell them the secretary of state really wants them to open up?"

He said, "You do that."

So I said, "Great, I think that's going to work," and it did. I was a guy from New York and Christopher was a rather taciturn fellow from North Dakota but we seemed to hit it

off. I remember for some reason I had mentioned I played the clarinet. I was standing next to Christopher while we were visiting an American base at the DMZ. For the first time, I experienced the routine of Clinton playing the saxophone with a jazz band. They knew he played and they had a saxophone for him, "Mr. President would you join us?" So he bounded up the stage and was playing.

I said to Christopher, "The president plays pretty well."

Then in his dry North Dakota way, Christopher said, "I bet you'd play pretty well too if you played the same two damn songs every time."

It was always "Summer Time" and "My Funny Valentine." That's all he ever played. The same drill when he came to the Philippines a few years later, "Summer Time" and "My Funny Valentine." (laughs) All this had nothing to do with foreign policy but it's amusing stuff.

I don't have too much more on Korea. Super busy three and a half years but relatively fast to summarize. Don Gregg gave me a lot of responsibility, including managing the military relationship from the pol-mil point of view. I had great relations with our military, too. In fact when I left as chargé they got the Department of Defense to grant me the Meritorious Civilian Service award for my contribution toward the defense relationship. We got along well, and I did a lot of heavy lifting for them. For example, part of the DCM's job was, and I believe still is, to negotiate with the ROK [Republic of Korea] vice minister of defense about the cost-sharing agreement. I believe I negotiated the first such agreement. You can imagine what that's like. Koreans are proud of the fact that they are very tough negotiators. They take a zero-sum game approach. Any concession by them is like cutting off an arm. It was tough stuff, but we got there, three years in a row. I also remember providing lots of support to the American business community, persuading the Korean airlines to buy Boeing planes or GE [General Electric] turbines and engines, helping Amway. Promoting American commerce was a big part of the job.

Q: Was this a moment when South Korea was beginning to go into the WTO [World Trade Organization]?

BURGHARDT: I don't remember that. One thing that happened while I was there was that South Korea normalized relations with China in 1992. My friend in the Taiwan/ROC [Republic of China] mission had to say farewell and left. Their embassy was taken over by the PRC. That was a major development.

On trade I do remember two interesting incidents. One was there was something we were trying to sell to the Koreans, I don't remember whether it was planes or engines for planes, and we were competing with British or German companies. We found out that there was corruption—you'll be shocked to hear this. So we blew the whistle on it. We got it fixed and they bought American.

Another incident showed how things worked with the press there [they're not this way anymore, usually]. Gregg was scheduled to meet with the minister of commerce. A lot of the economic ministries are south of the Han River so it was kind of a long haul. At the last minute, the meeting was called off. The next day in the press, articles appeared reporting on the meeting and its results! Somebody had screwed up and hadn't pulled those press reports, which had obviously been submitted before the meeting was even held. We got a real laugh out of that one.

Q: When you finally did have the meeting, were those reports useful in that it demonstrated what the Koreans thought was going to happen?

BURGHARDT: Sure, definitely—what they wanted to happen.

Q: One last question about bilateral relations. When you were there did students and other exchange activities occur?

BURGHARDT: Yes, they did, and they were lively. Korea was a big source of students for the United States and we had a very active USIS and USIA [United States Information Agency] program. While I was there, we had a consulate in Pusan which I visited frequently. Pusan was by far the largest port and an important industrial center. Near Pusan were a lot of big industrial facilities that manufactured ships, autos, steel, and other heavy industry items. We also had USIS branch posts, one in Pusan with the consulate and one in Taegu, which is just north of Pusan. Another was in Kwangju in the south, where there had been big riots and demonstrations against the military government of Roh's thuggish predecessor Chun Doo-hwan. The first thing to go was the branch post at Taegu, which was hard to defend because it was too close to Pusan. But then, after I left everything outside of Seoul was closed, the Pusan consulate and the two remaining branch public affairs offices. There were serious budget problems in this period, State Department budget problems. Toward the end of my time in Korea and especially during my time in the Philippines in the late '90s, there was a lot of budget crunch. We closed the consulate in Cebu while I was in Manila. The Korean business community in Pusan offered to pay for the consulate to stay open but of course we couldn't do that. They were very sad to see it close.

Meanwhile in terms of visits and cultural activities, the Koreans love classical music. Extraordinary performers came there not only from the United States but from other countries, some just commercially. At the Sejong Cultural Center, which is directly opposite the U.S. embassy, we saw the Bolshoi perform, the New York Philharmonic. Mstislav Rostropovich came to conduct and play the cello, a delightful and hilariously funny man. Pavarotti. We all had dinner with him—he really ate a lot of pasta. One of the great things about the Foreign Service is that you meet all these wonderful people. I had dinner with Pavarotti. One of the more memorable moments, I don't know why Lord and Tomsen weren't available, but at some point in my years in Beijing I had dinner with Gregory Peck. He was the nicest person you'd ever hope to meet.

One last item on Korea: I forgot to mention that President George H.W. Bush visited in January 1992. I was deeply involved in preparation for his visit and attended most of his key meetings, but I don't remember much about the substantive issues discussed. I do remember that at his next stop, Tokyo, occurred the famous incident in which he threw up on the prime minister. We were not completely surprised in Seoul because while he was there, some of our staff working on the visit became sick with the flu.

That's it on Korea. On to the Philippines. I left Korea on August 5, 1993. Back in the department, I met Jim Laney, who was to come in as ambassador. It was the only time we ever met. We had a long conversation in the elegant surroundings of the State Department cafeteria. Laney, the president of Emory University, had served in Korea with the U.S. military in the late 1940s and had spent a few years teaching at Yonsei University in Seoul as a Methodist missionary. So he had Korea experience and knew some Korean. It's generally said by the Koreans that Kathy Stephens speaks Korean better than Laney, but he was still the only other ambassador that had any mastery of the language. As governor of Georgia, Carter knew Laney as president of one of the state's leading universities.

There was some possibility of becoming ambassador to Laos at that point. That had been the intention of the outgoing Bush administration. But with the new administration coming in, many ambassadorial selections were changed. That's normal; things were reshuffled. For a moment I really didn't have anything to do so I accepted an appointment as a diplomat in residence at the City University of New York [CUNY], which was very appealing.

Because I'm from New York, I'd been looking for a chance to get back. The assignment was to cover that university—which has about twenty separate colleges—plus do things at Columbia, Fordham, NYU. I was to engage with the New York academic community as diplomats in residence do, both to recruit people for the Foreign Service and also do outreach on foreign affairs issues. Of course, in New York you also have the Council on Foreign Relations, the Asia Society, the Society of the Americas, all of their doors were wide open. It was a hell of a lot of fun, but only lasted about four months. I was there one semester. My office was in one of the most obscure corners of the New York academic world, Medgar Evers College in central Brooklyn, which is one of the colleges of the City University. The president of that college, Edison Jackson, was a brilliant and dynamic black educator who was a close friend of Congressman Charlie Rangel. Rangel wanted to have a diplomat in residence in New York, and thought it should be at his friend's college. In later years, other people had the same position and it did move around a bit among the colleges of the City University. My friend Mark Minton had exactly the same position later, but his office was at Baruch College. I had a busy and enjoyable fall semester in New York. But John Negroponte was named ambassador to Manila and he asked me to be his DCM. I resisted at first, because I felt I had made a commitment to be in New York. HR [human resources] wanted me to stay there, didn't like jerking the universities around by pulling people out early.

But as he had been other times, Negroponte was very emphatic. My wife and I had dinner with him; he came to New York to see me and twist my arm. He said, "I can see you're having a great time here, you're like a diplomatic dilettante here in New York doing things with Nick Platt at the Asia Society, doing stuff at CFR, speaking at Columbia. Sounds like fun. But I'm offering you a real job. Our relationship with the Philippines is at an absolute nadir." We'd just been kicked out of Subic Bay, and before we could get kicked out of Clark Field we pulled out because it was wrecked by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. The Defense Department didn't want to do anything with the Philippines any more, and it was not attracting officers of great ambition in the embassy. It was a bad picture. Negroponte said, "I want you to help me. First thing we're going to do is rebuild the military relationship. If you want to finish your time in New York and enjoy yourself here and you turn down coming to help me in the Philippines, you know the word will get around. I don't think that's very helpful for your corridor reputation."

At that point my wife is laughing. I finally put my arms up and said, "All right, I'm yours. I get it! Let me finish the semester here. The last day of classes before exam week is December 15. Immediately before that the director general of the Foreign Service is coming to New York to visit CUNY, and I'm supposed to be her guide." He said that was fine, so I stayed until December 15. After packing out of New York, going down to Florida to see my parents in Sarasota, explaining to our kids what was happening, arranging to ship the pets, we somehow arrived in Manila around December 27. Twelve days after leaving New York. I remember that this story of Negroponte's recruitment of me got around. It's in a bio of him. People called it the Corleone School of personnel management—an offer you can't refuse! (laughs)

Q: Do you recall from that time in New York recruiting anyone that did get into the Foreign Service?

BURGHARDT: I did. I didn't have a whole lot of time there but I was active and I recruited some people—I was wise to the fact that I was not only supposed to recruit FSO generalists, but also people who might join as specialists of various kinds. I successfully recruited one guy, a student at the university who had been in the military and had communications experience. He became a communications officer, so that was one success. I recall I was a speaker at a nursing school. I talked about international public health issues. It's an interesting thing about that kind of experience; it forces you to do research and look at aspects of international relations that you don't always think about. Of course, the nurses were interested in the subject and I did make a pitch about joining the Foreign Service as a nurse. They basically laughed me off because they could make so much more money anywhere else, certainly in New York. I also remember there was a brilliant guy, an older student, who had a wife and a child and was already working some place in the financial world. His family had emigrated from Jamaica. He was among other things the president of the student organization for the entire CUNY, which was about two hundred thousand students. We hit it off, a good relationship. He was very interested in the Foreign Service and would have been a brilliant officer but he was

already thirty years old. He said to me, "I thought a lot about all of that. I concluded that would be a terrific occupation for my son, but for myself, I'm taking the offer I just got from Goldman-Sachs." I was reminded of a quote, perhaps from John Adams, about three American generations, in which the soldier is followed by the merchant so that the third generation can be a poet.

The Philippines: Negroponte said he considered our number one mission goal was to reestablish operational defense relations with the Philippines. We had a defense agreement, we were allies, but nothing was happening.

Q: At this time, Ramos was president?

BURGHARDT: President Fidel Ramos. In my judgment he is one of the best presidents the Philippines has had since the end of the Second World War, since independence. He was relatively honest, decisive, and we had great relations with him. The Philippines being the Philippines, my wife and I instantly were members of high society. You had to be careful about that, they'd suck you right in. Immediately, I was Ray to the president and I got invited to golf tournaments where I had ceremonial tee-offs with him, all that kind of stuff. I remember once on live television, he and I did ceremonial tee-offs, and mine went straight out, great shot, and then took a nasty hook at the end. On live TV, Ramos said to me, "Ray, that was a great shot, about the first 95 percent of it." (laughs) Classic Philippine humor. One of the many reasons we loved our time there.

On the military relationship, there were three things I had to get going. We wanted to resume ship visits. We wanted to resume exercises, the annual Balikatan exercise and others. And at some point we were going to need a new SOFA [Status of Forces Agreement] also. Big agenda.

The political counselor in the embassy was Peter Spalding. To make a long story short, I don't want to trash somebody else in this, especially Peter who was a fine person and officer, but he wasn't the right person for this job. He had no previous experience as a political officer. He had been a consular officer. I remember I went with him to the kick-off negotiating session with the vice foreign minister, Rodolfo Severino, who later became the secretary-general of ASEAN. In the course of the meeting Peter essentially revealed our bottom line. I got back to the embassy and told Negroponte what had happened. He said, "You're in charge of these negotiations now. You can use Peter as an assistant if you want. Eventually, we have to persuade Peter that it might be a good time to retire." And he did. We brought in Hank Hendrickson who had worked for me in Korea and who Negroponte also knew and wanted, and who the department had resisted allowing to become counselor in Manila because he didn't have the required rank. Hank arrived as well as his wife Anne Derse, who was a first-rate economic officer. They were great additions to an otherwise rather disappointing team, as I'll explain later. That was the first of a series of difficult personnel matters Negroponte and I had to deal with in the Philippines.

To finish with the military relationship: Over the next three years we resumed the large-scale Balikatan exercise, negotiated a number of arms sales to the Philippine military, ship visits resumed, SOFA talks started at the end of my tour, and the "Visiting Forces Agreement" was completed after I left. We probably can thank the Chinese for that fairly rapid progress in reconstituting our military relationship. In February 1995 the PRC Navy occupied Mischief Reef, a Spratly Island outcropping claimed by the Philippines. The reef is about 135 miles from Palawan, a large Philippine island, and many times further away from any part of the Chinese mainland. The Chinese planted their flag on the reef and constructed a military guard post. President Ramos, noting that Mischief Reef was "very appropriately named," protested China's action and sent warships and fighter planes to the area. But Manila had no capability to seriously challenge this occupation. Negroponte quickly acted to alert Washington and to ensure that we made strong statements. This episode definitely increased the Ramos government's interest in improved military ties with the U.S., its treaty ally. At the same time, the Philippine government was very concerned about an increased terrorist threat from Abu Sayef, a Muslim separatist group that was growing in the most southern islands of Basilan and Jolo. When we resumed our joint military exercises, including Balikatan, they often had an anti-terrorist focus. Other countries, including Australia, sometimes joined as well.

Because of increased concern about a terrorist threat, I developed a close relationship with the minister of the interior, Rafael Alunan. A group of terrorists whom later we could identify as people connected with al Qaeda, a name that wasn't used then, were operating in the Ermita, a densely populated Manila district close to the embassy. There was a substantial population of Muslims there. Many were money changers. At some point while they were making bombs in their rented room the terrorist group managed to blow the place up and went streaming out of the building. They were caught. One was Ramzi Yousef, a prominent terrorist who had been involved in the first bombing of the World Trade Center—is that later?

Q: The first one was '93, with the underground parking lot.

BURGHARDT: Yeah, that was while I was still in Korea. Ramzi Yousef was involved with that plot. With all the intelligence and detective work, later it was determined that the group operating in Ermita had a plan to set off bombs on flights, intra-Asian flights. They had already done a test run on one flight, and a small bomb had gone off that killed one passenger. Somehow, it didn't bring the plane down. Serious stuff. Also during the period I was there, the Pope visited and also Clinton. Our intelligence indicated that this group of terrorists was definitely planning to target the Pope while I was there.

Q: This was John Paul?

BURGHARDT: John Paul. For the Clinton visit we were never quite sure if they were looking that far ahead, if they had any early knowledge of plans for the visit.

They were captured and one thing that happened was a rendition flight that came. A plane was sent to Manila with U.S. marshals to bring Ramzi Yousef and maybe others back to the U.S. I was in charge of that operation. I worked closely with Interior Minister Alunan, to handle the arrangements.

I did a lot of travel around the country. I developed good contacts and we had a good grasp of the local political machinations, the corruption, and how it affected things. There are local political bosses in the Philippines, usually by family, generation to generation, almost a feudal system. They're called *caciques*. The governor in Ilocos Sur, a province in northern Luzon, was one buddy I had. I knew him well. He was a real character. His family won out in what was basically a war with another family, a lot of bloodshed. You can learn a lot from these people, and they gave their judgment on other people, who influenced whom, who paid for this campaign, who was going to pay for the next campaign. I cultivated the Chinese community in Manila, who were major campaign donors, and from them also learned interesting information about Beijing's activities in the Philippines.

Ramos on the whole was a good president. His vice president was Joseph "Erap" Estrada, a former action movie star who brought nothing to Ramos' team. He knew nothing. A former cabinet member and governor of La Union Province, Jose Aspiras, known as "Smiling Joe," had known Estrada all his life. He said to me very seriously, "I know Erap. Basically, he doesn't have any opinions of his own about important subjects. Whatever he last heard someone say, that's probably what he'll go along with." Then he thought and observed, "You know I think that would probably be a big weakness in a president." I agreed. Unfortunately, Estrada succeeded Ramos as president. He was impeached for corruption and removed from office after two and a half years.

Once Estrada invited me to spend an evening at his private club. I didn't know what kind of lascivious activity this was going to involve. But it was pretty innocent; it involved a lot of drinking. Next morning, Negroponte asked, "What did you learn?"

I said, "Well, he gave a lengthy exposition on why he preferred Johnny Walker blue label instead of the regular stuff. That's about it."

The last thing I'll say about the Philippines is the personnel situation. These were really tough management issues. We sent home for cause two consuls general in a row in the two and a half years I was there. Essentially these were cases in which the ambassador lost confidence in the two officers because they were suspected of corruption with the added deficiency of poor leadership of their large staff. They represented two of the three consuls general who had been sent home from Manila within ten years. The then-director-general with whom I personally worked very closely on all this, Genta Hawkins Holmes, told me after the second guy on our watch left, "You know, we did a little research. This is the worst record of people being sent home for cause from any single position in the history of the Foreign Service."

When the new guy took over—our third consul general in two years—he was recruited from within the embassy, and the comments among embassy staff were like gallows humor: "How long are you going to last?" He was fine.

The first we sent home was John Adams.

Q: Oh, the *John Adams?*

BURGHARDT: This is all in the public record. He was indicted and brought to trial. Do you know him?

Q: No but he's one of the descendants.

BURGHARDT: He is, he's descended from two presidents. His immediate previous job was principal deputy assistant secretary for consular affairs, that bureau's number two officer. Later I learned from DS [diplomatic security] people whom I befriended over the years, that he had been very seriously investigated for his behavior as head of the consular section in Hong Kong. In the end they didn't pursue it. I can't explain how someone with that record was chosen to be in such a senior position in Washington.

Then in Manila—first of all, Negroponte became very disenchanted with him because he was always out partying, his picture constantly in the paper judging beauty contests, which are very big in the Philippines. Negroponte probably didn't like somebody else getting more publicity than he got. To be honest about it. That was part of it. One too many times, Adams was in the paper crowning some beauty queen, and Negroponte said to me one morning, "What is all this, why does Adams have to be always spending his time at beauty contests? Is this really appropriate activity for the consul general?" Plus we all knew he had the largest section of any embassy or consulate in the world, the consular section in Manila, with the largest number of officers. And he wasn't a very good leader of it, or a very good mentor for all those junior officers. We knew that already. His deputy wasn't much better. They seemed to spend a lot of time at long lunches together. It was a poor situation.

I remember talking to Adams about this. Adams was very defensive and said, "Well I'm out there on the party circuit and I get myself in the paper. It's good outreach for the embassy."

I said, "I know the boss isn't going to buy that, so it would be best to knock it off." But I couldn't resist, so I went back and with a straight face told Negroponte, "I told Adams, he gets it. But he says he's been doing it for outreach for the embassy."

Negroponte, after I peeled him off the ceiling of his office, said. "Outreach? Why would we need outreach by the consular section chief in a country where every Filipino wants a visa?" (laughs)

Q: I did not have a stellar career but if I was the head of the consular section in the Philippines, even I would know that the last thing you do is that kind of thing. You are exposing yourself to every potential visa sucker—

BURGHARDT: Well, it gets worse. We knew he was hanging out with all kinds of slimy people in the Philippines. One day, we got a message through the channels of INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]. It said they had busted some kind of club in Queens, New York and sent home two Thai hookers from there, repatriated them to Thailand. They thought it was interesting that their visas had been issued in Manila and directly issued by the consul general, John Adams. Maybe we would want to look into that?

We did look into it. These were women who had traveled to Manila with friends of Adams from his time in Bangkok, who were nightclub owners and people of the demiworld in Bangkok. These women were with them. They were their "friends" or employees, so Adams gave them visas. That didn't cut it. So we sent him home with full support of the DG [director general].

I don't know the exact things they got him on because that didn't seem like something indictable, but he was indicted for various forms of corrupt activity. Maybe dating back to Hong Kong, I don't know. But the Justice Department lost the case; he was acquitted. I talked later with a fellow who had been in the consular section with Adams and was called as a witness at the trial. He said the prosecution didn't understand how an embassy worked, what was okay and what wasn't. They didn't explain the visa law to the jury; they made a hash of the whole thing.

So then the embassy and department were determined we would get someone good to replace Adams. Mary Ryan, the head of the consular bureau, the beloved consular chief, handpicked the replacement, Richard Peterson. Negroponte knew Peterson; he had been the consul general in Ciudad Juarez when Negroponte was ambassador to Mexico. He didn't know him well, there are about fifteen consulates in Mexico, but he knew him. I don't think Peterson lasted even a year. One day, our head INS inspector, an American, came into my office and shut the door behind him.

I said, "This is going to be good, right?"

"Yeah, stay seated. Here's the picture. My Filipino agents have been watching something funny going on in front of the visa section for a while. They pieced it together. It seems there are two Americans who every day are accompanying Filipinos to the visa line, where they are brought to the door, then let in and brought directly to Peterson, who adjudicates their visas."

I said, "Oh my god, here we go again. Get me more."

He came back the next day and said, “These two clowns have an immigration law firm in Beverly Hills, California, and have set themselves up at a hotel two blocks from the embassy. What we’ve learned is the people come to the hotel, pay between five thousand dollars and nine thousand dollars per person”—a fortune for Filipinos in 1995—“to these two lawyers, who then bring them to the embassy. We also learned that the other night they hosted a party which was a tribute to Peterson that he attended at the hotel.”

This is all reported back to the department. We decide before we nail this, we’re going to get more information. We had all of the law enforcement agencies run traces on these two guys. The only thing they picked up [which was interesting] was that one of them had been identified as suspected of money laundering in El Paso. Where is El Paso? Right next to Ciudad Juarez. Maybe it’s a coincidence? (laughs)

The first thing we did was to inform the Filipino police. I don’t remember the sequence, but the Philippine police arrested the two guys, I can’t remember the charges. It didn’t stick and they got out. That happens a lot in the Philippines. Negroponte said, “I don’t even want to see Peterson, you tell him he’s out of here.”

Of course I’d talked to Genta again; yes, he’s got to go. This is worse. Much worse than Adams. I said, “We don’t know what he’s getting out of it but it’s a complete violation of the rules. Why do we have these consuls general who think it’s their job to issue visas? They shouldn’t issue a visa in their whole tour, they’ve got fifteen officers in the NIV [non-immigrant visas] unit.”

So I confronted Peterson. He was defensive in a weak and unconvincing manner. He left.

I don’t know what you do in these oral histories, but unfortunately the job is not all grand policy and nuclear weapons. Especially this embassy, which was hurting, nobody good wanted to go there anymore. Next was the B&F [budget and fiscal] officer, an older woman, a Radcliffe graduate with an accent like Eleanor Roosevelt. One day the communications officer, a very smart guy, came to me and said, “There’s something I think you should know. I see how everyone uses communications, all the various equipment we’ve got here in the embassy. Our B&F officer has never signed on to the budget and fiscal system. She’s never actually logged onto it. That seems to be very odd.”

I can’t remember the whole investigation but it turned out she was totally relying on her FSNs to do all the work. She was I guess technically unable to do anything herself. We never seemed to know what our situation was, budget-wise. Negroponte was always asking how come we have no picture of where we are financially? Back to the director general’s office. This was unusual because it was not for malfeasance; it was for incompetence. Pretty unusual, but it’s valid. The ambassador lost confidence in her. So she was out.

There were others: The RSO was kind of marginally okay. But he was not really okay. I don't think there was an incident, but everything kept slipping and was not well handled. He had extended, so we cancelled his extension and he left.

Then there was the commercial attaché. He was okay. But his wife was a nutcase. She went around the world spending money they didn't have. She must have been mentally ill. Believe it or not, she rang up a huge bill at some shop in Italy, and the merchant complained, took it to the embassy and then wrote to Warren Christopher complaining: "She is the wife of one of your officers" [which wasn't quite right, the Foreign Commercial Service was already separate at that point]. God help us how this happens, but somebody actually showed this message from the merchant to Warren Christopher, "By the way boss, here's a wild one." Warren Christopher didn't laugh at shit like that. He reportedly said. "I want action on that. I want Negroponte to know about that." So we told the commercial attaché, "You're going to have to clean up your wife and your family situation." He left Manila.

That was the personnel toll. That was a lot in one tour of duty.

Two other things I'll mention: During this period there was a lot of commemoration of the fourtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The Filipinos did elaborate recreations of the landings and battles. They're very good at that kind of stuff. The highlight was an enormous recreation of the Leyte landing. One guy played MacArthur and they reenacted his famous wading ashore. Defense Secretary Perry, General Shalikashvili, then chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, the secretary of the navy, all came. There was no place for anyone to stay on Leyte so my wife and I were allowed to stay on the *Blue Ridge.* At that time, it was very unusual for a woman to be allowed to stay on a ship. As the daughter of an Annapolis graduate, she especially appreciated the honor. I was in charge of all the logistics, an enormous operation. Being Americans, we flew down cars and planes and helicopters, everything.

All the other embassies were jealous because Ramos kept them there forever sitting on his boat drinking and then they had trouble figuring out how to get back to Manila. The Australian ambassador told me that his defense secretary, a very large man named Robert Ray, was sweating to death the whole day. It was hot as hell. So Robert Ray at the end finally getting back to Manila said, "All I can say John, you better be glad I'm not the fucking prime minister, or you'd be fired today!" But we were happy.

One anecdote: As our delegation was walking in from the helicopter landing zone to the scene of the reenactment, hot as hell, Perry had a suit on and saw that all the rest of us were in *barongs* (Filipino shirts) and said, "All you guys look pretty cool and comfortable."

So the defense attaché said, "Sir we can get you a barong."

"Really? How are you going to do that?"

They were just going to take it off somebody's back. So they found a guy who still looked clean and dry, and actually took it off his back [they paid him] and the secretary put it on and wore it for the rest of the event.

The other major event was that President Clinton made an official visit deliberately on Veterans Day of 1995. In Manila there is a wonderful U.S. veterans cemetery. At the end of the Second World War they drew a line down the middle of the Pacific; everybody on the west side of that line who had died was buried in Manila. On the east side, they were buried at Punchbowl in Hawaii. So it's enormous, like the veterans cemeteries in Europe. At the entrance there are maps and text that provide an excellent explanation of all of the battles and landings of the Pacific War. The Veterans Day ceremony was there. In addition there were the usual meetings with the president, with Ramos. Clinton being Clinton, the Philippines being the Philippines, lunch at the Malacanang Palace finally was served at three. As someone said to me, "If you watch the way President Clinton operates, every time he met someone he wanted to talk to them." There was a man who ran the cemetery and his wife, and Clinton ended up talking to them much longer than he was supposed to. He felt it would be wrong to cut him off, and he also liked them. So that's how he kept falling behind schedule. It was his good nature. Filipinos understood and admired that.

One footnote: As I mentioned once before, I play the clarinet. In Manila, former Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus recruited me to join the "Executive Band," a group of mostly retired high-ranking Philippine officials and business executives plus a couple of other foreigners, including the trumpet-playing headmaster of the American School. Our pianist was President Ramos' wife. Manglapus enjoyed introducing the players "in order of senility." Part of my responsibility was to wake up the octogenarian who was the other clarinetist just before his solos. We had a great time playing jazz, mostly of the Dixieland variety. We even traveled to Hong Kong to play at the opening of a Philippine community center. We also prepared a recording to send to the Thai king for his birthday. With a chamber music group in Guatemala, a similar group in Seoul, conservatory students in Shanghai, the Executive Band in Manila, and occasional solos at Minh's Jazz Club in Hanoi, the clarinet gave me one more way to carry out public diplomacy.

That kind of closes out the Philippines.

Q: One last question before we leave. Moros, problems in Mindanao, did you have to address that?

BURGHARDT: We did. I spent a lot of time on Mindanao and I got to know some Muslim leaders. While Abu Sayef was causing increased mayhem in the small islands near Mindanao, the situation on Mindanao itself at that time was relatively low-level violence. Talks had begun about how to deal with it, how to reach an agreement to grant greater autonomy, but that didn't really gestate until later. We followed the issue and made a real effort to know the Muslims and their leaders. We also had a large American

aid program focused on Mindanao and I monitored that closely. With my family I once visited Marawi, the most Muslim city in the Philippines [97 percent], invited by the head of the university whom I knew well. We decided to visit the market and they sent guards armed with machine guns to accompany us.

One last thing—the budget crunch. One of my main jobs was to cut the embassy staff, as tasked by Negroponte. Every agency, not just State. I did it systematically, and we cut a huge amount. Negroponte kept saying it was a bloated embassy. When I first arrived there I had two thousand people working for me, counting drivers, gardners, and cleaning crew, everybody. Between Bangkok and us, we were probably the biggest embassies in the world. Just enormous. Negroponte kept saying, "I don't know what half these people are doing here." There was a lot of waste, a lot of fat. We cut 14 percent of the locally hired employees and 20 percent of the American staff over two fiscal years. We cut a lot of people.

Q: Was the peace dividend driving this?

BURGHARDT: No, it was just a budget crunch in Washington and a strong belief that we had more staff than necessary to do the job.

Q: Today is September 17, 2019 and we're resuming our interview with Ambassador Raymond Burghardt.

Q: You are now leaving China and getting ready for a new post. How does your decision for a next post come about?

BURGHARDT: About going to Korea? We already did Korea, right? I don't know if I told you this, but I had gone back to Washington at some point in 1989, after the inauguration of George Bush, to look into my next assignment. Jim Lilley interviewed me to stay on as DCM in China. I think the same day Don Gregg asked me if I wanted to be DCM in Korea. The Korea connection—first of all I knew Don from my NSC days; he had been Vice President Bush's national security advisor. We sat next to each other at meetings and traveled together with the vice president seven times, so we knew each other well. I had a Korea connection—I did those talks with the North Koreans while I was in Beijing. I even went to Korea to be introduced to the Koreans as the American who would be talking to the North Koreans. So I had gotten myself into Korean matters. I told Jim Lilley with everything that happened in China, especially the Tiananmen mess, I really wanted to go somewhere new. He said he respected that but asked me to stay on as an interim DCM, and I said of course. He even asked me whom I recommended. I mentioned Lynn Pascoe, and that's whom he chose.

Q: So that takes us up to—

BURGHARDT: To 1996. I left the Philippines a little early, almost six months earlier than completing a three-year tour. I had been recommended by the department [Winston

Lord was then EAP assistant secretary] and tentatively selected by President Clinton to be ambassador to Mongolia. I went back to Washington, even started studying Mongolian, but my nomination was ultimately killed because of my experience working on Central America on the National Security Council staff during the era of the Iran-Contra scandal. My fate was decided in a discussion between Deputy National Security Advisor Sandy Berger and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. They decided, as I was informed by Eric Edelman, then an aide to Talbott, that I had been "too closely associated with a policy that this administration had opposed."

I said, "That's interesting. That's not the way the career Foreign Service is supposed to work." I was not the president, nor the national security advisor. I was a Foreign Service officer who was detailed to work in the National Security Council staff, to carry out the policy of the current administration.

Edelman responded, "I understand. But that's what they decided." Years later I was told by someone who probably knew what he was talking about that Nancy Soderberg, then a deputy national security advisor, had been instrumental in the decision not to go forward with my nomination to Mongolia. I don't think I learned exactly what her objection was.

In the long run, this temporary disappointment may actually have helped my career. Within twenty-four hours of my conversation with Edelman, I got a call from Kent Wiedemann, then DAS for China/Mongolia in the State Department. He said, "We're all very upset at what happened. We could keep fighting it. Win [Winston Lord] would like to fight this one; he thinks it's really stupid. He could go talk to Strobe about it. But we probably wouldn't win, so here is another idea."

Wiedemann informed me that unexpectedly, there was now an opening for the position of consul general in Shanghai. The current occupant would be leaving one year early. EAP thought, and the director general concurred, that I would be great for the position.

I said, "The answer is yes. But out of respect for my wife, let me run that by her." I talked to Susan, whose response was, "That sounds wonderful."

I spoke to John Negroponte, my mentor, and John said, "That's perfect. That will solidify your credentials as a China hand for the rest of your life, whether in the Foreign Service or out. It's money in the bank."

For anyone who is a China hand, the job of consul general in Shanghai is immensely attractive. The consular district, which covers the city of Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui, is an economic powerhouse and then had nearly two hundred million people. The region is full of places of great importance to Chinese history and culture: Suzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, the Yellow Mountains. The regional military headquarters in Nanjing is tasked with preparation for a possible Taiwan invasion. And Shanghai is the economic-financial capital of China. It's like being consul general in New York.

So I agreed. But the assignment didn't open until June 1997, so I began my "Year of Living Aimlessly." In addition to the trip to Tucson I also did other interesting things. I was asked to become a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University, an entity of the School of Foreign Service. I wrote a chapter in a book called *Why We Need Embassies*. My chapter was on the embassy in Seoul, which I later saw a professor using in his class at the University of California at San Diego. I did a lot of speaking to Georgetown classes. Earlier in that year I was put back in the job of DCM in the Philippines for one week, without going back to the Philippines. Very soon after I'd arrived back in the United States, John Negroponte was in San Francisco on the first stop of the annual tour of U.S. ambassadors to ASEAN countries organized by the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council. He called to tell me that he just got word that his father had died in London; he was going to have to leave the tour. He asked the department to agree that I could "put back on the coat of DCM" and finish the rest of the ASEAN ambassadors' tour. The department agreed. I flew to Dallas the next day to join the group.

I went to Shanghai in June 1997.

Q: An aside. Did you get additional Chinese?

BURGHARDT: Yes, that was the other thing I did. In addition to what I did with Georgetown and those trips, department-related trips, I took a refresher course in Chinese at FSI. That prepared me well for the next four years in Shanghai and subsequently in Taipei. Also, I participated in a very helpful small conference of America's leading China experts that was held at Arden House, a Columbia University retreat center near Bear Mountain Park north of New York City. My old friend Don Zagoria arranged for me to attend. I learned a great deal from the participants. For example, Mike Oksenberg, NSC Asia senior director during the Carter administration and a highly respected Michigan University professor, gave me great advice on what to read to bring myself up-to-date on China.

Q: At that point going back to China, how confident were you in your use of Chinese?

BURGHARDT: Between my departure from Beijing and my arrival in Shanghai was eight years, '89 to '97. So I had lost a lot of it, but the refresher course brought much of it back. I was and am very comfortable in day-to-day chit-chat in Chinese. I could give speeches in Chinese. In terms of negotiating or dealing with sensitive subjects, I would want to have an interpreter there. I might begin the conversation for a while without using the interpreter, but then I would turn to the interpreter because I wasn't sure about a word, or about what I heard, or about what I wanted to say. The thing about Chinese is you are often dealing with difficult accents. The way people speak Mandarin Chinese outside of north China, where it is the native dialect, is often quite problematic. An amusing incident—I was with my main Chinese assistant, the number one Chinese assistant in the consulate at Shanghai, Mr. Xu Bailing, somewhere in Zhejiang province where the accents are particularly strong. A man said something to me and I turned to Mr. Xu to

ask, “What was that? “He said, “I don’t have the foggiest idea.” (laughs) People would sometimes think they were speaking Mandarin, but if it was, it was pretty hard to understand.

Shanghai can be relatively brief. I got there in 1997 just as the Asian financial crisis hit. It lasted pretty much through the entire tour. The region’s economy was in a deep recession. It made Shanghai interesting, because there was great attention from Washington to the Asian financial crisis. That very much included what was going on in Shanghai where we had what was then the only stock market in China, the Shanghai Stock Exchange. Plus one of the four big Chinese state-owned banks is based in Shanghai. The People’s Bank of China, the central bank, has a very important branch in Shanghai, which handles all foreign exchange matters and many other international issues. So I had to do a fast learning course on finance issues. It was challenging, but valuable knowledge. I was interacting frequently with key financial people in Shanghai: the head of the stock exchange, the woman who headed the People’s Bank. Also with many people in the American business community, with whom I established close relationships. Hank Greenberg, head of the AIG insurance giant, a company which began in Shanghai, visited more than once. There were visits by Tim Geithner, then the assistant secretary for international affairs at Treasury, and by his boss Larry Summers, then the deputy secretary at Treasury. I escorted them, briefed them on local attitudes and personalities, and was present at their meetings.

In addition it was the time we were having WTO [World Trade Organization] accession negotiations with China—what our conditions were for China to be brought into the WTO. A team in the embassy was negotiating at the working level with Long Yongtu, the chief negotiator for China on WTO accession. I had a great relationship with Ambassador Jim Sasser and with Bill McCahill, the deputy chief of mission, an old friend from Hong Kong days. They asked me to be part of the embassy team that met with Long Yongtu and his staff. Those sessions in Beijing were held between meetings of the principals, when Long Yongtu went to Washington or USTR [U.S. Trade Representative] Charlene Barshefsky came to Beijing. They asked me to participate because the American business community in China was primarily based in Shanghai. The embassy wanted me to brief the business community in Shanghai about the WTO negotiations and to bring their views to the table.

A former mayor of Shanghai was a highly-respected figure named Wang Daohan. Wang was Jiang Zemin’s mentor. Jiang, then the party general secretary, told everyone that. Jiang would frequently visit Shanghai and see Wang. In fact, Jiang Zemin, who was from Shanghai and had been the city’s party secretary, would often decamp to Shanghai for long periods. There were occasions in which I would accompany visiting Americans to meet Jiang in Shanghai. One example I recall was Senator Orrin Hatch. Wang Daohan had been designated by Jiang [and by Deng while he was still alive] to be the chief negotiator with Taiwan.

Beijing and Taipei had set up two negotiating organizations—the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits [ARATS], the PRC team, and SEF [the Straits Exchange Foundation], which was the Taiwan association. This is kind of like AIT. They were theoretically unofficial but of course they really weren't. They called them "white-glove" organizations, because "the skin didn't touch." They carried on cross-strait negotiations, which began in 1992. Wang and his Taiwan counterpart, Koo Chen-fu, were Chinese gentlemen, mandarins of the old school, who might have preferred to exchange Tang dynasty poetry with each rather than debate the future of cross-strait relations. They were figures from a vanished era. When I moved to Taipei I developed an equally close relationship with Koo. He had a world-class collection of old Chinese porcelain. My wife Susan was very knowledgeable on that subject and they could discuss it at length when we visited Koo's home. I was designated to meet with Wang regularly, to understand the course of what was happening in cross-strait relations and to pass on our thoughts if we had any. One of the most important meetings between Wang and Koo was held in Shanghai in October 1998, while I was there. Engaging with Wang on cross-strait relations became an unexpected part of the job of being consul general in Shanghai.

On one occasion when the DCM Bill McCahill was visiting, we met Wang, who was accompanied by the head of the Foreign Ministry's office in Shanghai. That began a series of regular meetings that McCahill and I had with Wang. Those meetings branched out into subjects far beyond Taiwan; we knew Wang had a close relationship with Jiang. Among other subjects, we discussed with Wang the terms of China's WTO accession and the arrangements for Clinton's visit to China. We found that we had a back channel to get around the Foreign Ministry in Beijing, a ministry that regularly was a big pain in the neck to deal with. I don't know if the ministry ever figured out what was happening. Wang Daohan would go back and forth with us on these issues and he enjoyed telling us whether or not our idea was stupid. Ultimately, if we reached agreement on something he would say, "I'll go touch heaven," an ancient Chinese expression meaning, "I'll talk with the emperor." Usually things were then solved. That also became part of the job.

Bill McCahill and Jim Sasser, when I left the job early to go to Taiwan, wrote in my performance evaluation that my service in Shanghai was "a classic example of the old Foreign Service truth that a job is very often what the officer makes of it." Of course, luck also helps.

Q: One question before you leave Shanghai. On Chinese accession to the WTO, what were our principal concerns, goals China had to meet in order for us to agree?

BURGHARDT: There was the elementary stuff about reducing tariff levels. But there were more sensitive issues even at that time about intellectual property rights guarantees. One of the big issues was enforcement. Ultimately the agreement didn't deal with that sufficiently, but even then it was perceived to be a big issue.

Back to Shanghai: The department thought my predecessor could have done more reporting. So I led my staff—I had good people. Robert Griffiths, who later became

consul general in Shanghai, was effectively my deputy; very good officer. I led them personally to go out and meet everybody important and find out what was happening. We cultivated religious leaders including the Catholic archbishop there. Nanjing is the traditional home of the Protestant Church in China. There is a printing shop for Protestant Bibles there and the head of the state-blessed Protestant organization was in Nanjing, so I also cultivated those people and followed issues of religious freedom. Relations between the Chinese Catholic Church, the Vatican, and Beijing, all that was stuff we did reporting on. The restoration of the old Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Shanghai was another interesting development. Construction of the synagogue had been financed by the wealthy Baghdadi-Jewish Sassoon brothers in the early 1920s. Rabbi Arthur Schneier from New York persuaded Shanghai Mayor Xu Kuangdi to restore the synagogue, which had fallen into bad shape in the years since it stopped being a religious building in 1952.

Plus there were often commercial problems. We got involved in that. I had good people in my commercial section. There were many issues involving major American companies.

One of the most fascinating incidents during my time in Shanghai was in the cultural realm, involving the decision by the Lincoln Center Festival to include a Chinese opera performance in its summer 1998 festival in New York. The plan was to bring to the U.S. [and to another festival in Paris] the Shanghai Kunju Opera Company to perform in six episodes all twenty hours of a famous four hundred-year old opera called *The Peony Pavilion*. Kunju is a distinct version of Chinese opera that comes from the town of Kunshan in Jiangsu Province, bordering on Shanghai. In preparation for this ambitious plan the director of the Lincoln Center Festival, Nigel Redden, and the director of this production, Chen Shi-Zheng, were in Shanghai for an extended period, during which Susan and I developed a good relationship with them. We attended at least one dress rehearsal performance in Shanghai.

Then disaster struck. The Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture decreed that this production of the opera was “not fit” for export. Their main objection seemed to be that this full performance of the entire saga contained lots of risqué dialogue and scenes that usually had been deleted from the abbreviated performances given during the Communist era. Pleas from American and French officials at high levels were of no avail. Ultimately the show did go on—in both New York and Paris—exactly one year later. I had a small role in helping to make that happen. The German consul general and I conspired in enabling the show’s leading lady and the most important musician, a flutist and music director, to travel to Germany, ostensibly for some lecture or cultural event there, but in reality to then travel on to New York. Over the next year Redden and Chen put together the entire company they needed by getting a few more people out of China and recruiting others in Europe and America. They also had to recreate all the props and costumes. Susan and I saw most of the twenty hours of performances during the 1999 summer, between my tours in Shanghai and Taipei. Redden and Chen invited us as their guests and introduced us to the performers backstage after the performance of the first episode.

And we had a visit by Bill Clinton. According to the department's Historian's Office, it was the longest visit to a constituent post [as opposed to an embassy] that a sitting president had ever made. I thought that was a rather obscure fact but interesting. He was in Shanghai for three days. The whole visit to China was nine days; that was also the longest that a sitting president had made to a single country. During Clinton's visit to Shanghai, we arranged a meeting for Secretary Albright and National Security Advisor Sandy Berger with important religious leaders, including the Catholic cardinal whom I knew fairly well. We had events for either President Clinton or members of his delegation with Wang Daohan, with local party leaders and a speech by President Clinton at Fudan University. Commerce Secretary Bill Daley, Senator Jay Rockefeller, and others met with business leaders. The president and top delegation members took a cruise on the Huangpu River with the Mayor Xu Kuangdi and top officials from Beijing. The president and Hillary Clinton, accompanied by Secretary Albright attended a ceremony in which Rabbi Schneier re-sanctified the old synagogue.

The most memorable event was Clinton's speech on June 30, 1998 to a gathering of Shanghai intellectuals in which the president, in response to a planted question, made a policy statement that came to be known as "The Three Noes." Clinton stated that,"We don't support Taiwan independence, or two Chinas, or one Taiwan-one China. And we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member of any organization for which statehood is a requirement." This statement was very controversial, especially among the many strong supporters of Taiwan in the U.S. Congress. It has never been repeated by any subsequent U.S. president.

Two important figures in China policy at the time were the woman who was DAS for China-Taiwan, a Mount Holyoke classmate of my wife, Susan Shirk. And Ken Lieberthal, one of the great China scholars, who wrote the definitive book about the PRC's internal political system, *Governing China*. He was the NSC senior director for Asia. Both were pushing for better relations with Beijing, sometimes at the expense of Taiwan.

I left early. I had extended to stay in Shanghai for four years. Soon after that was formalized, my assignment was cut to two years. During Clinton's visit, at one of the dinners I sat next to our assistant secretary for Asia, Stanley Roth. We started talking about Taiwan, about Wang Daohan. Then he said, "The Republicans are killing me on Taiwan." Jesse Helms was then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee [SFRC]. The Republicans controlled the Senate. The Republicans were pushing something called the Taiwan Security Act. It would only have been a sense-of-the-Congress resolution but the administration didn't want it. The Republicans regularly criticized the administration for not selling Taiwan enough arms or being too slow, not having enough high-level visitors to Taiwan. Roth said, "The position of AIT director is opening up. You might be good for that." This is at dinner, Madeleine Albright sitting across the table. He said, "The Republicans kind of like you; maybe you could keep them off my back."

I said, “I can’t guarantee anything Stanley, but I’d be honored to do that.”

I should mention one last thing about my time in Shanghai: In May 1999, just as I was about to make my farewell calls and attend farewell events, the U.S. Air Force accidentally bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, killing several people. There were massive demonstrations against our embassy in Beijing, with Ambassador Sasser unable to leave the building for days. There were demonstrations against our consulate in Shanghai, but much smaller, so much so that we learned that the Beijing leadership criticized the unimpressive show in China’s more sophisticated city. A couple of my farewell calls were cancelled, but a lot less than if I had been in Beijing. For example, I had been practicing with four musicians at the Shanghai Conservatory for a concert we would give during my last week or so there. There was some brief discussion about canceling the concert since the clarinetist was the American consul general, but in the end it went forward and was well attended. One activity that the Chinese definitely did not want to cancel was my series of meetings in Beijing with officials and think tanks specializing in Taiwan. They wanted me to hear their point of view before I arrived in Taipei.

So I was curtailed and pulled out to become our representative in Taiwan. To become AIT director, two steps are needed. First of all—it’s not a confirmed position because technically it’s not even the State Department—but the department always informs the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The department’s view was that they notified the chairman. But Jesse Helms’ view was that he was being consulted. The word came back, “Chairman Helms thinks that’s an excellent choice.” That became a joke around the State Department. Helms was the administration’s nemesis. People kidded me that now the administration would cancel my appointment. The next step was to notify the government of Taiwan. This is not widely known, but the government of Taiwan has a long reputation of being very tough on whom they will accept from the United States. There have been ten or eleven directors of AIT so far, of whom two were second choices after Taipei rejected the first choices. Jim Lilley went as the second AIT director because Taiwan rejected Tom Shoesmith. Stan Brooks, two ahead of me as AIT director, went because Taiwan rejected Bill Rope, who among other things was one of the authors of the ’82 communique that limited our arms sales to Taiwan. Generally known among many of us as “the bad communique.”

In my case, Taiwan was not excited about the fact that I would be coming directly from Shanghai. To them the optics of going from the mainland straight to Taiwan was not good. They also would have preferred someone more senior, who had already been ambassador. Not many previous AIT directors had met that expectation. I believe the only one was Darryl Johnson, then the director, who had earlier been ambassador to Lithuania. They did due diligence on me. I met in Washington with the American lawyer hired by the Taiwan office in DC to investigate me. And Lilley helped me out also. He met with the Taiwan representatives in Washington. Lilley informed me he had told them, “That you were even maybe a little bit of a right-wing nut.”

I said, “What? That’s not even true!”

He said, “It doesn’t matter, I think it helped.” (laughs) Jim and Sally Lilley hosted a farewell reception for me and Susan at the Mayflower Hotel, a very gracious and deeply appreciated gesture. Lilley, who had been the second AIT director in Taipei, gave me some very valuable advice, which I have also passed on to others: 1) Make sure that the Taiwan leadership, the entire political elite, knows that you fully understand and respect the profound political predicament that they face every day [the threat from China]. “If you do that,” Lilley said, “you will be able to accomplish a lot; if you do not, you won’t accomplish anything.” 2) “In addition to all the political stiffs that you will have to get to know, make sure you meet right away the business leaders who have made Taiwan the important economy that it is today. Without their success, the world wouldn’t be taking Taiwan as seriously as it is.” He mentioned Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company [TSMC] founder Morris Chang, still a close friend today, and several others.

So Taipei ultimately blessed me. I spent two years there, a very exciting two years. Great job. Basically a chief of mission job.

Q: In that case, talk a little bit about the size of the place.

BURGHARDT: And maybe a little bit about how AIT works. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 created the American Institute in Taiwan, which consists of the office in Taipei, which is effectively an embassy, and an office in Kaohsiung, Taiwan’s big port city in the south, which is effectively a consulate. The headquarters office in Washington, DC [which I later headed] operates as kind of a backstop, has a board of directors and a chairman of the board. Kurt Campbell, EAP assistant secretary under Obama, said the chairman of AIT is “the U.S.-based representative to Taiwan,” doing things that would normally be done with Taiwan by a DAS or assistant secretary but which we avoid doing that way because it would be too official.

Q: Is the American office in the department?

BURGHARDT: It’s over in Rosslyn, VA, deliberately, to keep it looking non-governmental. As I have said sometimes, it’s a “fake corporation.” The way it works, the American chairman is not the boss of the director in Taipei. The director reports back to Washington precisely the same as any other chief of mission. His boss is effectively the EAP assistant secretary. The secretary of state appoints the director with the blessing of the White House. And as I mentioned earlier, it doesn’t require Senate confirmation. The secretary of state also appoints the chairman. I’ll explain what the chairman does when we get to my time in that job.

The staff looks exactly like an embassy. There’s a military attaché office. At the time I was there that office had to be staffed by people who were retired from the military. That changed very soon after I left Taipei in 2001 and now we have active-duty people there. There are two military offices: the attaché office [it has some other funny name], and an

office that is the same as a JUSMAG [Joint United States Military Advisory Group] to handle military sales. There's a Commerce Department office, a big one since we have very important commercial and investment relationships with Taiwan, a very high trade volume for an economy with twenty-four million people. Taiwan is consistently among our top ten trading partners, and one of our best agricultural markets. We have a big agricultural trade office there. There is a CIA station. It's a full embassy-like operation. When I was there, we had about seventy American direct hire personnel, about a dozen part-time Americans and 250 locally hired people. In addition to the office in Taipei, we have a small "consulate-like" operation in Kaohsiung.

The reality is that our relationship with Taiwan, and therefore the role of our mission there, is far more important to American strategic and commercial interests than the role of many of our official embassies in the world—dozens of our embassies, including a couple where I worked.

The position of AIT director is approved by the D committee [headed by the deputy secretary], just like any other chief of mission job for a career person. It has to be approved by the White House. We've only had one political appointee as director of AIT in Taipei. That was Doug Paal, who succeeded me as director. All others before and after him were career Foreign Service officers. Well, Jim Lilley had been an intelligence officer.

I was there from August 31, 1999 until September 1, 2001. Two years. This was a politically important period. After Japanese colonization of Taiwan ended in 1945, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang [KMT] ruled the island from the Republic of China's capital in Nanjing. In 1949 Chiang and his KMT government evacuated Nanjing and moved to Taipei. They ran an autocratic political system, with no opposition parties, no real elections, martial law, and no press freedom. But in the 1986–87 period, Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's son and successor, ended martial law and opened the political system to become democratic, bringing into the government more native Taiwanese [as opposed to those who after 1949 had fled the Chinese mainland]. At this time, Chiang Ching-kuo also allowed opposition parties to function. When I got there, the president was Lee Teng-hui, the first native Taiwanese president. Taiwanese like Lee Teng-hui are also ethnically Chinese, but their ancestors came over from mainland China in the seventeeth century, mostly from Fujian. There is also a small population of a few hundred thousand people, closely related to Malays and other Southeast Asian peoples, whose ancestors already inhabited Taiwan when the first Han Chinese arrived in the 1600s.

Lee had infuriated Beijing. They were thoroughly disgusted with him by the time I got there. He had arranged in 1995 to visit his alma mater, Cornell, and Beijing was angry with the U.S. government as well for allowing that trip. Taiwan presidents had been allowed by Washington to make "transit stops" in America on the way to or from other countries. They were really like visits, but called "transit stops." Lee's 1995 trip to the U.S. was exclusively to speak at his alma mater, with no pretense of being a "transit stop"

to or from some other country. To make matters worse, Lee's speech at Cornell was highly political, definitely not just the remarks of a nostalgic alumnus. Beijing went ballistic over this. Then they tried to influence Taiwan's first free presidential election in 1996, in which Lee was running to extend his term, by staging what became known as the Taiwan Strait crisis. They were firing missiles into the strait. Clinton very appropriately responded by sending the U.S. Navy to a position near the entrance to the strait, which successfully intimidated the Chinese but also was an important inspiration for building up their military strength. They didn't want to be humiliated like that again.

Just before I got there, Lee Teng-hui had made a statement saying that relations across the Taiwan Strait were "state to state" relations, which was not the way Beijing saw it. They saw it as "province to capital" or at least within one country. No two states, as far as Beijing is concerned. So cross-strait relations were in a period of heightened tension when I got there.

That tension increased with the election of Lee's successor, Chen Shui-bian. I arrived in Taipei on the last day of August 1999 and Chen was elected in January 2000. He was the candidate of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party [DPP] that took a more favorable view of Taiwan independence, was less interested in better relations with the mainland. Chen's opponents were two Kuomintang figures, either of whom Beijing viewed as quite satisfactory. Since these two "Blue" candidates [in Taiwan political parlance meaning they still believed in "one China" and hoped for better relations with Beijing] split the Blue vote, the "Green" [pro-Taiwan independence] candidate Chen was able to win. His election was viewed with great alarm by Beijing and with some trepidation in Washington. In accordance with Taiwan's constitution, he was elected in January and the inauguration was on May 20. I was in Taipei with Chen for the first year and three or four months of his first term. He was elected during the last year of the Clinton administration, the days of Ken Lieberthal and Susan Shirk handling China policy. They were on the secure phone to me all the time, quite nervous about what was going on. One memory of that period—I respected both of them—but once Ken called and had a whole plan of things he thought I should do and say. I responded, "That's all really interesting, Ken. I agree with some of it. You may recall, I worked in the NSC also and that there were some issues while I was there about the NSC going rogue. I don't want to live through a re-enactment of all that. Could you please talk to Stanley about this and if he agrees to do any or some of that, he and I will talk about it."

Ken didn't like me saying that but he realized he was kind of out of line.

Q: This is now the end of the Clinton administration. Had you seen as you went along the NSC growing in influence over the State Department in making some of these policies of most interest to the White House?

BURGHARDT: It always depended on who was the secretary, and the strength of his or her personality. Who was the national security advisor and how strong his or her staff were in the relevant geographic or functional offices. And how did the president manage

the relationships in his national security cabinet. There are a lot of books about this. Disfunction peaked during the Reagan administration, ending in a mess. NSC staff had its wings clipped for a while after that. Carlucci came in determined to keep it down, along with Colin Powell. Powell was Carlucci's deputy and then became national security advisor with Negroponte as his deputy for the last year of the Reagan administration. They were careful. I think in the George H.W. Bush administration you had a very strong Secretary of State Baker. You also had people like Scowcroft who defined the role of the NSC in what many of us would say was the proper way. Those were golden years when things worked the way they were supposed to work, without those kinds of crippling State-NSC tensions.

Then in the Clinton administration, although I personally liked Warren Christopher, I have the impression he wasn't a forceful player in the interagency battles. Clinton's national security advisor for his first three years or so was Tony Lake, a very smart guy but I don't know how strong he was in that position. Then there was Berger.

Q: Right, but ultimately Sandy Berger became national security advisor.

BURGHARDT: He was there for Clinton's second term. I think on some issues the NSC was pretty strong in the Clinton years, certainly on Asia policy. The department was pretty strong too, you had Winston Lord there; you had Stanley Roth who was no pushover. There was a healthy relationship. I wouldn't say the NSC was dominating.

There was a strong desire on the part of State and the White House—and also my wish, I didn't need encouragement—to manage the transition in Taiwan in a way that minimized cross-strait tensions. I recommended, and Washington fully agreed, that I should be meeting with Chen Shui-bian during the long lame-duck period under Lee Teng-hui, before Chen was inaugurated. I would say in many ways this was one of the highlights of my entire diplomatic career. It's been discussed in several books, including by Richard Bush, who was the AIT chairman at the time. Richard was a great person to work with, immensely valuable, and he visited Taipei regularly. He had a deep knowledge of Taiwan, had been in the National Intelligence Office and on congressional staff. Bush wrote that our management of the transition, basically prepping Chen Shui-bian on how to deal with cross-strait issues, and the positive result that had in how Chen acted and spoke in his first year, calming the level of tension in Beijing and in Washington, was a major successful piece of diplomacy. I met with Chen countless times, accompanied by Steve Young, my deputy. In the first two meetings Chen was alone, and we started to become uncomfortable with that because we weren't sure that he was following up or that he could really remember everything—not because he wasn't smart, but just because we were covering a lot of detail. So we suggested that since there were two of us, to be fair there should be two of them. He brought in his closest adviser named Ma Yong-chen. That helped. Our interaction resulted in important things getting done or written or prepared. We were doing all this in Chinese without an interpreter, and Chen's Mandarin is very heavily accented. There are cases where four or five different sounds that are supposed to sound distinct, in Chen's mouth all sounded the same. So I asked if I could

include a trusted interpreter. We brought in a Chinese-American woman who worked for the CIA station. We used her just to be a check, to make sure we understood. That was a good idea.

In these sessions, I drew on my knowledge from dealing with Wang Daohan in Shanghai to suggest how the Chinese were likely to react to things, how they thought, where they were coming from. Chen was very receptive. He is a very smart man, asked great questions. He had only been to mainland China once in his life. He hadn't worked on it as a subject; it wasn't something he had a background in. He was a human rights lawyer. It even got to the point later in the discussions where he was sharing with us drafts of his inaugural address, and we were making suggestions. Our American involvement in counseling Chen during this period was rumored in the Taiwan press but we never acknowledged it. In his inaugural address Chen articulated "four noes"—that he would not declare Taiwan independence; not change the country's name from "Republic of China" to "Republic of Taiwan"; not include the doctrine of state-to-state relations in the constitution; and not promote a referendum on unification or independence. They were a relief to Beijing since they preserved Taiwan's status as the Republic of China, without any movement toward self-definition as an independent Taiwan. Those points in his inaugural address very much came out of our conversations.

In that period also, the White House sent over Lee Hamilton as a special envoy. Hamilton had left Congress, he was somebody President Clinton respected, and he came bringing the word to Chen. Of course he met with President Lee [it was before the inauguration] but mainly with Chen. That was helpful.

Clinton later sent Tony Lake [when no longer in office] as a special envoy. Tony is a real professional. He handled it very well. Basically the message was "try not to stick the pointer in the hornet's nest, please." (laughs)

January 20, 2001. Bush becomes president. The Bush administration had a number of people in it like Richard Armitage who had always been friends of Taiwan and had [out of office] been heavily engaged in meetings with Taiwan. Both Armitage and EAP Assistant Secretary Jim Kelly, who has become a good friend, would regularly engage in various kinds of track two activities [involving both officials and non-official experts]—meetings with Taiwan officials, with Taiwan and Japanese officials together. They cared a lot about Taiwan. There were signs of that early in the Bush administration. Most importantly, there was a big decision made about an arms sale to Taiwan. Billions of dollars of stuff, a lot of important items. Some of the items in fact never were sold, particularly the submarines. They were specified to be diesel submarines, which the U.S. does not use and are not manufactured in the U.S. Our navy never liked the idea that we would create in the U.S. a capability to make diesel subs, even for sale to another country. Somehow that was seen as potentially undermining the U.S. Navy's commitment to nuclear subs. That always seemed to me a rather odd objection, but the result was that the sub sale never happened. Now, decades later, we are authorizing the sale of technology to Taiwan to make its own subs. But other parts of the arms package did happen at that time,

including various kinds of missiles. The Patriot anti-missile system was a big part of it. Torkel Patterson, who was then on the NSC staff, made a secret trip to Taiwan—secret because normal practice since 1979 has been not to permit travel to Taiwan by policy-level State Department, Defense Department, and White House officials. I went with him, just the two of us, to meet Chen Shui-bian in his official residence, a block away from the Presidential Office Building. We chose that unusual venue for the sake of privacy, to brief Chen on the arms sale.

I was active on the issue of arms sales to Taiwan, working closely with our military offices in Taipei as well as with the Pacific Commander in Honolulu, Admiral Dennis Blair, and during the Clinton administration, with Defense Under Secretary for Policy Walt Slocombe. One major accomplishment was to ensure that equipment sales would be combined with providing necessary training.

Early in the Bush administration, the president was interviewed on April 25, 2001 by ABC News, the day after we notified Congress of the big arms sale. The reporter asked if the U.S. had an obligation to defend Taiwan in the event of an attack by China. Bush gave a very strong answer, saying, "Yes, we do—and the Chinese must understand that." The reporter then asked if the U.S. would use the full force of the U.S. military. The president replied, "Whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself." That got huge attention in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. No president had ever said anything quite like that. The Taiwan Relations Act is not an open and shut commitment to defend Taiwan in the event of attack. It's a commitment to provide defense equipment to Taiwan. It's also a commitment to maintain the U.S. capability to defend Taiwan. But as far as actually responding to a challenge, we have preserved "strategic ambiguity," not giving Taiwan a "blank check." Later in the Chen administration, when his provocative actions and words toward Beijing aroused considerable concern from President Bush on down, we started to describe our position as "dual deterrence": military deterrence of China from attacking Taiwan and political deterrence of Taiwan from gratuitously provoking Beijing. The TRA also carefully preserves the constitutional arrangement that the president would make a decision in consultation with Congress.

Bush's "do whatever it takes" commitment in April 2001 came before those kinds of concerns about Chen's provocations had become a factor in our decision making. I mention Bush's 2001 statement because at the time there was speculation by scholars and the press that Bush was shooting from the hip, and that it was not a carefully considered policy statement. I can put on the record that that is not true. In the period before he made the statement, we were concerned by what we were seeing in both open and closed-source information that the Chinese were coming to the conclusion that the U.S. really didn't have a strong commitment to the defense of Taiwan. And that they could operate on the assumption that in the event of a conflict, the U.S. would back down. That was causing concern in Washington, so this was an occasion for the president to knock it down.

I should mention that while I was in Taipei a tradition began of holding meetings in Hong Kong about twice each year of our ambassador in Beijing, the AIT director and our consul general in Hong Kong. I remember two occasions when Ambassador Prueher and I used the meetings to send our thoughts and recommendations to Washington just before President Clinton met with Jiang Zemin. Stan Roth later told us that the president and Secretary Albright had used our recommended talking points. Those trilateral meetings in Hong Kong continued for several years after I left Taipei. I'm not sure if it still is a regular practice.

There's more that I could say but I think that deals with Taiwan.

Q: Before we leave it, one other question. Many of the things you've described are the political issues between Taiwan and China. What about the economic issues? Was this the period when there was more cross-strait investment and commerce?

BURGHARDT: I'll talk more about that later when I was chairman, that's when it picked up more. But it had definitely started. In that period there was already growing Taiwan investment in mainland China, building factories. China was the world's assembly place, and a lot of that was Taiwan investment. I had followed that subject while I was in Shanghai, meeting with some Taiwan investors. Two of the main areas where Taiwanese invest in mainland China are outside of Guangzhou in the south, and outside Shanghai, particularly in Kunshan—the same town where the opera came from that figures in my Shanghai account. Those investments are growing and growing. I don't remember whether Foxconn already existed, Terry Gou and his company named Foxconn that assembles all the Apples. I think that had already begun while I was in Taiwan.

This also was the period when Taiwan was preparing to enter the World Trade Organization [WTO]. That negotiation had been completed just before I arrived. The deal was that Taiwan would enter the WTO a few hours after the PRC. While I was in Taiwan, there were a few instances in which Taiwan sought to backslide on some of the market-opening commitments they had made as conditions for our support for their entry into the WTO. We successfully persuaded them not to do that. In addition, I was involved in a successful lobbying effort to get both the Chen administration and the opposition-controlled legislature to pass banking reform laws favored by the U.S. Treasury and our financial industry.

On a different subject, during my two years in Taiwan we had two crises affecting the welfare of American citizens: a major earthquake on September 21, 1999, exactly three weeks after I arrived and, in October 2000, the crash in Taipei of a Singapore Airline plane as it was taking off for Los Angeles. For AIT these were major crisis management operations. The number of American casualties was especially high in the plane crash. The entire mission team did a great job and received high praise from Washington.

Q: Now we're approaching the end of Taiwan, were there any other thoughts you had about it?

BURGHARDT: Yes, I had one other thought. As a general thought applying to everywhere I served, I would say I always took a strong interest in cultural relations, and viewed it as an important way not only to share with other countries our culture, but also to do things that showed respect for the culture of the host country. I want to give credit to my wife, Susan. She had a deep knowledge of Chinese art and culture. She had taken courses on Chinese ceramics at the Sotheby's and Christie's galleries in Hong Kong. While we were in Taiwan, she became a docent at the famous Palace Museum in Taipei; probably the world's greatest collection of Chinese art. She had to take a long course—she knew about the porcelain, but had to learn about Chinese painting, jade, et cetera. She had a great Chinese uniform she wore. There were only four English-speaking docents; it was a great honor and something she loved doing.

In Taipei we had an Art in Embassy exhibit in my residence; just like normal ambassadors I had one of those. We chose Chinese-American art. We went to a family friend, Ethan Cohen, who owns the best gallery of Chinese art in New York City; his father is Jerry Cohen, a famous expert on Chinese law at NYU, and his mother Joan is an artist. We also borrowed works from the John Young Museum in Honolulu and the Honolulu Museum of Art. Through the relationships we had developed with those institutions we were able to borrow a lot of really world-class stuff and had a great exhibit. Susan did all the work in assembling the exhibition. We opened it with receptions, showing it to a wide audience of people. There were many articles in the Taiwan general press and art magazines about the collection and interviewing Susan about it. That's an important part of the job, and it gives the U.S. a lot of credit. Since I'm about to talk about Vietnam, I can leap forward and tell a story on Vietnam related to art.

In Vietnam we also got to know the local artistic community. I developed quite a collection of modern Vietnamese paintings. We knew all the major painters and the gallery owners. We often had programs in the ambassador's residence with Vietnamese music. We did an exhibit of Vietnamese art before our Art in Embassy exhibit showed up. My wife also worked with a group of local expat women [mostly French] to update all of the English and French-language captions in the National History Museum, which is also a museum of ancient artistic treasures. I was very moved when as I was leaving Hanoi toward the end of 2004, in what I think was my final call on Deputy Prime Minister [who soon after became prime minister] Nguyen Tan Dung—a powerful figure. He said to me, "One more thing before we finish. We have all noted how much attention your wife has given to Vietnamese culture, how she has helped our cultural relationship. We know that it has great value and has had value for many years in healing the relations between our two peoples, and we deeply appreciate that."

This was not a man of idle gestures. He didn't say anything that wasn't to be taken seriously. So I note that, not just to commemorate my late wife, but also for anyone who reads this in the future—don't ignore that part of diplomatic relations.

Q: It can often make a difference in ways that are not immediately apparent, but are valuable, nonetheless.

BURGHARDT: This is an excellent segue to Vietnam. I was ambassador to Vietnam from December 15, 2001 until September 5, 2004. I think the department's official records list me as ambassador from November 15, when the president attested my nomination following Senate confirmation, but I landed in Hanoi on December 15.

This transfer was the second time in a row that my assignment was cut short. Since both times it was to be promoted, I wasn't complaining. But I really liked the assignment in Taipei. In fact, in one meeting in Washington with my old friend, Deputy Secretary Rich Armitage, who was instrumental in having me assigned as ambassador to Vietnam, I said "Rich, I could have stayed on in Taipei; it was a perfect assignment for me." That was a mistake to say that.

Rich's response was, "You can stay there as long as you f—want, but we're making the assignments now and next year there won't be any ambassadorships left. You get the picture?"

"Yes, sir!"

Q: Armitage was known for plain speaking.

BURGHARDT: Yeah! (laughs) As soon as the Bush administration came into office, I was in talks about my future with Jim Kelly, directly with Armitage and even with Torkel Patterson from the NSC, including when he made his trip to Taipei to inform Chen of the arms sales. Armitage knew the whole story about how I was going to be nominated to be ambassador to Mongolia, and then the Clinton administration withdrew it. I wasn't the only person who had that fate because of the administration's views on the Iran-Contra issue. He wanted to right a wrong. That was a real factor, and he was quite blunt about it. But also Armitage and I had worked together on the normalization of relations with Vietnam. I told you the story about how back in 1982, Armitage and I traveled to Hanoi in one of the first official trips to Vietnam after the war, to negotiate about resolving the POW/MIA issue. But at the beginning of the Bush administration they had Vietnam on the list for a political appointee. As you know, the White House and the State Department draw up a list: "You get those, we get these." Pete Peterson, the first ambassador to a unified Vietnam after normalization, was of course a political appointee, so there was an assumption by the Bush administration that the next ambassador would be as well. I was initially selected to be ambassador to Thailand. The department informed me that I had been selected for Bangkok by the D committee [chaired by the deputy secretary], the White House staff had approved it and the president signed off on it. Evidently, we had informed the Thai government [I don't know whether they had given "agrèment" yet]. The Thai representative's wife in Taiwan said to Susan, "Oh we're very happy to hear you will be coming to our country."

But then when Torkel Patterson visited Taipei, we had a conversation about how it seemed as if people were going to places within the East Asia Bureau that did not make all that much sense, including my proposed nomination for Thailand. When Torkel went back to Washington, there was more discussion on that at a higher level. Then one Saturday morning in Taipei—a Friday night in Washington—I got a call from Jim Kelly. We were in the kitchen. My wife could hear my side of the conversation and she laughed and said before I was finished, "Where are we going now?"

Jim said they had decided to reshuffle everybody, even though the president already had signed off on several proposed nominations. We had just had the E-2 incident of the American plane being shot down and the crew bailing out in China, in Hainan. Darryl Johnson was then the DAS for China/Taiwan. Darryl had been my predecessor in Taiwan, and in Beijing, too. Darryl's performance greatly impressed the White House as well as Colin Powell and Armitage. They got to know him better and found out he'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand, and spoke Thai. They decided he would be perfect as ambassador in Bangkok. Then they also realized that another one of our friends who had been selected for a post I don't remember would make more sense in Indonesia. So they did a reshuffle. Jim Kelly informed me, "We persuaded the White House to have a career person in Vietnam so we're going to nominate you for Hanoi."

A lot of people were surprised by my reaction, which was, "That's great; that's better." Thailand is viewed as a glamorous place to be ambassador, but Vietnam is important and we were trying to establish a new relationship. Plus, I speak Vietnamese, know something about it and have a long history of working on it, not only from my assignment there but also in the department. It made a lot more sense.

Kelly has a story of a meeting with the president at the White House to select ambassadors for Asia. George W. Bush apparently was very hands-on about this. Deeply involved. When they came to position of ambassador to Vietnam, Karl Rove reportedly gave Bush the names of several people who were veterans. Bush apparently said, "I don't know any of these people. What have they all done for us?" I guess the answer in the end was not very much. Bush reportedly said, "Normalize means maybe we see who Colin's got." [Meaning, let's see if there is an appropriate Foreign Service officer.] Bush reportedly added that he understood why Clinton had nominated Pete Peterson, because he may not have been able to get anyone else through the Senate. There was considerable opposition to normalizing relations with Vietnam that time because of the POW/MIA issue. It took nine months to get Peterson approved by the Senate even though he was a former POW, a sitting congressman from Florida, and a former air force officer—very carefully chosen. Desaix Anderson was in Hanoi as chargé for all that period. In response to a question from Bush, others at the meeting reportedly told the president that they did expect the same push-back from the Senate this time. So the State Department came back with my name.

Kelly was there at the next meeting. He quoted Bush saying, "This guy sounds great, sounds like perfect credentials. Been running what we could call an embassy in Taiwan.

Good connections with Vietnam, sounds good, worked for Reagan and for my father." But he added, "I understand he was there during the war. I want to have a clear picture of what he did. Was he in danger? What was it like? We may get flak from veterans."

So Kelly called me. I replied. "Well, I can tell you that at least at one point, people opened fire at me. We were driving next to a rubber plantation, and all of a sudden [gunfire noises]. We were in a Jeep with flak jackets and helmets, holding M-16s. Fortunately they missed." I said there were some memorable days when I saw scenes of horror after combat and at times had shells going overhead. I spent a lot of time in some hairy areas.

Kelly said, "All right that's all I need."

That did it; Bush nominated me.

I was nominated around Labor Day, a couple of days after I left Taiwan. The White House had already announced their "intention to nominate." I came back to Cape Cod for a brief break. On the morning of September 11, 2001 our daughter Helen, who was in New York, called and said, "Mom, Dad, you better turn on the TV." I remember that my friend Mark Minton, a college classmate and also a Foreign Service officer, was visiting us at the time.

The original plan was for me to travel to Washington a couple of days after September 11, but that became difficult because all the flights were canceled. Finally after a few days my friends in the department said, "Well you could find some way to get here, you're not that far away." So Susan drove me to Providence the next day and I took the train, which was packed with other people doing the same thing.

In Washington I made my rounds, met with the two senators from Florida, which was then my official state of residence because my parents retired there. I saw senators I knew: Jay Rockefeller and Senator Inouye of Hawaii. Saw John Kerry, then chair of the East Asia Sub Committee: everyone said I would need two people's support or I wouldn't be going to Vietnam: John Kerry and John McCain. They had been the architects of normalization of relations. I had excellent meetings with both of them.

Unfortunately, on the first day I visited the Senate office building, at some point an alarm went off and we were evacuated because the anthrax attack had just occurred. It was quite a week.

There was a strange atmosphere in Washington, but some of it was helpful in the sense that the Senate was not in the mood to drag out confirmation battles at that point. Joe Biden had recently become chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He had just led a delegation to Taiwan before I left, and I had a lot of face time with him in Taipei; that helped.

Frank Januzzi, Biden's chief aide, told me, "We can't completely ignore your whole Reagan service on Latin America. We've got to ask some questions in writing and you have to give us some answers." It was all softballs such as, "What did you learn from that experience?" Answer: "No foreign policy can ever be successful unless it has the support of our Congress." Januzzi saw that and chuckled, "Oh, that's good, Ray." So we went through that but it wasn't really serious.

At the same time, Negroponte was being confirmed as ambassador to the UN. There were questions to him about the embassy's reporting on human rights issues in Honduras while he was ambassador and I was his political counselor. So I had to get into that also. The same questions they asked him, Biden also asked me in writing. So all that was dealt with.

Senator Chris Dodd, who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic, was very interested in Latin America. Dodd, and especially his aide, Janice O'Connell, took an intense interest in the whole Central American adventure. O'Connell went after everybody including a poor guy who had simply been the office director for ARA/CEN [Office of Central American Affairs]. This was now many years later—fifteen? But O'Connell, whom I have never met, still hadn't given up. I heard she was after me. So I mentioned it to John McCain. I met with McCain more than once. McCain liked to have you complete the meeting by walking with him from the Senate office building to the Capitol; he was famous for that. As I was making that walk with him one morning, I mentioned the potential threat from Janice O'Connell and Chris Dodd. He said, "Chris owes me one this week, I'll give him a call."

The next day, I got a call from Mark Salter, who was McCain's main assistant. Mark said, "Hey, the senator talked to Chris about that problem; you don't have to worry about that anymore." That's the way things used to work. I wonder if it would be resolved so easily now.

After those steps had been taken, my confirmation hearing could be scheduled. The Senate's expert on State Department nominations said, "There are three ways this works. If it's going to be easy, you will go up as a group. If they want to work you over but will eventually confirm you if you don't screw up, they'll call you by yourself. If there's really no hope, there won't be a hearing." So they called me in a group, four or five people nominated for ambassadorships or other positions related to East Asia. The group format was a good sign, and it went smoothly. Kerry presided. We had had a long conversation because he's very interested in Vietnam. There was a good crowd of senators, including McCain, and they asked good questions. We all sailed through without any problem.

Armitage made a point of presiding over my swearing in on December 2, 2001. I didn't ask for the secretary because I knew Armitage wanted to do it. Many of my colleagues from Vietnam in the war years were at the ceremony.

Susan and I arrived in Hanoi on December 15, 2001. Let me say a little about the history of how relations were reestablished, going back before I got there and even before normalization in 1995. Relations with Vietnam were rebuilt in layers. The first layer, beginning in the early 1990s had to do with overcoming distrust of each other and building people-to-people ties. A number of NGOs [non-governmental organizations] like the Vietnam Veterans Association of America, organizations that searched for landmines and unexploded ordnance, people concerned about Agent Orange, education organizations, universities, the East-West Center [EWC] in Honolulu, all played important roles.

Q: What about the special refugee program?

BURGHARDT: Good question, I'll get into that.

Even the art world. American artists who were Vietnam War veterans were interested in re-establishing relations with Vietnam, befriended Vietnamese artists, and organized joint exhibitions in Vietnam and the U.S. I've given speeches about diplomacy in the twenty-first century and how truly good relations occur when most of what goes on is not run by the governments, and the governments may not even be aware of it and don't need to be. Vietnam is a prime example. The non-government part really established the base for formal relations; it wouldn't have happened otherwise. We tip-toed, we went sideways into formal relations. Before we opened the embassy in 1995, we had already opened two official offices in Vietnam. Both dealt with what came to be called "legacy issues"—problems left over from the war. First, we opened an office with American military personnel and experts looking for missing-in-action. We opened that in Hanoi, well before we had an embassy.

The second office we opened, in Ho Chi Minh City, managed the family reunification program. People whose relatives were in the States were given immigrant visas as well as people who had worked for the wartime U.S. mission in Vietnam. That office was fully in operation before we had an embassy or even a liaison office.

In January 1995 we opened in Hanoi a "Liaison Office," a kind of quasi-official embassy. One of the people involved in that, Ted Osius, later went on to be ambassador to Vietnam. We opened the actual embassy on July 15, 1995. Desaix Anderson, my former boss in Washington, became the chargé and served in that role for more than a year before Peterson arrived as ambassador.

When I was in Washington, I got a clear message from people about what they would like me to accomplish as ambassador. I got pretty much exactly the same answer from John Kerry, John McCain, Rich Armitage, and Colin Powell, which was, "Pete Peterson made a great start; we need you to complete the process of normalization."

There were three important elements that weren't there yet: military-to-military relations, law enforcement relations, and an intelligence liaison relationship. These were going to

be tough, the most sensitive areas. They involved the people on both sides who would be the most wary and in many cases, the most embittered about the war, particularly on the Vietnamese side. So those were my marching orders.

When I first got to Vietnam, it turned out to be a rough period for the relationship. I arrived in Hanoi in December. On Easter Day of 2001 there had been an incident in the Central Highlands involving the Montagnard people, of Malay descent, ethnically distinct from the majority Viet people. The Montagnards [a name given them by the French and adopted by Americans] were somewhat less modernized than the ethnic Vietnamese. Many Montagnards had fought with our special forces in the war, which did not endear them to the current authorities in Vietnam. Many of them are Christian; Catholics but also a lot of Protestants. Many worshiped at house churches that weren't officially recognized by the government, which like China insists on officially recognizing churches. The Montagnards felt they were being oppressed. A lot of their land was being taken. They owned land under traditional land-rights relationships, not very well documented. There was a huge surge in plantation culture in the highlands in that period, mainly coffee. Ethnic Vietnamese were coming and taking over their land. There was harassment over their religious practices. There were big demonstrations on Easter Sunday that turned somewhat violent. The police, then the army came in, and a lot of people fled to Cambodia, thousands. This was a big headline issue. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] got involved. When I arrived there had been successful negotiations involving UNHCR to repatriate some of these people back to Vietnam. I guess the tension had gone down. UNHCR wanted to visit those areas to confirm that things were okay to continue the repatriations; there was some word that things were not okay in three provinces: Pleiku, Dak Lak, and Kontum. The government in Hanoi was resisting inspections by UNHCR. This issue had soured our bilateral relationship a bit. We were making a big deal out of it in the first months of the Bush administration.

The Vietnamese government was a bit skeptical of the Bush administration anyway. Clinton got credit for normalizing relations. He visited there just before he left office. Bush was viewed as a right-winger, more anti-Communist. They knew I was a career diplomat, but I had been appointed by Bush. They also knew my history, so they were skeptical. I'll digress and go back. During the confirmation period, I got word from some of the NGOs based in the U.S.—the Mennonite organization, the IIE [International Organization for Education], Save the Children, and others, that some of their people were nervous about me going there because I had been involved in the economic blockade of Vietnam during the '80s when I was in the department. So they organized a meeting in New York at IIE headquarters with many of those organizations. That calmed the waters a lot. But in general, the Bush administration was viewed with some caution in Vietnam, not only by the government, but also by some in the American NGO sector.

So relations were cool. I was getting to know people, but it was slow. I felt that Matt Dailey who was DAS for Southeast Asia was being overly and publicly strident on the refugee issue. It was something that was going to get settled, and we had many more issues to handle with Vietnam. Hanoi was already getting nervous about China's growing

strength and willingness to exert it. That gave us an opportunity. There was also a promising economic relationship—what I would call the second layer of our relationship, coming after tackling the war legacy issues. We had just signed a bilateral trade agreement days before I got there. There was a big surge of American business interest in Vietnam. We needed to keep the issue of the Montagnards in balance; I didn't think Matt was keeping it in balance. I heard Jim Kelly was going to be in Bangkok and I arranged to go talk to him. We had a long discussion. Jim understood and reined Matt in after that. That's how things can work. Meanwhile I didn't ignore the Montagnard issue. I made some prominent visits to the resettlement areas for people who had returned from Cambodia, insisting on meeting privately with returnees and their families and visiting house churches, despite protests from the provincial leadership. We concluded that the repatriation had been a mixed picture, okay in some regions but not in others. The people who had returned from Cambodia were treated by the authorities with suspicion. We raised these concerns in Hanoi and were able to be specific about the shortcomings.

The house churches were constantly harassed. There was no clear way for them to be officially registered. Throughout my remaining time in Vietnam we continued to work on religious freedom issues, especially for the minority peoples. The State Department's special envoy for religious freedom visited. Vietnam was put on a list of countries that violated religious freedoms. Finally, some progress did come during 2004, my last year there, and in the years that followed. Many—perhaps most—of the Montagnard house churches were officially recognized and thus tolerated to operate without harassment. Of course, Vietnam remained a Leninist political system that demanded party control over all elements of civil society, but they had made some small concessions.

The real breakthrough in U.S.-Vietnam relations—and it's not just me saying it, it's been mentioned in many studies on the subject—came in June 2003, after I'd been there for a year and a half. It came when the Vietnamese had a semi-annual meeting of their party central committee. At that meeting there was a lot of discussion about Vietnam's strategic position in the world. The 2003 party plenum was a major watershed in Vietnam's foreign policy. They concluded, in their words, that "the strategic triangle is out of balance." The triangle to them is Vietnam, China, and the U.S. They had improved relations with China, and overcame a lot of differences—after all they had fought a border war in '79. Things were a lot better now, including new agreements on defining their land borders. But that left them concerned about two things. One was that they didn't like the trend of what they saw happening in China. They saw China becoming stronger, and more willing to throw its weight around. There were long-standing differences about the South China Sea and the islands there. They saw China being more aggressive on that subject. They didn't like the way China was cultivating closer relations with neighboring countries, especially with Cambodia and Laos, which Vietnam considers part of its sphere of influence. They saw Prime Minister Thaksin in Thailand as too close to Beijing. The regional geo-strategic picture was going in the wrong direction. They thought they needed better relations with the U.S. to put things in better balance. Relations had been strained by human rights issues, but now they wanted to focus on the strategic relationship with the U.S.

Right after the party meeting, Deputy Foreign Minister Le Van Bang asked to see me. He had been ambassador to the United States, and invited me to dinner when I was the nominee to see what I was like while they were contemplating "agrèment." We hit it off well. One of the most important ways I managed the job of being ambassador [it's nothing original] was that I met about every month to six weeks with Bang one-on-one, at a restaurant for lunch or dinner. He didn't want to meet at his office and when I suggested meeting at my residence once, he said, "No! No! No!" (laughs) The Vietnamese have a great sense of humor and are very practical and straightforward. He knew the residence was bugged, assumed I must know that, and there was no point ignoring the fact. He didn't want his bosses reviewing the tapes of our lunch conversations.

Bang came to me right after this plenum, said the triangle was out of balance, and they wanted to move forward. He was very concrete. He said, "We have a long-standing invitation from you for our defense minister to visit Washington, as a reciprocal visit for Defense Secretary Cohen's visit to Vietnam a few years ago. You also have proposed [this was even bigger news] one of your navy ships to pay a port call to Vietnam. We would like both of those to happen now. The minister's visit has to be first; the port visit can be very soon after that."

At that meeting, or maybe the next one, he added to the list of things that should happen: a visit to the U.S. by deputy prime minister Vu Khoan, number two in the government and an important person in the party, the secretary of the politburo; pretty high up, respected, and a wise man. "We want him to visit and meet everybody he can in Washington; we want to move the relationship forward."

At the same time, the deputy minister of defense called in my defense attaché and told him the same news about the defense minister visit to Washington, and about the ship visit. All those meetings probably were in July 2003.

In early November the defense minister visited Washington. Late November was the ship visit. Vu Khoan's trip to the United States, which I accompanied him on, was in December. Boom, boom, boom.

The ship visit was a profound signal of good relations. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam had invited back to Vietnam an American warship, an iconic symbol of the military power of its former enemy. This was a message to China as well as to Vietnam's own people. The ship visit was a major new story around the world.

Q: What sort of ship was it?

BURGHARDT: The biggest ship that could get up the Saigon River. It was a guided missile frigate named the *USS Vandergrift*. My wife and I went to Vung Tao at the mouth of the Saigon River, boarded the ship there and then went all the way up the river to Saigon. We had been in Vietnam together during the war. This was big. It was emotional.

On the ship we chatted a lot with the young sailors; many of them told me their fathers had been in the Vietnam War. They got it, they knew why it was a big deal.

The ship was flying the American and Vietnamese flags as it went up the river. It was early in the morning, and we saw people on the banks of the river doing their morning exercises or watering their gardens. We saw people startled as they saw the American flag on the ship. We were laughing, we joked, "They're thinking, 'Holy shit, they're back!'" (laughs)

We docked in Saigon port. By the way, despite the official name of Ho Chi Minh City, the river is still the Saigon River, the port is still officially the Port of Saigon and all the people who live there still call the city center Saigon. Ho Chi Minh City was a joining of the city of Saigon with the surrounding province of Gia Dinh. So the various districts still have the names they always had. The former surrounding province happens to be the province where I worked as an adviser for seven months. All the hotels are called the Saigon this and the Saigon that. It's not politically incorrect; it's the common usage.

So there was the ship visit and all the related ceremonies. There was a reception on the ship. One of the people I made sure to invite was a man named Pham Xuan An. An had been the main *Time* magazine Vietnamese employee during the war. When the war ended, when the Communists took over in 1975, as all the staff left they urged him to hurry with his family to the airport. He replied, "Have a nice trip." He was a general in the intelligence service of the North. He had provided the intelligence that guided the troops in during the Tet Offensive. There have been two wonderful books written about him. One was called *The Spy Who Loved Us*. Because he did love America; he had lived in America. Later, like many people who had served the cause, he had a falling-out with the authorities. They still kept him as an officer of the intelligence service, but they didn't really trust him anymore; he was close to others who were disgruntled. I befriended him. I used to visit An at his home in Saigon, where we had long, fascinating conversations. He told me a lot of useful inside stuff because he still was very well-connected. Sometimes I wondered as I was ending my tour in Vietnam: was he my last best contact? Or was I the last guy he played?

Q: How do you ever know for sure?

BURGHARDT: When he died I remember I sent his obituary, which got a lot of play, to my kids, and I wrote, "This man in many ways personified every enigma about the Vietnam War."

I invited him to the reception on the *Vandergrift*. In one of the biographies, it quotes him as saying about that invitation, "At that moment, I really felt that the war was over."

Which gets back to another point. For my wife and I, going back to Vietnam, back to a Vietnam that no longer had barbed wire, which was now united, now at peace, seeing people that I had known during the war, going places we had been before—it was like

picking up the thread of a story: the story of my personal relationship with Vietnam, and the story of our relationship as a country with Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. It was profoundly more moving and made me more emotionally involved than being ambassador anywhere else. The same was true for Susan.

Asians very often would comment on how Vietnam was my first assignment and now it was my last assignment in the Foreign Service. “For us,” Asians said, “this is like the cycle of life.” It turned out not to be quite my last assignment because I did the AIT chairman thing later, but it looked like it at the time, and it was my last assignment overseas. Many things that happened were moving and even amusing. For example, on my first trip as ambassador to Saigon, probably in January 2002, I called on the key figures there including the head of the party in Ho Chi Minh City [he later became president of Vietnam]. As I walked into the house I realized that it was the former American DCM’s residence. Being Vietnamese and having the wonderful sense of humor and the relaxed way of dealing with people that the Vietnamese have, he smiled and said, “I bet this place looks familiar to you.” (laughs)

I said, “The flag’s different but it does look familiar.”

I counted. He said “Saigon” five times and “Ho Chi Minh City” twice during the meeting. And he was head of the party there.

I went to Ho Chi Minh City about every two weeks. It is the largest city in Vietnam, considerably larger than Hanoi. It’s the financial and business capital and I had almost as many people working for me there as in Hanoi. It is a very large consulate. Almost all the consular work was done there, plus a big commercial section and political section. We had Emmi Yamaguchi, a wonderful woman who went on to be DCM in Chile and other things, as our consul general. She did a superb job.

During that first visit to the south as ambassador in January 2002, we hosted a musical event at the conservatory in Ho Chi Minh City. We had a reception afterwards and a man came up to me who was vaguely familiar. He said, “Good to see you again.”

I asked if we had met before.

He said, “Yes. Do you remember when Vice President Agnew visited?”

I said “Yes, probably in late 1972.”

He responded, “Yes, you went with him to call on President Thieu.”

“Yes I did. As I recall, it was just me, Vice President Agnew, and Ambassador Bunker. I was the notetaker.”

Then he started to smirk a bit. “I was there too.”

“Really? What was your role at the time?”

Then more of a smirk. “I was working as a special assistant for press relations to Huang Duc Nha.” Nha was Thieu’s nephew and closest aide and adviser. So this guy was in the absolute inner circle of Thieu’s administration in the last years of the war.

I said, “Impressive. What do you do now?” He handed me his card. He was the editor in chief of *Thanh Nien* newspaper. It means youth. It’s one of the two biggest newspapers published in Ho Chi Minh City. Like all news publications in Vietnam, it is controlled by the Communist Party.

This struck me as rather remarkable. So when I was back in Hanoi, at my next one-on-one with Vice Foreign Minister Bang, I said “Oh, by the way, let me tell you about an interesting experience I had in Saigon. Do you know this guy? Can you explain to me about this?”

He collapsed in laughter. “Let me put it this way, Ray. No one could ever have been that much rehabilitated.”

I said, “He was on the other side all along?”

“Right.”

No wonder they lost! Right there, in the inner circle of the palace.

There were a lot of experiences like that. Like the experience of my first meeting with the Catholic archbishop, Pham Minh Man [elevated to cardinal in 2003], in his residence in Saigon, and I realized I was in the same room and sitting in the same chair as when I last met his predecessor twenty-nine years earlier.

I was very moved, even a bit choked up. He saw that.

I said, “In January 1973 I sat in this same chair and met with Nguyen Van Binh, your predecessor as archbishop. The reason for the meeting was we were negotiating the Paris peace agreement and President Thieu was resisting signing. My bosses at the time, specifically Deputy Ambassador Whitehouse, sent us out to contact all the organizations we worked with to explain why this was a good agreement and why they should encourage President Thieu to sign it.” I was the embassy’s liaison with the Catholic Church, and Binh was the head of the church. Binh was a southerner and not too excited about the Paris peace agreement, but he listened to me carefully. We later heard he may have been helpful. I said, “Sitting here now I’m remembering the conversation and [I put it diplomatically] I’m remembering how everything turned out.” Boat people, labor camps, the whole thing. I didn’t have to say it.

There was a long pause. He looked at me, and his words were unforgettable. Suddenly, I was not the ambassador. He saw me as a supplicant. He said, "I understand, my son." And then we moved on.

That very emotional moment brought home everything. That as a twenty-seven-year-old political officer I'd been involved in something which at the time I knew was not quite right. I was lying for my country. We called it Operation Big Lie in the political section, this campaign we were on of persuading people, because we knew it wasn't going to turn out well.

And now I was back there one generation later. What had happened could not be undone. I was back to re-establish the relationship and to move on. It was a perfect summation of the history. Again, where else could I have had a moment like that?

One of the results of the improvement of relations that followed the central committee meeting in June 2003 was that my access to Vietnamese leadership opened up. Until that point I had not met with the general secretary of the party, the number one guy. After June 2003 they wanted me to see him. In fact we basically worked my way through the entire politburo, one by one. The general secretary at the time was Nong Duc Manh. He was partially a minority, not 100 percent ethnic Viet, which was unusual for a top-level Vietnamese leader. There were rumors that he was an illegitimate son of Ho Chi Minh—which may have been true, we weren't sure. The meeting with him was generalities and affirmations of good relations, which was good enough. What was important was that it was given front-page coverage in the Vietnamese press. This was of course a signal to the people of Vietnam of good relations.

I had other interesting politburo meetings. I remember well a meeting with the man known to be the number one hardliner in the politburo. There were different trends, almost factions, in the politburo. There were those who saw the advantages of improving relations with the U.S., and there were a handful who had close relations with China and were less enthusiastic about improving relations with us. This fellow I met was head of the party school and in charge of propaganda, responsibilities that in Communist countries typically go to hard core Leninists. He was the ideologue. He made a comment to me that I've quoted many times in later years in describing the fears that grip the world's remaining Communist parties. A Vietnamese made this comment, but I think it could just as easily have been made by a member of the Chinese politburo. What he said [with great intensity, almost anger] was, "We saw what happened in Poland. First it was the labor unions and then it was the church. We're not going to let it happen here."

I think that is what's in Xi Jinping's mind also. For them, both the Vietnam politburo and the party leaders in China, the great devil of recent history is Gorbachev, and the way in their view he allowed the Soviet Union to collapse. They're determined not to let it happen in their countries and particularly in China; it drives decisions every day. The core principle of Leninism is that there can be no challenges to the authority of the party.

That means that the party must control religions, labor unions, fraternal organizations, and all the other elements that represent civil society in non-Leninist political systems.

One of the unusual things that happened in my time in Vietnam was the role played by an American friend from Vietnam days named Steve Young—not Steve Young in the Foreign Service, but another Steve Young who worked for AID in Vietnam during the war and whose father was Kenneth Young, at one point ambassador to Thailand. Steve Young, among other things, went on to be an assistant dean at Harvard Law School and dean of a small law school in the Midwest. Steve was married to a Vietnamese woman whose father had been an extremely important politician in South Vietnam during the war years, someone who might have become a prime minister, who might have provided real leadership, except that the Communists assassinated him. So Steve had this deep interest in Vietnam and retained relationships there in a way that was quite extraordinary and I never fully understood.

I came to realize that he could be helpful. He gave me good ideas. He orchestrated my meeting and development of a good relationship with a member of the politburo whom I saw regularly, more than any other politburo member. Phan Dien had been party secretary in Da Nang and was known to be in the China faction. He had been educated in and worked in China, but he also could see the way the wind was blowing. It was clear he wanted to get to know the American ambassador, to be seen to know the American ambassador, to protect himself on that flank, and to not be seen as a hold out against the shift in the country's strategy.

Steve Young was living in the U.S. and may only have visited Vietnam once while I was there, but he made that relationship possible. One of those things I never totally understood, but it worked. Steve also suggested some ideas to raise with the leaders, some of which turned out to be very good ideas. I tried to encourage the leadership to be more sensitive to the concerns of the American-Vietnamese community. To not just view them as hopeless anti-Communist foes; many of them were that, but certainly the next generation was changing in their views and many were already doing business there. At any rate, the Vietnamese community in the U.S. had an effect on American politics and was in a sense a drag on improving relations because of their animosity toward the regime. Many were still really fighting the war, particularly in Orange County and to some extent in Arlington too, and Houston.

Steve had the idea that the current government ought to do a better job of maintaining the old South Vietnamese army's military cemetery near Bien Hoa. I heard this from others too and I would occasionally raise the issue. I had constant interaction with Nguyen Tan Dung, the deputy prime minister, very valuable because he was at least as powerful as the prime minister at the time, who was kind of phasing out. I raised that idea. They did do some things. Dung named a delegation to go to the States and make contact with Vietnamese-Americans back there. Looking at the delegation, I saw it didn't have any southerners and I suggested to Dung that it should. He took the advice, and added southerners to the delegation.

At another point I suggested [this was Steve's idea] to Dung that his government should make contact with Nguyen Cao Ky and invite him to visit. Nguyen Cao Ky had been prime minister of the defunct Republic of Vietnam, was living in California, owned a liquor store, and played golf. When I first raised the idea, Dung erupted in anger and said, "That son of a bitch! I fought against him in the jungle!" Dung had been a party commissar with the Viet Cong, way down in the deep delta where he came from, in Ca Mau. He said his family members had died in the war, "Why should I invite that son of a bitch?"

I said, "He still has some hold there among the Vietnamese community in the States. It might help." After that explosion I said to my friend Deputy Foreign Minister Bang, who had attended the meeting, "Maybe that wasn't a good idea."

Bang laughed, and said, "Don't worry about it, I bet it happens. He did that for the note-takers. He had to give that reaction."

Well, when that delegation went to the U.S., they contacted Ky, played golf with him, invited him to visit Vietnam, and he came. How much that helped reduce animosity among the Vietnamese community in America is debatable. I heard that many in Orange County [overwhelming southerners] said Ky's visit to Hanoi was meaningless because he came from a northern Vietnamese family!

Going back, people I'd known from the war years: There was a man who had been a student leader. While I was in Vietnam in the '70s I covered the student radicals and student organizations. The number two in the main student group was named Doan Van Toai. He has written a number of books about Vietnam. He stayed on after the Communists won and was involved in the initial coalition government they had in the south. When the Communists totally took over and dismantled the interim coalition government, he was on the outs and had the dubious distinction of being imprisoned both by Thieu's government and later by the Communists. He finally left as a boat person. In the States he favored reconciliation. He was seriously wounded in Orange County by some crazy Vietnamese-American who thought he was a commie sellout. Toai regularly visited Vietnam and we got together in Hanoi.

He was also someone who told me an interesting story. He said, "You know, one of the reasons I had trouble after the Communists took over was because I'd known you. As you know, when the Communists won, they captured all the police files of the Thieu government. The police files reported that I had met with you and with Dick Mueller [another FSO who had been my predecessor in that job, later consul general in Hong Kong]. The old government [and probably the new government also] figured you and Mueller were CIA. Political officers had to be CIA, right? So that put me under suspicion." In Vietnam, the past is always with us.

Another old contact from the war years was Father Chan Tin, a Catholic priest who had been a famous dissident opposing the South Vietnamese government. I heard he was still in the same office where I had often met him thirty years earlier. I stopped by to visit him in Saigon. He remembered me and immediately started railing against the current government in Hanoi. I laughed and said, "I guess you've never seen a Vietnamese government you like." He laughed too and said I was right, because "they're all crooks and despots."

I had also considered that the current government had probably reviewed my police files from the Thieu era before they agreed to accept me as ambassador. Once I was sitting at a dinner with the deputy minister of public security. That ministry covers the functions of both the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and the CIA. He turned to me at some relaxed point and made some remarks about my activities in Vietnam in the early '70s that let me know he had reviewed his dinner partner's file.

Finishing with Vietnam: When Vu Khoan visited the United States I went with him. We went to San Francisco where he met with people from the IT [information technology] community, including Patrick McGovern, founder of IDG [International Data Group], a big company that was setting up an office in Vietnam, including a venture capital firm dedicated to investing in Vietnamese start-up companies. Then Khoan went to Houston where he met with the oil industry. Vietnam is a big oil exporter. Conoco Phillips was active in Vietnam and we went to their headquarters. They had a map of the South China Sea area near Vietnam showing all the areas they wanted to drill. They were trying to stay in areas that were less controversial in terms of China's claims. I remember Vu Khoan half-jokingly at one point said, "That's great but how about moving a little more to the east [i.e. toward some areas jointly claimed by Vietnam and China]?"

The president of ConocoPhillips looked at me and smiled and said, "I think maybe you need to talk to our State Department about that." Vu Khoan was just kidding. He knew what was going on. We also visited the ill-fated Enron company, went to see their energy trading floor. The highlight of the Houston stop was that former President George H.W. Bush hosted lunch for Khoan and his delegation at his private residence. Barbara Bush was also there with all her famous wit and graciousness. The Vietnamese gave a lot of publicity to the lunch with the former president. It was generally seen in Vietnam [correctly, I believe] as a gesture that carefully compensated for the fact that protocol precluded a meeting between Khoan and the former president's son, the then current President Bush.

Then on to New York and Washington. In Washington he had an excellent meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell. We went to the NSC. The visit was supposed to be with Steve Hadley, the deputy national security advisor, but it ended up also being with Condoleezza Rice, the national security advisor. She came in and stayed for an hour. There were other important meetings, including with Congress. He saw everybody except the president, basically. One striking thing was Vu Khoan's tone. Until that visit, in our discussions with Vietnamese policymakers and analysts, it was always clear that they

didn't want to talk about the strategic picture. In Asia the word "strategy" means "China"—how you deal with China. They didn't want to talk about that—until Khoan's visit. At all the meetings in Washington Khoan was ready to discuss China's new aggressiveness, Vietnam's concerns about China, to know whether the U.S. shared their concerns, what we planned to do and whether we would help Vietnam's military capability—all of that was now on the table. Conflicting South China Sea claims, all of that. That had all been taboo before. No more. At one point during the trip, Deputy Secretary Armitage commented to me on how remarkable he found Khoan's openness to discuss their anxieties about Beijing. So that was a sea change, probably the most significant consequence of Khoan's trip.

I'm unclear whether this next point relates to Vu Khoan's time in New York or to a later visit by the minister of planning, a key economic official whom I also accompanied to the U.S. Maybe it was in both trips. I had gotten to know John Thornton, who in the summer of 2003 was stepping down as co-chief operating officer of Goldman Sachs. He was very plugged in, active with the Asia Society, close to Asia Society Chairman Dick Holbrooke. Earlier in his career he had headed Goldman's operations in Asia. I had met Thornton in both New York and during a visit he made to Hanoi. When I mentioned to Thornton plans for these Vietnamese officials to visit New York, his response was, "They're going to come to New York and they're talking about giving a speech to a hundred people in some hotel banquet hall. That's not what they need to do. They need to meet with two people then, with another two people, people who can make important investment decisions about Vietnam or about putting the Vietnamese stock market on their list of where they're going to invest." So John arranged those meetings. I don't remember all the participants because I did not attend those meetings, but they were heavy hitters on Wall Street. John was also on the board of Intel, and at that point an important investment decision was whether Intel would build a major facility in Vietnam, both a manufacturing factory and a testing plant. They did, and John helped to guide the decision.

Most foreign companies wanted to invest in southern Vietnam. There was more experience there because of the capitalist history under the southern government. Saigon is a bigger city with better infrastructure and has a great port [there's no great port in the north, Haiphong is third-rate]; it had a lot going for it. So Intel wanted to invest in the south but the Vietnamese government wanted them to build their facility in the north. Finally the government gave in and let them build it in the suburbs of Ho Chi Minh City. Intel threatened to go to Thailand otherwise. Intel invested billions of dollars. As John told the Vietnamese, "Once you get a company like Intel to come in, all the other companies think they must know something. Either they come in emulating or they come in as suppliers, so you have to import less components." That helped them a lot, a big step up the ladder from basic manufacturing to more high-tech industry.

The intelligence relationship: I mentioned three things my superiors told me we needed to get going—the military-to-military relationship, a law enforcement relationship, and intel. About the military ties, I have explained how that happened. It continued to develop after the navy visit in 2003, followed by another visit the next year. The Pacific

commanders also visited from Honolulu. One thing we had to be careful about concerning our developing military ties was to dampen the over-enthusiasm of some people in Congress and elsewhere who had dreams of the U.S. fleet returning to Cam Ranh Bay. I sometimes had to quote my friend Vice Minister Le Van Bang about why Vietnam, despite two thousand years of difficult relations with China, would need to be cautious not to gratuitously provoke its northern neighbor: "They are very big. They are right next door. And unfortunately they will always be there." Our military understood that.

The law enforcement relationship didn't need too much from me; it happened through the DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] and others: they brought the FBI people over from their regional office in Bangkok to make sure they knew their Vietnamese counterparts. And we eventually negotiated a mutual legal assistant agreement. We have a training program for law enforcement people run at a U.S. facility in Bangkok. I visited it once. We started bringing more Vietnamese for that training, and that developed good relations.

The intelligence field was the last piece. I met many times with Minister of Public Security Le Hong Anh—tough bird, as he should be in that job. He understood the need to have that kind of "liaison relationship," to have a declared station chief. We already had a CIA station in Vietnam and they had an MPS [Ministry of Public Security] station in Washington but in both cases they were exclusively engaged in clandestine activities. The station chiefs had not been declared to the host country so there could be no liaison relationship—the exchange of intelligence and other forms of bilateral cooperation between intelligence services. Of course the Vietnamese ministry wanted to exchange information about China. We identified a person to be the potential declared station chief and brought him to visit Vietnam. I introduced him to the minister. He arrived to take up duty right as I left, either the day I left or the next day. That was the last piece to put in place.

The other thing I should mention is Agent Orange, the dioxin-based defoliant that U.S. forces used extensively during the Vietnam War. While I was there, a major international conference on the subject was held in Hanoi, and it didn't go well. The Vietnamese had a tendency to exaggerate somewhat the range of damage caused by Agent Orange and sometimes seemed to ascribe every health problem to it. There was a lack of scientific rigor, our people felt, especially the public health person in my AID team. Later I thought maybe that fellow went too far in his skepticism. But a lot of the American scientists who participated in the conference disagreed with the Vietnamese and the conference ended up being more of an argument than an agreement. It wasn't just the Americans. Some of the Europeans were also dubious of the Vietnamese claims. It turned out that Italians are very knowledgeable about the subject because one of the worst dioxin spills in history had been in Italy.

I would say that was an issue I didn't make much progress on in terms of removing it as a scar between us or as I referred to the Agent Orange issue in my speech at the conference, "the last significant ghost" haunting U.S.-Vietnam relations. We did have some programs

in place that indirectly addressed the Agent Orange issues. For example, programs to help people who were disabled because of war-related injuries; mines, explosives, wounds, but also problems that could have been because of Agent Orange. We didn't try to determine why they were disabled. Anyone who was disabled would be helped in various ways, with artificial limbs, employment training. Under my successor, Mike Marine, the U.S. began the big job of cleaning up the ground contamination at the two main locations where we had stored Agent Orange during the war, Da Nang airport and at our Long Binh base near Bien Hoa in the south.

During my tenure we did a lot on the environment. There's a program in which the ambassador can give small amounts to various projects, and I did that with enthusiasm. There were actually two such programs for small projects. In the one focused on the environment, we were very active. I was publicly identified with those projects so people and organizations came to me with their requests. I went out and made sure our efforts were effective and the U.S. got credit.

Another program had to do with cultural projects. We restored Buddhist temples. We recorded traditional music. As I mentioned I'm always interested in cultural activities, so we were quite active with all that as well.

Q: As ambassador you must have encouraged American businesses.

BURGHARDT: In Vietnam, I forgot to mention commercial promotion work. I remember it was a big part of the job. We were really revving up our relationship and had just signed a bilateral trade agreement literally days before I came as ambassador in December 2001. Two deals were particularly important and were successes for American business, and the embassy helped—not just me, the whole embassy. One was to get a contract for General Electric [GE] for the Vietnamese government to buy turbines that would be used in power plants. That was a big-ticket item, and GE was happy about that and gave a lot of credit to the embassy for it.

The second one, also a very big deal, was Vietnam wanted to have its first satellite. There was a lot of competition from Russian and Chinese companies and others. Vietnam gave the contract to Lockheed-Martin. It was right across the line, for the design of the satellite and for the launch also. That happened toward the end of my time there. Lockheed-Martin was deeply grateful. My friend Le Van Bang whom I've mentioned before, the deputy foreign minister, made an important comment on that decision when I visited Vietnam for an Asia Foundation conference a year after stepping down as ambassador. Bang said, "As I'm sure you will understand, buying a satellite is a sensitive issue of political and strategic judgment, as well as commercial. It's a question of trust. So therefore, you and your country should see that decision in that light."

Why don't we move on to AIT chairman?

Q: One question. Under the area of policing, I think, you mentioned DEA. Were we already talking to them about the flow of opium or other illegal drugs? All of them are near the Golden Triangle and so many illegal drugs find their way out of there.

BURGHARDT: Vietnam had cracked down on illegal drugs pretty well before I got there. Including addiction in Vietnam, although some addiction to heroin remained. I don't remember how much we worked with them on smuggling chains. But you remind me of something. There was an AIDS [acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome] problem in Vietnam while I was there and most of it came from addicts using needles. Even as somebody brought up in New York and who lived in rough areas when I was going to Columbia University, the only place I ever saw people shooting up in broad daylight was Hanoi. One of our achievements while I was in Hanoi was to persuade Washington to name Vietnam as the sole Asian country to receive financial support under PEPFAR [President's Emergency Fund for AIDS Relief]. A major factor was the excellent job Vietnam had done in handling the SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] epidemic in 2002. They had demonstrated that they had an effective public health administration.

When we discussed my tour as the AIT Director in Taipei [1999–2001], I talked about how AIT is structured. The AIT chairman's job consists of presiding over meetings of the AIT board, which gets into nitty-gritty things about the budget including that of AIT Taipei. The construction of a new office building in Taipei was something we were involved in supporting. I helped FBO [Foreign Buildings Office] to pick the site in 2001, while I was stationed in Taipei, and we moved into the building in May 2019. The State Department moves slowly on those kinds of projects.

More importantly, the AIT chairman goes to Taiwan at least twice a year and brings the word from Washington. Meets with the president and other government and political figures, brings views on our policy, presses the Taiwan leadership on things we would like them to do. The AIT chairman does this because we do not allow anyone higher than office director to go to Taiwan. We do occasionally slip in a deputy assistant secretary or someone even higher, especially in recent years, but generally we don't. One recent pattern has been to send DASs and even assistant secretaries before they are formally named or confirmed.

The AIT chairman is a policy level official who can freely visit Taiwan. Also when the Taiwan president makes U.S. transit stops [never to Washington] to New York, Boston, Houston, San Francisco, LA, Seattle, or even sometimes to Honolulu, Anchorage or Guam, the AIT chairman is always with the Taiwan president and makes sure the visit goes well and doesn't step outside of our boundaries. During these transit stops, the chairman also joins the Taiwan president in his or her meetings with senators, congressmen, governors, mayors, members of the local Chinese community, and business leaders. The Taiwan president also usually has phone conversations during the transit stops with senior officials and members of Congress, which have included the speaker of the house, majority and minority leaders in the Senate, the deputy secretary of state, and many other very senior people. The Taiwan president usually hosts a big dinner, mostly

attended by the local ethnic Chinese community. In Los Angeles and New York those banquets regularly are attended by several hundred people. The chairman always is one of the speakers who precedes the president. During the transit stops the chairman has his or her own private meetings with the president and what ends up being a running conversation for several days, with the president as well as with the foreign minister and national security advisor who usually are along on the trip. That is very useful.

The AIT chairman participates in U.S. policy-level inter-agency meetings in Washington, the meetings at the assistant secretary level, and ones just below that. The chairman always participates in our policy discussions with Taiwan, which are held somewhere in the U.S. a few times each year with officials who can include their national security adviser and sometimes the foreign minister. The highest-level regular interaction with Taiwan are the so-called "Special Channel" meetings, usually held in DC, in which Taiwan's national security advisor, accompanied by other key officials, meets with our deputy secretary of state and deputy national security advisor. Because of this long-established role for the deputy secretary, I regularly met with the incumbents in that position: my mentor Negroponte at the end of the Bush administration, and then Jim Steinberg and Tony Blinken during the Obama administration. My last meeting as AIT chairman, on my last day on the job, was with Blinken in his State Department office in late September 2016. I pushed for a decision to go ahead with an arms sale and he agreed.

I also participated in many military meetings, held every year in the Washington area, at the Navy Postgraduate School in Monterey, or at the Pacific Command in Honolulu. It's an interesting situation. In all of our policy-level meetings, either in-house or with Taiwanese, the other participants are—as usual for such meetings with any country—representing agencies or departments that have a role in executing the policy: Defense, State, or on economic issues, Treasury, Commerce or USTR [Office of the United States Trade Representative]. For U.S.-only meetings we also have the CIA there to give the intelligence brief. The AIT chairman—what does he or she represent? The chairman represents a public corporation that is really part of the State Department. So you're there for your expertise and your long knowledge of the subject, and because you have a lot of interaction with the top people in Taiwan and can sometimes be the one who brings the word to Taiwan on decisions that have been made. As AIT chairman I also was enlisted at times to persuade the Taiwan president or his or her key aides on some policy issue. Going back to what Bill McCahill said in Beijing, I found it was also true as AIT chairman that "every State Department job can be what you make of it."

I found, and my successor Jim Moriarty [also a Hawaii resident] is finding out now, something that Kurt Campbell had perceptively observed: that coming in from Hawaii to Washington every two months or so, you got more done than if you lived there all the time. Kurt was shrewd in analyzing how this worked. The policy people in Washington say, "Oh, Burghardt [now Moriarty] is going to be in town. He wants to reach a decision on this possible arms sale or what our positions will be on trade talks." The chairman's visit tees up the issue and gets people to focus on it. You are a "convener." I think that was Kurt's word. It worked for me and it's working for Jim. I was the first person to be

AIT chairman part-time. Before me the chairman lived there in Washington and was also the managing director of AIT, day-to-day management. When I took the job in 2006 we split the two functions. Barbara Schrage was the managing director at the beginning of my term. She had been deputy managing director for years. Barbara was succeeded by Joe Donovan, my political section chief in Taipei, and now our ambassador in Indonesia.

So that's what the AIT chairman does. How did I get the job? In a rather odd way. After I left Vietnam as ambassador in September 2004, I was recruited by Charles Morrison, president of the East-West Center in Honolulu, to head a new division at the center dedicated to exchange programs for journalists and for young political leaders and activists, seminars on current Asia-Pacific topics, and bringing knowledge about Asia to cities throughout the U.S. in collaboration with local partners. That job in Honolulu wasn't going to start until January so I took some time off at our house in Cape Cod. My friend from our NSC days Johnathan Miller then ran a consulting firm in Washington. [Miller is now head of the Peace Corps division for Africa.] He wanted me to go to Taipei on behalf of one of his clients, AB InBev, the big beer and beverage company, to find out if they could buy part of the Taiwan government's liquor and tobacco monopoly. He paid me well to take the trip. I called Jim Kelly beforehand and said, "You should know that I'm about to visit Taiwan. I think I'll get to see Chen Shui-bian. What would you like me to say to him?"

Kelly said basically the administration was fed up with Chen. He was now in his second term and was moving even more to a pro-independence position, very aggressive toward Beijing, and George Bush was fed up with him. Therese Shaheen, until earlier that year the AIT chairman, had encouraged Chen in that kind of thinking, which was why she was fired. So the position was vacant. I should tell Chen that the administration was surprised and disappointed that he had taken Shaheen's views seriously. I met in Taipei with Chen in early November 2004 and ended up spending more than three hours with him. We quickly dispensed with the issue of tobacco and beer [I'd already met with the finance minister about that] and I said, "My friends in Washington are disappointed with you." We had a long, in depth conversation. Chen listened. He was very open. I also was careful to meet with my successor as AIT Director Doug Paal to inform him what I would be telling Chen.

After I got back to Cape Cod, I was invited the next month to a Taiwan-related event in Washington. I had written a report and sent it to Kelly about my conversation with Chen—unclassified, did it on my home computer. Among those at the December 2004 reception in Washington was Dennis Wilder, the Asia senior director at the NSC. Dennis said, "I saw what you sent Jim; I want to hear more." So after the reception we spent hours at the Mayflower Hotel bar for a long talk about Taiwan and my impressions of Chen Shui-bian. After that Dennis got the idea that I should be the next AIT chairman. He sold it to Chris Hill, who in April 2005 replaced Kelly as EAP assistant secretary. I knew nothing about all that until June 1, when I was in my parents' home in Sarasota, Florida. My father died on May 28. In Sarasota, I got a phone call from Mike Meserve, then the director of the Office of Taiwan Coordination at State. Mike said, "Chris Hill

would like to know if you're interested in being AIT chairman? He asked me to make the first call." [Chris Hill should have made the call, but that's Chris Hill; that's the way he is. I accepted that.]

I replied that I would be glad to have a conversation about that possibility. I had never thought of doing that job. After I accepted, it took some time to get my security clearance re-established.

Much more time consuming was that Chris had to get past the White House's temptation to name another political appointee with no diplomatic experience even after the last one had just been fired for being a disaster. Chris had to go through the motions of meeting with the White House personnel office's candidate for AIT chairman position. Chris then persuaded the secretary, Condi Rice, to call the deputy chief of staff who supervised the personnel office in the White House. I'm told that what she said was along the lines of, "You must remember what happened with Therese Shaheen; this is not a job for amateur hour. It's delicate stuff. We think we have someone very experienced."

We also came up with a solution to deal with the fact that I didn't want to quit my East-West Center job in Honolulu and didn't want to move to Washington. If we split the chairman and managing director jobs, it would be less appealing to political appointees because it wouldn't be a full-time job. So that's what happened. My office was at the AIT headquarters in Washington, but I only visited there every one or two months, sometimes more often, especially in the summer when I spent more time at our home in Cape Cod. In 2011 I went to a part-time schedule at the East-West Center, and then at the end of 2012 left the EWC altogether [except for pro bono work], so I tended then to devote more time to AIT and spend more of the year living on the East Coast.

When I was in Honolulu I worked out of the State Department foreign policy advisor's office in the Pacific Command headquarters at Camp Smith. I developed excellent relations with a series of Pacific commanders, key figures in our relationship with Taiwan, and participated in numerous visits to the Pacific Command by Taiwanese military leaders as well as exercises related to possible crises. My service as AIT chairman lasted ten and one half years through the end of the Bush administration and continued until almost the end of the Obama administration. That continuity was in part because of the fear of opening it to an ill-prepared political appointee. There had been two, one at the beginning of the Clinton administration and Shaheen at the start of the Bush administration. Both had not done well, especially the Clinton appointee, and were both removed in less than two years.

When I began the chairman job in February 2006, Chen Shui-bian was still president. He was finishing his second term. Relations were tense but I always had a good relationship with him on a personal level. We didn't hide our irritation with him. When he did transit stops in the United States, on two occasions the only place we could find in the United States that we would allow him to stop was Anchorage, Alaska. There was another occasion when he stopped in Guam, but that was when he was visiting Pacific Island

countries. Ma Ying-jeou also made a Guam stop during a Pacific Island tour. The most popular "transit stop" for Taiwan presidents is in Los Angeles, in part because they use the stops there to raise campaign funds from ethnic Chinese who live in southern California.

Chen's second stop in Anchorage was his last U.S. transit, near the end of his second term. Taiwan had just had legislative elections in which his Democratic Progressive Party had done very poorly, presaging the fact that they were going to do poorly in the upcoming presidential elections. That Anchorage transit was in January 2008. It was really cold. Ma Ying-jeou took office in May 2008.

Q: Ma is representing a party that is more heavily representing original Taiwanese?

BURGHARDT: No, Ma's party is the old Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang, dominated by the people that had come from the mainland with Chiang Kai-shek; friendlier toward the mainland. Chen Shui-bian, who was still in power for the first two years after I became chairman of AIT, represented the party that was more pro-independence.

With Ma Ying-jeou, you started to get real cross-strait détente. Beijing and Taipei reached agreement on direct flights, shipping, postal service—all those things started to happen. They also reached trade agreements, agreements believe it or not on the equivalent of an MLAT [mutual legal assistance treaty], even an extradition agreement.

Q: These were what years?

BURGHARDT: From 2008 to 2016. The two terms that Ma had. The U.S. was happy about that cross-strait progress because it lowered the tension between Beijing and Taipei. It also meant the two sides were in regular communication so the opportunities for misunderstanding or miscommunication were greatly reduced. That was all good.

Evan Medeiros in the NSC staff was a colleague with whom I worked closely. He was the number two there under Danny Russel for a while and then became senior director for Asia in the Obama administration. Evan will tell people [it's flattering, I'm not sure I totally deserve it] that he and I helped to reshape relations with Taiwan. There is some truth to it; we certainly had a lot of help from Kurt Campbell and from many other people.

We decided that we needed to show Taiwan respect, which was above all what Beijing did not show. Taiwan deserved respect, because it was a huge success story economically and politically. Mainland China may have developed economically, but not politically. Furthermore, this was an important economic relationship for the United States. It was a major trading partner. We had a lot of investment there, as they did in the United States. I have visited Formosa Plastics' facility in Texas; it is huge! It represents about twelve billion dollars; it's real money. They have another one in New Jersey. We decided that was the way we needed to approach Taiwan and the way we needed to talk about it. So

that if we needed to have relatively high-level Taiwanese officials visit the States or American officials visit Taiwan, we would do it even if Beijing would complain, but we would make sure there was a practical reason for the visit. Taiwan would often want us to do things just for show. We wouldn't do that but would take action if we could say, We're not going to hurt the interests of Boeing, Monsanto or Microsoft or American agriculture just because you [Beijing] object to having one of our officials visit Taiwan. That was the approach. Treating Taiwan as important in its own right. Not some subset of our relations with Beijing, as it too often had been treated since 1979. That shift was made very deliberately and it has lasted into the Trump administration. Those of us involved were proud of that change.

I did a lot of public speaking in the U.S. about U.S. policy on Taiwan. That was part of the job, to explain our policy at academic conferences at Harvard, Columbia, Stanford or at CSIS, Brookings. My remarks would get quoted and picked up. I also spoke publicly when I went to Taiwan. In Washington, I remember that at our Congress I spoke at a commemoration of the U.S.-Taiwan Relations Act and also to congressional staff at two events sponsored by the Mansfield Foundation. There was a public-affairs side of the job that provided an opportunity to give our new spin on the relationship.

The only time I had interaction with people in the PRC was when I took part in meetings in New York organized by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy [NCAFP]. Those were track two meetings that I'm still involved in. They had two annual meetings that involved Taiwan; they still do. One is a meeting generally earlier in the year that the NCAFP calls "the trilateral." People from Taiwan, mainland China, and the U.S. There, you had no officials from the mainland. Lots of academics, some of whom were mouthpieces for the government. At the trilateral meeting, officials from Taiwan always attended and sometimes State Department officers. The AIT chairman always participates and gives a luncheon talk on U.S.-Taiwan relations.

More interesting, usually in May, the NCAFP hosts in New York a meeting with the Taiwan Affairs Office [TAO] of the Chinese State Council/Communist Party, the entity that manages relations with Taiwan. The TAO's deputy director always heads the Chinese delegation. Taiwanese do not participate in these meetings with the TAO. Those meetings were useful, and we could engage in a lot of side conversation over dinner or during breaks in the formal meeting. We sometimes arranged to have off-line from the conference a private meeting with the TAO deputy director. The head of the Taiwan Coordination Office at State would come up to New York and join me.

One off-line meeting was particularly memorable. It was in 2012 when Ma Ying-jeou was running for re-election. We decided [of course I did this after agreement within the U.S. government], that in this meeting I would tell TAO Deputy Director Sun Yafu that China would see the United States would be doing a lot of things that would help our relations with Taiwan. One of the big things we began that year was to allow visa waiver for Taiwan travelers to the U.S.—a big accomplishment in my time as chairman. And we were building a new office building. I said to Sun, "Don't be surprised if there also are

some announcements about new arms sales." And I mentioned other things we were doing with Taiwan. I had to be very careful about this, but what I was signaling was we probably wanted the same person to win in Taipei that they did. Things were going well under Ma Ying-jeou for them and he provided stability as far as we were concerned. Showing that Ma was handling relations with the U.S. well could also be a plus for Ma with Taiwan voters.

The department's Taiwan office director was with me at that meeting in New York. It was clear these were authorized, official comments. Sun Yafu was a particularly skilled TAO leader who understood Taiwan very well. He took this all in and he couldn't resist needling me, "This is all an elaborate way of telling me you're going to make more arms sales to Taiwan, right?"

I said, "I don't think you quite got my point. That is just one aspect of what we might do—"

That's an example of one part of that job.

Another memorable moment: When Obama made his first trip to Beijing, in the joint U.S.-China statement issued afterwards, some language made a lot of people uncomfortable, including in Taiwan and even a lot of Americans. It could be read as suggesting we bought Beijing's interpretation—it talked about respect for Chinese sovereignty. That could have been read as including their claims over Taiwan. I was about to make a trip to Taiwan. I was being sent to brief them on the trip, even though I hadn't been on it. I first went to Washington to meet many of the key people who had accompanied the president to China, most significantly Jeff Bader, who had been the president's right-hand person the whole trip and had negotiated the joint statement. During the trip to Beijing, the White House/State Department delegation in Beijing had regularly communicated with officials in Taipei about aspects of the Beijing meetings that related to Taiwan. Bader said at one point Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister He Yafei said to Jeff, "I didn't know there was a third person in this room with us." Referring to the constant communication with Taiwan.

But despite that consultation with Taipei, the administration managed to piss Taiwan off with the result. So I was sent to try to explain publicly and privately that no, this had not in any way implied we were accepting China's sovereignty claims related to Taiwan, that the language in the joint declaration strictly referred to Tibet and Xinjiang. So I said all that in Taipei. Of course, Beijing just blasted the hell out of me. They insisted the U.S. had recognized their sovereignty over Taiwan. Washington did stand by me.

Taiwan presidential candidates usually make a trip to Washington while they're candidates, to show their ability to handle the important U.S. relationship. Of course, an incumbent president seeking reelection cannot make the trip since he or she is not allowed to visit our capital. I accompanied presidential candidates during their DC visits in 2008, 2012, and 2016. I accompanied the DPP [Democratic Progressive Party]

candidate Tsai Ying-wen when she visited Washington in 2012, the year that she lost the election to the incumbent, Ma Ying-jeou. In meetings with White House and State Department officials, Tsai had too many people with her from her party, and she was looking over her shoulder all the time at how they were going to react to her answers. She was too cautious on the cross-strait issues; people in Washington were not impressed; she kind of bombed. For her State Department meeting, we met next door at the Institute for Peace. She didn't see the main deputy secretary; she saw Tom Nides who then was deputy secretary for management. He is a smart guy. We briefed him ahead of time, had him all prepared. At the end of the meeting he walked over to me and said, "Is that all there is?"

I said, "Usually there is far more substance to what Tsai says, but I know what you mean about today." So as Tsai was leaving town, a story appeared in the *Financial Times* saying that someone in the NSC staff had indicated that there was disappointment in her visit, which had raised questions about whether she was up to the job of dealing with mainland China. I forget the exact language, but it was a real hatchet job. To say that Tsai and her group were disappointed with that article would be an understatement. Her main assistant, who had prepped for the trip, a long-time friend, wouldn't even speak to me for about a year.

But the intellectual author [as they say in Spanish] of that call was not anybody in the administration. It was Richard Bush, the former chairman and now as well as then at Brookings. Very respected in this town as a leading China and Taiwan expert. During Tsai's visit Richard, always well-informed about anything happening related to Taiwan, had tested the waters with me and Kurt and maybe Evan at NSC, "What would you think about someone making such a call?" And I'll confess, I didn't oppose the idea. I'm unclear about the next step in this process, but probably the NSC Asia office decided to follow through on Richard's suggestion. Unfortunately instead of the Asia experts talking directly to the press, the task was given to one of the press handlers at the NSC. So it was a bit crude. I remember afterwards I commented to my colleagues, "As a veteran of U.S. policy in Central America, I'm familiar with the art of influencing elections. It's to be done with a stiletto, not a machete." (laughs) This was kind of a machete job.

Tsai did win the next election in 2016. The KMT [Kuomintang] nominated a candidate who was very pro-China, way beyond what the electorate would have supported. Then they changed horses in midstream, nominated a new candidate close to the election date. They never recovered from that and he lost. Tsai also ran a good campaign. She'd learned. When she visited Washington in 2016, she asked us [she's not afraid to ask], "What should I do differently this time?"

I replied, "Just come with a small group, have intimate meetings. And be prepared to answer the tough questions." And she did.

I always say that my tenure as AIT chairman was for ten and one half years because the last six months were eventful. After Tsai's election in January 2016 we decided to do

something done occasionally in the past—to send a high-level envoy to meet the in-coming president, to help ensure there would be no surprises. Our Taiwan policy group decided to send Bill Burns. He's not an Asia expert, but he's Bill Burns. Very smart, very wise, really knows how to handle himself. I went with Bill to Taiwan. Kin Moy, our extremely able director in Taipei at the time, joined our meetings. We met with Tsai, congratulated her, and had a long talk about how she was going to deal with the mainland. We gave the administration's position and what we'd like to see. We also met with the losing candidate. Bill left town one day before me, so I got to meet with a third candidate who never had a chance. That's what a delegation's deputy does.

She became president on May 20, 2016. I was still the chairman for a few months, until October 1. I was a member of our unofficial-official delegation. The White House names the delegation, but of course it's called a "people's delegation," unofficial. The Obama administration named as delegation leader Ron Kirk, former U.S. trade representative and mayor of Dallas. The administration wanted to have it bipartisan. I suggested John Negroponte and he agreed. Alan Romberg, a very respected expert on China and Taiwan was also part of the delegation. Tsai invited us to a lunch she helped to prepare at her home the day before she was inaugurated, a personal touch that showed the importance of Taiwan's relationship with the U.S. She "transited" the States a few weeks later and I had a lot of interaction with her in my last few months as chairman.

The U.S. government has had an excellent relationship with President Tsai and her team. That was true during the last nine months of the Obama administration and has continued during the Trump administration. Beijing hates her, refuses to engage with her in any way, and puts every imaginable form of diplomatic, economic, and military pressure on Taiwan. But even the Taiwan experts who work for and with the Chinese government grudgingly acknowledge that she is much more cautious than Chen Shui-bian. In both our administration and in our Congress, Beijing's treatment of the Tsai government is seen as bullying.

I continue to see President Tsai in my frequent post-AIT visits to Taiwan and when I'm included in events when Tsai "transits" the U.S., most recently in New York two months ago. In the last three years I have met privately with Tsai several times. I am seeing her as a private citizen but she knows that I'm in regular contact with both the American expert community and members of the current administration. I regularly get together with Jim Moriarty, my successor as AIT chairman. There was one quasi-official trip I made to Taipei after leaving the AIT job. In June 2018, the State Department paid for me to attend the ceremony for the opening of our new AIT Taipei office building. I was especially glad to do that because seventeen years earlier, at the end of my time in Taipei as director, I had been directly involved in selection of the building's site. During my 2018 visit I did a number of public events, including an oral history interview, a press Q and A, speaking to a university class, and a round-table discussion with experts on cross-strait relations.

As we used to say on consular documents, "Further deponent sayeth not."

Q: It's been a while since I heard that!

Before we end the interview altogether, you've seen the department and service change over time. How would you advise—

BURGHARDT: Every day, things get a little bit better. (laughs)

Q: How would you advise an individual now that wants to become a member of the Foreign Service in terms of preparing themselves?

BURGHARDT: I often get asked this question. I talk to young people a lot on these things. First, I point out that there is no specific required track. We have people in the Foreign Service who have had prior careers in the private sector, in the NGO world, in the military. I've met FSOs who were botanists. You don't have to study political science or economics. It doesn't hurt to study some of it, I found it very useful, but there is not an absolute one-size-fits-all for how to prepare to become a diplomat.

I also say that an overall knowledge of our country, culture, and history is important. They tend to have questions about those things on the oral exam. There will be questions about Louis Armstrong or baseball or Supreme Court decisions. But that's not the only reason. Once you get in, you need that. You need to be somebody who's a good spokesperson for the American people.

I also say that once you get in and as you get in, you shouldn't always be thinking about how far you're going to go, and how all this can lead me to becoming an ambassador or an assistant secretary. All of the jobs on the way up are fascinating in their own right, in their own way. They were in my case. You should enjoy them and feel like you're accomplishing as much as you can and be proud of what you're accomplishing from the junior through the mid through the senior levels. If you don't take that attitude, you're never going to make it to the top anyway. But that's not why to do it—you have to enjoy it at every step.

I also tell people that probably the toughest part of being in the Foreign Service, if you're married, are the constant moves and especially the stress on your spouse and his or her career. The constant moving can also be very stressful for your children, but your spouse can have the special challenge of trying to have a career. There are a few careers that are very portable. But there are a lot that are not. My wife said sometimes that she started her career all over again every two or three years. That wasn't totally true, but she had a very eclectic collection of jobs. Generally, particularly in the last half of my career, I was in more developed places or at least places that were growing fast like China, and she could find good things to do. But there are places where it is really tough. If you go to Botswana or the Marshall Islands or someplace like that, there are a lot of careers that aren't going to work there, so you have to think about that. It can be a strain on the marriage.

When I was AIT chairman, our office in Taipei always asked me to have a brown-bag lunch with first- and second-tour officers. I love to do that, and they seemed to like it.

I would say to them, people will tell you things you must do, to check boxes in your career. Be very, very careful about that. For example, I was once on a special board [I've been on a lot of promotion panels]. During my year of living aimlessly I got to be on some very interesting panels. One was for senior officers in the commercial service. That was great because it was just before I was about to go into a series of senior positions. I learned who all the good and mediocre senior commercial officers were! But the other one I was on was a specially convened board for 01 to OC [counselor]. It was because someone, one or two people, had grieved against the decisions of the board. I guess there was considered to be sufficient justification to reconvene the board. It wasn't long, a couple of days, but we had to look at the files again and they wanted to see if we would rank order them more or less the same way as the previous board, or if there was a radical difference in the way we ranked the candidates. I never heard about the outcome; I don't think they tell you. Since it was only for a short period, two days, they didn't feel too bad about getting very busy people, along with people who were not busy like me. So we had a pretty high-powered group.

Several things struck us. One was that you had officers who had obviously decided that they had to be DCM somewhere—anywhere—or at least the consul general at a constituent post. In some of these places basically nothing was happening there and no matter how someone wrote it up, you still knew that really nothing was happening. There wasn't a lot to say about them. For example, that was certainly true for a guy who was consul general in Brisbane, Australia. For two EERs [employee evaluation report] in a row, in his own statement most of what he talked about was how he got his quarters squared away. (laughs) I'm not kidding! You didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I was not surprised when not long after that our consulate in Brisbane was closed.

But then, in contrast, there were examples of people who were DCM in places where things were happening. In many cases, they obviously were stars. But there were also people who really stood out as section chiefs. I remember there were two persons who as 01 officers were the econ section chief and political section chief in Israel. Well, that's a place where there is really something going on. Those reports had some zing to them. And there also were admin section and public affairs chiefs in places where something was happening, places where we actually care what was happening.

Now here's the factor that was sort of politically incorrect in our system—politically incorrect is the wrong term, but it was somewhat improper. We could not help but notice who had written these reports. If someone got a glowing review from Tom Pickering, who happened to be ambassador to Israel at the time—it was usually the review statement—you read that carefully. If it was glowing, or if it was written with that kind of moderated phrasing when we're not so impressed by the person, it came through. If it was by Tom Pickering, I'm sorry, but it had more weight than if it was by somebody you

never heard of. Is that wrong? Well, we're human. Probably that's also a factor that's worth considering.

So therefore, what is my advice? Go someplace that is important to American strategic and/or commercial interests. Do not take a job just because of its title. If you're not interested in that country, if you don't think you are going to be interested in it, if there's not something going on there which is attracting interest from Washington and the world, don't go there just for the title. Maybe later if it's the only place you're going to be named ambassador, it's fine. I also recognize that for personal reasons, especially for tandem couples, or because of family connection to a country or a deep interest in the culture of a country there can be understandable exceptions to this advice. But generally I advise avoiding sleepy places. It's probably not going to help you unless some unexpected major event happens there. But if you get offered a job where there's really something happening, that's different. You're probably going to shine better there. And if you can work for someone who is one of the State Department's stars, that'll be good, first of all because what they write will be listened to, also because they're going to be a great role model for you.

Also if the post is important, you're going to be visited by important people from Washington. They're going to see you. For example, Assistant Secretary Stan Roth sits next to you at dinner and says, "I'm going to send you to Taiwan." That's not going to happen if he doesn't sit next to you.

That's the kind of advice I give junior officers. Go for quality, go for substantive interest. The other thing I notice is that sometimes officers make career mistakes because they think, "We better stay in Washington so Johnny can finish high school here." When my parents moved from Connecticut to New Jersey, I was deeply upset. Just as upset as a kid is when his parents move from Fairfax, Virginia, to Prague. But I survived. Of course, moving to another country is much more stressful, but the kid will probably survive who goes from Fairfax to Prague. In many, maybe most cases they even benefit from it. So don't ruin your career by being afraid to move out of Washington, or stay in Washington too long, turning down jobs that would help your career if you took them. Of course there are exceptions: medical conditions of the officer or family members that require the attention of American doctors, children with learning disabilities or other special needs, responsibility for the care of elderly parents, and other personal and family situations.

One last thought about advice to Foreign Service officers: Wherever you are assigned, make an effort, with your spouse and children, to engage with the country and its people, learn about its history and culture, get out into the neighborhoods of the city where you are posted and explore the whole country. Move beyond the expatriate community in the friendships you develop. You will all have more fun and the country's people will notice and appreciate your interest. Encourage your family members to learn the local language. That will give them more independence so they can have their own experiences and not feel isolated or even "trapped" in the expat bubble. Susan and I were proud of our daughter Caroline for deciding to learn the difficult Korean language during her three

years of high school in Seoul. Caroline was very happy about how that language capability enabled her to have Korean friends and to enjoy life in Korea much more than if she had been confined to the expat world.

Q: That's for the individual. Now, for the institution. I let you get away without instructing the State Department about how it can do better.

BURGHARDT: There's a great expression in Chinese, which means, "I dare not have the pretense to do that."

Q: I don't mean how to change the foreign policy of the U.S., but rather how can they improve the way they do business, to be more effective or just better from your view?

BURGHARDT: Some of this is not going to be very original. The only thing that Rex Tillerson did that I agreed with was to get rid of the proliferation of special assistants. This was a big mistake in the Obama administration. The secretary of state's span of control was seventy-five people or something. It was out of control. It also created lots of confusion in terms of who was speaking for the administration, and lots of unnecessary visits around the world, and was also a waste of taxpayers' money. I don't know how far they've gone in cutting back on that. There's always room for a few. Steve Biegun is doing a pretty good job as the special representative for North Korea, and many of us who may have other problems with this administration have been quite impressed by him. But there was always a special assistant for North Korea, even before the Obama administration. Many others are superfluous.

That's one, a small one really. My friend Larry Pope has written about the over-militarization of American foreign policy and the Defense Department having too large a role, too much of a budget to do things that really should be the State Department's, like aid programs. I agree with him on that. Larry has written very good stuff on that subject and he gives speeches, too. I got him to give a speech in Cape Cod. The State Department has to reclaim some of that and somebody needs to rein in the Defense Department. Obviously, it has to be the White House, or a very wise secretary of defense who escapes the grip of his own building.

Q: What about training?

BURGHARDT: There's a long-standing problem of training being downplayed in importance; we don't do as much of it as most big organizations do. I think the State Department does an excellent job of language training. One thing it has always done, first rate, is language training—and I took a lot of language training with the State Department: two years of Chinese, one year of Vietnamese, then I had refresher courses in both when I did later assignments. It was always very well done.

But the only other training I ever had was a kind of brief management training they gave when you became an 02 or first had a job with some supervisory responsibility. Then I

had the DCM course, which I thought was pretty good. I had the ambassadorial course before going to Taiwan. They used to give it to you every time you went to be chief of mission. Pickering was famous for taking it every time. Then they stopped doing that. When I was going to Vietnam, they brought me in for one afternoon as a resource person who had already been a COM [chief of mission] rather than as a student. Those courses are okay. DCM course was very good. The ambassador course was only okay, because they have to tailor it to the political appointees as well as the career ambassadors.

Other training: There's a lot that I never got because it came later. Like political officer training—I never had any of that even though I was a political officer. There's economic training, various kinds of consular training. I never had functional training for my political cone or any other cone, so I can't judge the quality of it.

I think area studies is very important, and important that it's done right. I did a lot of that over the years. It was okay, but it probably needs to be taken more seriously. It needs to have a larger chunk of the time while officers are studying the language. They need really good people doing it; sometimes they are, sometimes they aren't. I don't know, what do other people say about training?

Q: The only thing I wonder about is once you begin training in a hard language, should you leave them in that region? In other words, it's a big investment and once they have that skill, what's the point in assigning them—if you learn Arabic, there are fifteen or sixteen countries with thirty posts among them, you could spend a career speaking Arabic or Chinese. Russian perhaps a little bit less. The argument that once you make an investment in someone in that hard a language, you might as well explain to them or set the expectation that they're going to spend the majority of their career in that region.

BURGHARDT: I agree with that. I see people who seem to have used their hard-language training only once. But I think maybe we got better at that than we used to be. Among China people, they keep going back pretty well. I think it's good to always have a plus-one in your career. A lot of Japan hands also do Korea; that's good. Each is a one-country language. A lot of China hands also do Southeast Asia, as I did. That's logical. In a lot of countries in Southeast Asia you can use a little Chinese also, that's part of the population. I dabbled at different points in my career in Latin America, also. That was random. There was no plan to do that. But I don't regret it. I came into the Foreign Service thinking I'd work in Latin America. I'd been in the Peace Corps in Colombia, I had been an exchange student in Ecuador. I studied Latin American affairs at Columbia. I was pretty knowledgeable about Latin America. And then of course they sent me to Vietnam. And then I went back to Latin America, then to Asia, then to Latin America again, when the whole Central American thing picked up and Negroponte drafted me.

There's no harm in that. It gives you some respect for the world's complexity, which is another one of the things I tell new officers. "There are all these myths in the Foreign Service that you will hear, and most of them are BS like 'once you are in the Latin

American Bureau, you'll never get out.' Well, that's baloney. I got in and out twice. Don't believe that nonsense."

Q: That may have been true long ago. Then I guess the last thing is the recruitment and retention. Any recommendations?

BURGHARDT: I'm not knowledgeable about recruitment. I will say as AIT chairman and after that when FSOs come to the East-West Center or when I travel overseas, I meet lots of new officers. I'm impressed. I think they're smart people. I think they're recruiting good people. Is that not what other people say?

Q: It's not that I've heard one or the other, it's more over time the department has become more conscious of the need to recruit more thoughtfully and focus on various skills that the department may need, and also retention by being more family friendly.

BURGHARDT: Right. The retention issue. And diversity is important too. I think it's great that we're getting more women, we're basically fifty-fifty now. In terms of retention—the family pressures are the greatest problem to a career, no question they're the greatest challenge. I think there are things that can be done to make that better. Improve the opportunities for spouses to work at posts; getting agreements with countries to allow them to work is very important. I worked on that at some posts. Sometimes they had to change their labor laws. That's not easy. If you can get it done by regulation, that's easier. And sensitivity to the quality of medical programs and schools overseas is important for retention. Also how you handle evacuations and the separation of families. One of my favorite mentors, the great Phil Habib, used to say in his Brooklyn accent, "In most evacuations, by the time the evacuation has been carried out, the crisis is over." So we kind of jump the gun sometimes. But of course in a country run by lawyers and insurance executives, I guess that's unavoidable.

Q: All right. Do you now have any parting thoughts?

BURGHARDT: I don't. I've covered everything. I know there are things I will think of just like I thought of the whole Fang Lizhi caper and realized, How could I not have mentioned that? That may happen. Maybe we can handle it over the phone. I think we've done it.

End of interview