

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
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*Memoir*

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**A Non-Forgiving Life**

**Pre-World War II Poland**

There are episodes in my life about which I should like to write. The audience is largely me. The aim is self-clarification. I am not attempting an autobiography. My memory is faulty, I do not distinguish well between events that I can remember myself and events that have become part of me because I had been told about them and they have incorporated themselves among my own memories. Also, I am often uncertain of the order in which events occurred.

More importantly, I am not an open personality. I believe in a broad interpretation of Freudian theories, and I am ready to believe that self-analysis can be helpful. But I also believe pulling away self-defense mechanisms can be destructive. My life does not involve major matters that are shameful, but there are things about which I am not proud; things that I have happily or unhappily left behind, and I have little wish to give them another look.

I was conceived in Gdansk (Danzig) Poland and born in 1930 in Krakow to a middle class, Jewish family which had long since freed itself from religion. We soon moved to Lwov, now Lviv, then in Poland, now in the Ukraine (Poland moved west, as it were, after World War II, taking over parts of Germany and giving up parts of Eastern Poland). My father, Zygmunt, was, I believe, an atheist and my mother, Maryla, a pro-forma Jew who went to temple once or twice a year at most. My recollection, rather vague, is that neither thought nor talked about religion at all. (Maryla ate ham on matzos on Jewish holidays.)

Zygmunt was keenly interested in politics and had strong views about what the future would bring, for Jews in particular and for the world in general. From about 1936 he foresaw a world war and the end of Jewish life in Germany and East Europe. He ceaselessly counseled our extended family to make plans to leave Poland and emigrate to the West.

It was relatively easy for my family to do this. Zygmunt's business was timber – both developing tracts of it and exporting the product, mainly to England. His brother, Edward Griffel, my uncle, had already set up some of the business in England to which

he moved. Zygmunt's efforts to convince members of the family to leave Poland met with no success. Nevertheless, he made plans to leave.

I was sent to school in England in 1938 or 1939, and Zygmunt and Maryla followed in 1939. A few of the family escaped the Nazis later, via Romania, Italy and Tangier, and the rest were either shot or died in concentration camps. Oddly, with this history, we went on vacation to France in the summer of 1939 and were still in Chamonix when Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September, as World War II began.

It should be said that emigrating is easier said than done. (This is written in 2015, and we see today evidence of the difficulty daily in the wave of refugees, Syrian and others, in Southern Europe.) Yet in a curious way, middle class emigration is perhaps the most difficult psychologically of all. Lawyers, doctors, educators generally lack the skill and language to be able to transfer their knowledge and skills from one country to another. A wonderfully intelligent novel on this subject (essentially Jewish blindness) is *Badenheim 1939* by Aharon Appelfeld.

Zygmunt's case proves the rule. Even as a businessman, hugely successful in Poland, he was unable to do as well in England and later in the United States, and declined steadily intellectually and in the business world.

#### I

I recognize that much of the foregoing seemingly contradicts what I said earlier about memory, but, in reality, there is no contradiction, for little of all this is actually remembered. Much, much more is derived from family lore and piecing together information subsequently learned.

My first memory is lying in bed with one of my grandmothers. The second being told by my (German) nanny while playing with bricks that I would make an excellent architect. That's it. Two updatable and unimportant memories and then just about nothing else until the age of seven! I was once told that children who have undergone a change of country and circumstances can remember much less than other children. (This is certainly not true of foreign service kids.) It is true in my case.

I also remember two interesting sessions with Zygmunt. I must have been about seven. I approached him very seriously to say that I was very worried that before I became old I would have read every book there ever was and that there would be nothing else to read. He reassured me. I was, and remain, a prodigious reader so there was some sense to my worry. Reading has remained my greatest pleasure in life.

The second scene happened in England in 1945 shortly before we left for America. Zygmunt woke me up very early in the morning to tell me the Americans had dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. I said in a bored voice something like, "Oh not another secret weapon. Nothing will come of it."

At seven or eight I remember a vivid experience. I was lying on a sofa listening to the radio to a Polish propaganda piece about the Polish invasion of Teschen (various spellings) as part of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia (Sudetenland). It is one of the most inglorious small pieces of Polish historical stupidity. Polish radio went gaga over the event. So did I. This revealed two interesting facts about me: my Polish “patriotism” and my conservative instincts and that in spite of anti-Semitism I did remain a Polish “patriot.”

There is absolutely no doubt that there was profound anti-Semitism. There is no doubt also that I felt little of it. I was obviously protected from it by my parents. I never went to school in Poland. I don’t know how I learned to read but I could by the time I reached England. I am not clear why I didn’t go to school in Poland – partly no doubt because school started late in Poland, but still, at eight it is a bit strange unless my parents already knew I was being sent to England. The main point though was that we moved in a liberal Polish and middle class Jewish social milieu which itself was almost walled off from the rest of society. This separation also explains the frequent dichotomy between a luminous intelligentsia and the frequently awful Polish governments (such as now, in November 2015).

But there was more to this quirk. I was not only patriotic but quite conservative. Where this came from is not clear. Not my parents. But it persisted over the years until I was about 18 from which time I moved steadily left.

My conservatism took various forms, and the tie-in with the Teschen incident is not shinningly clear. To my later horror, but understandably, I was a wartime school boy fond of Churchill. At the post-war British election, I was strongly pro-Churchill and the Conservatives, and anti-Attlee and Labour. I was pro-British and anti-Israel in the Jewish fight for the then-to-be Israel. This position was to give me a lot of trouble in my first years in the United States. And, as I moved steadily left in the later years, some of these early positions horrified me (though I never lost my emotional liking for Churchill). More of all this later.

### **Emigration to America**

After a period on the Isle of Wight of some six weeks waiting for accommodations on a flight to the US (the flights were heavily booked), we left for America. I don’t remember very profound thoughts. I was more concerned with the bus schedule to Ventnor, the nearest town, than with the future. The bus schedule was neatly arranged so that one could hardly ever go to the cinema in Ventnor and see a complete film. The Isle of Wight, strangely, was the beginning of my life-long love affair with cinema.

When we left Poland, I did not concern myself with what my future would have been had we remained in Poland. It was clear even to me, I think, that a concentration camp would comprise my future. This lack of thought was not the case in leaving England. I did not

wish to leave. Had I stayed how would I have made out? Even with my less than glorious grades and my laziness I think I would have done fairly well. I knew I had a good brain. My friends, or those who were fellow refugees, did well. But clearly the struggle in England would have been harder than in the US.

I am not sure whether we arrived in the US in late 1945 or early 1946. Zygmunt had left earlier via Central America ostensibly because of flight difficulties. There must have been some truth to this but clearly, I now know, it was not the whole truth.

We stayed, the three of us, at an old, rather nice, hotel on W. 79th Street in Manhattan. Zygmunt did not stay with us though I saw him frequently. I don't know who had prepared for us by finding our accommodation – a comfortable hotel suite.

On our first day in New York, Maryla sent me shopping for food in the neighborhood. The “suite” had some cooking or at least snack facilities. I was welcomed by the counterman in the first small grocery I entered reacting to my English accent by saying that I must just have stepped off the boat. I confirmed his surmise that it was my first day in America and everyone laughed. It was a pleasant launch. The Italian waiter in the hotel dining room fell in love with my three-year-old sister for whom he could not do enough. She refused to eat her eggs since for her only powdered eggs were real and she would not understand these things in shells. For all of us the plentitude of everything was overwhelming. That evening we were invited to dinner with some elderly relatives in Brooklyn. I was offered beer for the first time in my life and had a shock – it turned out to be root beer which I have hated for the rest of my life. It was obvious that our relatives were not doing well. They were eking out a decent but difficult life: this was the other side of the American dream. Curiously my sister was not with Maryla and me on this visit.

This brings me to two important, but not equally important, factors in my life: money and food. I am to some degree a foodie. All the years in England and then in the US have not much affected my central-European tastes, and mixed in later years with French predilections. Neither World War II food in school or at home, which could be pretty stark, affected me. I was quite satisfied with some English food such as sausage and mash; meat pies and bubble and squeak (cabbage and potatoes refried). At home, where the cooking remained central-European, such as it was, I did not complain at Maryla's cooking or that of Mrs. Wahl, both of which continued to be deplorable. The situation remained much the same in America where the food I consumed was still central-European. I did not, do not, like corn as a vegetable though I like it in corn meal dishes. I consider the combination of fried eggs, pancakes and maple syrup as one made in hell though I think maple syrup itself is one of the great American contributions to gastronomy. Curiously, it was in America that I began to love Indian food under the influence of an Indian girlfriend and a very good Polish refugee friend who had spent the war years in India and with whom and his family we later shared a two-storied house which we had bought together.

Money is a more complicated matter. I always thought that my contempt for wealth in the abstract combined with my love of it for the comfortable life it could provide were a reaction to my small business Jewish background, and to the fact that money however carefully saved could so easily be lost as in World War II. As is apparent, I have gone through a good deal of money in my life, but always somewhat heedlessly and thoughtlessly. Yet when we (my first wife, Bobbie, and I) purchased a book store in New Hampshire, it was not only the allure of books and reading which I have always had that greatly pleased me. It was the selling itself, the retail part of the equation, which also was an important factor in my satisfaction with what I was doing. Atavism I think. When we left Poland, Zygmunt must have been a very rich man. How much he was able to bring out of Poland is not known to me but it was enough for first the three of us, and then the four, to live very comfortably, with only fairly negligible income coming in. The later years, largely after his death in 1953, were ones that saw considerable additional amounts of money to appear.

Dr. Ziffer was instrumental for the first tranches. These resulted from a claim which he researched together with another Polish-Jewish attorney in New York for payment of the claim against the German government for confiscation of specialized timber in Poland and on the high seas on the way to England in the early days of the war and possibly just before. The amount which we received came to well over two million dollars which we three (Maryla, Diana and me) shared but not in equal amounts. By agreement Maryla was to get the greater part.

I have some doubts about the veracity of our claim. There is no doubt that some of it was based on indisputable fact, but the timber confiscation on ships is somewhat of a question. It remains to be said that none of us had any qualms whatsoever in accepting the claim whatever our suspicions. One view was, and it remains my view, that whatever Germany paid our family it owed much more, and not only in money, than it could ever repay. In later years various insurance policies on my father's life also began to appear. It was obvious that while he managed to transfer a large amount of money out of Poland, he did not manage to transfer everything. He then bought life insurance policies in Poland with Polish money with international companies payable in England, Italy and the US in US dollars. The companies did not volunteer their debt, but we gradually found out and they were forced to pay. The interesting thing about these policies is that Zygmunt began to buy them as early as 1936 showing again how early he foresaw the tragic future for Jews, for Poland, and for Europe.

### **Thoughts on Religion and the Arts**

I have never had the slightest religious inclination. I do not, and never have, believed in a personal God. It seems entirely possible to me that some force controlling human destiny in some way exists, or then again it may not. We simply do not and cannot know. The fact that some religions do some good in our world (and some evil) is true enough, but for me extremely beside the point. The same can be said about bringing comfort to many

people: commendable but of no interest to one who questions religion. This sounds naive even to me but I believe that a religion has to be “true” to make me believe. By “true” I mean a number of things: explain why we are here and where, if anywhere, we are going; why this particular brand of religion rather than another; why devoted to one species rather than another; and thousands of other mysteries. Since we cannot even conceive of all possible answers to all possible questions, it seems quite useless to try. All religions have the same problem: one must first have faith before one can accept a particular doctrine. I have no faith. As far as being a Jew is concerned, I feel exactly as I feel about other religions. The doctrine is attractive in some ways but this has nothing to do with religion according to my understanding of what religion must be for me.

My one visit to Israel many years ago actually strengthened the above feeling. I felt not at all at home. I felt guilt at not speaking the language (Hebrew). Even as long ago as 40 years, I felt Israeli democracy applied only to Jews and was thus not the real thing. I do not believe the holocaust in any way justifies Israeli behavior toward Palestinians, neither historically nor contemporaneously. And worst of all, I did not like being in a Jewish state. I tended to regard Israelis vis-à-vis Arabs in similar light as Germans vis-à-vis Jews. As the saying should go most of my friends are Jews, but when everyone is a Jew I fall off the wagon. (See further thoughts on Israel later.)

This of course makes me anti-clerical. For example, I cannot understand why churches pay no taxes (municipal). Or why everyone is not an agnostic (not an atheist for that implies a belief in non-belief). However, some (many?) churches here make tremendous contributions to the arts. In the Western tradition alone, sculpture, painting, music and theatre would be inconceivable without religions’ support. It obviously enriches us vastly, but it must also be noted that the cost of art to the glory of God is paid for by the wealth of churches built on the backs of the poor.

I came to music late. In all my years in England I do not remember ever going to a concert. If any music spoke to me at all, it was Gilbert and Sullivan. I did not see my first opera till I was 17 or so: it was Parsifal (with Kirsten Flagstad) and I have hated Wagner’s music ever since. Yet without knowing much about it, I developed a passion for classical music that has stayed with me; almost to a point where it rivals my pleasure in reading. I cannot carry a tune, however, and I am told that my piano lessons as a child were a disaster.

## **Family History**

I also have no great love for the “glory” of the past. Most middle-class Polish Jews (or at least Galacian Polish Jews) point to their distinguished ancestry – real or imagined. For what it's worth mine is not an exception. My cousin Edward Gelles has written a book about my father’s side of the family: *An Ancient Lineage – European Roots of a Jewish Family – Gelles-Griffel-Wahl, Hayes-Safier, Loew-Taube; Portland, Oregon: Valentine*

Mitchell, 2006. It is of interest only for those interested in complicated lineages among these families for long periods of time.

I know less about Maryla's family. They were well known in Krakow as rabbis, bankers and jewelers. There is a family tradition that they (the Wohls – as distinguished from the Wahls) stemmed from a late Middle Ages chief Rabbi of Padua, Italy. Another family legend is of a family member, a Polish parliamentarian, whose only recorded mention was once asking for a window to be opened.

In Poland as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Jews were sometimes entrusted with important political appointments since they offered no danger of turning out too powerful competition for their appointers. The Wohl version of this is that one of their ancestors acted as King of Poland between the death of a genuine king and the appointment of his successor the next day. This story is not to be trusted: it may have been made up by Maryla who did make up good sounding stories.

Aside from Zygmunt's reparation claims against the German Government, now fully settled, Maryla had substantial claims against the post-war Polish Government. These were shared claims with her brother Max for three houses in Krakow and an interest in a bank on the central square in Krakow. The claims were disputed by other members of the family, the Polish Government in the case of the bank which had been legitimately sold to a German bank (it is not clear by whom) and others. In addition, Maryla's brother Max Susser had obtained some compensation from the US Government for all three houses, under a US/Polish agreement, and Maryla had had the same partial remuneration for two of the houses (only two because she was not yet a citizen when the third turned up). After a much passionate legal battle by all parties, I, who inherited Maryla's claim, gave up the claim on a trip to Poland many years later. It was just going to be too expensive to pursue. I do not know if anyone else in the claim was ever successful.

## **America**

After a very pleasant month or so in New York I was sent to a boarding school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. It was the very opposite of my school in England. This one was run by a Serbian left-wing martinet with strong progressive education theories. The only interest here is that I fell in love for the first time. The girl showed not much interest. I later discovered that she became a gym instructor and was a lesbian. I found the former more disturbing than the latter.

### **I**

In my absence my parents must have decided on their future. They decided to separate (and later divorce). My mother and Diana moved to Los Angeles where her brother lived and I soon followed in late 1947 (or 1946).

Lean years followed this. I had loved New York, and also liked what I saw in Great Barrington and the rest of New England. I hated Los Angeles from the first day, and I

have never lost my hatred. It is admittedly a comfortable place to live – even now, even with smog and impossible traffic. It then had a comfortable middle class, single-dwelling housing and it still has. But it is sprawling, unlikable, architecturally undistinguished, and artistically, though improving, tarnished by too much money and a Hollywood perspective on everything.

By this time, late 1946 or 1947, the money we had brought was largely gone and what was left was divided between Zygmunt and Maryla. By what proportion I do not know. Maryla bought a house at about this time. We rented a couple of the rooms, usually to airline stewardesses. Since we were far from the airport I don't know how or why this worked. My mother soon went to work as a bookkeeper in 1950.

I skipped high school except for a couple of citizenship classes and entered Los Angeles Junior college transferring to UCLA after a year and a half. At various times I also worked part-time at a ball point pen factory owned by a cousin of Zygmunt.

My uncle – Maryla's brother --- was a charming but ineffectual individual. Well educated and informed but pretty useless in all practical matters. However, even though he did not take Zygmunt's advice, he and his wife managed to escape from Hitler's Poland in late September 1939, through Romania, Leghorn, Italy, Tangier (where he was helped by a cousin who owned a small private bank there and whom I got to know well many years later when I worked in Morocco), and then the US and Los Angeles. I am not clear why LA. His and Maryla's family (mother and sister) were shot by the Nazis in our apartment in Lvov.

We sold the house after about two years and bought a duplex with us living downstairs and another Polish refugee family of friends living upstairs. Their children were about my age and I became very good friends. They had spent the war years in India – another clue to my love of Indian food.

I loved UCLA. At first, I commuted by bus but soon I bought my first car. I majored in political science (probably a mistake) but liked my courses and most of all my instructors, particularly a Dr. Nixon who got me interested in South Africa and Robert Neumann, an Austrian refugee, who later became US Ambassador to several countries including Afghanistan. More about him later. I also soon became a teaching assistant.

By this time, Diana was becoming a pretty pre-teen of whom I became very protective. One earlier memory of her perhaps bears repeating. When she was about five, I convinced her that she could lay eggs and that it would help the family finances if she did so. She would have to sit quietly in the corner for twenty minutes and behold an egg would emerge. I would carefully place an egg under her bum and after twenty minutes I would, behold, pull it out. I believe she half-believed until she was about seven that she could lay eggs. She and I were very close until her death of cancer in her mid-sixties.



## U.S. Army

My pleasant life was soon interrupted by the draft which caught up with me sometime in 1951. I was a very reluctant soldier. The Korean War meant nothing to me. In later years, my attitude turned even more negative. And I was afraid of the Army. In prospect everything terrified me: the uniforms, the guns, the communal living, fellow draftees, etc. As it turned out practically nothing turned out to be too bad. On the way to Camp Roberts near Paso Robles where basic training was to take place, I met another life-long friend, Richard Roth, who was Mark Rothko's nephew. He was as inept a soldier as I. In training I probably fired my rifle about six times and missed all six shots. Luckily, I knew almost at once that I was not going to Korea. My position then, as it would be now, was that firing a gun only meant that it would need to be cleaned so what was the point. The worst part of basic training was the lack of privacy – I particularly minded sitting on a pot in a multi-toilet facility. Aside from about 20 draftees from California (some from heavily agricultural counties in the north), our company was largely composed of Black draftees from rural Georgia. I had no difficulty getting along with them and everybody else except one white corporal who was clearly an anti-Semite. It was the first instance of this in my life. Or at least the first I detected.

My training terminated abruptly with my getting mumps. I spent several weeks in the very attractive base hospital nursed by a nurse whom I had first met in my first-year college class! I came out of the hospital with no ill effects when it was almost time for an overseas assignment. Mine was Germany as a translator. I served at the transit camp in Sonthofen in Southern Bavaria, a perfectly beautiful mountain town. The camp was teeming with prospective translators presumably all of whom had passed the Army German language test. The actual Army need was for three translators! The Army took the easy way out: after all, a translator is a translator. Although German was almost my first language (I spoke only German to my German nurse in Poland), I was very shaky, my vocabulary was that of a small child, and what I had once known was now partly forgotten. But to the Army, one language was like another, and I was duly recruited as a French translator. Despite all my years of French instruction in England and the US, my French was even worse than my German. It should be said that, in spite of my multi-language history and experience, I had a distinct anti-language talent and it showed.

I was transferred to Rochefort, France. For obvious reasons I much preferred the French assignment to the previously proposed German one. To this day, I do not feel comfortable in Germany or Austria. Rochefort is an ancient small town located between La Rochelle and Bordeaux on the Bay of Biscay. It owes its fame as one of the last redoubts of the French Huguenots; the word redoubt is useful in this case since the company of which I was to be a part for some 21 months was housed in an old redoubt in the middle of town. In the 1950s Rochefort was a heavily communist town which may be the reason we were allowed, even encouraged, to wear civilian clothes.

The town has a long military and naval history, and various caissons and forts are spread throughout the town. The main square, Place Colbert, is quite thrilling for its amplitude.

It is where the film, “The Young Girls of Rochefort”, by Jacques Demy was made. It is also a good food town with oysters from Marennes nearby available cheaply. I was lucky to make friends with the daughter of the town’s pastry shop owner. What the Army achieved in reducing my weight, the free pastry more than compensated.

My company was a seaport company most members of which had shipping and port experience (mainly in New York City) and who were often absent for a week or so in St. Nazaire and Nantes. That they were professionally competent was a rare Army error. I on the other hand became a co-translator in the small Army invoice checking-office in town. My co-translator was an elderly French drunk whose English was as ancient and poor as my French was forgotten and poorer. The operation was commanded by a Captain from Wisconsin who was about as poor a soldier as I. An additive duty of mine was to help find suitable housing for company and other officers. For this I had the services of an official car and driver.

We spent several weeks translating a very long and highly technical invoice for some kind of vehicle refitting. We had a lot of dictionaries in the office but could not find what kind of vehicle it was (I have forgotten its name). On a walk in town, I saw a car named like our invoice vehicle. We assumed from this that it was a land vehicle of some kind and translated our invoice accordingly. It was not till months later that we were chastised by American headquarters in Orleans that we were crazy since the vehicle in question was a boat and our technical translation was all awry. It had not occurred to either of us that for an invoice presented to a port company a boat was a more likely object than a car. Nor had we thought of doing some research in the town’s excellent library. The whole thing was symptomatic of how the Army did things and how easy it was to adapt to inefficiency.

As frequently as my money supply lasted I made trips to Paris. I stayed in Paris with my cousins so that part cost nothing, and my tastes at the time had yet to develop their semi-luxurious demands, and an Army friend and I did manage a two-week plus vacation to Italy my part of which I largely financed out of not inconsiderable winnings in Monte Carlo en route. Zygmunt’s instincts had not altogether failed to descend on me.

This period in Rochefort was not my first experience of France, but it was the first I remembered much about. Similarly, only more so with Paris. I loved it (then) and I still love Paris above all other cities. It was Thomas Jefferson who said, “Every man has two countries – his own and France.” It is true for me but with special emphasis on Paris.

Zygmunt died while I was in the Army. I attended his funeral in New York City. It was in more than the usual way a sad occasion. He is buried on Staten Island in an area of the cemetery occupied by the Nadworna Jewish emigre community organization. He was born near Nadworna. The last time I visited the site was very neglected.

I was discharged from the Army in Tucumcari, New Mexico. Two of my friends, one black, and I decided to visit Washington, DC. We could not find a restaurant that would

seat us together. We were finally directed to the Romanian Inn, near the White House where we were treated respectfully. This was Washington, DC in 1953.

### **The Beginning of a Professional Career**

I returned to Los Angeles and UCLA. I began to worry about my future. Political science was not a brilliant choice for a good chance for an interesting job. I did not want to teach except perhaps at a university, and preparation for this was too long and too costly, despite the fact that tuition at UCLA was \$68.00 a semester at the time. For the last year of my BA, I took some economic courses at UCLA after graduation and at George Washington University in DC. I applied for a U.S. State Department job but found that one needed to have been a US citizen for at least five years. I had been one for a little over four. The Agency for International Development (AID) within State seemed a good second choice. I was accepted as an intern after a rather interesting interview. Many years later I came across a report on the interview in my personnel file. It said something along the lines of: "Griffel was an excellent candidate with one large defect which he shared with so many others." I always wondered which of so many choices this referred to. I never found out.

I arrived in Washington in the summer of 1958 and saw the premiere of "West Side Story" at the National Theatre on my first night there. Unlike most of the rest of the world I did not like it, but it did not spoil my love of the theatre which continued relentlessly. Washington at this time was not a good theatre town. It played mostly tired touring companies playing tired Broadway audience pleasers. I argued with one of my friends that these nevertheless gave pleasure and were worth seeing. He was made of finer stuff. I did go to New York frequently, as money permitted, and theatre was my main reason for these trips.

In Washington, I first stayed with my friend Richard Roth in Arlington and then found a small studio apartment on Scott Circle. Even though I came from a rather unsophisticated LA, I found Washington very provincial. Obviously, there were museums, galleries, monuments, historical sites, some wonderful formal architecture and pleasing living areas. Washington is not a good walking city. The interesting things are too far apart and one either is in huge crowds or in deserted parts. The city went to sleep terribly early, the streets were deserted soon after sunset, the restaurants mostly terrible. By midnight on Saturday everything was closed (by law). One revealing example: You could get a drink at a restaurant or bar, but if you saw a friend at another table you were not allowed to take your drink from one table to another. One took to going to Baltimore weekend evenings.

At AID my first several weeks were taken up by an organized training program. There were clearly some very able people among the speakers and interns, but the program was at a very low intellectual level and poorly organized at that.

At the end of this program I was lucky. I was assigned to AID's evaluation office. The office was responsible for sending teams out to AID posts overseas to evaluate the programs at these posts. The evaluations were supposed to look at the political and economic performance as a whole and were not meant to delve into individual project details. I was not to find out until much later that no one paid much attention to the reports that resulted from our recommendations.

For me however the assignment proved to become the first exciting adventure of my adult life. I was to be the staff assistant to a three-member team which was to go to Afghanistan. It was led by Jim Cooley, a former General Counsel of AID who had been seconded to AID by the CIA. Although I was of course very junior and knew nothing at all about Afghanistan, I was treated throughout as a full member of the team. A great deal of reading was prescribed and enjoyed. We spoke with everyone we could find in Washington who was familiar with Afghanistan, and we even consulted with Sir W.K. Fraser-Tytler in Scotland who was at that time the elderly preeminent scholar of Afghan history, at least in English.

We finally arrived in Kabul. The place was wondrous. Everything we had ever read about it paled in comparison: Not beautiful but strange, austere, a little threatening and frightening. The countryside around Kabul was all these things too, but the austerity a little further out was broken by the bluest of blue lakes and ponds – a blue made bluer by the brown dry earth all around it. The blue had an intensity equaled only by the green of Ireland over which we had flown a few days earlier.

Outside Kabul the people, and by this, I mean the men, were full of curiosity and very friendly. We were very aware of the legendary Afghan hospitality and everywhere food and tea were offered. The children were pleasantly rascally. But we saw very, very, few women and those we saw were completely covered by burqas. The only way to tell who was good looking and who was not was by an examination of heels. Were they clean or dirty, well cared for or neglected? But since the men and children were generally handsome, one could assume the same for women. I later came to know that this was indeed the case. The food sizzling on open braziers everywhere in the country smelt and generally looked wonderful, but we were warned away from it, and frequent infestation of it by hosts of flies strengthened the warnings. A number of times I broke my inhibition and never suffered any ill consequences. Suffice it to say that I fell in love with the country and never lost my affection in several subsequent visits.

But, of course, there was work to be done. Unfortunately, there was a program to be reviewed. The AID mission at the time was well staffed. Traditionally, it had been infiltrated by a number of officers who were adherents of a fundamentalist Christian sect. There was always fear that they would start proselytizing which would have been the end of them and of us. There was no evidence that they ever tried this. Presumably, therefore, they had done nothing wrong, and there was no possible legal way to have them transferred. Moreover, they were excellent members of the AID staff. They were competent in their jobs, knew the country well, spoke some of the local languages (Dari

and Pashtu), and were, simply, exemplary employees. One of them conducted our team to the north of the country, to Mazar-I Sharif, and was both professionally and personally a pleasure to be with.

One of the problems with AID was that the officers who set up programs never stayed in the country long enough to see whether they worked or not. Their assignments were just too short. The faults of any particular project and program could never be ascribed to anyone at post, and the Agency did not ever have the guts to look for the project planner who by now might be anywhere in the world or retired to, for example, Kansas.

That said we (I) found the program deplorable. That which was in place was at best marginally useful and that which was planned, largely ridiculous. One long-term project, run by Columbia Teacher's College under AID contract did some good, but was painfully slow to show results and very expensive. In my later, considerable contact with the Afghanistan program, this project was to become a huge matter of contention. We had also begun a huge irrigation and land-reclamation project in the Helmand Valley under contract with Morrison-Knutsen. Our team was not competent to evaluate this, but it was obvious that, whatever its merits, after Morrison-Knutsen left, there would be no one to oversee the working out of the program or to pay for it.

The most ridiculous project in the works was Kandahar International Airport. At that time (1958-59), planes from Europe could not reach the Far East without refueling. They overflew Afghanistan, and Kandahar, it was thought, would make a wonderful refueling stop. Vast amounts of money were spent. A splendid airport was eventually built. But by the time this happened, several years later, two major problems manifested themselves. Refueling fuel had to be brought in from Pakistan either by air or over several hundred miles of practically impassable roads. Worse, by the time the airport was finished, longer distance aircraft were available, and refueling was no longer necessary.

I want to emphasize that this disparagement of the AID Afghan program is not a criticism of all AID programs, as I shall show. It was, however, an indication of what could, and indeed did, go wrong.

On the way to Mazar-i-Sharif in a USAID car, we stopped at Bamiyan. This was a Buddhist site where hundreds of years ago huge Buddha statues were carved out of the side of a mountain. It was a titanic human achievement on a vast scale. Many years later, the statues were destroyed by the Taliban. For me, the loss to civilization was even greater than the killing of thousands of people by the Taliban. I should be ashamed by my priorities, but I am not.

We stayed in a Government guest house of which the locals were very proud. It was modern, clean, with a beautiful bathroom. The arrangement was that the guest house provided room, including a kitchen, but no food. One hired a cook to prepare meals during stays. This is an arrangement known all over Asia. We had an excellent cook. Unfortunately, the house was not connected to water which bothered no one but us.

Our car broke down in Mazar. While waiting for another from Kabul we were informed that the leader of prayers in the mosque had ordered prayers for us. When nothing came after two or three days, we noticed a cooling in our very warm welcome. Obviously unanswered prayers were the problem.

It was not clear to me why we went to Mazar in the first place. There was no AID activity thereabouts at all. I suppose it was a demonstration, rather an elaborate and expensive one, that the country was highly underdeveloped, and that Kabul was in no way representative. Afghans knew this very well.

It took us several weeks to gather information for our report and to start writing it. We finished writing in Washington with the help of an office secretary/admin assistant, Kay Livingstone. She was marvelous. She had been in the Evaluation Office forever, knew everyone and everything, and could do anything. She had started after World War II working for the UN Refugee Agency in Albania. Then, there were no more professional opportunities. She was an example of an important phenomenon which I did not pay attention to at the time--the thousands of highly competent women throughout the US Government and outside, stuck permanently in meaningless jobs because women, for the most part, were not allowed to advance.

## **Morocco**

It was not long after the Afghanistan assignment that I was assigned to my first regular overseas job as Assistant Program Officer in Rabat, Morocco. Early in my tour, I met Bobbie Waddington who was to become, many years later, my first wife. We first ran into each other in a Jewish deli in Rabat where she had the temerity to correct my French. Bobbie was then married to Bill Waddington who worked for Catholic Relief Services in Morocco. It was my first introduction to the Waddington clan. I also right away met Leonce and Rita Block. He was the UN Representative, or Deputy (I don't remember which) and she was the most elegant woman I ever knew. We remained good friends for many years.

The AID mission apartment I was assigned was large, commodious, and in the centre of town. It was somewhat noisy, next to a cinema, about a three-minute walk to the AID offices. Rabat was still very French--a town of small white buildings, unobtrusive Government quarters, a large but not distinguished Arab market, a Jewish native quarter, and a large Spanish section. There was a huge food market, the covered portion of which was pristinely clean and meant largely for Europeans, i.e. the French. Nearer to the centre of town was a lovely smaller vegetable and fruit market. I remember that there were 14 olive dealers alone. There were uncrowded beaches nearby, lots of places to visit, a magnificent mosque, a virtual copy of the one in Cordoba, Spain, begun in the 13th century and "improved" many times since. Many referred to Rabat as a small, less

sophisticated, pre-civil war Beirut. The Royal Family was much in evidence. The truly much beloved Mohammed V, who was instrumental in the struggle for independence from France and Spain, died in 1961 in Rabat while I was there. Interestingly, the dynasty is Alawite like the dictator of Syria. In sum, Morocco has everything: the sea, mountains, desert, vineyards – all in close proximity. Also wonderful food, Moroccan and French, and even great roads, hotels and all easily reachable. One of the great sights seen in many places are deserts with palm trees and in the medium distance snow-capped mountains. In my first week in Morocco, I went to a movie and was surprised to see a newsreel showing a Moroccan Army ski battalion. Very little English was heard but French was everywhere and was still the official government language.

Thus, finally and reluctantly, we come to the AID program. The AID mission was well staffed with mostly French speaking, many formerly-Marshall Plan, veterans previously working in Paris. Local staff was mostly Moroccan (Berber and Moslem), Jewish Moroccan, Lebanese, Egyptian. Everyone seemed to get along together with the society in general quite tolerant. The chief Moroccan interest in our program was the check (a large one) which we gave them for use of air bases, which we built as a never-admitted quid pro quo. I sometimes thought that the rest of the AID program was primarily run to fudge the air base payment under a more developmental rubric.

A very large problem was the language. No one expected any of our people to speak Moroccan Arabic--not always well understood even by other Arabic speakers. But as the Moroccan government did most of its business in French, this did not matter as most of the resident staff spoke French at least adequately. The problem arose with finding American French-speaking expertise either through contract or within the AID itself.

An additional problem was France. French advisors were in all government departments. Whole sectors of the economy were considered French monopolies. This was most evident in education. Additionally, many Moroccans in high positions spoke a cultivated French of which they were very proud. When we found American French-speaking experts, as with a contract with a vocational education institution from Louisiana, the Moroccans made fun of the contractor's accent (not entirely unreasonably), and contractors got nowhere. We had some more success in agriculture, but here we were frustrated by Morocco's crops with which we were not overly familiar (wine cultivation on a massive scale for example). We had some success with a leather tanning project. Moroccan methods of tanning, especially in Fez, were pre-medieval with practically-naked men immersed in huge tubs of chemicals doing the work. Here again we simply contracted with Belgian experts. We also had some success in cooperation with the International Jewish Education Organization (ORT) which had worked over the years with Jewish and non-Jewish boys in Casablanca. ORT fielded a fine team from Switzerland, but there were obvious political problems and our participation was soon phased out.

As will be gleaned, our program did not greatly interest me. I had plenty of time to explore the country which is simply magnificent. I can imagine few cities anywhere in

the world as fascinating as Fez; I at least have never seen one. Nestled by mountains, the huge--and hugely intricate--medina and souk provided endless excitement, not least in the feeling of being permanently lost. If one wanted to actually get to a particular place, one almost had to have a guide. Everything was old, hundreds of years old, but with centuries of overlay and building modifications. Nothing was particularly architecturally valuable, but the whole, much more than its parts, gave one a peek at an old and wonderful civilization still with all essentials the same as ever. Of course, one had to forget the poverty. This was made easier by the main hotel at the time. Simply put, this was the loveliest hotel, inside and in its site--that I have ever stayed at. It has been spoiled since.

Fez was only one of the great cities of special interest. Marrakesh was almost its equal. And there was the south. There was a standard route that one took from Rabat, through Casablanca (uninteresting – the film was not made there) to Marrakesh, to Ourzazate where many films set in Morocco and often elsewhere, are made, and the road across Morocco south of the Atlas Mountains. The trip took three or four easy days with stops at government guest houses of great comfort. The stop at Tinehir was especially glorious with the guest house location in a spot of wonderful views.

In another direction to the east lay what had been Spanish Morocco. The mountain village of Chaden (various spellings) with its completely naturally enclosed village square and a rather simple hotel (with, as everywhere, good food) was especially beautiful. And then there was Tangier—which, strictly speaking, had not been a part of Spanish Morocco but rather a city ruled by seven European countries chaired by Belgium and was still then a truly international city. It was about a four-hour drive from Rabat, and one still had to go through frontier posts and show one's passport. I was lucky to be put in charge of our small program supporting the American School in Tangier about which I will say much more when talking about my return to Morocco for a second tour some twenty years later. For the moment, my responsibilities which were murky, “necessitated” about two trips a month to Tangiers. I made sure that I always had to stay at least one night. It was a marvelous town, not architecturally distinguished, but vivid with life, day and night. My bank-owning cousins, the Alters, provided me with another entrée into the quiet part of the local scene; they were very kind to me.

The problem that remained from a career standpoint was that I continued to be interested in Africa, and Morocco, and North Africa in general was not “Africa.” In theory, AID assignments were non-negotiable. In practice after two years in Morocco, and since I was where everyone wanted to be and wanted to go where everyone did not want to go, I had no difficulty negotiating a move to “Africa.” I was sent to Guinea in West Africa.

## **West Africa**

Neither my assignment to Guinea nor then to Katanga was a success. Guinea was newly independent, having broken from France at the time of independence for all of the



French-ruled countries of Africa. But Guinea was different from the others. Here the break was bitter and radical. The stories of the French departees taking everything movable, while a little exaggerated, are mostly true including, apparently, the one about taking electric bulbs from the airport lighting system with them.

Guinea was led at independence by a flamboyant labor leader, Sekou Toure, who stayed in power for many years and ruled, messily, a radical left-wing dictatorship, but hardly totalitarian. One nice touch of opposition could be seen in many women's dresses. Wearing the traditional multi-colored Africa-themed dresses, many women added a nice touch--a portrait of Sekou Toure accurately placed to appear exactly on the women's rear ends.

Nothing got done, and Guinea descended even further into a failed state. It was not entirely the Government's fault--Guinea was left with a very small educated cadre (not as small as Congo's but still tiny). The country was rich in mineral wealth with giant extraction facilities at Boke, but the people were impoverished. Guinea tried to turn to the Soviet Union, but its approach was not too warmly welcomed. As one would imagine the AID program was practically dead on arrival. I was to be Program Officer, but as there was practically nothing to do, a temporary-duty assignment was arranged for me in Bamako, Mali.

Mali appeared in many ways the same, but actually very different. The Government was little better, but Malians made the difference: a proud, wonderful looking, affable and extremely articulate people. Of all my years in Africa, and indeed anywhere, these were the most attractive people I ever met. Bamako was where I received the first tranche of Zygmunt's reclamation claim from the German Government. From Los Angeles, Maryla tried to telephone me with the news but was told by AT&T that there was no such place as Bamako. The money made no difference to my lifestyle though much later it became useful in important ways.

Every pleasant experience can easily be spoiled, and this one was. In this case, it was the US Ambassador who was completely mad. Some of his extravagances included daily two-to-three hour staff meetings at which all Americans in the Embassy (including all AID and USIA officers) had to attend. It was noticeable that many on the staff wore dark glasses behind which one could sleep. At these meetings, the Ambassador was free to indulge in his favorite subject--a Tuareg conspiracy to take over all of Africa and then go into Europe. Another Ambassadorial foible was to refuse to apply for permission for staff to leave Bamako for the countryside. The requirement was imposed by the Malian Government, ostensibly for safety reasons. All the other Embassies simply complied, sent requests two or three days ahead and almost always got permission. They had wonderful weekend trips; we stayed in sweltering Bamako. But our honor was maintained!

Eventually the Ambassador went too far. He sent a cable on the Tuareg threat to every American Embassy and Consular post in Africa and to several European, Asian and

American posts. Shortly after I left to go back to Guinea, he was removed and given a minor non-Ambassadorial post.

Mali, Guinea and Ghana were members of a formal African political and economic group. There were frequent "Head of State" meetings in Accra, Conakry and Bamako. A great deal of effort and money was spent for these occasions. There were no detectable results. One particularly grotesque event was a celebration of the undying friendship between Mali and Outer Mongolia. For weeks, the newspapers devoted much space to this historical friendship. The Mongolians sent a delegation to take part in various events. The whole thing, however, was made ridiculous by the complete absence of any contact between the two countries thousands of miles apart and with no ability to understand each other's language.

After three months in Mali I returned to Guinea where things had only very marginally improved. That was one problem. The other was quite paradoxical. The small mission in Conakry was headed by Gene Abrams, a bilingual AID officer who had spent many years in Paris after his World War II army service. Gene was known in AID as probably the only officer who had not only not gone to college but had never even finished high school. Yet he could do anything-- intellectual to practical. He knew what AID could do, and he was aggressive in doing it. He could get along easily with Guinean officials (no mean task), and he was liked by all for his wit and charm. We all took advantage of Gene's practical side. When anything broke in Guinea, there was seldom any Guinean who could repair it. When the toilet failed, the obvious answer was to invite Gene and Monique (his wife) to dinner. Gene could and did fix anything. Gene and Monique became lifelong friends of Bobbie, my first wife-to-be and myself. I vividly recall several days we had, many years later, in Paris when they made a special trip from Geneva where they lived, to spend time with us.

Our Ambassador to Guinea was William Attwood, a Kennedy friend, and, like Gene Abrams, an optimist about Guinea. I mention him only because soon after my return to Conakry, he developed polio and was evacuated, never to return. Had he been able to stay on he might have made a difference in our situation. My connection with him was that soon after his evacuation, I developed hepatitis and was taken to stay at the Ambassador's residence where I ruled the roost for several weeks. I was nursed incompetently by the Embassy nurse who shot me up with a shot of locally procured medicine (strangely enough medicines were generally available when everything else was in short or in non-supply). The medicine was clearly marked "buvable" or "to be drunk". The nurse did not read French and asked no one to translate the instructions. (She later became the State Department's head nurse.) I had considerable pain in the butt where the shot was given. The main problem was that with hepatitis, I could not be evacuated to the nearest decent hospital in Dakar, Senegal, since none of the planes had air pressure control without which hepatitis patients cannot be moved.

There is a mystery here which I still do not understand. One of the nice perks in the State Department system is that those who serve in posts that are declared difficult have their

airfare paid, once a year, to a designated city which has good hotels, food, and entertainment, etc. Only the fare is paid and time is counted against one's leave days. The city designated for Guinea was Zurich, Switzerland which seems pretty far. It was chosen since it had an international direct flight from Conakry. It is unclear why this route could not be used to evacuate me. Too expensive? Embassy (i.e. nurse) inefficiency?

While I was ill, an AID colleague Philip Waddington, my first wife's husband's brother, came out to perform my duties which were not very onerous. Neither Philip nor I can now recall whether he or I had met before. I never knew him in AID, but I had a dim recollection of visiting his mother's house in New Jersey with Bobbie. This was long before Bobbie and I married and also long before Philip and Ruth, his second wife, also married. We all became life-long cherished friends: all in this case included Jackie, my second wife.

Conakry was not unpleasant. I had a lovely high-rise apartment, the climate was hot but not unbearable, and there was much to see outside the city. Consumer goods were in short supply, but we in the Embassy did not suffer--most of our supplies came from Danish export companies which specialized in supplying various embassy personnel with liquor, food and other needs. I bought a Deux-Chevaux (a small minimal car) soon after arrival and got around the country frequently. The Deux-Chevaux would go anywhere, be repaired anywhere, and, when the car got stuck, could easily be picked up and carried by two people. It was by far my favorite of any car ever. One small incident--in travelling one was always on the lookout for anyone selling food. We came across an old lady selling chickens. We checked the price. One chicken was 7 CFA francs; two cost 17 francs. Why we asked? She replied if she sold both she would have nothing to do the rest of the day.

We frequently rented Air Guinea planes (with Czech pilots). One would take the plane, buzz a small airport near where one wanted to go, wait for the airport worker to drive from town, wait for the landing lights and only then land. On one such occasion, in Nzerekore, we had to stay the night. Gene and I and a Bulgarian Aid worker were asked to judge or co-judge with a Guinean official, a Guinean beauty contest. I was glad to see that all of us could easily agree on who the winners were.

Essentially, there was little to do in Conakry. I read a lot. I then liked, and still do, the British Victorian novelists, particularly Anthony Trollope. George Orwell was a lifetime influence. I read classic detective novels. I dabbled in David Hume, Edward Gibbon and Modern European history. John Stuart Mill was a profound influence. I still think he was the sanest and most decent of all the philosophers. For his time, his views of women were astonishingly advanced. He really meant it when he called Harriet Taylor, his wife and co-author, his intellectual superior. I was well read in "upper-middle-brow" literature but lacking much understanding of poetry and the ancients. I particularly missed knowing much mythology. Nevertheless, I believe I was the second-best-read person I ever came across. I relish one book buying experience. I used to order books

from Hatchard's in London which generally gave good service. Once, however, I got a book addressed to me with a big printed note on the package from Port Moresby, New Guinea. It merely said, "Try Africa." Another time I received something called "Why I Am A Christian Scientist" instead of the ordered Bertrand Russell's "Why I am Not a Christian."

My only real accomplishment in Guinea was cooking a gigantic chili on the beach for the Embassy's official greeting for the visiting Zbigniew Brzezinski and Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams. (I still use Mennen shaving soap.) Gene Abrams was co-cook.

Katanga was more of the same, only worse. This was by far the silliest of my assignments. Katanga was the richest Congolese province, and there was a strong pro-irredentist movement abetted by Belgium. The province was practically running itself by the time I got there; its government was headed by a Belgian stooge, Moise Tschombe. Stooge he might be, but he was a colorful and relatively able stooge, and there were very few able and educated Congolese. Patrice Lumumba in Leopoldville (Kinshasa now) was another. In all, Belgium had trained eight Congolese graduates by independence; it would well earn the honor of being the very worst of colonial powers. Soon after my arrival, Katanga was reintegrated into the Congo; Dag Hammerskjold was killed in an airplane crash on Katanga's borders. It is now thought that he may have been murdered.

With reintegration, the whole rationale for AID being in Katanga was gone. All we had been doing was delivering a check every three months generated by Agricultural AID imports to the provincial government. The one check delivery I made was lost for a time by the financial secretary whose wife had sent his suit, with the check in it, to the dry cleaners.

The idea of our presence was that we were the advance guard for a full future AID mission. I spent my time in mad--and maddening--exchanges with Washington as to what would be needed for such a Mission. I never convinced AID that Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) had a moderate climate and did not need the standard issue of air conditioners prescribed for African posts.

Katanga was also the first time that my work was not appreciated by my boss. It was a two-person AID mission headed by a State Officer on loan to AID. He did an immense amount of work calculating Katanga's economic situation and its needs for outside assistance. We (he) had no basis for this analysis. Little was available, that which was available was not available to us, and nothing that was available, was worked out in terms of each Congolese province such as Katanga. My efforts were not well thought of, and my views of my boss were approximately the same as his views of me.

Elisabethville had been a very pleasant town, and the many Belgians there lived a very comfortable life. There was a large Jewish minority, some working in the Consulate, and

they were a fascinating group, mostly originating from the Greek island of Rhodes from which they were driven in the late 19th century.

I was very fond of our Consul General, Jonathan Dean, who was obviously very bored and spent much of his time listening to Czech opera about which he was very well informed. Since I liked Janacek, we had something in common. Later after retirement, he lectured extensively on the futility of our various wars. Some 20 years after Elisabethville, he was surprised to find me at one of his lectures in Concord, New Hampshire where by then I owned and ran a book shop. We had a delightful dinner together.

Pleasant Elisabethville may have been, but the pleasure was mitigated by constant shooting by various Congolese factions aiming at each other but sometimes hitting third parties. There were also profound consumer shortages and economic dislocations. Much like in Guinea everything depended on which government was trying to woo the local authorities. Thus, you would see the local department store, one week, stock nothing but Bulgarian brooms. Everyone bought one or more Bulgarian brooms – there was nothing else to buy. Next week, it would be lard from god knows where. Everyone bought lard.

Many weekends hundreds of foreigners would decamp to Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). The attraction was “no shooting” once one got to Kitwe. I joined a Northern Rhodesian country club (for nicer accommodation). Many, many years later I found out that they had a reciprocal arrangement with a Princeton country club where I stayed on a trip to Princeton.

In normal times, it was a 90-minute journey by car on good roads, but now one could only go by regularly scheduled armed United Nations convoys, with not infrequent shoot-ups with local armed gangs. The attacks were not political; the aim was robbery, but this was not a real consolation. Still, it was better than sitting by the huge malachite-lined swimming pool in Elisabethville and being shot at there. It was the largest swimming pool in Africa. Whatever its discomforts, Elisabethville was still one of the strangest places I had ever been in. Nothing went together.

I had come directly to Katanga from Guinea without home leave. All my possessions were still stored in Conakry. I went on home leave, and I was pretty sure I would not return to Katanga. And thus it was to be. My next post was to be Kathmandu, Nepal, and a wonderful posting it was to become. But this was the end of my “real Africa” experiences. One minor tragedy. In shipping, one of my crates from Conakry to Kathmandu (no mean trip it took seven months – by the time one got these shipments one discovered one did not really need them) fell into Conakry harbor. It was soon pulled out with surprisingly little damage. But among the casualties were my large collection of vinyl records of classical music. Everything was still playable, but all the labels on all the records came off or had become illegible. I thus never knew what I was playing till I slowly worked out what was what.

## Nepal

Everyone (practically) who arrives in Kathmandu thinks and says, “It is wonderful now, but you should have seen it when I first arrived.” It is true, and even now, after the awful earthquake, I suspect it is still true. First, it is the Nepalese who are invincible. It is easy to say “the Nepalese,” but there’s hardly such a thing. Nepal is really three countries and none of them is neatly contiguous. It stretches hundreds of miles topping northern India. It is only about 250 miles deep north to south, with a southern dry hot belt and then hills and mountains, the Himalayas, up to Everest and huge other mountains, and then China. Tucked into the mountains are the fertile and protected villages like the Kathmandu Valley. Nepali and Hindu languages predominate, but Kathmandu is also heavily populated by Newaris speaking their own language. Nepal has been influenced but never conquered. British influence and then Indian was pronounced. The valleys have a rich and bountiful agriculture, and produce grows to prodigious size yet, unlike much such large-size produce, it tastes good at least before it is cooked. (Despite the many Nepalese restaurants in the US and elsewhere, Nepalese food is among the worst in the world, rivaled only by Indonesian.) The Newaris had the most interesting style of agriculture production; farming was organized from the towns where everyone lived and went out daily into the countryside to tend their own crop. It was much like middle-age Europe and for the same reason: safety from robbery and other crime.

One result was the architecture. I am not here speaking of the magnificent Buddhist/Hindu spectacular temples and other Nepalese public architecture, but of three, sometimes four-story houses with their wooden carving and graceful beauty.

Nepalese society was vastly complicated. Aside from a powerful Royal Family (the King and eight other Royal family members were murdered by the apparently demented Crown Prince, who then shot himself in June 2001), for more than a hundred years the actual rulers of the country were a caste of hereditary prime ministers--the Ranas. There were three classes of Ranas. Class I consisted of those born of legitimate marriage, progeny of man and woman Ranas. This went down to third-class Ranas of considerably lesser legitimacy. Practically all male Ranas were generals. This had nothing to do with the military. It was an honorific title, carefully calibrated by a person’s priority of legitimacy. Not only were the Ranas powerful, but they were very wealthy. Kathmandu had only about 1½ miles of paved road and yet there were many elegant sedans on the road. There were also many junky cars sold by foreign hippies. In Nepal, it was legal to sell cars, but cars could not be bought and driven from India. Cars bought in from India had to be carried in by six to eight men with poles, over the mountains and impassable roads. Kathmandu was also the place to buy wonderful Czech crystal bought in Europe by travelling Ranas and then carried in. Some 50 years before my time there was also an opera house in Kathmandu with Italian opera and Italian singers brought in for the season. Art, however, only went so far. The local drama society of interested foreigners and Nepalese were prevented from staging Hamlet at the National Theatre because “it was the story of the murder of a King.” I played Horatio.

This was not a place that sounded hospitable for a foreign aid program. True, there was terrible poverty. The geography was beautiful, but most unfriendly for moving around (one district officer I knew had a 28-day journey to make from Kathmandu to his district each time he had to go there--as seldom as possible I believe). The AID mission had its own small air fleet to help us get around--STOL aircraft (short take-off and landing planes). This is a contravention to the wise dictum never to start any project that could not be continued after we left and when there was no more money or expertise.

Nevertheless, we did well. We practically eliminated malaria from the dry southern plains of the country (the Terai). We helped build an imaginative system of rope bridges for river crossings. We trained hundreds of young Nepalese in Nepal and in the US in practically every subject useful for development (or course this was subject to the usual problem of the many Nepalese who never come back to Nepal). Every Ministry, every business enterprise, every manufacturing facility was heavily staffed by US trained young men and women. Even more important, we gave strong support to the Nepalese family planning program which I do not think would have developed without us. It was and is one of Nepal's great successes. During the recent terrible earthquake it was evident that rescue and rebuilding efforts at the local level were surprisingly effective. Those we trained who trained others have had a huge effect.

As for myself, I had a very good time. I lived on the second floor of a wonderful old Nepalese mansion about five miles from the office. The only neighbor was another AID officer who had the other apartment in the mansion. Interestingly all windows faced away from the mountains. The Nepalese respect the mountains too much not to be afraid. It always used to remind me of US motels--no matter how beautifully located, the view was always of parked cars.

I had Nepalese friends and many friends in the foreign community. First and foremost was the famous Boris Lissanevich. Much in Kathmandu depended on whether Boris liked you or not. I think he liked me. Boris had been a Russian ballet dancer who escaped to Paris and then came to Calcutta to open a restaurant and bar. He charmed his way into Calcutta society and was eventually set-up to run the Grand Hotel in Kathmandu. It and its Yak and Yeti Bar were eccentric establishments and were the center of foreigners' lives and of many Nepalese lives as well. As Boris used to point out there was not another hotel for 450 miles--in Calcutta (this was long before Kathmandu became a major tourist attraction).

Boris was married to Inger, the daughter of a Danish sea captain who plied the Asian seas and was probably not averse to a little smuggling. Inger was simply a beautiful woman, talented in many unexpected ways. She painted my portrait which I still have though it must be said that painting was not Inger's greatest talent. Inger's mother also lived in the Grand hotel and reared turkeys. She had strong opinions about turkeys calling them the most stupid animals on earth. Boris, on the other hand, bred pigs which he adored and considered the cleanest and most intelligent of animals. The family owned a wonderful

farm some five miles from Kathmandu access to which was on foot with considerable need for climbing. Many happy hours were spent there.

One of Boris' greatest talents was cooking. He could produce magnificent feasts of Russian food, or French, or Indian. One of his specialties was Indian peafowl which is usually rather dry. He would inject the meat with butter and exotic herbs to make an inimitable dish (inimitable because unavailable in the US). It cannot be said that Boris' culinary achievements had much effect on the ordinary meals served to mere customers at the Royal Hotel Dining Room. Their meals were just about edible. It hardly mattered since just about everyone was half-drunk. Boris also had excellent relations with Aeroflot pilots who smuggled vast amounts of caviar to him. I remember one night when eight of us consumed two and a half kilos of caviar.

Another member of the group was Yussuf. He was the Pakistani head of Air India in Kathmandu. I don't even know if he was Muslim or Christian. In any case he was completely non-religious. He was a quiet gentleman, extremely well read and more English than any Englishman. He knew more about London, English literature and Anglo-Indian history than anyone I have ever known. He was a very good friend for many years until he died at a rather early age. There was also a much younger French woman with whom I spent a good deal of time. I got to know her well and later her family in France and New York. She stayed in Kathmandu.

After a little more than two years I went on home leave with a planned return. But it was not to be. I was bumped out from my position by an old war-time crony of the head of AID who proved, as everyone had predicted, a total loss.

### **Washington, D.C.**

I worked for a while on the India desk in Washington, and then became AID Desk Officer for Nepal, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka (Ceylon). It was a strange combination, but a most enjoyable job. First though, I was sent to Sri Lanka for a program evaluation. This was quite different from the previous evaluation of the Afghanistan program. The process had been severely downgraded. Moreover, we were a very small player in Sri Lankan development. Nevertheless, my fellow evaluator and I spent four delightful weeks travelling around Sri Lanka. Our findings were few and insignificant, but I got to love the country and its people, an affection that lasted all the way through the bloody civil war that later ensued. Sri Lanka is, and remains, a different kind of less-developed country. The Government is, usually, democratic. English is spoken pretty well everywhere; the literacy rate is almost 70 percent. But there is a problem. It's really quite easy to live, at a certain low level, without working. It is almost a case of lying under a tree and watching the fruit drop. It means essentially that the Government does not really have to do anything, and it often does not. I can easily be accused of being food-obsessed. But in Sri Lanka there is an interesting developmental angle to this obsession. During World War II, Sri Lanka which was rice-eating but did not grow



enough of it for its people became cut off from its usual import suppliers. In what is a rare and permanent shift in diet, the Government, with British help (it was still a colony then), switched to a massive effort to grow potatoes. And the diet switched permanently though, of course, not completely. This is not supposed to happen.

Later in my Washington tour of duty, I returned several times to Afghanistan. On one of my trips I was supposed to voice AID's general dissatisfaction with our contract with Teachers College of Columbia University which was to provide many services to improve Kabul University. I was personally not as critical of the performance. The US Ambassador was dead-set against any changes believing that the Columbia contract was one of the few things our development program had going for it. The Ambassador was Robert Neumann who had been my faculty adviser at UCLA many years ago. He and his wife had always treated me with great kindness and continued to do so in Afghanistan. He asked me at our first meeting what I thought. I was diplomatic. I said if studying political science had taught me anything it taught me where power lay. He easily discerned what my situation was, Columbia University stayed put, and my relations with the Ambassador remained excellent on subsequent trips.

I was not so lucky in regard to Nepal and Sri Lanka. Money was always tight and everyone thought I knew enough about the situation and did not need further in-place orientation. It is probably quite needless to say that my successor in Kathmandu made a far greater mess of things than I was likely to have done.

My life in Washington was pleasant. I met Bobbie Waddington again who in the meantime had lived in Senegal, Togo and Dahomey, had a second child, Richard, returned to the United States, and divorced her husband Bill (in that order). We saw each other frequently.

After several years in DC it was time again to go overseas and I was assigned to East Pakistan (later Bangladesh).

### **East Pakistan (Bangladesh)**

East Pakistan (later Bangladesh) was not everyone's favorite post, but I went quite willingly. The capital Dacca (later Dhaka) was a Consulate Generalship reporting to the Embassy in Islamabad. The AID mission was large and active. I was, at first, the program officer and soon became the Provincial Director. It was to be an exciting and terrible three years. My predecessor was a charming elderly agricultural economist. He knew everything there was to know about East Pakistan's agriculture and rural development. In his mind, on paper, and in elaborate models, he had organized a detailed, precise model for the whole Province and in an ideal world, it might even have worked. But the model was built on needs not availabilities. It would have required a magnificently organized government, a huge, highly competent middle level cadre and a great deal of luck and money. None of this was available.

The obvious, glaring problem, which was plain to everybody, was that East Pakistan and the rest of Pakistan were separated by more than a thousand miles of India, different language that were mutually incomprehensible, deep religious differences (both parts of the country were Muslim but the East had huge Hindu and smaller Buddhist minorities), and most importantly a considerable contempt for each other. The West celebrated its military traditions, its efficiency and its blunt lack of subtlety. The East admired intellect, and poetry, art and history.

There was worse. Resources were not distributed evenly or according to need and population size. The East earned most of the foreign exchange with its exports; the West controlled the budget and the Government. We in AID and other aid organizations saw this at first hand. The foreign largess was budgeted and distributed by West Pakistan Government officials, and it was easy to realize who got the most of everything.

And the Bengalis recognized what was happening. There are three pieces of evidence to show how things were. Two were profound, one silly but revealing. The first was the dreadful cyclone and flood of 1970. East Pakistan is flat and very highly populated. Population pressure is huge. The below-sea level lands in the south are extremely fertile and thus over-populated. It was not that the cyclone was extraordinarily powerful. It did not need to be. It is estimated that between 200,000 and 450,000 people died. East Pakistan mobilized as best it could. The AID Agencies including ours worked night and day to evacuate and tend to people's needs. Some of the technicians were particularly useful. Some knew various parts of the country well and spoke the language (English is spoken in Dacca and a few of the larger towns but not elsewhere). They were an important resource. Hundreds (literally) of planes came in from all over the world. One could see them come into Dacca and Chittagong. They came from China, the US, India, Russia, Britain, Germany, Australia and many other countries bringing supplies, tents, food and hundreds of relief workers. For the first three days, nothing came in from West Pakistan. It was noticed.

Second, a national election was postponed but then held in December. The Awami League under its Bengali leader Sheik Mujib-ur Rahman won big in East Pakistan. With the votes it also got in West Pakistan, it won a clear victory nationally. Constitutionally, it should have been asked to form a National Government. It was not. A widely disliked West Pakistan leader Mohammed Ali Bhutto formed the Government instead.

And moving to farce a number of Bengalis frequently alluded to Monopoly, the local version of which showed the best properties were named after West Pakistan cities (Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi) the less valuable properties after cities in East Pakistan (Dacca, Chittagong, Khulna, Mymensingh).

The cyclone and the election were the final straw. The years of inequality had done their work. Negotiations between West and East went nowhere. After a Presidential visit to the East by Yahya Khan, and local riots, martial law was declared. Civil war ensued.

America and AID were important to East Pakistan. Before all this happened, we had directed considerable resources to the East (not equal to what went West but we tried and were known to have tried). We were active in agriculture, family planning, and particularly in health. USAID supported the world-famous Cholera Research Center near Dacca which not only led the anti-cholera effort province-wide but was the most important statistical resource to health and family planning information for East Pakistan. I was particularly proud of the fact that USAID allowed the very capable Harvard University team to lead the effort without any interference. We built river and port facilities. I took pleasure in showing the very right-wing Republican Ambassador (a coal company lawyer from West Virginia) a port facility we built named Roosevelt Jetty. When questioned about the name I blithely remarked that it might have been Theodore not Franklin after whom it was named for all I knew.

All this, and more, came to a virtual end as resistance against martial law and the army (which was almost exclusively West Pakistani) developed. Soon the army adopted repressive measures and killings started. The targets were mostly professors and students from the University of Dacca and members of the large Hindu minority.

It cannot be claimed that the American official community remained neutral. We had developed a strong case of local loyalty. We saw people who had been to our houses for dinner being shot. Many of us knowingly or unknowingly hid Hindus in our houses who were threatened. The Consulate was certainly *parti pris*. The Consul General was Archer K. Blood, a comparatively young and very competent career Foreign Service Officer. We came to regard him as a hero.

In theory, this was a Consulate. We were normally supposed to communicate our views to and through our Embassy in Islamabad who would then pass these on to Washington. Or not. Gradually this became impractical and our reporting became sharper and sharper. Messages were sent from a transmitter in the Consulate that was not known about by the Government of Pakistan. As in the case of the cyclone, some of the AID officers knew parts of the country well and their observations of killings and atrocities were vividly included in our dispatches. Gradually all of the repression turned to open guerilla warfare. We never knew whether, when a power station was blown up, to be pleased ("our side won that one") or sorry (there was no electricity to be had for a while). Some of the staff saw a massacre at the University of students and professors. I saw two American children playing yards away from a gun battle. Soon families of the Consulate staff and some of the staff themselves were evacuated.

The Consulate reports of massacres and unrest became ever more horrific. Washington paid no attention. We soon gained support from our Embassy in Delhi. There the Ambassador, former Republican Senator Kenneth Keating of New York, began bombarding Washington with critical cables dwelling on, chiefly, the thousands, then millions, of refugees who began to flee to India. There were mainly members of the Hindu minority. Eventually there were over four million refugees who entered India.

Not all the killings were on the part of the West Pakistan Army. The Bengali resistance also did its part. Moreover, what had begun as a movement for freer government turned into a fight for separation and independence. Cries of “Jai Bangla” (Freedom for Bangladesh) were heard all over the city. People began to feel themselves Bangladeshi not Pakistani. West Pakistan was provoked.

The Americans in Dacca became progressively more furious at our government which was clearly supporting the West. The Pakistan Army and Air Force were using American equipment provided by our military aid program to kill what I too will begin to call Bangladeshis. President Nixon was said to be apoplectic at the dispatches coming from Dacca and New Delhi. It was known that Nixon revered the Pakistan leader Yahya Khan and had an almost pathological hatred of Indira Gandhi. Our skewered policy clearly showed this.

A number of us decided to try the completely new State Department dissent channel. A few drafts were prepared and a text agreed upon based largely on the draft of the Embassy political officer, Scott Butcher. (It was a running joke that the post’s principal officers were named Blood, Butcher and Killgore.) We were the first US entity to use the dissent channel, the first of what over the years became hundreds. Everyone in the Consulate family signed the draft cable. The question became “would the Consul General sign?” He did and appended his personal endorsement. It was an act of courage on the part of Archer Blood who risked his promising career. The rest of us risked much less and were on the whole not professionally affected in any major way. The Blood Telegram became the centre-piece of a book by Gary J. Bass of Princeton University (The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger and a Forgotten Genocide, New York, Knopf, 2013). It was the co-winner of the Asia Society award as the best book on Asia in 2013.

It should be emphasized that almost all the conversations, attitudes, documents, etc. mentioned in that book and in this memoir are matters of public record due to Nixon’s passion for recording everything said in his presence--a passion that was passed on to lower levels of our government. (For corroboration of many events in Dacca/Islamabad consult Google entries “Nixon and Griffel” and “Kissinger and Griffel” in Islamabad Document 1-100 Department of State).

What was by now a civil war continued and intensified. Our increasingly passionate, some might say hysterical, cables continued, and continued also to annoy the State Department, Henry Kissinger and President Nixon. Nixon called Blood the madman of Dacca. Of Indira Gandhi he said much worse. But in 1970-71, a new element entered the picture: the approach to China which was to be a central factor in what had happened and was still to happen in the Bangladesh civil war. For some time, Nixon and Kissinger had used as an intermediary between themselves and the Chinese Pakistan’s dictator Yahya Kahn. In the last stages of the Chinese rapprochement, Kissinger came to Islamabad, ostensibly for bi-partite talks, but in reality, as a secret stopover on the way to China as arranged by Yahya. The secrecy included a hospital stay in Islamabad for

Kissinger who it was said had a stomach ache. No one in Dacca, and very few in Islamabad, knew of the approach to China. Our Ambassador, of course, knew and perhaps a few other among the American Embassy personnel.

I was in Los Angeles on a medical emergency (Maryla was very ill) and of course I knew nothing of all of this. I was told by cable to return to post but to stop on the way in Islamabad. Kissinger had agreed to talk to representatives from the Consulate, and I was among those chosen--by whom I know not. Two of us from Dacca (Archer Blood did not attend) and several from the Embassy in Islamabad were in a long meeting with Kissinger. He was polite and even quite charming and affable. He must have thought that we were complete idiots to think we could change US foreign policy even absent any knowledge of the China approach.

I took by far the strongest stance. I said we were supporting genocide; that we were backing the losing side; and that our policy was immoral and short-sighted. I contradicted Kissinger several times and said he was wrong two or three times. Kissinger listened. Others were gentler but no less disturbed. I was simply annoyed and rather enjoyed myself.

Of course, our interjections achieved nothing and the killing continued. But even when we knew of one of the reasons for our government's stubborn support of Yahya, we thought US actions and non-actions were inexcusable. There were other possible intermediaries (Romania for instance), but Nixon loved Yahya and hated "that woman."

Archer Blood was soon withdrawn. A new rather harmless Consul General was appointed. I stayed on for a few weeks (Kissinger told Nixon that to remove me would raise the wrath of Congress, particularly Senator Kennedy). India invaded Pakistan and easily won. Bangladesh became independent, and Mujibur Rahman became its President (but was later killed in a coup). Thousands died in a war in which we were complicit. The US never said a word condemning Yahya Khan.

There were only two compensatory events. In one, Nixon in a meeting with Ambassador Farland and Kissinger called me a bastard. And the second: Bangladeshi's family planning program which we did much to help is considered one of Asia's most successful. And in all its agony in the war and after, Bangladesh achieved food self-sufficiency for the first time since 1946.

One other point: a number of Kissinger's assistants tried to tone down Kissinger's and Nixon's vile rhetoric, particularly about Indira Gandhi, and soften their partisan policies. The efforts were on the mild side and unsuccessful.

What is quite apparent from reading various reports and statements by participants and others, and contrary to Kissinger's writings, Kissinger did not in any way attempt to temper Nixon's ravings. Instead he egged Nixon on. This was not an example of classic Metternich diplomacy; if you lie you should do a better job at getting away with it.

Finally, a word about the US Foreign Service and the wide reaction to the Blood telegram. Our Embassy in Islamabad at the top level was thoroughly in favor of the US policy of backing Yahya, led by the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission. The working level staff was split. The AID staff supported Dacca, but only rather timidly. Those in charge of South Asia policy in Washington in State and AID were for the most part strongly and vocally supportive of Dacca at some danger to their careers. The book *The Blood Telegram* by Gary J. Bass makes an excellent case that the U.S. was supporting a major war crime by Pakistan. We were part of the crime.

### **Back to Washington**

I came back to Washington in late summer 1971 somewhat disillusioned with AID, and I was not received very warmly, nor did I feel very warm toward the Bureau (South Asia) of which I had been in the past. I had begun to see that what AID was doing overseas was basically beside the point. Most of their budget was beamed at Israel and Egypt. Changes of policy in international economics were well outside our business. We were on the whole a senior Peace Corps engaged in technical assistance--costly yet small change. I have already mentioned some major exceptions--the Green Revolution in India, for example—and some of the programs with which I was involved, such as malaria eradication in Nepal, world disaster relief at which we excelled, and the Cholera Research Centre in East Pakistan, but these were mostly outside the main needs of development action.

I soon was offered a job as the Near East and South Asia Coordinator in the Policy Coordination Bureau of the agency. It was a pleasant job with some prestige, but essentially, I had been put out to pasture.

One particularly agreeable moment came when I was chosen as a German Marshall Plan fellow. This involved hosting a major EU aid official (a Sardinian) in a tour of the USAID establishment in Washington and elsewhere and then being received in Europe and hosted by the same official in Brussels, the Hague, Copenhagen, London and Dublin, where I in turn could learn what and how these countries were doing in the foreign aid field. I was lucky in having so intelligent a guide. We had wonderful interviews with Congressional Committee Chairmen responsible for providing financing of AID programs. My guest was amazed at their ignorance of world events, of economics and at their general stupidity. Bobbie and Richard joined me for a short tour of Ireland which was, I think, our most successful trip together. Bobbie and I grew very fond of my counterpart. He invited us many times to his property in Sardinia, but we never, regrettably, took advantage of his invitations. His views of America were substantially improved when, after the interviews, he discovered that the Euro was very strong at the time in relation to the US dollar. He took full advantage of this at the best US restaurants. My situation in Europe was the obverse, to my chagrin. My pleasure in this

assignment was a little, but only a little, spoiled by the fact that my nomination has been opposed by AID's Office of Personnel.

On the side, I was also involved in Family Planning. Congressman Levin of Michigan, between elections, became AID's Head of Family Planning. It was, of course, a political appointment. Levin, a highly intelligent man, knew nothing of family planning. He learned quickly, but nevertheless he needed some tutoring and learning along the way which was where I came in.

Professionally therefore these years--1971-1977--were anticlimactic years. Yet on the personal side they were interesting. I married Bobbie Waddington in Washington in 1976. Bobbie and her two children, Richard and Denise, moved to our house. The house was (and is) on a very nice street, very near to a good school, and within two blocks of a large community swimming pool. The house street level contained the bedrooms with the lower level, facing the garden, made up of the kitchen, living room and garden. The only disadvantage was the inclined driveway--very slippery in ice or snow and the bamboo surrounding the garden giving privacy but growing with prodigious speed. In our first years there I remember one scene. Bobbie and I were having breakfast. I was indulging in my bad habit of reading aloud some item from the newspaper. A Korean-American painter we had engaged was doing some patch-up paint work. When we had left the dining room Denise came in. The painter said to Denise, "In Korea you would never see what I just saw--a nice looking well-dressed woman was being read to. In Korea such a woman would never have been illiterate."

Our first weeks of marriage were not auspicious. I was a 43-year-old bachelor, set in my ways and probably unusually non-pliant. Bobbie was very shy. Surprisingly, the children were not the problem. Denise and I had in common our love for reading and our similar tastes in books. (We both admired Patrick White for instance). Richard and I got along well enough. The problem was Bobbie and me and our getting used to one another. Moreover, a health issue arose almost immediately. She had an epileptic seizure which apparently was not her first though the seizures were not frequent. Then and subsequently I made a connection between epilepsy and Alzheimer's. I don't know how but I had come across this in my reading at the time, and it worried me. The connection is now well-established though it is not clear, even now, which leads to which.

### **Return to Morocco**

In 1978, I was offered a job in Morocco as Deputy Director of the AID program. Bobbie was very pleased but apprehensive to her changed situation. Denise was by this time going to college: American University at first and then Kirkland/Hamilton. Richard could go to the American School in Tangier which was known to me and had, we thought, an excellent reputation. My boss to be as Director was Harold Fleming who I got to respect and like a great deal. Harold was difficult not to like with his great booming laugh, wide interests and easy personality. We became very good friends and

remained so until his death some 25 years later. I remain best friends with his widow Arlene.

Morocco was still lovely. The French were largely gone, the Jews almost completely so. The roads were even better, the food still marvelous and the Government still inept. The rich had got richer, the poor poorer. Absent the French, the country was still Francophile and at the Government level French-speaking. We had a small house conveniently situated next to the Iraqi Embassy (to make political demonstrations easy). The same obstacles to development and our program remained. Harold tried to use his talents making cross-cultural friendships to advance our program and have some success but the kind of projects which resulted were not always to Washington's taste. Washington had the curious notion that you could make a program that was essentially a cover for our base payments, developmental.

I had determined to retire at 50 and not serve in the Government when and if Ronald Reagan became President. I almost made it and retired in early 1981.

### **A Private Life**

We returned to the US via Switzerland, Austria and France. We had rented our house in Chevy Chase and had no intention of staying in Washington. I had never doubted what I wanted to do after retirement. I wanted a bookshop; Bobbie wanted to live in New England (she had been born in Scarsdale, NY, I think). One condition was that the bookshop had to be within an hour or so drive from a city with theatre and classical music. Practically this meant Boston or Portland, Maine. Bobbie had rented a small apartment for us in Cambridge (for some reason apartments in Boston were hard to find in 1981) while I finished my business in Washington. From Cambridge we planned to conduct our bookshop search. We were willing to consider opening a new place (despite my ignorance about the business) or buying a going concern. The money from Zygmunt's German claims was now going to be almost essential (tranche two and three had by now arrived). Despite the decline of the independent bookshop, finding one for sale was proving difficult. One in Sharon, Connecticut was rather nice, but its customer base was largely Philip Roth and his wife Claire Bloom and while they bought a lot of books that alone would not keep us in business. And Sharon was far from anything.

We found our place in Concord, NH called The Apple Tree Book Shop on one of the two main shopping streets, two blocks from the State Legislature (the largest, in terms of numbers of legislators, in the world). I considered changing the name but eventually decided to leave things as they were. Concord was not itself a beautiful town, but the surroundings were. We bought the store; Bobbie stayed in Cambridge while I looked for a house. I found a newly built Cape Cod in Hopkinton nine miles from Concord. It was quite lovely in a picture postcard New England village way, but it had a long driveway making it difficult to negotiate the heavy winter snowfalls. We moved after three years to a 1780 or so house, also in Hopkinton/Contoocook (sister small towns).



I made considerable changes in the bookshop. The building was owned by the New Hampshire Bible Society which occupied the second floor. The first floor, the bookshop, had about 2,000 square feet of space, including a small office. We were housed in an attractive brick, early nineteenth century building which had two large display windows for books. I commissioned a talented local young artist, Melissa Miller, to paint a picture of the bookshop and the result, often happily mistaken for an Edward Hopper, still hangs in our living room in Washington, DC. We used postcards made of the painting for advertising. I made a twice-a-week, 15-minute review recording program for the local news radio station which continued for about two years. It was a great success until I was fired for interjecting too many political matters into my talks.

Bookshops are excellent in being able to employ part-time help. Pay is low, but hours that are convenient can, and were, easily arranged. We had a crusty New England bookkeeper who knew everything about books and bookselling, and about Concord. She seldom spoke but when she did one knew that “pithy” was her specialty. We soon also persuaded Trina Richardson to come aboard. Trina could do everything; she became completely indispensable and became a good friend of Bobbie (a shared interest in gardening), and myself. We all cherished her. Outside the bookshop her greatest achievement was the building of a new very attractive home for the Hopkinton/Contoocook Library. Without her it would never have happened.

The bookshop made a profit--technically. And this despite the fact that my own work in the store was unpaid. Without my pension and my own money, it would not have been possible to live comfortably. Of course, we operated under some difficulties. First, there was another bookshop in town, and it was in its way as good as mine. We competed but quite amiably and peacefully. Second, as I made very clear I was operating a serious bookshop. We did not stock many non-book items such as magazines, novelties, or stationery (although I never quite had the courage to throw out the greeting cards, of which, the good ones we stocked I grew quite fond). And we did not stock trash: no romances, very little light fiction, no comics or graphic novels, and while we had an excellent detective fiction department, there was nothing like James Patterson. Also, no pop psychology, no self-help, nothing about dogs and cats (or mongeese) as man’s best friend. Nothing about Hollywood stars, but an excellent serious cinema section. No David Sederis. No test preparation books. Ergo, we annoyed some people, but I had an excellent time. After all, our motto was “An Idiosyncratic and Serious Bookshop.”

In my time, my competition was the other good Concord bookshop. The nearby Borders which opened while I was there had little effect on sales. Amazon was only a small blip largely in the future. We sold little contemporary hard-back fiction--three or four copies of even well-received books. There were exceptions: we sold 250 copies of John Irving’s *Hotel New Hampshire* in one week (for obvious reasons) and for many years three or four used copies a week of Grace Metalious’ *Peyton Place*. (We kept a small but carefully chosen used book section of mostly out of print books by New Hampshire authors.) Kenneth Roberts, of all people, sold very well. Otherwise we had a good

children's book section, the already mentioned cinema section; one of the best detective story sections in New England and lots of books on politics (local, national and international). I made it a point of honor of being willing to special order any book, however much I hated it, including Mein Kempf, Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly. I once had an order for 50 copies of a Limbaugh title. In that instance, I asked for a 50 percent deposit since I felt I was being tested.

Concord was a terrible food town, rivaled only in my experience by Kathmandu, Nepal. In some part, this was due to its population mix. The old New Englanders were mostly uninterested in food; the old English prejudice that an interest in food was somehow ungodly (and/or that a lack of interest would get you to heaven more easily) still held, rather reminiscent of the English theory that cold baths/showers were good for you while hot ones were effete. The French-Canadian minority largely used Concord as a temporary dormitory. The Laotians kept to themselves. The Greeks, when they first came to Concord, opened a number of restaurants some of which must have originally been good. But the owners soon noticed that the less the food resembled that of Greece, the more it was appreciated. They complied. For a time, there was a wonderful French deli run by a French woman and her American husband, but they soon divorced, and it was back to the Concord Sahara or good places in Boston, Tilton, Lyme and to some degree New London. I wrote and published a little book on Concord restaurants which comprised somewhat facetious largely bad reviews and I sold out my printing of 300 copies.

By 1996 however, a number of strands in my life combined to make a change necessary. Our lease for the bookshop was expiring, and the New Hampshire Bible Society wanted to sell the building. I had first purchase rights but did not want to use them. Too much money was involved. I had the option of moving the bookshop, but given Bobbie's health and other factors this did not appeal. Also, I was 66, the bookshop was a vast pleasure but not a huge profit point, and I had had 15 years of it; perhaps it was enough. My friend Ludwig Rudel had for many years looked after the Chevy Chase house, and he also took charge of selling it. He had performed wonderfully and without complaint over the many years without any remuneration other than my inadequate thanks.

Of course, one of the main reasons for moving was Bobbie's deteriorating health. It was Denise who sounded the first serious alarm. One day Bobbie could not find her car after going to the hairdresser in Concord. Another time she went to Boston for a medical consultation at Boston's Women's Hospital and came back home without seeing anyone because she could not find the hospital entrance. Both Denise and I soon suspected the onset of Alzheimer's. One of the more serious concerns was that Bobbie would not admit that there was a problem and attributed her problems to fatigue and nervousness (and to me). I had convinced myself that she would get better medical attention in a larger city than Concord. This proved to be only partially true. The only rational place for us to move was Washington where both of us had many friends. And Richard was there. At first, we did find more expert medical attention than in Concord, but in the later

stages of Bobbie's illness New Hampshire might have been better and cheaper in terms of resident dementia care.

I sold the contents of the bookshop and we moved to DC early in 1996 where we rented a nice apartment in Chevy Chase.

### **Return to Washington**

In Washington, Bobbie deteriorated further. There were more specialist doctors available, and we saw a number of them but their recommendations did not get us any further than we got in Concord. Eventually Bobbie would have to be institutionalized, and this might have been easier and less costly in New Hampshire.

On the one hand, Bobbie got much closer to me (and more dependent). On the other hand, there were more incidents common it seems to all who have Alzheimer's: leaving her hot coffee in the freezer; trying to cook directly in cups and plates on the flame of the stove; and worse, going out by herself and getting lost. We (Richard, Kristen and Denise) soon began to think about, and visit, facilities that could care for her. We chose one in Sykesville, Maryland which seemed as caring and comfortable as any. It was about a 20-minute drive from where Richard and Kristen lived. With hindsight I knew we chose well; they were kind, caring and knowledgeable.

Immediately, on being placed there, Bobbie appeared quite happy. She gave up cigarettes cold--something she had been trying to do for 30 years--on the second day in Sykesville (it was a no-smoking facility) and never again appeared to feel a need to smoke. Of course, there were many problems, none of them unusual in such cases. I visited at least twice a week. Sometimes Bobbie was welcoming and loving. Sometimes not. Sometimes she recognized me, her children, friends; sometimes not. She had the quite common Alzheimer's experience of falling in love with a fellow patient; they were separated by the facility's director--actually against my wishes. Bobbie lasted over two years. It was an agonizing time for all. Yet I was able to recognize (rationalize?) that she was the one who appeared to suffer least. I hope that is true, but I am not at all convinced that we know anything about the mind of someone with Alzheimer's. One of the curiosities of Alzheimer's is that in the first phase of the disease the afflicted patient suffers most; in subsequent phases, it is the ones who care for the patient most who suffer most.

Bobbie died peacefully 4 June 2004. She is buried near Sykesville at Mountain View Cemetery amid trees and flowers and grass. We had a short religious service at her graveside. It was light on the religious side. Neither the facility where she spent her last years, nor her children, nor I made a very heroic effort to prolong her life which, technically, ended with pneumonia.

Diana died in October 2011, after a long, distressing and painful fight with cancer over a period of many years. We were in many ways quite unlike but always very close. (Those who know us both do not think we were so unlike.) We had very different tastes in music, books, etc, but not in politics. Diana's second husband, Bill Schreiber, took wonderful care of her in her last days which Jackie (my second wife) and I shared with him in Valley Glen, California. We grew very fond of Bill and are in frequent touch with him. Our fondness does not stretch to mutual tastes: he is one of Southern California's most eminent bridge players (Diana also played but on a much lower level) and a baseball nut.

## **Jackie**

I stayed in Washington. My life threatened to turn into an anti-climax. I had been seeing more and more of Jackie Boehme, and she began to change my life. Jackie's husband, Arthur Boehme, had died some fifteen years earlier. She had many friends and was greatly liked by all of them. With me it became much more than that. We were married on 12 November, 2008. It was a "beautiful" ceremony at the Clerk's Office in Rockville, Maryland. The decorations consisted of a plastic vine.

Jackie changed my life completely. From a period which was essentially one of waiting for death, it became the happiest ten years of my life. For Jackie, it may not have been undiluted pleasure, but I think she would admit, contrary to most of our friends' predictions, that it has been a good marriage. This even if as is well-known, I can be moody and difficult.

We have travelled together: France, England, Poland, the Ukraine, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Canada. Jackie's children are all adult but I have got to know and like her grandchildren as she has mine. Incidentally, one of Jackie's daughters, Sarah, went to school in Tangiers, Morocco with Richard, my stepson. We live in an apartment a few dozen steps from where I had lived previously and Jackie and I have melded our possessions until we no longer know what is whose. We await the end calmly having whatever pleasures are left to 85-year olds: Reading, music, theatre, food, Scrabble and friends--fewer and fewer as they die out. We each hope selfishly "that I will die before the other." I think I will make it. I do fear dying though I do not fear death. I have my disbelief in God to thank for that.

I want to thank Jackie for suggesting that I write a memoir and to thank Ruth Waddington in particular for prodding me till I had no recourse but to start. And then in greatly helping in discriminating editing and producing the product.

-Eric Griffel, Chevy Chase, 2015

**Editor's note:**

Eric ended his writing with an explanation of the title of his memoir, “An Unforgiving Life.” He was seeking to reconcile his unforgiving contempt for the evil that drove his parents from Poland with his recognition that the horrors Hitler wrought on the world in general and Jews in particular led to a new life--his settling in the United States and, eventually, a career that introduced him to the world. “Hitler made me homeless...but at home everywhere...a citizen of the world, loving parts of it, appreciating all of it.” He lost his city in Poland but gained England, France and the United States. While grateful for the life that developed from the trauma brought by the Nazis, he was unforgiving of those responsible, just as later he was unforgiving of those anywhere who abused their power, whether in Europe, the Middle East, or Bangladesh. He died at home with Jackie in 2020.

*End of Memoir*