

**A COLLECTION OF
LITTLE STORIES
ABOUT
FOREIGN SERVICE LIVING**

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PREFACE

This collection of stories about Foreign Service experiences was initially written for a small group of Security Engineering Officers who communicated by e-mail after they retired. The stories were released each Monday morning over a five-year period. Some of the stories generated similar tales from other officers on the e-mail list and triggered discussions about situations and people with whom we worked.

The author is himself a retired Security Engineering Officer. He was also a Foreign Service dependent from the age of five to the age of twenty. Here and there, an experience from the author's youth is thrown into the mix of stories. As many of the readers on the e-mail list raised children of their own in a Foreign Service environment, they could relate to those stories as well. Finally, the author also served in the Army before joining the Foreign Service; he has (once in a while) tossed in an Army story that also recounts a foreign experience.

Rather than posting the stories in sequence, following the order in which the experiences occurred, this collection intentionally skips around from year to year and from place to place. The author and all the other original readers were regional Foreign Service Officers, meaning that they were assigned to an overseas office at one Embassy and supported between two dozen and three dozen surrounding Embassies and Consulates as part of their territory. This posting system might help explain why so many different Embassies and foreign nations appear in the collection.

The intent of most of these stories was to share a humorous experience with readers on the list. The stories contain a number of acronyms, abbreviations and workplace expressions that may not be familiar to you. An alphabetized Glossary has been added at the end of the collection to help you through this problem.

The author hopes you will enjoy the many experiences related here. It was fun to write about them.

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YEAR ONE

1. THE INVASION OF GRENADA

When I first visited the Engineering Services Center in Panama in 1981, Don Hoover was in charge of the office. He had in place the best scheduling system I had yet encountered, consisting of three changeable calendar boards made of wood over which were stretched big sheets of plexiglass on hooks. Each sheet was annotated in erasable colored marker. The board was designed so that the plexiglass sheets were interchangeable, meaning that April would move over to the left, May would move next to it and March would be erased and re-formed as June. When scheduling was planned, everyone in the office attended. The secret aim was to allow everyone in the office to have a chance to see all of the assigned posts, but there were many other benefits here. "I can't do that April trip: it's my wife's birthday and her parents are coming down!" We had two car mechanics assigned, but they lived in a world of their own, visiting post after post, servicing armored vehicle after vehicle, all on a set schedule of their own.

For the others, however, there was an opportunity for new guys to travel with old guys, for assignments calling for three people to volunteer together and for office members to occasionally get back to places they liked. I thought it was a good system: democratic, efficient, understandable, easy to set up and great at eliminating friction over kid's birthdays, anniversaries, and the like.

When I took over as OIC Panama, I kept the same system.

In October 1983, I asked security engineer Bob Stuckey and a Seabee electrician to go out to Barbados on an inspection trip. They gathered up their gear, packed their bags, kissed their wives and headed out. We then heard nothing from them at all. On the 24th of October I received a secure telephone call from Bob indicating that they had been retained on an assignment of great importance but could not discuss it further. Then the line went dead.

On October 25, 1983 — it turned out — the U.S. military invaded the Island of Grenada. A growing Cuban military force on the island was growing and was getting into local politics in a big way. Under the Monroe Doctrine, that was of great concern to us, and President Regan decided to take action. C-130 gunships and warplanes pretty much destroyed the Cuban barracks, followed quickly by an assault of American airborne troops that took out all the rest. The second wave to arrive was led by a designated Chief of Mission, a small diplomatic contingent and our trusty SEO team, there to set up security for the new Embassy.

There wasn't much to work with. Basically, there was one hotel on the beach large enough to serve as a temporary embassy, and everyone headed over there. More U.S. support materiel kept landing at the secured airport: food, barbed wire, claymore mines, Suzuki jeeps, drums of gasoline and items like typewriters for the new Embassy. Satellite communications were set up quickly, and we were back in touch with our team: what did they need, how could we get it to them, etc. They didn't need a thing: everything needed for the invasion was arranged in advance.

Being a small hotel, and there being a number of flag and field grade military officers involved in the invasion, living quarters were at a premium. Every room in the Embassy/Headquarters/hotel was soon taken. The COM got the bridal suite, the commanding officers got individual rooms and everyone else sort of fended for themselves. The 101st Airborne had tents, but none were available for our guys, so Bob Stuckey slept on a couch in the lobby. The Seabee looked around, spotted a vacant Suzuki jeep, and claimed it for his own. Our team installed alarms, helped run barbed wire, set up a couple of TVs and returned within four days.

When they got back, Bob and the Seabee then filed their travel vouchers for the trip. These were a little different because their travel had suddenly been ordered by Washington rather than the ESC. Everyone who stayed at the hotel received a modest bill, the funds from which probably helped to pay the hotel for the repair of automatic rifle fire across the front of the building.

Everything was falling neatly into place until the Seabee marched into my office with fire in his eyes. Unlike the other participants, his per diem had been cut in half.

Why? Because he slept in the front seat of a Suzuki. *Government quarters had been provided for him, and he was only entitled to 1/2 per diem.*

I visited the Finance Office and made a gentle plea to the Finance Officer to rethink this situation and give the Seabee the same consideration allowed the rest of the invasion team. He was amused, but sympathetic, and our electrician received full per diem for his excursion.

2. GETTING IN BED WITH THE BOSS

My first overseas trip as an SEO was a week-long research assignment to Copenhagen. I was part of a team lead by Don Fischer, my Division Chief. Don needed to go on to Frankfurt after we finished the first project, and he thought it would be instructive for me to see a Regional Technical Center, as we called ESCs in those days. It was a dream trip, and I was eager to go.

The Embassy in Copenhagen had difficulty making reservations for us within per diem, putting us into the very expensive Sheraton Hotel for the first four days of our visit. With Sheraton breakfasts costing nearly \$30 way back in 1976, I was severely out of pocket on the trip before the first week was out. I asked Don if every trip was so expensive, and he told me we could make up some of our costs by staying in a less expensive pension in Frankfurt. He called Casper Pelczynski in Frankfurt to request such accommodations. Casper was a little miffed because he had already *made* reservations for us, but he called around and found us a place to stay.

When we arrived in Frankfurt, a Consulate car took us to a nondescript boarding house not far from the RTC. The proprietor, Frau Gust, took us upstairs to show us our room. There was a small desk, a plastic shower stall near the window, a dresser with a lamp and a single double bed. Frau Gust explained that she had only one room at the moment and no extra beds.

When Don Fischer became agitated, he tended to blink a bit. So when Don realized that the accommodations he had insisted on would have us sleeping together, his eyelids began to blink like mad. It was obvious that he did not want to change rooms again, but he also did not want me to think that he had arranged our sleeping situation.

I went to college in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: Amish Country. The Amish have a tradition of letting courting couples share the same bed on an honor system that involves putting a “Bundling Board” down the middle of the bed, which the lovers are not allowed to cross. I explained this system to Don and told him that if he was concerned for his virtue, we could probably get a 2X4 from Frau Gust. Don saw the humor in the situation, and we agreed to take the room.

Don’s excellent German made a strong impression on our hostess. Each evening, when we returned from the day’s activities, there were two bottles of Grolsch beer waiting for us near the door to our room. Don was amazed: apparently, pension owners seldom provided amenities for their guests. The beer was great, Don was in good form and our stay in Frankfurt passed almost without incident.

As we got ready to leave, Don and I stopped in to see our hostess. Don thanked her for accommodating our visit and for her hospitality. Frau Gust said he was very welcome. As Don turned away, Frau Gust looked at me and winked.

I decided that I would ask for a room of my own on the next trip.

3. MEETING PAUL TUBBS IN FRANKFURT

When I joined the Department in 1975, I believe SEO Paul Tubbs was already aboard. His background had been in CCTV systems with the U.S. Navy, and he knew a lot about that equipment. He and I became friends, shared the same library he established in SY/T, and greatly enjoyed learning about our new jobs, working in the Department and working with the delightful crew that Don Fischer, John Perdew, Mac Musser and Chris Disney assembled. Then Paul was assigned to Frankfurt, West Germany (before it was reunited with East Germany.) Why not? He spoke fluent French and German, was an amateur radio operator, and wanted to see all of Europe. About a year after Paul went out, I asked to go to Abidjan and was almost pushed out the door in SY/T's eagerness to fill a hardship position. So we went our separate ways.

In 1981, my tour in Abidjan was up and I was assigned back to Washington. My replacement? Paul Tubbs, who was a French speaker and a great asset to the office. Paul got the cook's tour of the ESO, a trip around town, many introductions and he even agreed to buy the leftover African money I had collected post by post without knowing what it was worth, which all of you will agree was very noble of him. Being a good friend of Paul's, I saw fit to schedule him one week after his arrival to Conakry, Guinea, allowing him to see what was arguably one of the poorest countries in the region. Paul has since reminded me that his arrival at the airport in Conakry was accompanied by a total loss of electricity, even before he passed through immigration.

So, I returned to Washington and set up shop. Not long after my arrival, a wave of security concerns popped up in Europe. A general's car was shot at. The DCM in Paris was nearly shot. And a pyrotechnic device was thrown at our Consulate in Bordeaux. Well-heeled and politically connected Ambassadors from all over Europe got together electronically and let the Department know in no uncertain terms that they were not pleased watching security improvements all over the rest of the world while they were convinced that they were the soft underbelly of the threat world.

Congress, supported by the backers of some of these Ambassadors, IMMEDIATELY found a large pile of money to protect our vulnerable diplomats in Europe. It had to be spent right away. Although we were undermanned in the Department, several of us were yanked off our piddling Washington assignments and sent out to where the real threat was. Field Cooper, who knew London and Ireland well, was sent there. I must confess that I have forgotten who went to Germany and to Scandinavia. No one, however, was available for France. Since I had acquired rudimentary French during my three years in Abidjan, I timidly raised my hand as a volunteer. In less than the time it takes to say "Paris Per Diem" I had tickets and visas and a plane seat to the City of Light.

With the wonderful Mark Mulvey serving as RSO Paris at that time, we were immediately put to work. We went over the plans for Lyons, Marseilles and Bordeaux on the first day, and had a little get-together ice-breaking party. We were traveling with a funny, adept Turkish architect whose skills came in handy a bit later. With my wretched French, I became the

translator of menus and map-reader for the group, gradually pulling up [the language I remembered from my African tour](#).

We flew to Lyons to get started. And wouldn't you know it: the day we arrived was the very day that Lyon's Beaujolais Nouveau hit the streets of the city. We worked hard all morning drawing up plans, taking pictures, deciding what improvements were needed out of the pile of money we had been asked to spend. Then the Consul-General INSISTED that our team join the Consulate staff at a local restaurant to celebrate the arrival of the beverage in proper French style. Afterwards we returned to our jobs (some of the pictures were a little blurred), and we flew back to Paris to draw up our plans. We spent the weekend in Paris, [visiting](#) the Louvre if memory serves me right.

The following Monday we were off to Marseilles. What a great city that was. Old French forts, a little harbor, charming, friendly people enjoying each other's company at sidewalk cafes, and food that put pounds on all of us. The Consulate-General was housed in an old Ducal Residence that was pretty shabby. You entered our diplomatic mission through the back door, squeezed through a metal detector and wiggled your way through a dingy basement to get into the upstairs areas, where things changed completely. The Consul-General, a man of considerable means, was spending his own money to revive the historic building. Parquet floors with fleur-de-lis designs were being lovingly refinished by hand. The CG was glad to see us but was concerned that our efforts might mess up his renovation effort.

Not to worry. The Turkish architect with us, something of a historian himself, took one look at the building plans and told us all that the building was being used backward. The raggedy front garden with a limestone ruin in it was actually the center point of what had once been a semi-circular carriage entrance with two gates, one of which had been bricked up. Instead of cramming more security equipment into the back door of the building, he suggested that the front gates be restored (with real security gates we could control), that the Marine be housed in a splendid new bulletproof facility in a central location at the front, and that the back entrance to the building be cleaned up, stripped of old security gear (there was a LOT of this back there) and restored to a more scenic appearance. This would not only greatly improve security and make the Consulate look beautiful, we had Government funds to do the job and the CG could continue with his interior restorations. The Architect even suggested that the limestone ruin, which was an authentic artifact from the Ducal Era, be cleaned up and retained as a work of art.

Our entire team was invited to the CG's house for an elaborate French dinner that very evening. As the plans were drawn up, and the validity of the architect's vision became very apparent to all of us, the CG stopped in frequently to compliment the crew. Under the expert guidance of RSO Mulvey, we began to explore the eating establishments of the Marseilles waterfront, eating, say, bouillabaisse in a Sicilian restaurant and then marching directly back to our hotel to be ready for the next day's job. On one such occasion, we bumped into the CG and his lovely wife, and we picked up the tab for dinner. On our final night, we were the Consulate's guests at another gorgeous restaurant. At this point my pants were getting a little tight.

We left for Bordeaux the next day and did not need to stay long. It appeared to the EOD physical security professional on the crew that someone had perhaps filled a Christmas ornament

with lighter fluid and had thrown it at the front wall of the Consulate. We went over the plans, made some suggestions, committed some money and headed back to Paris, where we needed to brief the Ambassador and especially the Administrative Counselor on what we had done. Here the beautiful plans put together by the Turkish architect carried the day. The Embassy seemed delighted with our efforts, sent a telegram to the Department praising our work and the team went back to Washington.

All except me. I had one further job, and that was to visit the Engineering Services Center in Frankfurt, whose territory we had invaded, and brief the Officer-in-Charge on our work. Having made only one previous trip to Frankfurt, I was looking forward to the visit. I got off the airplane at Frankfurt Airport and ran right into Paul Tubbs, who was supposed to be looking after things in Africa. As the organization's Operations Officer, I had not been briefed that Paul's presence in Frankfurt was required, and I was confused and a bit angry. Was there trouble in Europe serious enough to pull Paul out of Africa? I had not been told about it. What was he doing there, and who was looking after West Africa? I almost yelled at him in the airport.

He laughed at me. It wasn't Paul. It was his twin brother, David. David and Paul were identical twins, and I could not tell them apart at all. My memory has gone gray here, but I believe David Tubbs was a NYC-based auditor for Pan Am then serving as the Pan Am ground manager at Frankfurt airport.

I went into the ESC, made my report, then went back to Washington to write up my surveys. I found it very difficult to be both the Ops Officer and a survey writer, and it took longer than it should have to crank out the surveys.

After Washington, I was assigned to ESC Panama, where I had three subordinate offices. We had one in Rio de Janeiro, one of the world's most beautiful cities; we had a new office in Lima, Peru; and there was a bigger office at the American Embassy in Mexico City. Early in my tour, I went up to Mexico to get the lay of the land, reinforced by one of the fabulous FSI 10-week FAST courses of language immersion in Spanish. I got off the airplane, picked up my bag and ran into Paul Tubbs again, who should still have been in Abidjan. Once again, it was Paul's brother, now the Ground Manager for Pan Am in Mexico City. This time, since I had some time on my hands and we were near the end of the day, he took me home for dinner. His beautiful and gracious wife was a delight, wine from Latin America flowed and we talked a lot about Paul, who I kept meeting at airports.

4. OBSERVING THE LOCAL TRADITIONS

Mark Stevens and I always seemed to be at opposite ends of the Earth throughout our careers. He went to Abidjan but he was gone by the time I got there. We met once in Nairobi on a project arranged by John Wolf. Over the years, we usually encountered each other at conferences or gatherings back in the Department. When I visited him in Manila, he was the consummate host, showing me not only the newer parts of Manila such as Ermita but helping me to look for the area where my grandfather, a missionary, had raised his church in an older Northern suburb of the city. When we did meet at conferences, he was often the *vie du parti*, the life of the party. An example might be the time we all met for a conference in Frankfurt arranged by Lou Grob and had dinner at a Roman ruin-like restaurant out in the German countryside. Mark was selected to head the table and was given a laurel wreath to wear, which with his beard made him look a lot like the Spirit of Christmas Present in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

When I was stationed in Seoul, we had a gathering of the security personnel in Asia in Kuala Lumpur. Kuala Lumpur was so modern that it was easy to forget it was a Muslim country until you saw its flag, which looks a lot like the American flag with the white stars on the blue field replaced with a golden crescent and star. Women are not required to cover themselves in public there, although you do see a few head scarves on more conservative women. Mark and I were housed in the same hotel and I learned that he had arrived before me. I called him up and we talked a while, then decided to meet in the lobby of the hotel for a beer.

The hotel we were staying in was modern but small. There was a lobby bar off to the side of the ground floor sitting room, and there were simple grey chairs around small round tables. We sat down and started talking when a waitress approached us.

And what a waitress she was. A lot of different races and cultures have passed through Kuala Lumpur, and our waitress was stunningly beautiful—Malay with slightly Asiatic features that might have come from China and wearing a light gray silk sheath dress that clung to her model-like body like a sleeve. This woman could have given Scarlett Johanssen a run for her money. She had long, long legs for a Malaysian woman, and she walked with a grace that a ballet dancer might envy. She was extremely polite but serious and a little distant. She asked what we would like, and we ordered our beers.

A few minutes later she was back with a round tray, two icy beers and two tall pilsner glasses. As she approached our table, we looked up and an extraordinary experience occurred. This beautiful waitress in her silk dress *knelt down in front of us* and held her tray with her left hand. She did not look at us; her focus was entirely on doing her job correctly, presenting us with an exotic, beautiful face touched with concern and care. With her right hand, she gently poured each beer into its glass. She set a glass in front of each of us, pushed the empties together on the tray and then stood up gracefully and walked away.

I don't think either Mark or I breathed at all during this experience. All that I could think of was that perhaps throughout all of Malaysia, this was the manner in which men were served beer. If it was a local custom, it sure took my breath away. Mark and I just stared at the waitress

all the way back to the bar. Then Mark turned to me and, letting out his breath as he did so, whispered: "I could get used to this!"

5. CHEZ LE PETIT LOGIS

Early in 1981, ESO Abidjan was asked to have a team travel to the American Embassy in Congo-Brazzaville to enlarge a restricted office area. The size of the room we were working with was roughly that of a ballroom. The ceilings seemed to be about twenty feet high (we used a scaffold to get up there) and the other proportions of the room were similarly impressive. Because this was such a big job, we determined that four people (almost the entire office, back then) should go. There were two SEOs and two Seabees on the crew, one a builder and the other an electrician.

Accommodations in Congo-Brazzaville were rudimentary, to be polite. We were housed in “Le Petite Logis”, a tiny hotel with an attached bar and a dining room with plastic tablecloths that were wiped off about once a week. During the evenings, red lights over the bar were turned on and a local clientele emerged from somewhere around the hotel to drink, listen to the local radio and socialize. It was primitive, but breakfast was included in the price of the hotel: fresh French bread, preserved fruit and either coffee or tea.

At night we had lights and hot water, but there was no A/C and we were devoured by mosquitos.

On our first breakfast at the hotel, I ate with Pete, the Seabee Electrician. Pete noticed a rat about the size of a weasel emerge from a hole in the floor near the kitchen. It walked casually under the dining room tables near the wall and disappeared into another hole under the bar. We finished our breakfast and headed over to the Embassy to get started.

On our return that evening we were covered with brick and cement dust. On this occasion, there was air conditioning (no mosquitos!) but the water was cold and there were no lights at all.

Before work the next day, Pete checked out the hotel’s wiring system. He discovered that the hotel was wired with two power phases, one that supported the lights and hot water, and the other which kept the A/C running. There was only a single-phase source, however. We asked the management if they would allow us to adjust the wiring each evening so that guests would have the benefit of all these services. They agreed.

From then on, when we arrived at the hotel each evening, Pete would move the single wire with power onto the terminal for lights and hot water. We would wash up, change clothes, and scoot out to eat somewhere. At about 8:00 at night, Pete would move the wire with power over to the A/C terminal, and we would get a good night’s sleep. This continued all the way through our trip.

Being a good-hearted young man, Pete began to share his breakfast with the rat after the second day. He would gingerly place a small heel of bread with a little strawberry jam on it next to the wall under our table and move his legs over to the side so that the rat could get by. On

about the third day, the rat caught on to the morning offering and would sniff the jam, pick up the bread in its teeth and head for the bar.

Our mission to Congo-Brazzaville was finished, our relations with the hotel owners were amicable, and all was right with the world. The rat might still be there.

6. SHORT ROUND

The Security Enhancement Program was in full swing when I arrived in Panama in 1983. The program was evolving gradually. We found that local contractors could do a lot of the work we needed inexpensively with a little supervision, leaving the wiring and hook-up work to us. This was not done everywhere, but we appreciated the assistance when it was provided.

The problem was that most Embassies decided to engage a local architect as a part of this process. The thought line seemed to be: “We don’t want a building contractor just barging in here and throwing concrete around. We want the installation to look professional and last a long time. Let’s hire an architect.” We sometimes had little input to the architect's designs.

In Santiago, Chile the Embassy was housed in a multi-story business building in the middle of town. We had the top two floors; part of the roof was an open-air dining area next to the Embassy kitchen which was unusual and a nice place to eat. The architect that was hired had grandiose ideas of what an Embassy should look like, and he was especially concerned with the lobby area which set the tone for the rest of the section of the building occupied by the Embassy. Where the floors below us were encased in wallboard with paint or decorative wallpaper as you came out of the elevator, our architect used dark, expensive marble on the floor and on several of the walls leading up to the Marine Guard. The Watchstander was placed behind a Norshield ballistic window with a Norshield door on either side of him, one for entry and one for exit. The Consulate General was housed in a historic building in a different part of town, and I have another story about that facility which I will relate later.

Specifications provided to the architect showed him that we used roll-out equipment cabinets to house our security equipment. He was told that a number of enquiries, deliveries and other routine matters of the Embassy were conducted right at the Marine’s window. A tall Norshield window with a deal tray was accordingly ordered. No one told the Architect that the wheels on the equipment cabinets were optional, so he placed the Marine’s window an inch or two above the height of the tops of the cabinets *when they were fitted with wheels*. Then, as the appearance of the window was not in keeping with the elegance of the marble he had specified, he added a matching marble surround to the deal tray. By the time we arrived to install the electronics, the construction was complete: I could just barely put my chin on the deal tray. It was easily the highest teller window in Latin America. When you entered the lobby, you felt as if the Marine was somehow up on a pedestal watching over you.

This was not the case for every Marine, unfortunately. *The shortest Marine in the entire MSG program was assigned to the Embassy in Santiago*. When he stood watch at the window, all that you could see was the top of his white cover, and to see this you had to walk back to the elevator in order to see over the marble deal tray surround. It looked strange to see a moving hat in the Marine Booth. His colleagues named him “Short Round”, military terminology for a bullet that falls short of its target.

The Detachment Commander realized that all of his assigned Marines needed to see the lobby visually, and he conferred with his Detachment and the GSO to fabricate a special set of steps

that would fit inside the Marine Booth and which could be put into service when Short Round stood Watch. His name was painted on the steps, with the Marine Corps Emblem painted on each side, and this booster seat was presented to him by the Ambassador with great ceremony and high humor.

7. THE LAGOS CCTV INSTALLATION

Before there was a Security Enhancement Program, there was an earlier program called “Minimum Standards for Public Access Areas”. Most of the portion of Africa serviced by ESO Abidjan during my tour there (between 1978 and 1981) fell under this former program, which was essentially a do-it-yourself ballistic and forced-entry design and installation program. Using mostly local materials, we tried to bring Embassy and Consulate lobby levels up to a 9mm standard.

The results were ugly. We were installing thick wooden doors backed by steel plates that were bolted on, clunky electric locks like the ones made by Safemasters, unsightly cypher lock control boxes that seemed to die every time you turned around, and home-made ballistic windows with concentric rings of speaking holes drilled in them by hand. We were still using the Concord CCTV cameras at that time, which required expensive and very heavy multi-conductor cables to operate. They featured a coaxial cable in the center of the wiring bundle surrounded by control and power wires for the camera, the lens and the pan and tilt units beneath the camera. These were enclosed in outdoor housings that had filters on the back. If the filters were not changed often, the enclosures overheated in the African sun and the cameras died. If someone moved the cables or was rough in disconnecting the camera from the wiring harness, it was usually the coaxial cable in the middle of the bundle that broke, losing the picture and requiring us to order another cable. Each cable cost hundreds of dollars.

The new Embassy in Lagos, Nigeria was the Foreign Buildings Office’s first effort (at least in our area) to build security *into* buildings from the beginning. SEO Glenn Habenicht was the point man for Lagos when I arrived in Abidjan, and one of my first trips was to accompany him to Lagos to install the CCTV cameras at the new building. This was my first trip to Nigeria, and my first CCTV trip, and I was raring to go.

Of our African posts, Lagos was the place I learned to like the least. The country was in the grip of a military dictatorship. Public executions were held on an Atlantic beach near the city and they were popular attractions: you could buy little thorn tree wood dioramas of a firing squad shooting offenders. The war with Biafra was over, but there were a lot of people around who had been injured in the war. There were a lot of people, period: Nigeria was the most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Yoruba tribe that peopled the Lagos area seemed extremely obstinate and argumentative: I once observed a traffic accident in the middle of a crowded intersection where both drivers got out of their cars smiling because they knew they would be the center of attention for an hour or so as they argued with each other and the police.

Glenn had drawn up designs for the CCTV systems with the builder, showing locations where he wanted large-diameter PVC conduit run, where he wanted poured concrete footings for the CCTV cameras, how high the galvanized steel poles to support the cameras should be and what sort of threading he wanted on top to support his camera platform. All of these PVC runs (in those days long before Security Installation Cabinets) terminated on the front wall of the Marine booth, making it easy to reach the old Concord control units we used at that time. Glen brought along a 250-foot wiring snake, had shipped all the CCTV equipment to post and had

confirmed that it was all there before requesting tickets. I was learning a lot even before we left Abidjan.

The Embassy put us up in what had once been the Holiday Inn. It was within per diem, but was managed locally, and was something of a ruin. The carpets were stained and worn, the walls had been scraped by the movement of furniture, many lights were missing, doors were scarred by pry bars where keys had been lost. The dining room did not have much to offer except chicken. There was a pool out back, however, which seemed relatively clean and which had chairs and tables around it.

As we checked into the hotel, the electricity in that part of Lagos went out. This was a VERY common experience in Lagos, and no one knew how long the outage would last. Our rooms were on the fourth floor, so we walked upstairs in the dark to put our stuff away.

The next day, we started on the camera poles. Glenn had asked the builder to fabricate platforms that were welded to threaded pipe caps. The multi-conductor CCTV cables had huge Canon connectors on them and would not pull through holes or slots easily. Glenn solved this by cutting an inch and a half groove down through the threads of the camera poles with a saber saw, pulling the connectors out of the top of the pole and laying the cables through the slot. He then screwed the platform caps down on the poles over the slot. When he finished, only a small hole remained at the bottom. All of the Canon plugs were intact. We bolted the pan and tilt units to the platform, then put the camera housings on the P&T units, and finally installed the cameras. We were working off ladders and it was dirty work. We were both covered in metal shavings from the saber saw work and by dust from the inside of the pipes pulled out by the cables. We were dripping with sweat from being out in the sun all afternoon. Each camera (there were four exterior cameras at that time, more than most of our embassies had) took us a day to install and we broke a lot of saber saw blades.

After the first day, the embassy gave us a ride back to our hotel. The electricity was still off, so we walked upstairs in the dark again, feeling the numbers on the doors to make sure we reached our own rooms. On hitting the sink to wash up, we encountered our second Lagos experience: no water. Without electricity, the pumps used to push water to the upper floors of the hotel did not work. In some desperation, we took the tops off of the toilet tanks in our rooms, finding several gallons of water in each tank. This is what we used to wash up, but we somehow did not feel very clean when we went down to dinner.

As we were leaving for the Embassy the next morning, we noticed that the outdoor shower at the pool was working even though the power was off. The next six evenings, we took a towel and soap down to the pool and washed up down there. So did a lot of other hotel guests, forming a line with towels over their arms.

When all the cameras were installed and the CCTV cables run, we turned to the Marine booth. This was a time before standardized cabinets: the builder had installed wooden shelves in the Marine booth to hold equipment and had then covered these shelves with white formica. It looked great, except that *there were no holes in the shelving to admit cables or wires*. I borrowed a router, goggles and earmuffs from the GSO and began to modify the brand-new shelves to allow the big Canon plugs to reach the control units. I also cut several oval slots under each

control unit location to circulate air around the equipment. The GSO was disgusted at the “destruction” of the new shelving.

Glenn opened the control unit shipping boxes and was surprised to find that the Department had sent out a newer model of control unit that was a little longer than the older ones we used. We set the control units for 220V 50Hz and attached the Canon plugs. When we brought the power up, picture after picture from the brand-new camera installations came in clearly. All of the functions worked: pan, tilt, zoom, focus and the camera coverage of the Embassy’s exterior gates and grounds was great. The GSO and RSO were delighted with the pictures. We decided to let the cameras stay on while we went off to lunch, as the Marines would be using them all day once they moved over from the old Embassy.

When we returned from lunch, there had been a fire in the brand-new Marine booth. The new CCTV control units, while rated for 50Hz power operation, were not ready for the fluctuating voltages of Nigeria, which cycled from above 240 volts down to about 190 volts. In those days before we stabilized our security voltages with regulators based on ferro-resonant transformers, the brand-new equipment became way too hot and burst into flame. The GSO happened to smell smoke and rushed to the booth with a fire extinguisher. It happened to be a foam extinguisher for chemical fires, but he used it on every piece of equipment in the Marine Booth because he did not know the source of the fire. All of the CCTV equipment in the booth had been destroyed by fire. We asked Abidjan to pouch us down four of the older control units and new monitors, had some new shelves built, ordered some new cables to replace the ones damaged by fire, and arranged to come back in a month when all those items were in place so we could reinstall the camera controls. We sent the burned control units back to Washington.

The caustic chemicals from the fire extinguisher gradually ruined every item of electronic equipment in the Marine Booth. Over the next two years, every piece of installed equipment needed to be replaced. Not all of this was our equipment. SY/T went back to Concord to complain about the power problem, which was eventually solved, but we were lucky not to lose the entire embassy to the fire.

This was my first of *eight* trips to Lagos; other stories will follow.

8. INSTALLING QUITO'S DELTA BARRICADE

Late in 1983, the Department of State began to insist that Embassies install hydraulic vehicle barriers to protect our facilities and our parking lots from explosives-laden vehicles. The policy behind this requirement was not well thought out: posts were expected to purchase this exotic equipment, design its installation and install it themselves. There was money in each Regional Bureau's coffers to pay for the equipment, but posts squawked at the lack of service they were getting from their security personnel. RSOs wanted SEOs to design the systems and at least help install them; DS/ST did not think it had sufficient manpower to do this, and we were at something of a stalemate.

One of the posts of ESC Panama was the American Embassy in Quito, Ecuador, which somehow emerged as the second post in our area to get a Delta Barricade (Bogota was the first). I visited Quito to survey for the installation, which seemed straightforward to me. The entrance driveway was covered by two-foot-square concrete tiles; there was plenty of room for a large central guard booth from which the two barriers could be controlled. Power from the Embassy transfer switch was available near the front of the building and there was a nice location for the Delta hydraulic unit to the right of the entrance as you approached the Embassy. I drew up some plans, received warm offers of support from the GSO and ADMIN sections, and sent my report in.

Marv Doig, our Division Chief, called to say I would be fired if I had anything to do with the Delta installation in Quito.

What's a body to do? I had worked closely with both the Post and the RSO on the design; we as an engineering center needed a lot more experience with this new piece of equipment, we had promised help to the post and the equipment was on order. I thought Mr. Doig might relent if I did a good job in Quito.

One thing that troubled me, however, was the rather flimsy enclosure for the hydraulic control unit. I reasoned that something like a satchel charge would cause the enclosure to lose hydraulic fluid and probably drop both barriers. I decided to harden the hydraulic control unit by placing it in a room-sized box of reinforced concrete about four inches thick.

Learning from other projects, everything below ground was to be housed in heavy-gauge PVC pipe. The plans specified how the PVC was to run, where pull wires were to go, how high to place the control unit in the guard booth and how to reach the transfer switch. The idea was to lift the tiles, use a backhoe to trench the area for the PVC, pour a concrete base for the barriers, install the pipe and pull wires, back-fill with earth, replace the tiles and then come in to do the installation. The protected enclosure for the hydraulic panel was to have a steel door that faced

away from the street, power for the hydraulic unit and a sturdy latch we could secure with a padlock.

On my return to Panama, Sandra (the GSO) called. Sadly, *under the two-foot-square cement tiles was a four-inch slab of concrete*. The job changed a bit in both installation time and cost. A big jackhammer had to be rented to break up the concrete, which then had to be carried away. The rest of the job went as planned except that a new four-inch concrete slab had to be poured above the PVC pipe and allowed to cure before the tiles could be replaced.

About four months later, we arrived to install the barriers. Post Admin was a little less happy to see us than when we first arrived due to the cost increase, but the GSO was solidly in our camp. Working toward the protected pallet enclosure, we pulled wires, snaked hydraulic cables, connected the power panels and went in to address the hydraulics.

I am 5 feet 11 inches tall. The enclosure was somehow built to be 5 feet 10 inches tall on the inside. I bent over as I walked into the room, stood up and very nearly knocked myself unconscious. I still have a good-sized scar on my head from the impact with the concrete. I went over to the medical unit, got the wound dressed, and we completed the installation.

From then on, I tried to make the interior of every ballistic enclosure I designed for Delta Barriers *at least* six feet in height, and I would check the height before I entered the room.

Marv Doig did not fire me. Over time, we put in many other Delta Barricades in Latin America and the rest of the world, gradually getting a handle on the installation and maintenance requirements. There is no question, however, that my first installation came up short.

9. CHURRASCO

I was asked to attend an Admin Counselor's Conference in Buenos Aires in 1983 to discuss new security initiatives planned for Latin America. I popped down a day early to meet with the RSO; we went out for lunch along the river Plate and talked about old times in Copenhagen. I asked for some dinner suggestions, and he said "For the Argentine experience, you really have to have dinner at La Cabrera. They roast entire sides of beef and other meats around a large central fire that they keep going, and they bring your dinner to you on a sort of hibachi which keeps everything hot. And the meat is delicious."

So, that very evening, I took a taxi to La Cabrera and pigged out on an Argentine steak and some of their red wine from Malbec. In Argentina, this type of meal is called *carne asada*, but they also use the Brazilian word *churrasco* for a grilled meat dinner.

The next evening all of the Admin Counselors were in town, and the Embassy was entertaining us. We left the Embassy by bus, travelled through back streets, and arrived at a famous restaurant: La Cabrera. Malbec wines to match various dinner choices were listed on the menu. On this evening, I tried two forms of wurst and a small filet. The food was tasty, but pretty close to the previous evening's fare.

Diplomatic Security also sent a Desk Officer from Washington to speak at the Conference. Ralph Laurello, with whom I had worked in Africa, came in on the evening of the second day while attendees were at the restaurant. After a day of meeting with the Counselors, we went for a walk in Buenos Aires. Ralph eventually stated that he was hungry and would like to get something to eat. I suggested some seafood restaurants with attractive salad bars that we had walked by, but Ralph said: "You know, I have heard so much about the beef here in Argentina that I would like to try some. I asked at the Embassy and they said that La Cabrera was the place to go. "

So we got into a cab and went (for me) to the same restaurant for the third night in a row. I had a very small filet with a big salad and more red wine. Ralph, a former RSO Paris, was into wines and was a good guide to the Malbecs of Argentina.

10. SURVEY WORK

When I first arrived in Abidjan, we covered twenty-eight Embassies and Consulates in West Africa. The most modern of these facilities was our new Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, but the most American-leaning post in our territory was Monrovia, Liberia. Liberia had been founded by freed U.S. slaves who had traveled back to their original continent to form a new country based on many of the same precepts of the United States of America. Security at the Embassy was lax. There was a huge Voice of America transmitter just outside of town with curtain-wall antennas that were so high there was a golf course beneath them, and a powerful navigational transmitter with one of the tallest antennas in the world.

In 1980 there was a coup d'etat in Liberia. Master Sergeant for Life Samuel Doe established himself as head of state, executed several members of the former ruling party, and began making decisions. Armed squads of soldiers commandeered Mercedes sedans and drove around the city, sometimes firing weapons into the air. Undefended American Embassy compounds were suddenly at considerable risk, especially from armed troops looking for a little bit of money on the side.

Marv Garret was the Regional Security Supervisor in Nairobi at the time, and Marv made a beeline for Monrovia. He asked me to join him there and Marv, new RSO Roger Brown and I mulled over what we might be able to do quickly. Basically, everything was needed: locks, alarms, CCTV systems, ballistic material to protect the Marines, better radios, a reduced American presence, on and on. What was really a setback, however, was that the 13-acre Embassy compound was almost entirely dark at night. Almost anyone could jump the fence, get on the compound and become invisible. Marv assigned me six surveys to do, and I argued for a compound lighting survey as the first step.

Not an easy task, as it turned out. The Embassy sat on a cliff of basalt, a very hard form of fine-grained lava. Putting in telephone poles to support mercury vapor lights was a big undertaking. I had to learn a lot about telephone pole installation tools, things like prewired heavy electrical wire with messenger cables to take the strain, bucklers, reinforcing cables and their anchors, and so forth. But I found all the materials I would need in catalogs and identified the tools to install them that the Embassy would need. All I needed was a lighting survey that told me where the lights should go. I bought a very reasonable photocell attachment for a Fluke multimeter that measured light in lumens, and I thought I would get a set of plans for the compound, grid the plans to facilitate placement of the overhead lights I wanted to use, then walk around the compound with the digital photometer to see where more or less light was needed. I asked Roger to get me a set of compound plans and scheduled my first of several trips back to Monrovia. The plans, as it turned out, were about fifth generation Xerox copies, which I realize none of you have ever seen before, but they were adequate for what I wanted to do. Roger offered to come with me on the survey with a flashlight while I did the readings, which I appreciated. So we started near the front gate of the compound and walked over the grid, turning off the flashlight at each stopping point to measure light so as not to screw up our readings with the torch.

This being West Africa, and a laid-back Embassy, the grounds were in poor condition. We were walking through brush, around scrub trees, pushing vines off to the side as we walked. We could hear small animals in the brush as we walked, taking them to be rats or bushrats or perhaps lizards, but we worked at it and over two nights of walking we completed the survey.

As I was getting close to my departure time, I went looking for Roger in one of the out-buildings and found, to my amazement, a really good copy of the original site plan pinned to the wall of what must have been the GSO's office. I looked it over with special attention to the brush areas we had gone through and started reading the tiny place names that were not readable on our Xeroxed map.

As it turned out, three-quarters of the brush region we had been walking through had a name: Mamba Point, named after the Black Mamba serpents frequently found there.

11. BAR FOOD

I grew up in a cribbage-playing family. My dad taught me, my brother and my three sisters to play, and we played in pairs, threes and two-person teams for years. In many ways, the game was our family's cement: we would all go our separate ways when we arrived at a new overseas post, but we got back together on the ship (as we travelled in those days) by playing cribbage.

While stationed in Abidjan, we were asked to visit the American Embassy in Banjul, capital of the Gambia, for some lock work. This was a strange assignment in a strange place. The Gambia is a tiny little English-speaking riverine country in the middle of Senegal. It's not very wide; the story was that the country was only as wide as a British warship's cannons could fire on either side of the river, and that Banjul was created where the water became too shallow for Her Majesty's ships.

I went to Banjul with a Seabee electrician. We arrived on a Friday on a plane filled with young Scandinavians, who came to Africa for the sunshine. Our rooms, unusual in our line of work, were actually in a beach hotel not too far from the Embassy. We decided to meet at the bar and have a beer. On a whim, I took my cribbage board and a deck of cards down to the bar, thinking that I might teach Pete to play. He already knew how, and we both saw a good trip ahead of us.

After our first beer, we asked the bartender if he had anything to go with the beverages: popcorn, shredded carrots, perhaps olives? He said cheerfully: "I can get you some peanuts!" Peanuts sounded great, so we played several games of cribbage, downed a few brews and munched on ground nuts. Then we went out for dinner.

Our Embassy in Banjul was in a three-story office building that seemed to have seen better days. This was in the mid-1970's, and post did not have an RSO: we offered our services to the Administrative Officer, who asked us to check out the rudimentary Comm Center after we fixed the safe. Pete, quite knowledgeable on DTS standards, began with the ground system.

In Banjul, the Comm Center ground was a bright green number 10 wire that was poked through the wooden frame of a window, draped loosely down the side of the building and run across the ground openly to a small building near the street. Pete followed this wire to its end, which had been stripped and wrapped loosely around the cold-water pipe below a men's urinal.

We repaired a safe, installed a cypher lock in the Embassy interior and headed back to the hotel. We were done early for the day and decided to walk down through some volcanic rocks and look at the beach. We walked down a staircase-like rock formation, passed a couple of lava boulders about eight feet high, and turned the corner.

Directly in front of us, on a beach towel, was a nude Scandinavian girl in her early twenties with long, honey-blond hair and a pair of sunglasses. We were both in shock, and did

not want to disturb her tranquility, so we tried hard to avert our eyes as we walked around either side of her towel. We were not entirely successful in this effort.

We walked along the beach and went to a similar but fancier hotel a little further West. We sat at the bar and asked for some beer and popcorn. Beer was available, but no popcorn, nor carrots, nor olives. But they did have peanuts.

The Gambia has only one export crop. Peanuts.

12. SORRY, WE'VE GOT TO WORK LATE TONIGHT

When I was the Officer in Charge in Panama, we basically had two groups of Seabees. There was a builder, an electrician, and a steel worker in one group, and two car mechanics in the other group. By that time (1985), almost every Ambassador in Latin American had a fully-armored vehicle, and the car mechanics were required to travel from post to post to post to keep the cars running, the tires checked and especially to examine the suspension systems that were carrying a LOT of extra weight. Shock absorbers were replaced with regularity, but once in a while a vehicle would hit a pothole and a suspension part would bend, resulting in an uneven and even dangerous ride. The car mechanics generally went out for about three weeks, returned for a week or two depending on birthdays, holidays and anniversaries, then went out again, shipping needed parts ahead of themselves to posts.

I inherited two car mechanics from Don Hoover, but they were both near the end of their tours when I arrived in 1983. I traveled with each of the mechanics on installation trips to get to know them, but not on the car trips because that work was specialized and I knew I would be in the way.

In early 1985, however, both of our car mechanics were replaced almost simultaneously. The new arrivals were a different set of guys. They were young, enthusiastic body-builders and runners, and they would work out with the Marines at most of the posts they visited. They were polite, handsome, popular at every post and they did a good job, not only with the fully-armored vehicles but with the partially-armored cars we were producing about every two weeks for the Panama DAO Office, which sent them all over Central America.

In June, 1985, this crew was on duty in El Salvador, which was engaged in a civil war at that time. Their plane arrived on a Friday and they checked into their hotel and then into the Embassy, visiting the RSO and outlining their work plan. They then checked in with the Marines, who said that they were going to go to a small party down the street at a restaurant called the Zona Rosa to eat, down some beer and watch girls, a central feature of life in El Salvador. (RSO Bob Brittain used to claim that every single Marine who was assigned to this post left married.) The Marines invited the Seabees to join them that evening.

On checking out the Ambassador's Cadillac, however, the Seabees found that one of the suspension parts had been badly damaged and it appeared as if the front axle might have been slightly bent. Fortunately, spare parts were available at post, so the team set to work. They had to tell the Marines, however, that they had to skip the festivities because they needed to work late.

On the evening of 19 June 1985, several gunmen with automatic weapons dressed as Salvadorian soldiers came into the Zona Rosa restaurant and opened fire. Twelve people were killed, including two American citizens and four Marines. Had it not been for the bent suspension parts, we would probably have lost both Seabees as well. Car support trips became much more carefully coordinated after the incident in El Salvador, and we felt mighty lucky as an office.

13. BEANIE BABIES

When I left for Seoul, Korea in 1991, my niece was at a point in her life where she was collecting Beanie Babies. These were fabric-covered toys that were from three to four inches in length, usually developed along a theme and a name, such as “Sally Squirrel”. There were a lot of Beanie Babies in circulation. They were made in China, but each toy was only made for a very short period of time, after which the factory stopped making them. This caused the really neat Beanie Babies to become quite valuable in a short amount of time. I have two Platypus Beanies downstairs that sell for quite a bit on eBay.

My niece reasoned that if I was going to be anywhere near China, I might have an opportunity to pick up some of the rarer Beanie Babies for her. She gave me a two-printed-page list of the animals she wanted me to find. With little hope of achieving her dreams, I set off for Seoul with her list in my pocket.

In Seoul, since we had lost our Engineering Services Center in Manila, I was assigned as an SEO Regional Supervisor. I had six offices to check in on throughout the Far East, all well-manned by young and competent SEOs. My job had several aspects: I was the coordinator of large projects for which we would need to garner help from several offices; the rating officer for the region; a buffer between SEOs and the RSOs they supported; and a filler, an available pair of hands in the region that could take over a post for a while if someone got sick or had a family emergency. I need not have worried about much of this, but we did have five posts in China. I filled in there as the OIC between John Jomeruk and Field Cooper, and again between Field and Steve Klein, staying about six weeks in Beijing on each of those two fill-ins. I tried to see as many constituent posts throughout my territory as I could, but felt strongly that I should become familiar with all the posts we had in China, so I traveled around China quite a bit.

On my first trip into Beijing to visit with Jomeruck, I asked several secretaries in the Embassy if anyone was familiar with Beanie Babies. Generally, I drew a blank, but one young lady in the Administrative section had a relative who collected them. She suggested that I visit a stall in the very back of a clothing market near the Embassy and talk to an elderly Chinese lady who rented the stall. There was a problem, however: I had studied Korean rather than Chinese for this tour, and was not certain that I could make myself understood.

Not to worry. I had a picture of two Beanie Babies that my niece had given me. I went to the market, looked around until I saw some toys, then started handling some of the toys. A Chinese lady came over to me quickly, and I smiled and showed her the picture. She became happily agitated, smiled, took me by the wrist and pulled me three alleyways over to a stall where an elderly lady sat. I smiled at her, tried a “Ni hao!” Chinese hello and showed her the picture. She nodded and, in the manner of traders all over the world, pushed some boxes aside, reached under other boxes and pulled out a box of Beanie Babies.

To be valid, there was a little heart-shaped “TY” tag in the ear of each Beanie Baby, attesting to its authenticity. All of this lady’s stock was properly tagged. I poked through the box, found four of the Beanie Babies on Rachel’s list, and asked the price of several others in the box.

When she gave me the price, I stood up as if to leave, and she became concerned. She gestured that I should write down the price I wanted to pay. I tried writing down half of what she had asked. She wanted a little more, so I went down the “what if I bought two of them?” route. This was more acceptable to her, so I scratched my head, poked through the box, set some of the dirtier toys aside and casually picked out the four on Rachel’s list. I handed her the money, got my merchandise in a paper bag that was probably as old as I was, and stood up to leave.

Almost as an afterthought, I took out Rachel’s list (written in English) and showed it quizzically to the lady. She moved more boxes, set aside a bolt of cloth, moved three plastic boxes of beads and found a notebook. It contained a catalog of Beanie Baby pictures in Chinese with the equivalent of an English language translation off to the right. Think of it as the Rosetta Stone for Beanie Babies. I was going to be in town for a while, so I picked out four more of the items on Rachel’s list, one valuable one and three middle-of the road toys. I asked her to get them for me at the same price.

This went on over several weekends. I would see the Temple of Heaven, then stop by the lady’s stall. I would visit the Chinese bell museum on the outskirts of the city, and maybe one of the stores that then only sold Chinese artifacts to foreigners, and then visit the stall. By the time I left, I had purchased all but four of the Beanie Babies on Rachel’s list.

My wife was starting to get into the Beanie collection craze, too. I bought two of the TY Patti Platypus Beanie Babies because they were cute and I liked their colors (raspberry and yellow). I invite you to look up their value on eBay.

14. TAKING OUT AN INCINERATOR

As many of you know, shredders and disintegrators were not always our primary means of disposing of classified paper. In earlier years, such paper was burned in incinerators, most of which were force-fed with air to keep the fire burning at a high temperature. Burn detail was commonly given to the Marine Detachment, if the Embassy had one. A hinged door provided access to the interior, and one dropped in "Burn Bags", so labelled on the outside, one or two at a time, closing the metal door after each deposit.

Incinerators raised the heat in a communications center and often had rusted stacks or conical pipe hats that leaked black fly ash. They were a pain to clean out when they became too full of debris. The Department of State welcomed the relative ease of cross-cut shredders placed near the locations where people worked, eliminating piles of burn bags and a hot, dirty chore.

The incinerators did not just come out by themselves, however: they had to be taken apart by cleared personnel.

After I arrived in Abidjan, I received a telegram from the Embassy in Niamey, Niger. They had a small incinerator in the Comm Center lobby area that they no longer needed: would we be willing to come up for a visit and remove it? We were willing.

Our Embassy in Niamey was something of a surprise to me. It was near the Niamey River, so there were large trees in abundance, an unusual sight at the edge of the Sahara desert. It appeared to be an attractive, FBO-built building with an expanded parking area, a graceful fence around the property, a well-placed flag staff and a clean and well-kept exterior. There were tennis courts on the Embassy grounds and a small pool. Compared to the other posts we served, one might ask: "What makes this place so special?" The answer was simple: Uranium. Niger had a good supply of uranium, which many countries were willing to buy at a high cost. The only unsightly part of the whole embassy was a standing roll of tar paper on the little roof above the front door, which seemed out of place.

As we entered the Comm Center, we were given a little tour. There were several sets of shelves off to the right of the vault door apparently holding tools that were no longer needed. I spotted a linesman's handset in one of the bins and asked if I might have it when we left, once we removed the incinerator. They said they would be glad to see it go.

We disconnected the power from the foyer incinerator, and removed the bolts securing it to the floor. The paper-burner had been there a long time, however, and some of the chimney parts had rusted together. Normally, one person held the chimney from a ladder, while another person twisted the incinerator back and forth until the chimney came off. Then you removed the incinerator and took the rest of the chimney apart, usually getting entirely black with soot in the process.

I was working with Pete, a Seabee Electrician, and the two of us could not free the rusted chimney, even working from the top of the ladder the post provided. I thought we might get a bit

more torque on the chimney seam if I removed some of the false ceiling tiles and went higher on the chimney, so I did.

There was no place up there to sit or stand securely. There was a protruding brick on the right side that offered one foothold, and a couple of one-inch pipes up there (one wrapped) where I could place my left foot. Against my better judgement, I moved from the ladder to the two footholds offered. I grabbed the chimney and started to twist it. The rusty weld broke and the chimney started to come apart. Pete twisted the incinerator back and forth and we started making progress. All I had to do was lift up the stack and we were nearly done.

As I put my weight on the brick and the pipes and tried to lift the chimney, the pipes broke. I fell through the aluminum lattice of the suspended ceiling, tearing it apart and breaking up some tiles as I fell. The distance to the floor was about ten feet; luckily, I landed on my feet, but the shock of the fall was severe. Hot water poured out of the wrapped broken pipe and mingled freely with the mess I had created on the floor.

The Comm Center personnel came out of the vault, looked at the mess and shook their heads. "We should have called some other office to remove it" was clearly heard. We found a way to turn the water off, repaired the pipes, removed the incinerator, went up into the attic to remove the stack, sealed the hole in the roof and escorted some local workers through the building to take it all outside for pickup. We found some aluminum ceiling tile supports and some new acoustic tiles and repaired the damaged ceiling. We did not see or hear anything from the Comm Center people until we went up to report the job complete. I asked about the lineman's headset: they said they needed it after all.

I had told the Admin Officer on our arrival that the roll of tar paper on the entry way roof looked junky and offered to remove it while we were there. He thanked me and said I could do it. Just before we left the post, I went out on the roof through a window and walked over to the standing roll of tar paper.

The roll was occupied with a nest of the biggest wasps I had ever seen. Their heads were the size of peas and the average body length was about two and a half inches. Many triangular wasp heads were looking intently at me from within an eight-inch hole as I gently backed away from the nest. I told the Admin Officer about the nest, regretted that we did not have more time to work with it, and we beat feet for the airport. The tarpaper roll is probably still there.

15. SHOPPING TRIP

Africa was an interesting place to live, but it could also be a dangerous place. There were haves, and there were many more have-nots, and those without wanted all that they could get.

All of us assigned to African cities found marvelous collectable items, from baskets to fetish figures to musical instruments and masks and much more. Jewelry was available, but expensive, especially gold jewelry. Still, there were necklaces of mounted stones, earrings fashioned out of intricate wire designs and interesting leatherware, especially for women.

About six months into my tour in Abidjan, Gilder Washington arrived as our office's new secretary. Abidjan was Gilder's first tour, and she launched herself into it. She was always friendly, always on time, always ahead on her work or hopping to catch up, and she got along with everyone from the Marines to the DCM. She was so good, in fact, that she needed more to do to keep busy. I hesitantly asked her to take over the travel and voucher arrangements for our five-man office, at a time when we were sprinting from place to place to keep up with our 28-post workload. I'm talking 70 per cent travel here.

Gilder took to the travel arrangements like a duck to water. She would peruse the airline guide (this was way before computers) and she would find the best routes with the shortest flight times and the fewest number of stops. She would arrange embassy vans to come by our homes in plenty of time to get to the Embassy and pick up our equipment and then have a reasonable amount of time in which to check in at the Airport. We always had the visas we needed, and if multiple entry visas were needed we had those, too. We travelled on two diplomatic passports back then, so as to have one to travel on while we waiting for the other one to come back with visas. When you returned, you gave Gilder your travel information and you usually had a correctly completed voucher to sign within a day. We could return from Conakry in the depth of the night on a late flight with lots of equipment, and there would always be an Embassy van waiting for us.

About a year into her assignment, Gilder was offered a different secretarial job at a higher level somewhere else. I have forgotten the initial assignment. But suddenly, the Ambassador in Congo-Brazzaville needed a new secretary, and Gilder was asked if she would accept that assignment. We were desperately sorry to see her leave, but becoming an Ambassador's secretary on her first assignment was a fitting follow-on to serving at an ESC, and she had all the skills. Off she went to Congo-Brazzaville, taking along her tasteful wardrobe, her new trinkets and African memorabilia and the few items of jewelry she had acquired. She was given a nice little house in Brazzaville, and we were looking forward to visiting her on our next visit down there.

Two months after her arrival at Brazzaville, Gilder's home was burglarized while she was at work. Literally, everything she owned was taken: clothing, food, shoes, underwear, jewelry, artifacts, artwork on the walls, everything. Her place was picked clean.

Post almost immediately found a way to compensate Gilder for some of her losses; they arranged for her to represent the post at an Administrative conference in Paris. She attended the conference, using her after-hours time to shop and shop and shop. Her new wardrobe and more personal items were carefully packed in new luggage. With her customary efficiency, she replaced her losses in her spare time on a single trip.

I heard roughly a year later that her house was burgled a *second* time, but I cannot be sure this was true. If it was, I am sure she recovered just as rapidly. Hardship posts were given that name for a reason.

16. KADUNA TELEVISION SURVEY

Most of the trips I made to Nigeria while stationed in Abidjan were to Lagos, Nigeria where we were building a new Embassy on Victoria Island. It was a major undertaking (I made eight trips to Lagos) and we learned a lot about marine booths, sally ports, ballistic doors and centralized lockup systems from that facility. I have a great many Lagos stories, but these should be crafted and told one at a time.

This story, however, concerns my only trip to our Consulate in Kaduna, Nigeria, located up near where Boka Haram is now threatening villages. From my vantage point at that time, the Hausa people who lived in Kaduna were a lot more pleasant than the Yourba people who occupied Lagos.

The RSO in Lagos, Ben Schaumberg, had asked me to do a CCTV survey in Kaduna. I had not seen the post yet, so I decided to do the survey personally, and arranged for tickets and a hotel reservation.

Kaduna sits at the bottom edge of the Sahara Desert. At the time I visited the post, the Hamsin (desert wind) was in full force and, because of the dust it generated, it was not possible day after day to determine where the sun was located. The days were bright, even desert bright, but the dusty wind covered everything and got into everything you owned.

I made measurements, decided where the cameras should go, where to get power, how to bury the conduit to support the cameras, and where to put the monitors and the control units. We used simpler cameras and control units then than we do today, but the RCA cameras in the sealed cylindrical housings filled with dry nitrogen were starting to appear at ESOs and I chose those units because of the dust. I then drew up a set of plans for the installation with details showing a footing for the front camera pole, a bracket for the fixed rear door camera and the general layout of the Consulate compound. There was, however, a problem with my drawing. I wanted to put a compass rose on it to indicate directions, and I could not determine where the sun was on account of the desert dust. I asked a couple of Consulate officers if they knew where true North was located, but they did not know. No one seemed to have a compass.

Kaduna being primarily a Muslim area, there was a prayer niche for the Muslim employees on the back side of the building. I realized that the prayer niche pointed directly toward Mecca, which was East-Northeast of Kaduna. After checking my estimation on a map in a Consulate dictionary, I confirmed my directional guess and added the compass rose to my drawing.

17. A TRIP TO PRAIA

When I reported to ESO Abidjan in 1978, some of our constituent posts were really out on the edges of the territory. One such post was our Embassy on Praia in the Cape Verde Islands. This was a cluster of eleven small islands out in the Atlantic Ocean: not quite in the middle of the ocean, but getting there. Praia was on the largest island, all of which were volcanic.

On my first trip to Praia, because this was such a remote post, I was asked by post to travel as a Non-Pro Courier for the first time. I understood the process of seeing the cargo aboard in Abidjan, descending to move the cargo to another plane in Dakar, staying with the pouch until the plane took off and then being the first person off the plane at the distant end to receive the pouch and accompany it to the terminal, where the Embassy would then assist me.

I flew from Abidjan to Dakar on Air Afrique without incident. Pouches were common on this leg of the trip and I was greeted by the captain of the aircraft, who understood what was happening. In Dakar, we moved the cargo from a jet aircraft to a De Havilland turboprop, which was much smaller but which had been purchased with every seat the aircraft could accommodate, meaning that every passenger ate their knees throughout the entire trip.

As we approached our departure time, the pouches went on to the plane without incident, one of the engines was started, and the captain waved me aboard. I stood in the doorway of the plane until the steward asked me to take a seat. Still, the plane sat on the tarmac with the door opened and the engine running. I got up to say something to the steward, but he stepped aside and a tall Catholic priest got on to the plane. He passed me and took the window seat next to me near the front; I sat in the middle seat next to him in order to be the first person off the plane when we landed.

I like to meet my fellow passengers when I travel and learn about their education, backgrounds and careers. I started to introduce myself to the tall, bearded priest. He was over six feet in height, probably weighed somewhere around 170 lbs and was wearing a well-fitting but very simple ivory-colored frock and a crucifix. Just as I began to introduce myself, the priest smiled, took out a small book of prayers and a rosary, and began to pray, dropping on his knees on the uncomfortable aircraft as he did so. I thought we might have a meaningful conversation when he finished his religious observance, *but the priest prayed all the way from Dakar to the Cape Verde Islands, a period of nearly three hours.*

As we approached Praia, the steward passed down the aisle with landing cards. The priest and I each took one. I took out my diplomatic passport to complete my document.

The priest took out the most unusual and beautiful passport I have ever seen. It was bound in burgundy leather and it had a yellow silk ribbon in the binding with which to mark important pages. The pages of the passport were all gold-rimmed and every page in the document was *hand-illuminated* (beautifully illustrated) with religious scenes by monks or nuns at some religious institution. Incised in gold on the front of the passport was the emblem of the Vatican. The priest was the Papal Nuncio (Ambassador) to the Cape Verde Islands.

After we completed our landing cards, the priest returned to his prayer book and rosary. We landed about twenty minutes later. When the plane came to a stop, I stood up and headed for the door, intending to be the first person on the ground under the plane. As I reached the door, the captain of the aircraft put his hand on my chest to hold me in place. The priest retrieved a light valise from an overhead compartment, passed me, thanked the pilot and walked down the mobile stairway. At the bottom of the stairway was a short, stocky man in a brown suit and a bowler hat. As the priest reached the ground, the attendant took his valise firmly, kissed the priest's ring with great respect, took the priest by the elbow and walked away from the *plane in a direction completely different from the direction to the terminal*. The priest apparently did not need to have his bag checked, present his passport or clear customs: he just left the airport, evidently answering to some higher power.

The rest of the trip went entirely as planned. I never saw the priest again.

18. THE FASTEST CAR IN ALL BOLIVIA

On my first tour in Operations, the SY Fully-Armored Vehicle program was still part of SY/T. The SY Front Office had decided that they needed a Special Agent in charge of armored car distribution, however, so we had Irving Bridgewater embedded in our office space, in charge of the FAV program.

By 1981, the Department was no longer armoring only Cadillacs. In the interests of cost savings, SY had discovered that a Chevrolet Caprice Classic, when equipped with a luxury interior, an upgraded suspension system and a big, powerful V8 engine produced a very statesmanlike vehicle. SY found that it could buy and equip almost two Caprice Classics for the cost of every Cadillac they turned out. The cars were still armored at Hess and Eisenstadt, but we were saving money by working with a less expensive vehicle.

There were some problems, however. The suspensions on all fully-armored vehicles were carrying much more weight than they were designed to support, and a bumpy road system in an overseas country could cause suspension parts to wear out, bend or even break. To solve this program, we had traveling Seabee teams composed of car mechanics who were trained to service the armored cars, and we tried to keep extra suspension parts in stock. We also had a good support system in place with the Chevrolet dealer near our SA-7 Springfield warehouse; they could usually get parts for us very quickly. The FAVs were fuel-injected, but deploying an armored car to a high-altitude post like Quito (8,000 feet) caused the car's performance to drag noticeably.

When it came time to replace the Ambassador's limo in La Paz, Bolivia, it was time for some extra engineering. The high altitude at post (12,000 feet at the airport) meant that a normally-aspirated FAV would gasp for air everywhere it traveled. Irv Bridgewater and Hess and Eisenstadt discussed this problem and consulted Chevrolet. Chevrolet suggested that we work with a speed shop to bring the car up to specs.

After a little design work, the speed shop recommended that we put a supercharger on the new car for the Ambassador. There was some discussion on how best to mount it. The normal approach was to mount it on top of the engine, cut a hole in the hood and weld a big scoop over the hole to provide access for the blower and to channel air to its intake. We decided that such a car would draw attention to itself and might not look "Ambassadorial", so a special mount was designed to hold the supercharger next to the engine at a lower point on the block where it could be connected to the motor by a toothed drive belt.

I transferred to Panama at about this point in the FAV's design. The car was procured, armored and sent to the speed shop, which installed the blower and expressed satisfaction with the car's performance. Arrangements were made to ship the car to Bolivia's only port on the Pacific coast; our two car mechanics from ESC Panama were to meet the car at the port and drive it up the mountain roads to La Paz.

As arrangements were being finalized, the speed shop had a question for us: did we want the car shipped with low altitude fuel jets, which would have required a stop about halfway up the mountains to insert the high altitude jets, or did we want the car to simply be shipped with the high altitude jets in place, which would result in a race-car like ride up the slopes? I asked the Seabees, who both smiled a little, then told me that the high altitude jets would be the way to go.

Our Seabees met the car, brought it through customs with assistance from the Embassy, and took turns driving it up the road to La Paz. They said later that it was possible to burn rubber off the tires at any speed allowed by the mountain roads, so they discretely replaced all four tires when it reached its destination. The Ambassador discovered quickly that he could easily lose his Bolivian motorcycle escort whenever he wanted to, and realized that he had the fastest car in all Bolivia.

19. MEETING THE MAYOR OF ACCRA

Prior to his assignment as the Regional Security Supervisor in Nairobi, Ralph Laurello was the Senior RSO in Paris. Ralph was a pleasant man and good company, but he was used to what I would call “high living” after his tour in Paris and did not seem inclined to lower his high standards just because he had been assigned to Africa. One of his junior RSOs from Paris, Bob Boyke, was assigned to the Embassy in Abidjan at about the same time as Ralph went to Nairobi. Since Bob reported to Ralph, and since they had worked together before, Ralph decided to start his round of African RSO inspections in Abidjan. He sent a telegram to Abidjan announcing his intention to visit and mentioned that he wanted to go to a constituent post while on our side of the Continent. Bob was new in town and asked for a suggestion as to which post he might visit in his region with Ralph. I suggested Accra, the capital of Ghana. I offered to accompany them to post, since I did not know Mr. Laurello and wanted to see what he was like.

The economy in Ghana was almost non-existent in 1980. The local currency was essentially worthless and there was not much to eat in the local stores. The Embassy had a Commissary on the GSO Compound at some distance from the Chancery, which was an FBO-built building shaped like an African Chief’s house and made entirely of wood on a raised concrete base. Embassy and USAID personnel purchased nearly all of their food items at the commissary due to the condition of the Ghanaian economy.

At the commissary, there was a demented African man who tended to sit or stretch out in the nude on the side of the road. This man was very, very well endowed, and was fond of walking up to the driver’s side of vehicles exiting the commissary when those vehicles were driven by women. He was not threatening, but would stand to the side of the road next to the vehicle’s driver’s side mirror and just hang out until the driver looked to her left before making the turn. This nearly caused some accidents as women would hurriedly drive away from the man; at other times they would delay their turn and just stare at the man, blocking traffic. Because of his natural gifts, people began to call this guy “the Mayor”.

Bob Boyke made reservations for all of us at the Intercontinental Hotel. The hotel had long before lost its affiliation with the international chain of Intercontinental Hotels and was locally managed, but the name stayed the same. The hotel was a wreck with lots of mildew, leaky roofs, broken windows and poor internal cleanliness, but it was the best hotel around.

When Ralph came to Abidjan, he stayed in the Hotel Ivoire, an *actual* Intercontinental Hotel, and found it up to his standards. He was in his element with fine dining, French wines, a beautiful pool, palm-landscaped hotel grounds and gift shops. He asked Bob where we would be staying in Accra, and was advised that we would be in the Intercontinental Hotel in Ghana as well. Ralph was pleased.

When we arrived in Ghana, Ralph and Bob met with the Ambassador, DCM and Admin Counselor. On hearing that we were going to stay in the Intercontinental, the Admin Counselor offered to house Bob and Ralph in his guest house instead. He had a nicely-built playhouse for his children in a separate building behind his residence, and intended to house his guests in the

there. He took us over there to show us the accommodations, and Ralph was offended that he was offered a children's playhouse as quarters. We went to the Intercontinental as scheduled.

Ralph offered to treat us to lunch. We sat down in the mildewed dining room with stains all over the tablecloth and were offered menus that dated back to the time the economy was in good shape. Ralph ordered *steak au poivre* and a salad. He was told that neither dish was available. He then ordered sautéed shrimp, only to be told that there were no shrimp. Exasperated, he asked what *was* available and was told that chicken was on the menu. Looking around the dining room, it was apparent that everyone eating that afternoon was dining on chicken, the only menu item available.

Ralph wanted to see all of the embassy's facilities, and we had arranged for a car to go visit GSO and the Commissary. When we got into the vehicle, with Ralph still steamed about the condition of the hotel and the poor choice of menu items, Bob mentioned that we had arranged for him to meet the Mayor of Accra on our way to the other compound. Ralph felt that such a meeting would be appropriate and cheered up a bit.

When we reached the Commissary, we had the van stop next to the prone figure stretched out along the curb in his birthday suit. On our arrival, the man stood up and stared at the car. We told Ralph that Embassy personnel called this man the Mayor. Ralph, beginning to understand Ghana, said "I can see why!" Thereafter, Ralph's expectations became more normal and the trip went well.

20. LOCKWORK

All of us went through several weeks of lock school. Mine was held in the basement of Main State, in Russ Waller's lock shop. It was a fun course, and most of us enjoyed learning a manual but esoteric new skill. In the field, however, lockwork could make or break your program. I have many lockwork stories; here is the first of them:

Lock School was three weeks long when I attended it in 1978. François White ("Whitey" as we knew him) was our only instructor, and he did a great job of teaching us the nuances of door and window locks, padlocks, combination locks, safes and vaults. Lock school was a rite of passage at that time: completing the course meant that you were nearing your first overseas assignment. Whitey was a very tolerant teacher who let you make mistakes during his course and learn from those mistakes, such as the time I removed the bolt from a Simplex combination lock and had to chase the tiny ball bearing beneath the bolt all over the lock school floor, to the delight of all my classmates and Whitey. We spent a lot of time on the Sargent and Greenleaf 8400 lock, because it was mounted on most of our secure doors and safes and vaults around the world at that time.

Shortly after I reached Abidjan, the Department advised us that S&G had developed a new lock which we would soon be seeing on new containers and vaults. The lock was termed an 8500; it was similar to the lock it replaced but had some features that were different and were intended to make the lock more durable and easier to use. Each ESC and ESO received a few of the new locks to study. Before any of the locks mounted on safes or vaults materialized in our region, however, we were advised of a problem with the new locks concerning the accelerator spring. Suggested approaches to opening a locked-out container with an 8500 lock were sent to us by telegram. Tougher accelerator springs soon followed in a little box from the Department.

Not long after the springs arrived, I received a call on a Friday morning from our Embassy in Accra, Ghana. The Embassy had ordered two new safes, which were both installed in the Ambassador's office: one for the Ambassador and one for the DCM. Both of these containers featured 8500 locks, which the post had never seen before. The money to pay the FSN staff for the month had been locked in the DCM's safe earlier that week, but the safe could now not be opened. The Ambassador was away from post and the DCM was very concerned about paying the staff on time.

In a telegram to the Admin Officer, I explained the procedure that Washington had sent to us for opening containers with 8500 locks. The Admin Officer and the GSO, working together, made several efforts to apply that procedure without success. I obtained a round-trip ticket to Ghana, went down to our lab area and put together a drill rig packed it up, and scheduled a car to the airport very early on Monday morning. I also asked for transport in Accra from the airport to the Embassy. I requested that the post leave the safe combination with the Marine on duty since I was going to install a new lock and change the combination. Ghana's borders abutted those of the Ivory Coast, and I was expecting to make a quick trip to Accra and back.

My plane arrived in Accra at six o'clock in the morning. I cleared customs and found an Embassy car waiting for me. I introduced myself to the Marine, showed my credentials and asked to be admitted to the Ambassador's Office. Another Marine walked me down to the Front Office: he was aware of the problem, had the combination for me and showed me which safe was locked out.

Wanting to be neat, I spread some newspaper on the floor, walked the safe (a four-door Mosler Class 6) onto the newspaper, and opened my drill rig. Having read the instructions on how to open the locks, I had included a small piece of carpet tile in my tool box which allowed me to protect the surface of the safe while using a claw hammer to tap it. Before placing the drill rig on the control drawer, I thought I would try the suggested opening procedure which had not worked for the post. I dialed the number, placed my carpet tile on the drawer face, whacked the carpet tile with a hammer and turned the dial. The lock opened on the first try.

By this time it was 8:00. The secretaries for the Ambassador and DCM came into the office and uncovered their typewriters (remember typewriters? Accra was very dusty). The *Chargé d'Affaires* came bustling in, saw me and said: "Great! You're here. We really need to get into that safe—we've been working on it all weekend. How long do you think you will need?" and then he noticed that the safe was already open.

He stood there in astonishment. He shook his head, looked at me, looked back at the safe and said "Wow! That's amazing. What did you do?" I explained the accelerator spring problem to him, demonstrated the opening process and took out a new 8500 lock with an improved spring. I opened the back of the lock, showed him the function of the spring and then opened the back of the lock on the safe. I removed the spring from the new lock, exchanged it for the spring in the safe, and tried the repaired lock several times: it worked fine. I changed the combination on the safe, tried the lock several times, and gave the combination to the *Chargé*. I went through the same procedure on the second new safe. I then packed up my drill rig and went off to talk to the Admin Officer. With his assistance and help from the Comm Center, I repacked the drill rig, scheduled a car for the airport, called Abidjan to request a pickup and went home.

For the next two years, any security recommendation that I made for Accra was immediately approved by the Post. In their eyes, I was a security expert and my recommendations had the weight of gold.

21. THE FAMILY SINCLAIR

Jules mentioned some time ago that he was interested in genealogy. My father's side of our family is pretty straight-forward: my great-grandfather was a shoemaker from Swabia in Germany who immigrated to the U.S., eventually settling in a Methodist community in Nebraska that produced a lot of missionaries, including my grandfather.

My mother's family, however, were Sinclairs. Guy de Sainte-Claire, from a region near St. Lo in France, crossed the English Channel with William the Conqueror and fought bravely enough at Hastings to be given a large tract of land around Edinburgh, Scotland, where his descendants constructed Rosslyn Chapel. His family branched out a bit and eventually the family seat was moved to Caithness, Scotland, near Sinclair Bay. Two ruined castles, Sinclair Castle and Gurnigoe are located along the Scottish coastline near Wick and may once have been a single fortress.

Being a proud Sinclair, which we pronounce 'sin-clair', I have a bit of Scottish memorabilia in the house. I am a fan of Scottish tartans, so I have both a Sinclair Tie and a Sinclair Hunting Tie (two similar but different tartans) which I bring out on occasion, usually in the fall since they are made of wool.

Shortly after my arrival in Panama in 1983, there was an Administrative officer's conference for all the Admin officers and counselors in Latin America; it was to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. My former boss in Africa (RSS Nairobi, Ralph Laurello) was sent down from Washington to represent DS at the conference. He asked me to attend in order to bring our constituent posts up to speed on what we intended to do for each location. This included 38 posts at the time, so I was a busy guy for about a week making up plans and schedules from existing records.

I had previously worked in Copenhagen with the RSO in Buenos Aires, and I went to post a day early to talk to him and see what he would like done, which seemed appropriate since he was our host. The rest of the conferees were scheduled to arrive the following day on Eastern Airlines.

The Eastern plane came in very late, and they lost the luggage of many of the American diplomats on the aircraft. Knowing the system, and knowing that there would be dinners in their honor staged by the Ambassador, the often very senior Admin Counselors insisted on immediate damages to cover clothing they would need that evening. A whole troupe of Admin officers went out on the town with an Embassy guide and bought Latin-looking suits that did not fit them very well but which got them into that evening's dinner. Accessories, however, were another matter.

On the evening of the Ambassador's dinner, there was a gentle knock at my hotel room door. My next door neighbor was the Admin Counselor from the Embassy in Costa Rica, and he asked if he might borrow a tie from me. I had a leather tie wallet, and I offered it to him to choose from. He immediately picked the red and greenish-blue Sinclair tie and looked at it. He

smiled and said “This is a Sinclair tie: I would be proud to wear it.” He pronounced it “sink-ler”. And off went Joe with my tie.

The conference lasted a couple of days. As I remember, I received many more questions than comments of approval on my presentation, and Ralph sort of saved the day by pointing out how poor DS was at this particular time. Nonetheless, we worked out a rudimentary schedule of regional support, wrote it down and headed back to our respective posts. My neighbor Joe stopped by to return my tie, with thanks.

I did not get to Costa Rica, one of our safest posts, until early 1986. I went up on an Omni-spectra problem that the RSO had been unable to solve. When I checked in with the RSO, there was a little envelope waiting for me. It was an engraved dinner invitation to come and eat at the Admin Counselor’s house that evening. I was so seldom invited out by people at post that I was both surprised and embarrassed: having me over for dinner simply for loaning a man a tie seemed overly generous. I thought other people might be there, however, so I accepted the invitation.

The Omni-spectra problem was easy. All of the internal circuitry in the receiver had been removed. The RSO had a local support contract for the exterior alarm equipment, but the contractor had forgotten to tell the embassy he was taking the faulty equipment back to his shop to service.

So, that evening, an Embassy sedan picked me up at my hotel and drove me to the Admin Counselor’s house, a two-story villa that many movie stars would have envied. I was the only guest. We met downstairs and I met the Officer’s wife briefly, finding her to be charming. Then Joe and I went upstairs to his library.

Joe was an Anglophile, at first glimpse. On closer inspection, however, most of his books were about Scotland. There were histories, catalogs of tartans, books on Scottish weapons and much more. Joe took out a book titled “The History of Caithness” and invited me to read it and return it to him. It was a little book, and I accepted gratefully. Then his wife called us to dinner in their second floor dining room.

This room, also well appointed, was decorated with pictures of Scotland. On the main wall, next to the dining room table, was a large, detailed painting of Castle Gurnigoe.

His wife was a Sinclair.

22. THE CARACAS TACO STAND

Traveling on per diem and working during the day usually meant breakfast at your hotel, lunch in the Embassy and dinner on the town in some restaurant. Being taken to an interesting place to dine was always a treat, especially when there was fun involved.

When I was assigned to Panama in 1983, the Security Enhancement Program was in flower and the attention of our Engineering Center slipped from countermeasures to physical security improvements. Nearly every large embassy in our territory that was not built by FBO had some huge project in progress. It was initially our job to install all of the new equipment; later, we worked with teams of contracted installers from Washington to be sure that they did the work correctly.

Caracas, Venezuela was scheduled for security enhancements. It had two large buildings—the Embassy itself and an Annex building—both of which required security enhancement packages. We decided to do the Embassy first. The practice was to engage a local contractor to install the ballistic doors and windows provided by DS, and then the ESC would be on hand to move the Marine booth and install all the alarms, television systems, door lockup systems and other security hardware required by the Embassy. The RSO in Caracas was Tim Fountain, a friend of mine and a former U.S. Border Patrol officer. He was looking forward to our visit (before we started, the Caracas marine booth was filled with a lot of old equipment) and he was a good host, trying to get us out to see parts of the city.

Caracas is a spectacular place, for those of you who have not been there. It is a long, sinusoidal city of skyscrapers that starts at the bottom of a mountain valley and progresses all the way up into the mountains, widening and narrowing as the earth permits. There is actually a subway system installed in this earthquake-prone city, and it works very well. The people are handsome and open, with an astonishing number of red-headed women, and they were friendly toward Americans while we were there. Our Embassy was up toward the top of the mountain range, but I would mention here that the tops of all the mountains were left undisturbed as natural parks. So, even though we were in a city, we were surrounded by nature. Many of the apartment buildings in Caracas stepped down to the street like pyramids in a series of widening floors, with hanging planters of flowers on the edge of each floor a common practice. The per diem was good, the food and even the local beer were great, and we had an interesting assignment to complete in a set period of time. I have lots of Caracas stories to tell, but I would prefer to deliver them as individual episodes to keep them short and not lose the fun each story contains.

The Embassy kicked things off with an introductory briefing for local contractors followed by a cocktail party for the contractors who were interested in making bids. Using my FSI Spanish, I welcomed the bidders and attempted to explain what we were doing, what types of equipment they would have to install, problems we had had with installations at other posts and what our role in the project would be. The Admin Officer would help me with a Spanish expression from time to time, but I had some vocabulary words (*puertas blindados* (bulletproof doors, for example)) that did not come easily to the Admin officer. We followed our briefing

with a walk-through of the affected areas of the Embassy, chiefly the ground floor and basement, and then went to the cocktail party.

At the party, there were two sharp and very respectful bidders who drew me aside and asked me questions about the job. How were the heavy doors supported? Were there problems in installing the windows? How large a conduit should be run to each new camera location? I answered these questions as best I could, often making little sketches on Embassy cocktail napkins to explain details. When we returned to Caracas after the contract had been awarded and the equipment had arrived, the firm that asked me the most questions had won the bid, and my cocktail napkins were prominently mounted on their bulletin board. Who needs Matisse when you have an SEO around?

When we started work on the Embassy, I brought in a team consisting of myself, a Seabee car mechanic (Chief Vantine), and two young men from Dynelectron, the contractor hired by Washington to help with these projects. We would usually eat breakfast at the hotel, eat lunch at the Embassy Annex, and then go out to dinner somewhere. And there were a lot of great places to dine inexpensively.

It should be said at this point that our hard-working Seabee Chief had an unusual problem. After about 8:30 at night, he would fall asleep. It did not matter whether he was lying down, sitting down or even standing up: he would fall asleep. Horses can sleep standing up: so could Chief Vantine. You would be talking to him in a bar and turn around to answer someone else, turn back and Cliff would be asleep. He understood this condition and usually tried to be sitting down when sleep took him.

Early in our work on the Embassy, Tim Fountain announced that he wanted to take us out for the best Mexican food in Caracas. Tim having served on the Border Patrol, this seemed to be a strong recommendation. Tim had a little Honda Prelude at the time, a two-door car, but we could get five men into it with a little discomfort.

On a Saturday evening, Tim picked us up at our hotel and we started to drive through town. We drove through some very ritzy areas, then some very modern areas, then some poorer neighborhoods and finally up a narrow road on the side of a mountain where a vehicle that looked like a Gulfstream Trailer was parked. It was a dark and rather seedy area. I noticed that the trailer was powered by two long battery jumpers that were clipped onto the city power lines next to the curb. There was an oval back door to the trailer, and a ladder leading up to it, and the sides of the trailer swung out on each side on struts to form both windows for ventilation and takeout windows for customers who stopped by in cars. Inside, there were wooden benches and stools along each side of the trailer, so we sat down and ordered Polar beers. Tim knew the owner and introduced all of us, and we ordered a couple of rounds of tacos.

Meanwhile, the takeout traffic to the side of the trailer was almost continuous and very intriguing. The traffic consisted of a lot of high-end cars (S-series Mercedes, just as an example). The car would pull up to the ordering window, a darkly-glazed window would roll down and a girl of astonishing beauty would order for herself and others in the car, many of whom were equally stunning. When the order was filed, the girl would hand the owner some money, the window would close and the car would head on up the mountain. Another car of equal status

would then pull up and the process would be repeated. I did not see a single young lady who would have looked out of place on the cover of Elle magazine.

By this time, we were eating and the tacos were all that Tim had promised. We had several rounds of beers and ordered more tacos, since Tim was driving. We were starting to get full but did not want to miss the continuous parade of beauty passing in front of us.

By this time, however, it was past 8:00, and Chief Vantine was getting sleepy. Not wanting to spoil the evening for the rest of us, he asked Tim if he could borrow the car keys and sack out in the Prelude. Tim handed him the keys and went back to a discussion with the owner. When we went to check on Cliff about fifteen minutes later, we discovered that he had opened the *trunk* of the car and had just crawled in, leaving the lid up and falling asleep on the floor of the trunk. One of his feet was propped up on the edge of the trunk, giving him the appearance of a body that had been tossed carelessly into the back of the car.

There is crime in Caracas, and the jumper cable power arrangement might suggest to some of you that we were not eating in the high rent district. Cliff's presence in the Prelude did not go unnoticed among the take-out patrons in the expensive cars, who took one look at what appeared to be a dead body and sped away without ordering a thing. After about four cars passed without ordering, the owner noticed that something was wrong and suggested to Tim that he take his tired party home. We reluctantly woke Cliff, climbed back into the Prelude and returned to our hotel.

23. MOVING EMBASSY SAFES IN LAGOS

In 1978, FBO was building a new U.S. Embassy building in Nigeria. The new building was erected on Victoria Island in a wealthy part of town, and was the first FBO building in Africa to have a ground floor security package built into it. The old Embassy was in the middle of town near a race track, and it was a death trap. Steel grates had been put in place over all of the exit doors, even those of fire escapes; all those grates were secured with heavy chains and padlocks. If the building had ever experienced a fire, we would have lost a lot of people to smoke inhalation and flames as they tried to get out.

I went down to Lagos with Glen Habenicht and a Seabee builder the week that post intended to move from the old building to its new quarters. The new building was filled with new furniture, new safe file cabinets, new vault doors and new carpeting. Most of what remained in the old embassy building was going to be sold locally. There was one major exception: safe file containers filled with classified documents. The RSO wisely wanted to keep all the documents locked up, move the locked safes to the new Embassy, transfer the documents to new cabinets and keep the old safes on hand as spares. We offered to recondition the older safes with new drawer slides and locks so that the Embassy might have working spares they could rely on.

The problem was that the safes had to be accompanied by a cleared American as they moved through town. There were about two truckloads of safe file containers to move, all filled to the brim with documents. I offered to escort the safes between the two buildings, and was given the job. We filled a truck with safes, using a special hand truck that could handle the weight of the containers, and I got into the truck with six local laborers. Our Seabee stood watch on the remaining containers as we got aboard the truck. With the safe crew all aboard, someone closed the back door of the truck and it was suddenly almost totally dark inside the vehicle. A little light came in through cracks around the back door.

Because of the full load of containers, we were packed closely together, and it was suddenly hard to breathe. The crew with whom I was working had probably not bathed for a year. The air inside the truck was foul and there was no breeze at all. The hot sub-Saharan sun made the temperature inside the truck something like an oven, and all of us began to sweat heavily. We moved out into traffic, made good progress for a while, and then we stopped. Lagos is the most populous city in Sub-Saharan Africa, and traffic jams are frequent. We were stationary in the truck, baking in African midday sun, for about forty-five minutes. When we finally reached the Embassy, our crew moved the safes onto the loading dock for movement into the new building by another crew, and then we returned to the truck.

And we drove back to the old Embassy and repeated the process.

After the second round trip I was soaking wet, could hardly breathe and desperately wanted a shower. We had reached the end of the day, so we caught a ride back to our hotel. This time, despite the usual shortages, there *was* electricity in the hotel and hot water was available. I soaked in the tub for nearly an hour and tried to avoid escort duty on all future trips.

24. YOU GUYS GET ALL THE TRAVEL

When I was OIC in Panama, we received a new office secretary late in 1985. Her name was Shirley Corn, and she was a breath of fresh air to an engineering office. An attractive strawberry blonde, Shirley had actually been an executive secretary in private industry before she joined the Department, drawn like most of us to the worldwide travel. She had even heard about the Mustang Program before she came aboard, and was interested in a career with variety.

Shirley did everything right. She typed perfectly and quickly. She never got behind on the filing. She turned travel vouchers around in a couple of hours. She found time to talk to everyone in the office, to learn about their families and she kept up not only on travel arrangements but on travel delays, letting families know that incoming SEOs or Seabees were not going to arrive on time.

Over time, however, it hit Shirley that all of us were doing the traveling and she was holding the fort. I watched eagerly for a chance to put her on the road for a short trip, like a SecState visit or a conference, but nothing popped up. Shirley was too professional to let this get her down, but we all knew she wanted to see more of Latin America than Panama.

On the 19th of September, 1985, Mexico City was hit with a big earthquake. It registered 8.0 on the Richter scale and eventually caused the death of about 5,000 people. The Embassy in Mexico, overwhelmed with the need for people to support the emergency, asked for volunteers from throughout the region. I asked Shirley to go, receiving a wonderful smile in return. She was on the first plane out.

America responded well to the emergency in Mexico. All of us were proud that fire departments, cranes, front-end-loaders and other rescue equipment from all over the southern United States simply packed up their gear, drove across the border and headed for the Mexican capital. First responders, dog teams, EMT crews, doctors and nurses and military medics all answered the call and went hunting for survivors. At first there were a lot of them: children pulled from wreckage, adults buried deeply in the rubble who survived and helped others get out. There was a major problem at a big local hospital that had pancaked, however, and a lot of sick people were crushed to death there.

The phone lines into Mexico City were flooded with calls from relatives all over the world who wanted to know if their loved ones were safe.

Shirley Corn was put on the telephone line which informed callers that their relatives did not make it. She answered call after call after call giving people news of crushed bodies, of unsuccessful efforts to revive loved ones, of unsuccessful searches at specific addresses that had been turned into pure rubble. And she did this for long hours every single day for nearly two weeks. It took a great toll on her.

Shirley said that at first the rescue teams were successful and enthusiastic, but that after a few days the dogs stopped smelling live people and arrived back in the embassy dusty, tired and

reeking of death. After two weeks in Mexico, the volunteers were allowed to return to their posts of assignment. Shirley, always so bright, humorous and sunny, came back a changed person with no interest in her former duties. She stayed with us about a month, then quit her job and returned to private industry.

25. OPENING DAY AT THE NEW EMBASSY IN LAGOS

Late in 1978, the new FBO-built American Embassy in Lagos was set to open to the public. I have already described the process of moving safes from the old building to the new one. We had done a lot of work in getting the new building ready for occupancy, and we were especially eager to see the new security package developed by FBO put into service.

The Embassy was approached through a gate in its surrounding fence. Once inside the gate, visitors followed a concrete path to the front entrance. The new Embassy had a double-door front entrance that led up a set of wide stairs to the Marine Guard. There was a landing below the Marine booth with a metal detector and a local guard who also acted as a guide for Nigerian visitors. In front of the Marine, there was a deal tray; the Marine had control over two entry doors to either side of the MSG booth, one leading into the Embassy and the other leading into the Consular area. The Consular section was divided into a seating area and windows for American citizens and a larger area for Visas and Immigration. At the far end of the Consulate was a cashier window at which visitors could pay for Consular Services.

In leaving the Consulate or the Embassy, FBO had designed “sally ports” which exited the front of the building on either side of the entry doors. Each sally port was accessed through a locked door at the top of the stairway and each of these sally ports had interlocked doorways, the one at the top of the ramp and the one at the bottom. A departing visitor could be admitted to the exit chute through the upper door by the Marine on duty if the lower door was locked. The visitor would walk down a ramp to the lower door, which could be opened by a push bar if (and only if) the upper door was locked. The visitor would then exit the building. These doors were interlocked to prevent people coming in through the lower door and thereby bypassing the Marine; to help keep the sally ports secure, there was no locking hardware on the exterior side of either upper door. All of these doors were made of aluminum with plate glass panes, had electric Folger-Adams locks on the top of each door with steel bolts, and were controlled by a 220-volt AC system installed as a part of the building contract by a British firm working in Nigeria.

All of the wiring for this door control system used wires of the same color. Individual wires were identified by taped numbers which were wrapped around the wires. Almost before the wiring project was complete, the hot African sun began to cause the numbered tapes to unfurl and fall on the floor. (But that’s another story.)

Because the Consular Section had been closed for three weeks, there was a huge backlog of personnel needing its services. The line of waiting visitors that morning was long, stretching all the way down the front of the Embassy and about a half-block further. It was colorful, too: Nigerian men and women in their best flowing robes, decorated with gold and silver embroidery. As soon as the gates opened, this anxious crowd surged forward through the gate toward the front doors of the Embassy. The local guard manning the metal detector could not persuade the crowd to stop and pass through the metal detector one at a time. In short order, the landing in front of the Marine Booth filled up with visitors pushing on both entry doors, which the Marine would not open because no one had properly cleared the metal detector. Other visitors below continued to press on the bottlenecked visitors above. Help from the RSO was requested and

more local guards were sent to the front of the building to help control the crowd. Eventually, by backing up the first visitors and individually screening them, the crowd began to follow the instructions of the guard at the metal detector.

Being the first day in a new Embassy, the Marines on duty were all wearing khaki blouses with white covers and blue trousers fitted with a red stripe. The well-decorated Gunny Sergeant wore a dress uniform. It looked as if things were under control until the first Consular visitors concluded their business in the building and started to exit through the sally ports. The first guest stood at the upper door, pushing at the lock until the Marine opened the door for him. Then he went down to the lower door to exit the building. As soon as the lower door was opened, about twenty visitors rushed through this apparent new entrance, bypassing the metal detector. They began pounding on the upper door, which had no external hardware. When the bottom door eventually closed, all of these personnel were trapped inside the sally port. It was hot, and not what they expected, so they panicked and began to push together on the locking hardware of the lower door. The deadbolt remained fastened, but the frames of the aluminum doors bent out to a point where the deadbolt no longer secured the door. The trapped personnel came pouring out of the bottom of the sally port and tried to force their way back into the orderly line of personnel waiting of the metal detector, starting a fight.

The Marines were worried that they might not be able to control the crowd. The Gunnery Sergeant went outside the front door to try and assist the local guards in stopping the fight, and almost immediately became involved in the fight himself as waiting visitors began to first push him around and then hit him. Seeing their Gunny in trouble, three other Marines went out the back door, joined the fight at the front of the Embassy, rescued the Gunny and returned to the building through the back door.

The back door of the Embassy was essentially unlocked at that time and was used as an entry way for Embassy employees while the new front door system was being tested. A number of the waiting visitors realized that there was another way into the building, watched the Marines enter the back door and then slipped in the back door behind the hardline themselves. Some wandered toward the front of the building, some took the elevator by the back door to upper floors, and still others walked up the rear fire stairs. Employees leaving the Ambassador's office would find themselves in an elevator with a group of Nigerian men dressed in the traditional flowing robes, pill-box hats and gold-toned pointed-toe shoes. When word of the building penetration reached the Marines, they began a sweep of the premises to expel unwanted guests, herding the Nigerians they encountered toward the back door and around to the front of the building. A guard was then posted at the back door.

The fight in front continued. The confusion in the Consular section sally port was repeated in the Embassy sally port the first time an employee exited through the lower door. This door, too, was damaged when trapped Nigerians panicked and bent the frame of the door. With both sally port outer doors now able to extend their bolts, the interlock system saw them as "locked" and no longer worked as designed. Visitors were able to use the push bar at the top of the Consular exit ramp to open the door. The crowd saw this and surged toward the Consulate, with about twenty visitors getting into the Consulate through the chute.

At the direction of the RSO, the Marine on duty dropped the large, motorized steel grille that was intended to secure the Embassy at night. This formed a barrier that the crowd could not breach, and they clustered around the grill, reaching through its bars and shouting for the right to enter. The Marines inside the Embassy cleared the Consulate of visitors in small groups, escorting each group to the front entrance on the Embassy grounds. Other visitors were then informed that the Embassy was closed for the day, and were persuaded to leave the Embassy grounds, which were then secured.

Quite an introduction to Lagos!

26. THE FRENCH SLEEVE

Note: An earlier and heavily edited version of this story was published in the DS/ST newsletter. I thought I might retell the story in a slightly rougher form that captures more of the fun of the experience. Bear with me.

On my second tour as the Operations division chief, I became good friends with Dennis Lundstedt, who had become the State Department's Fire Marshall. For years, SY and FBO had been at odds over fire safety. We needed to secure buildings; FBO needed to keep them open so that people could get out in case of a fire. Dennis was the first officer with actual fire training to be hired by FBO, and in no time at all he had an important and influential office under way. Ancient fire warning systems of old brass bells pulled by ropes were replaced by modern systems that told the Marines which floor the fire was on and in which office the smoke was being generated. The systems were equipped with heat detectors as well as smoke detectors, had internal self-checking alarm systems and were inspected regularly to be sure they worked.

One of Dennis's dilemmas was fire escapes. When a fire starts, people need a way out of a building that isn't filled with smoke. For new buildings, the answer is positive pressurization of stair wells and fire doors that block smoke, but at that time (let's say 1984) we still occupied a lot of older buildings that did not have those features. Constructing outdoor fire escapes was a no-no with SY: terrorists could simply climb the fire escapes and shoot their way into sensitive areas of the building. What was a fire chief to do?

Dennis discovered that the French had developed a Nomex sleeve that looked something like a long white windsock. Attached securely to a window frame, this sleeve could be dropped to the ground. A person could then take off their shoes and jump into it; they could actually regulate their descent to a gentle drop by extending their arms and legs.

I had a corner office on the second floor of the Department at that time. Dennis stopped by to see me one day and decided that my office would be the perfect place to demonstrate a French Sleeve to the Department. He asked for my cooperation, which I gave immediately. He said that he would have GSA come over and measure for a frame and a sleeve, that he would order the sleeve and we would post a Department notice on the trial day so that people could watch from the many windows surrounding the plaza which my office overlooked.

Eight months later, GSA personnel arrived to measure for the frame and the sleeve.

Four months after that, Dennis called to say that the frame and sleeve were ready. He asked if he could arrange for the chute to be set up. Since we were in a restricted area, we agreed on a date, then sealed up every piece of paper we could find in our offices, locked all the safes and rechecked the locks several times. A crew from GSA magically showed up on the morning of the test, bolted the frame of the sleeve securely in my window area and opened the window. This created something of a wind tunnel, but we were all locked up and we posted an SEO at the

hallway door to guide people to my office. The Department circular had gone out the week before and the windows around the interior plaza were filled with interested faces.

First down the chute, like the leader he was, was Dennis. He was a big guy, but he slid into the chute easily, spread out his arms and legs and slowly slid down the Nomex. He had a briefing officer assigned to the top of the chute explaining to people how important it was to stretch out so as not to drop too quickly. He also (wisely) had a safety team at the bottom on the plaza. I was the second person down the chute, and it was fun. Since an invitation was issued to the entire Department, a line began to form at our hallway door.

About half an hour into the exercise, a really pretty young blonde woman in a red sheath dress asked for a turn down the chute. She was the first woman to volunteer, and we were especially careful to brief her about a safe descent. She took off an attractive pair of high heels, which she held in her left hand, and she jumped into the Nomex sleeve.

The fabric of her sheath dress caught against the Nomex and, as she fell, stripped her dress completely off her body. Her slip followed suit. Several hundred watchers saw a pretty set of legs, then panties, and finally a bra emerge kicking from the bottom of the chute as the young woman desperately tried to hold on to her clothes and shoes. A gallant employee of Dennis' safety team at the bottom of the chute slipped off his suit coat and immediately wrapped it around the young lady, but the damage was done. No other ladies in skirts or sheath dresses tried out the chute that day. Many, many more faces appeared at the windows, however.

In 1984, the Embassy Marine program was controlled by a friendly beanpole of a man whose last name I have unfortunately forgotten, but whose first name was Joe. He wanted a turn, but for some reason did not hear or otherwise regard the instructions about spreading out his arms and legs. Skinny old Joe jumped into the chute (which was two stories high) and dropped like a rock. Fortunately, the men on the plaza spotted the too-rapid descent and twisted the bottom of the chute at the last possible minute, locking Joe in a Nomex cocoon. He emerged a little shaken up, but safely.

While the French Chutes were cheaper than fire escapes and probably a faster way to get out of a smoke-filled building, we were all aware that they were not bulletproof. All of us could envision a four-story Nomex sock filled with people and raked with an AK-47, and we realized how easily we could contribute to our own casualty count by trying to be helpful. The French Sleeve was retired, and Dennis went back to the drawing board.

27. BED RACES IN FIJI

As most of you will recollect, nearly every place each of us visited had its own peculiarities. There was usually something to do after work, if your time permitted you to do it, and there were things to watch as well as things to actually do.

In May of 1994, on one of my constituent post visits, I went to Suva, Fiji to assist with a Selectone system installation in a building made almost entirely of concrete. Mark Steakley had planned the installation carefully, specifying a narrow gauge of PVC conduit for the entire installation, and packing rotary hammer drills with long bits to get through the walls and floors. There was plenty of wire, all the components we needed with a few extras, plans explaining where everything should go and a variety of conduit clips to try in order to find the ones best suited for the building. We notified the Embassy that we were coming in on a Friday, and we wanted to try and work over the weekend to get as much as the drilling done as we could without disturbing the Embassy. We got started on Saturday morning and had a good number of holes completed by the end of the weekend. The Admin Officer told us that he had already warned the Embassy that the installation was necessarily noisy, and to continue our work during the week until we were done. As the extra pair of hands on the job, my assignment was to help feed conduit through the walls and floors and hold pipes against the ceiling as Mark or our Seabee Senior Chief attached their clips. We were making good progress and were done by Thursday. Our plane back to Canberra required us to first drive across Fiji from Suva to the Northern part of the island where the international airport was located, a half-day's drive, and then we had to stay overnight in a resort hotel until the following day to catch our plane. We were supposed to leave on Monday, so we basically had the second Friday off.

During the evenings, we would eat dinner in the restaurants of hotels. Fiji being a tourist trap, there was usually a local Polynesian band in the restaurant with native dancers in costume, drums, the obligatory spinning Polynesian Tiki torches and chanting. After the show proper, the native dancers would spread out into the audience, grab spectators and haul them out to the dance floor to participate in the show. I suppose we looked vulnerable, as we were among the first observers led out to dance.

We tried a different restaurant on our second night in Suva, and there was the *same band* working that hotel. The food was different, but the show and the dancers were the same and they again turned to us as their tourist props. They took special interest in the Senior Chief. One rather

corpulent local lady had her eye on him, and kept him on the dance floor for quite a while. We encountered this troupe several times.

On Friday, in celebration of some local custom, there was to be a bed race for charity down the center of town. Each entry consisted of an iron or brass bed on wheels pushed by a strong, fast runner at each corner. Flags and streamers were attached to many of the entries. On each bed was a mattress carrying the prettiest girl the team could find, usually dressed in a bikini with a flower garland in her hair or something catchy like a nightgown or a teddy sleeping ensemble. Safety features were unknown in Suva: no seat belts, no brakes, no grips of any sort were on hand for the riders of the beds. A good percentage of the town's population turned out on the sidewalks to watch and take pictures of the festivities, and the entries lined up at the distant end of the Main Street. We had picked a position about halfway down the three-block course.

Someone started the race with a starter pistol, and the beds were off. The bed riders were holding on to the moving frames, as you would expect, but were also waving at the crowds, pointing out friends in the audience who should come up and join them on the beds, or stretching out prone as if trying to nap. It did not last long, but it was unique, fun, and I have sadly forgotten which bed won the race.

28. THE SUNNY SIDE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

When I was assigned as RSEM Seoul, one of my constituent posts was Canberra, Australia. Every trip to Canberra was something of a delight (many more stories on this topic to come), but Canberra, too, had constituent posts and one of them was Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea. For an old African hand, a trip to Port Moresby was maybe a little wilder than a trip to Lagos during one of the Nigerian military coups.

Papua New Guinea, you see, was still a very traditional country organized around native tribes who lived on mountains in the jungle. Each tribe did things their own way, had their own elected or appointed leaders, and their own social codes. One code, however, was pretty much the same across all of the tribes. If you did not behave the rules of the tribe, if you broke taboos or instigated fights or otherwise acted very independently, you were simply kicked out of the village. When this happened, there was only one real place for troublemakers to go: Port Moresby.

Crime was *rampant* in this small city, and I can perhaps best illustrate this by pointing out that the hotel Marv Cooke and I stayed in was robbed the first night we were in town. Robberies were frequent, flashing money anywhere was not a good idea, and we heard some real horror stories about people losing watches to thieves who simply removed a hand with a machete to get at the watch. I decided to keep my watch in my pocket throughout the Port Moresby visit.

All of those primitive tribes, like some of the tribes I encountered in Africa, produced interesting art work. Local woods were used to make shields and cooking implements and water-carriers and, as in Africa, masks. I had a mask collection from Africa and I thought I might add to it in Port Moresby. On the day before our departure we visited a store selling local crafts. I looked around carefully, studied the artwork and the colors and the shapes of things. Then I bought four masks, of wood with shell inlay, colored with natural paints derived from plants, fabulous carvings and exotic expressions. Two of the masks were even trimmed with hair and exotic feathers. I believe I spent about \$150 in the store.

When we disembarked at the Australian airport in Carnes, we went through Australian Customs and Environmental Protection. The customs officers saw our passports and waved us right through; the EV officers took one look in my two bags and confiscated all four masks. “Danger to the local environment, Mate. Might be seeds or plant pollen or even invasive insects in those masks. Got to keep the country safe.” I had owned the four masks for about a day and a half.

I really wondered for a while if all of the items confiscated in Carnes were secretly shipped *back* to Port Moresby for resale to other unsuspecting American tourists, who could then be again deprived of their purchases. I figured that a good mask might hold up for about six round trips before it would need replacement, unless the patina gathered by handling in both countries made the mask look *older* so as to actually *add* to its value.

29. THE DAY THE DOOR FELL OFF

There are emergencies, and then there are *emergencies*. While serving in Seoul, I had the luxury of being a security engineering officer at another officer's constituent post. The two posts in Korea were assigned to ESO Tokyo, and I was given great support on my assignment by both Dick Nordine and Mike Jacobs, who came over frequently to service Seoul and Pusan. I was asked by the post to address a couple of small projects, but by and large I could schedule travel to *my* constituent posts and go out on the road in the comfortable knowledge that my post of residence was always in good hands.

One morning in 1994 I was at home on a Sunday when I received a telephone call. One of the communicators at the Embassy explained that they had a problem they would like to discuss with me. They asked me to come into the Embassy: this was rather unusual. I hopped into the car and drove downtown, parking inside the Embassy fence. I signed in, took the elevator upstairs and rang the bell for the Comm Center. The communicator who called me in met me at the day gate and ushered me inside.

Within the inner sanctum of the communications center, an important door had fallen off its mountings and was lying on the floor.

The communications officer had also been called in and we discussed how we might handle the problem. We decided not to send telegrams for a while. We worked out a plan to correct the problem and called Washington on a STU-III to enlist their support. After a bit of ribbing from the Department ("You did *what?*") we received an endorsement of our plan.

A little bit about bolts, here. Normal machine-threaded bolts have plain hexagonal heads. Those are usually describes as being in "Grade 2". Bolts for tougher applications are supposed to have a higher tensile strength than normal bolts. Marked with three radial lines, these are "Grade 5" bolts, with a tensile strength of 105,000 psi. Bolts required for the proper mounting of the door we were working on were supposed to be "Grade 8". Those are marked with six radial lines and have a tensile strength of 150,000 psi. One of the severed bolt heads I picked up off the floor had three radial lines on it.

The action of the door was characterized by the communicators as "jerky". Over time, the erratic movement of the door put enough stress on the hinge mounting bolts that they began to shear, opening up much like a zipper. The door on the floor had not been badly damaged by the fall, but all of the broken bolts remained embedded in their threaded sockets with the bolt heads broken off.

I went downstairs to get my DS-provided Bosch drill and my screw extraction kit. Working bolt by bolt, I drilled into each snapped-off bolt and twisted a screw extractor into the hole. It took a couple of hours to completely remove all of the bolt stubs, with a couple of bolts somehow much harder to remove than the rest of the lot.

We were now in something of a quandary. Should I go out onto the Korean economy and randomly buy thirty-two Grade 8 bolts of Korean manufacture, or should we ask to Department to send us American-made Grade 8 bolts and wait for them to arrive? We went back to the STU-III and consulted "the Oracle." Common sense said to buy local and get the door back in service, but higher powers wanted us to use material that had always been under our control. The next courier headed for Seoul was given a bag of bolts with orders to hand-carry the bag to the Comm Center.

Less than three days later, with a lot of telegraphic traffic backing up, the bolts arrived. We created a cradle of wooden blocks borrowed from the Embassy workshop, man-handled the door onto the cradle with the help of two Marines, hung the door from the ceiling on a length of sturdy rope, and used drift pins from the Embassy garage to align the holes on the hinges with the holes I had emptied of broken bolt parts. Using a torque wrench borrowed from the Embassy garage, we cinched sixteen new bolts into place at the torque settings provided by the Department. We then closed the door. One by one, we removed and replaced all the older bolts on the *other* side of each hinge with the new bolts torqued to the correct setting. When the bolts were all in place, we adjusted the door closer to operate more smoothly and asked that the Office of Communications come inspect our work at their earliest convenience.

30. THE NOSE OF THE DEVIL

Our Consulate General in Santiago, Chile had once been our Embassy until we outgrew the building. It was a beautiful old residence that was on Santiago's list of historic buildings. As in the United States, there were many building codes in Chile associated with historical buildings, most of which were not at all compatible with the requirements of the Security Enhancement Program.

Based on its experience with the architect used for the Embassy, our Mission to Chile decided to look a little harder for its next architect, especially as a historical site was involved. I met this new designer at the Embassy before he started work on the Consulate, and was impressed. He was young man, but a top graduate of Chile's best architectural college. He had personally designed several award-winning buildings in the Santiago business district and he had an undergraduate degree in Art.

Santiago was in ESO Lima's territory, and they were going to supervise the Dynelectron team being sent down to wire the Consulate. Before that occurred, however, I wanted to see how the Architect had handled the historic building. I was due to visit ESO Lima, so I decided to route my way there from Rio through Santiago.

The young architect was delighted to see me again and wanted to show me all that he had accomplished. The plan for the Consulate involved several long see-through ballistic walls, and he had reinforced the floors under those heavy walls with structural steel and pillars meeting earthquake standards but hidden from the public. He had run conduit to support cameras and alarms and door controls with difficulty in the old stone, plaster and lathe building, but he had done it well and all that you could see was an empty box on the wall here and there with a tagged pull wire in it.

The big challenge for the architect was working with the ornate, hand-made plaster ceilings in the Consulate building. In one of the rooms where a ballistic wall was needed, there was a ceiling sculpture with a religious theme, the Devil tempting sinners toward spiritual ruin. After a great deal of thought, the Architect ran the ballistic wall right through the center of the decorated ceiling, then installed long mirrors about six inches wide at the top of the ballistic wall so that they abutted it and just barely recessed into the ceiling on both sides. The result was that the now-divided ceiling appeared *intact* to people on each side of the wall because the mirror reflected the "other half" of the ceiling. The architect was proud of his achievement (it was a beautiful job) and he confided in me that he had intentionally run the ballistic wall through the Nose of the Devil.

31. THE JEWELRY OF RIO DE JANEIRO – PART ONE

As the OIC of ESC Panama, I had some responsibility over our ESO in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. On my first visit to post, the Administrative Officer admonished me that what the Consulate least appreciated was people from out of town finding some official excuse to visit Rio during Carnival. I decided then and there, reluctantly, never to visit Rio during Carnival. My relations with post remained on good standing throughout my tour.

ESO Rio used to put up its guests in an old hotel on Leme Beach, which is a small northern extension of Copacabana Beach. The hotel was a short taxi ride from the Consulate, and it had several wonderful features. First, each hotel room, while air conditioned, was connected to its own screen porch. Second, breakfast was included in the price of your room. Third, you were able to order a Montana-sized breakfast, which usually arrived with guava, papaya, mango and other tropical fruits. This breakfast was delivered to your room at the time you specified, and you normally ate it out on the screen porch, watching Rio come alive in the morning. Swirling mosaic sidewalks led down to long, pristine beaches where early risers surfed, ran, played volleyball or soccer or swam.

After my work in the Consulate was through, I returned to the Leme Palace hotel. To my surprise, there was an H. Stern jewelry shop in the hotel on the ground floor. A beautiful Brazilian woman in an elegant dress stood behind the counter watching the hotel guests. Being interested in jewelry, I stopped in for a visit.

My hostess offered me coffee and began to show me bracelets, rings and necklaces that were *way* beyond my meager budget. I especially enjoyed the imperial topaz bracelets, but they were set with stones that belonged in some country's crown jewels. The lady told me that the jewelry in the store was simply an example of what could be made to order at the Stern factory, and that there were several buses each day that would come by the hotel, take you to the factory for a tour, then return you to the hotel free of charge. As it was late in the evening, and I had work to do the next day, I declined the tour, but thought I might look into it later during my stay.

As I walked around Rio, I noticed that *every* hotel in town seemed to have a small jewelry store from either H. Stern or their competitor, Amsterdam Sauer. *All* of these shops were managed by attractive Brazilian women in elegant dresses, often wearing expensive pieces of jewelry and most of these vendors were smiling invitingly at hotel guests. It quickly became apparent that the sole purpose of each of these ladies was not to sell jewelry, but to get customers to board either the H. Stern bus or the Amsterdam Sauer bus for a trip to the factories, where more affordable and harder to reject jewelry awaited them.

32. WILLIE DILLO AND THE CHECKLIST

Each of us, I'm sure, has their own approach to preparing for an international trip. When I first joined SY, I sounded out our managers as to what I might need on the road as a Technical Security officer. Wally Gilliam told me that the first thing I would need was an "indestructible" suitcase, which I am still looking for. I traveled with a Samsonite two-suiter for many years, replacing it with a three-suiter towards the end of my career.

With the suitcase itself addressed, I began to think about what should go inside it. On the first couple of trips, I either over-packed or under-packed. Gradually, I began to understand what items I needed on every trip and what items I could leave behind. This was especially important in Africa, where the local stores might not carry dental floss, let's say, or styptic pencils. What I really hated was to get to my destination and find that I had forgotten something basic, say "razor with new blade" or "deodorant". After several missteps, I began to compile a pre-travel checklist composed *entirely* of things that I had actually *forgotten* on previous trips. I forgot a lot of things on my first two tours: the current checklist (which I still use) is two pages long, with each not-to-be-forgotten item in one of two columns on one of those pages.

What items made the list? Well, one entry says "Valid passport with valid visas". I occasionally returned from a trip to find that the permanent visa for my post of residence had expired, so I learned to check visas before each trip. On one trip to Bangkok, however, I was headed through border control when the friendly Thai officer about to stamp my passport paused with the stamp in mid-air, left me at the desk and went looking for his supervisor. My diplomatic passport had expired! Fortunately, this happened in Thailand, so I was allowed into the country as a "guest" of Royal Thai Airlines. Our Embassy in Bangkok would not issue me a new diplomatic passport away from my post of residence, so I limped home on a hurriedly-obtained tourist passport, amending my "Valid Visas" checklist entry the day I returned.

I found it helpful to lay out all of the items I intended to take with me on a towel before starting to pack. This made it easy to run through the checklist. After we got to Panama, we acquired a tan-and-rust-colored beach towel from El Salvador illustrated with an armadillo playing a guitar sitting under a Saguaro cactus. The towel bore an inscription: "Willie Dillo". I latched on to this particular towel and began to use it as my own on every trip. My son at this time was carrying a baby blanket with him as he walked around our apartment; he saw nothing wrong in my having a "blankee", too. After a while, when my children observed me laying out the armadillo towel on my bed, they understood that I was going on another trip.

I revised the checklist after my first year in Panama to put personal items on the first page and clothing items on the second page. This was done because I sometimes went from hot climates to cold climates and back to tropical climates all on the same trip. The suitcase was only so big, and space was at a premium: I began to look for double-duty clothing, like a raincoat with a zip-in liner for colder weather. Once my clothing list was compiled, I could usually just circle the items I wanted for a given trip, printing a new checklist on my return.

The first time I had to install a vault door in Africa, I borrowed a Seabee steel worker—who had previously installed one—from Mark Stevens in Casablanca. When I arrived at the hotel in Dakar, I was embarrassed to find that I had neglected to pack underwear for the trip. The Seabee was about my size and offered to loan me two pair. He brought them down to my room and handed them to me. As I accepted the clothing, he said: “Wait till I tell Mark! Not only did I have to help him, I had to dress him, too!”

Guess what went on to the checklist when I got back to Abidjan.

33. OPENING A NEW EMBASSY IN HANOI

Peter Pham was an interesting SEO. The son of a jeweler from Nha Trang, his family escaped to Thailand after the war in Vietnam and lived in a refugee camp for a while. Eventually the family moved to the United States. Peter became a naturalized American citizen, went to college, got an engineering degree and eventually came to work for the State Department. Somewhere along the way, someone taught Peter that first impressions are extremely important, and you should always look your best. I don't believe I ever saw Peter at work when he was not wearing a suit: jacket, tie and all.

This is not to suggest that Peter did not do his share of assigned work, and more. If a CCTV needed to be removed from a dirty pole, Peter would get a ladder and remove it, in his suit. If the hydraulic pallet on a Delta barrier needed service, Peter would do it, again in a suit. I don't think I ever saw a drop of oil or a smidge of dirt on Peter: he was like Teflon.

While I was assigned to the Embassy in Seoul, Peter was given responsibility for ESO Bangkok. Relations between the U.S. and Vietnam had improved gradually as we searched the country for our war dead, and we were eventually given permission to open an Embassy in Hanoi. Several buildings were identified as possible temporary homes for our new Embassy. I was asked to accompany Peter Pham to Hanoi on a three-day trip to look at those buildings.

We were going in to Vietnam just before Tet, the Vietnamese New Year. I am a Vietnam veteran, and the idea of visiting Hanoi for Tet seemed especially strange to me. Still, I flew to Bangkok, met with Peter and we talked about our upcoming adventure.

It is traditional, in Vietnam, to acquire a budding branch from a wild peach tree just before Tet. These branches have been dipped in wax to seal the branches against the incursion of moisture. A day or two before the New Year, these branches (Hôa Dao) are dipped in very hot water, which melts the wax and causes the buds on the branches to bloom. The properly-colored pink-to-red peach blossoms are reportedly only found in the northern part of Vietnam.

This was to be Peter's first trip to Hanoi, and we were not sure how he would be received, even with a diplomatic passport. Would he be interrogated at the border? Would he be drafted into the Vietnamese military? Would he be denied entrance to the country? We need not have worried: we zipped right through customs to meet Lance Putney, the acting RSO.

Lance had been an Intelligence Officer down South during the war and spoke good Vietnamese. We looked at two buildings for our Embassy: one was obviously preferable to the other. We also looked at the house which had been selected for our Ambassador's Residence, which was literally full of Vietnamese masons and electricians and plumbers and carpenters all at the same time.

That evening Peter, Lance and I went out to dinner in Hanoi. Peter had been told by his family of a famous restaurant that specialized in mud crabs, and he wanted to take us there. We traveled from our hotel to the restaurant in cycloes, which looked like small, covered benches on

two wheels welded in front of a bicycle. These were small conveyances, so each of us hired a separate cycleo to make the trip.

The cycleo drivers spotted this neat, well-dressed and urbane young man, obviously Vietnamese, in the company of two older Americans, and wondered who he was. Almost as soon as Peter sat down on his ride, its driver started to ask him questions. We rolled down the streets towards the restaurant. My driver and Lance's driver wanted to hear the conversation, too, so they moved up close behind Peter's cycleo in a wedge-like formation and together we pedaled through the streets to dinner in a little vee.

The following day, we took some time to see a little of Hanoi. The "Hanoi Hilton", where U.S. prisoners-of-war had been detained, was being bulldozed. There were signs in many windows advertising English language courses. There were a lot of little shops selling leftovers from the war: I bought a 17-jewel Russian paratrooper's watch made outside of Moscow for about \$12 (it still keeps accurate time). We saw some beautiful garden areas and saw the lake where Senator McCain's plane was shot down. We also watched hordes of suddenly-affluent Vietnamese youths race their mopeds around a pond on the edge of town.

The next day, we stopped by the building we had endorsed as an Embassy and took a closer look at it. We stayed a bit longer than we intended and had to scramble for a taxi to get to the airport in time for our flight. Peter had really wanted to buy a peach branch to take home for Tet, but we did not see any along the road to the airport. At the terminal, we checked our bags, passed border control and went into the diplomatic lounge.

Peter went off to the rest room and I looked around. I saw that a number of passengers in the lounge were carrying peach branches. I don't speak Vietnamese, but I stopped a young woman who was cleaning windows, pointed to the branches and raised my eyebrows. She understood, and pointed through the window to a man standing across the street outside the terminal building who was selling them. I motioned as if to open a door and she understood I did not know how to get there. She took my wrist, walked to the back of the lounge and opened a door that led to a hallway. The hallway in turn led to an outside door. She guided me outside the building, across the street and over to the peach branch vendor. (I was sure I was going to be arrested by the border police for leaving the secure area.) I bought a branch with a lot of buds for about \$15, paying for it with Vietnamese money bearing the image of Uncle Ho. The woman then walked me back to the terminal. I offered her some money for her assistance, which she declined. I walked back into the lounge with my peach branch.

Peter returned from the rest room and I gave him the branch. "Where did you get *that?*", he asked.

34. FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE

I went through Dakar, Senegal with pouches several times during my tour in Abidjan. Most American Embassies in Africa employed expeditors, local personnel familiar with the airport who could help you through ticketing, customs and tarmac access with their Embassy credentials and contacts at the airport. As regional personnel, we were seldom able to use the Embassy expediter in Dakar.

In Dakar, the Russian Embassy had hired a (former?) French citizen to serve as their expediter. He was unusually pushy, had much more pull than other expeditors did (I am strongly imagining big bribes here) and he was able to take his clients and their luggage and the occasional pouch right to the front of the line at the invitation of the workers behind the counter. He would flourish their passports, dramatically identify his charges as “Diplomates Russe”, get them processed and settled in and then leave with something of a smirk for the lesser abilities of other expeditors. His Russian guests seemed to think themselves superior as well. We would run into this group from time to time, and it was never pleasant.

All of this changed a bit after the Nixon visit to China. The PRC was doing some support projects in the region such as building power plants and helping to build dams, and they brought in a lot of their own workers, especially skilled workers, to address these jobs.

I was headed to Praia with a Seabee electrician on one occasion when we, a Russian team and a large contingent of Chinese workers were all headed to Praia on the same plane. The Chinese all traveled in dark blue Mao suits with their names embroidered on the pockets; their baggage was neatly loaded on a large cart, identical duffel bags also covered in dark blue fabric with similar white Chinese markings. They sat uniformly in two lines on two benches in the airport. Their expediter was easily identifiable in a silver-grey Mao suit. We were all waiting our turn in line when the Russians came in with their expediter, who rudely pushed the masses at the desk aside, waived the Russian passports and got his team on the plane ahead of all the other travelers.

We were recognizable as Americans by our clothing, shoes, pouches and voices. The Russians looked over our way with very apparent disdain, and then at the Chinese with disinterest. The Chinese team and their expediter were looking at us with featureless faces, but with a tinge of curiosity.

As the Russians looked our way, the Seabee looked over at the Chinese group and smiled, giving them a little wave. The entire Chinese group broke into big smiles and waved back, enjoying the attention and the company of their new colleagues. We broke into similar smiles and tried a couple of discrete bows.

The mood of the Russian team changed dramatically. They scowled and sourly walked off to a distant part of the airport near the entry doors. The gaiety between ourselves and the Chinese lasted all the way through the flight, with nods and waves the norm, until we arrived in

Praia. The China card had been played, and played well, and its influence reached all the way to Africa.

35. THE NATIONAL POLICE DEADBOLT

Dick Roberts once told me that “Locks are an invention of the Devil.” While lockwork was sometimes very productive, it was often dull, repetitive work, as when all the combinations at a post needed changing. In Abidjan, we usually disassembled, inspected and serviced each combination lock in our territory once per year, more often in sandy areas like Nouakchott, Mauritania. At other times, locks could be perplexing. Consider this story:

When I arrived in Abidjan in 1978, the residential lock of choice was a Yale 197 deadbolt. This was a large, clunky, reliable lock that by its design merged the door and the frame. It had big mounting screws, rounded surfaces that would not catch on clothing and a Yale cylinder that in my experience never seemed to fail. It looked massive on a door, but it provided good security and we had a lot of them on hand.

About six months after my arrival, we began to receive a new lock for use on Embassy residences. This was a rectangular lock manufactured by the National Lock Corporation; it was marketed as the “National Police Deadbolt”. It did not join the door and the strike like the Yale 197, but the bolt did extend into a steel loop mounted on the door jam, securing doors against most penetration techniques except spread-jamming. It was a much more attractive lock for a residential door than the 197, and it was a less expensive lock than the Yale product. Finally, it was a double-cylinder lock, which provided better protection on doors with windows near the lock.

Several months after the National locks arrived, Victor (one of our communicators at post) asked if we could provide a deadbolt for his unsecured kitchen door. Bill, our Seabee builder, went over to Victor’s house and looked at the door, taking a 197 and one of the new National Police locks with him. Because there was a small window to the side of the kitchen door, Bill decided to install the two-cylinder National lock. He was a very precise and skilled builder, and the lock fit perfectly on the door when he was done. He gave one set of keys to Victor’s wife and returned to the Embassy with the other set. In our lab, he made two more sets of duplicated keys, one for the GSO and a spare pair for Victor. The communicator was grateful.

Two days later, however, Victor stopped by our office and said there was something wrong with the lock. The key provided by Bill would not open the lock. Chagrined, Bill went back out to Victor’s house, went through the house to the kitchen and slipped the key into the lock. It opened immediately. He then put the same key into the outside cylinder, and it also worked. Victor’s wife was embarrassed: she acknowledged that she had probably done something wrong. Bill returned to the Embassy and went out on a regional trip the next day.

Two days after that, Victor called me up. Apologetically, he said that the lock wasn’t working again, and that his wife had been unable to get through the kitchen door (off their carport) when she returned from the commissary. With Bill on the road, I drove Victor over to the house and I basically repeated Bill’s actions. We walked into the house, walked into the kitchen, put the key in the lock and opened it immediately. We opened the door, put the key in

the outer lock and the lock opened and closed easily. I had Victor turn the key several times and he admitted that it seemed to be working well.

The next day Victor called us in exasperation: the lock wasn't working again. I asked our Seabee electrician to go over to Vic's and look at the lock. Pete came back in two hours with a big smile on his face.

With a double-cylinder lock, you did not want to lock the door at night and leave the key in the door. Doing so defeated the purpose of the double cylinder. The National Police deadbolt would lock from the inside no matter which direction you turned the key. Also, you could remove the key from the door with the teeth either pointed up or pointed down.

On the back of the National lock, above and below the inner cylinder, there were two little legends: ON and OFF. According to the instructions packed in the lock box, this feature was called the "exclusion switch". The way that the lock was designed, if you rotated the key one way so that the teeth of the key pointed to OFF, you could take the key out of the door on the inside *and* open the lock from the outside, perhaps when you returned from the commissary. If you locked the kitchen door from the inside so that the teeth of the key pointed to ON, the lock would not let anyone with a key to the house open the door from the outside. Each time that we entered Vic's house to look at the "broken" lock, we entered the house through the front door, put the key in the kitchen door lock and opened it up. Since we responded to calls for help only when Victor or his wife were locked out, we unwittingly erased the problem we came to solve every time we opened the offending lock from the inside of the kitchen door.

36. GO WITH THE FLOW

In some of these stories, I have indicated that the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal was easily our nicest post during my tour in Africa. Not everything about the four-story building was perfect, however. Consider this problem:

In my experience, Embassies were often reluctant to host regional offices. These offices tended to have a lot of personnel which the Embassy needed to house and furnish; those personnel were frequently on the road away from their post of residence, and just as frequently needed to be taken to the local airport and picked up at the airport. This put a strain on the motor pool. An exception to this regional office reluctance were offices of the Regional Medical Officer: most posts were grateful to have an American doctor resident at post, and RMO territories tended to be small.

Our Embassy in Dakar during my tour in Abidjan was new and had a resident Regional Medical Officer. The RMO was in the basement of this building, where the doctor was available to Embassy family members without any need to escort them to higher levels of the Chancery.

Although the Embassy itself was modern, its plumbing system was unusual. The city sewer in Dakar passed outside the Embassy property at a point in the ground several feet above the lowest soil pipe run in the basement of the building. This necessitated a soil tank within the basement of the building above the level of the basement floor and a massive grinding pump connected to the tank that pumped sewage out of the building and into the city wastewater system. The tank leaked, and the Embassy used the soil tank room as a storage area for big cardboard boxes. The roaches in this area were memorable as to their size, even for Africa, and they could be heard chewing on the boxes whenever the door to the soil tank room was open.

Each of the upper three floors of the building had a separate soil pipe that descended to the basement level. Just outside the doors of the Embassy elevator, these pipes and another from the basement merged to join a single slightly larger pipe which ran into the soil tank room. Thinking that this area might be clogged from time to time, the architect who designed the building installed a small cover plate (about one foot square) over this junction point.

Sited in Africa, the Embassy occasionally ran out of toilet paper in its restrooms on a given day. When this happened, employees and visitors would just as occasionally substitute paper towels for the missing rolled paper. These towels would flush, but they tended to collect in the basement junction box rather quickly. Whenever this happened, although the access plate had a gasket on it, sewage water would flow heavily out of the junction box. Some of this sewage, under pressure from three blocked soil pipes from the upper floors, surged through the forward edge of the gasket and poured into both the elevator shaft and the Embassy elevator, announcing another sewage leak to the upper floors of the building. The bulk of the blockage, however, emerged from the rear edge of the gasket in sienna-colored waves, flooded the elevator landing, turned the corner and flowed downhill through the open doors of the Regional Medical Office, where it tended to puddle. This happened frequently enough that the RMO had begun to explore

closing the Embassy for reasons of sanitation. The odor of the backed-up junction box was overwhelming and employees often walked upstairs rather than choosing to use the elevator.

I became aware of this situation on a trip to Post and dropped in to visit the Admin Counselor. We discussed the problem; he told me that correcting the problem was beyond the abilities of the Embassy plumber because they had no way to break up the concrete around the junction box. We had several powerful 220 volt chipping hammers on our shelves and I offered to loan him a hammer and some suitable bits to help with the problem. I have seldom seen such a heartfelt look of thanks as the one I received from him.

Two weeks after sending the chipping hammer to post, Dakar had dug out the old junction box, had installed a newer and larger junction box with a larger connection to the soil tank, had equipped the new box with a massive gasket and had appeased the RMO, whose office was no longer filled with running sewage water. Our effort had nothing to do with security, but post was really glad to see us for quite a while after the loan.

37. THE GOLD MARKET IN BAMAKO

(One of my first efforts to buy jewelry)

One of my early trips out of Abidjan was to a desperately poor sub-Sahel post in Bamako, Mali. At the time, and probably continuing today, fuel in Africa meant wood or charcoal. People who lived in the forest would walk to the edge of the woods where the trees were a little drier, break off a branch or two for firewood and take it home for dinner. Over time, with many families foraging, the edge of the forest receded and the desert grew. By the time I got to Mali there seemed to be no forest left, just wind-blown sand from the Sahara desert.

On this trip, I was hosted by the Administrative Officer, who served as the post security officer. He was near the end of his tour, had a wife and two children and was looking forward to his next assignment. He invited me over for dinner the evening after I arrived. My principal task was to evaluate two new Edwards chiller air conditioning units that the Embassy had received and wanted to install. While outside of my area, they wanted someone with a technical background to look over the new equipment before it was installed. I also wanted to see the post and plan security activities there, so it seemed appropriate to accept the Embassy's request for support.

Both Edwards chillers were unserviceable. They had apparently been shipped with some water inside the pump units and left to freeze on the dock somewhere in Europe, possibly Antwerp. The housings on both exterior pumps had been split open by the expansion of a fluid in the pump, and water poured into the opening of the pump came right out onto the ground. The Embassy had insured its shipment, and replacement parts were ordered.

Like Budapest, Bamako was actually two cities divided by the Niger River. Basically, people lived and ate on one side of the river while the public buildings and offices were on the other side. There was a narrow two-lane bridge connecting the two sides of the city: one bridge. This worked until it was time for the President of the country to move. When the President was ready for lunch and perhaps his nap, the bridge was closed to all traffic for about an hour before his departure. Then he crossed the bridge in a flashy car with a motorcycle escort. The bridge stayed closed until it was time for the President to return to the Palace. Then the motorcade crossed again, the bridge opened up and traffic was allowed to move. Since the President crossed the bridge several times on each working day, there were days when Embassy personnel found themselves trapped on one side of the river or the other for considerable periods of time. Not much was accomplished on those days.

I am interested in jewelry, and usually tried to bring back something for my wife and daughter from each trip I made. I had heard that Bamako had a gold and silver market that went back to the 13th century. I asked for instructions on how to get there and took a taxi to one of the strangest buildings I have ever seen. The entire structure was of pink adobe. There were thirty-five foot rounded towers at each end of the building through which tree trunks had been

stuck to give the structure some support. One end of the market processed and sold gold; the other end did the same for silver.

Walking into the gold market was a unique experience. There was not much room for any of the craftsmen working there. No stores, either. Instead, there were a series of stalls holding ancient wooden benches on which the gold workers sat barefoot, usually with a proprietor between the worker and the access aisle. Charcoal or propane from tanks was used to melt gold in tiny pots. Workers would first melt the gold, then pour it into 4X6-sized wire molds. When the wires cooled, the goldsmiths would stretch them into filigree over the fire one by one, making a piece of jewelry as they went along. Everything sold there was by weight. I stopped at a stand that seemed to produce elegant jewelry; I drew up a sketch for filigree earrings I wanted the man to make, essentially gold filigree balls with little hooks on the end for pierced ears.

Using a straw-like blowpipe and the heat from the charcoal fire, the gold worker braised the earrings together in front of me. Where the thin filigree wires crossed each other, just a puff of air was enough to fuse the wires together, making a strong but very light (and relatively inexpensive) decorative ball. I wound up with two earrings whose pendants were the size of small marbles. The total cost in 1978 was about fifty-five dollars for the set of earrings. No boxes, no wrapping paper, just a careful weighing of the jewelry on an ancient scale with tiny little bronze animal figures as weights on the balance.

The gold market was near the mosque, and in Muslim countries, as Allah is merciful, people who are poor and infirm cluster around the mosque for charity. When word spread that a European was in the gold market (probably getting ripped off by his lack of understanding of the gold weights) a little crowd of beggars began to form outside the market. As I stepped out into the very bright Saharan sunlight, I found myself surrounded by men in ragged clothing asking for alms. Their hands and feet and faces were wrapped with old cloth, and some were missing fingers and toes. These were lepers, reaching toward me for a handout. I tried the “”Ou est le Chef?”” tactic, and gave a few Central African Francs to the largest man I spotted there, indicating with a wave that the money was for everyone. Then, while they argued over who the Chef was, I grabbed a taxi and returned to my hotel. I took a long, hot bath when I got there.

38. AN UNUSUAL OFFICE

When I first joined the State Department in 1975, my office assigned me a couple of computer projects. At that time, any of those computer programs would run on the Department's large IBM 370 mainframe computer, and each job initially consisted of a tray of computer punch cards carried down to the lowest floor of the building and submitted to a clerk at the computer room window. Although we soon progressed to taking our voluminous material downstairs on a large spool of tape with a much smaller card deck to tell the computer what to do, this was still a laborious process.

I was very interested in computer graphics in 1975, and I saw some graphic applications that could make one of my programs much more understandable and useful. Our Division, however, did not have the funding for me to buy the hardware we would need to produce those graphics. I began to look around the Department for another office that might already have the equipment I needed and that might be willing to work with me on an experimental basis so that I could show our Front Office in SY why we needed something fancier.

I found such a system in the Office of the Cartographer within the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Tucked away in the top floor of the Old State building was a little suite of three small offices managed by a cartographer (a young and very interesting woman) and her assistant, who was a computer operator. In the middle office of the suite was a Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-11 minicomputer, a Bendix digitizer and a large CalComp plotter—just the equipment I needed for a demonstration. I noticed that this equipment just seemed to sit there each time I stopped by.

In 1975, each time that the Secretary of State travelled, INR would prepare a briefing book for him that featured statistics of the countries he was about to visit and maps of each area that the trip would encompass. Often, these trips happened suddenly, and the cartographer and the computer operator would turn to a stored software package on the PDP-11, pull up large maps of the regions that were to be visited, edit the maps to pare down the presentation so that their product would complement the briefing book and send their maps to the group in INR that assembled the package. There were accordingly long periods when the computer was not used, and short, intense periods when its availability was crucial. It seemed like a perfect fit for an experimental project, and I began to explore the availability of the system. The cartographer's office was interested in my project; they were, however, a little leery of committing themselves to an activity that might tie up their equipment just when it was needed.

In the late 1960s, countries around the world were beginning to discover that there were huge deposits of petroleum off their continental coasts. There was a three-mile boundary in effect around most countries at that time. I learned this originally derived from the distance that a cannon ball could fly from the shore to a ship. As some of the oil deposits were many miles off their coasts, nations began to claim the entire continental shelf off their coasts as their sovereign property. This was especially a problem where island nations abutted other nations, and friction over national borders was inevitable. In 1973, the United Nations called for a Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to encourage nations to work together to protect the seas and their

marine resources, including subsea oil deposits. As counties met to discuss new boundaries, it quickly became apparent that maps of the undersea terrain around each country would be critical in any negotiations. The U.S. Department of State was actively involved in UNCLOS discussions and offered to help shed some light on those submarine border negotiations. Looking around for a government office that could help them with maps, USUN learned of the INR Cartographer's Office.

Faster than you can say "sweet crude oil", the Cartographer's Office personnel found themselves making lots of undersea maps. A new government agency formed in 1970 (NOAA) quickly became involved in helping to map the sea floor for those negotiations. More modern and faster computer equipment was ordered, new personnel were assigned to the Cartographer's Office and the grade levels of existing personnel went up. The machines in INR were now running much of the time. Staff members from the office were travelling to take part in overseas negotiations: those talks were intended to help neighboring foreign countries come to agreements on where their borders lay and on how those borders could be recognized from the Earth's surface.

My projected experiment was forgotten entirely. People in the upstairs office who had previously had the time to talk to me were much too busy and were likely to remain so for the next decade. I began to look for another set of equipment somewhere else in the Department.

39. EASTER AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

When I first arrived in Panama, I found that the ESC was locally responsible for four buildings. We had the Embassy, which was an old colonial building right down on the Pacific Ocean. We had our Annex next door, which contained our offices, a lab area and a basement storage area. We shared this building with the Military Group and the Regional Communications Chief. We had a warehouse down on the Panama Canal where we kept large tools and where we armored cars for Embassies and for the DAO office. Finally, we had the Ambassador's Residence, an elegant mansion on a hill overlooking much of Panama City.

The Ambassador's Residence was protected by a fence and a local guard booth with a couple of Panamanian guards in it. Because the property within the fence was extensive, the ESC had created a ring of alarms around the Residence. The alarmed area was roughly shaped as a hexagon, with microwave alarms on two sides of the figure and IR breakbeams on the remaining four sides. The IR alarms were basically located toward the sides and front of the residence, and were chosen because of extensive landscaping around the building that would have generated a lot of false alarms with microwave systems.

Because the residence was up on a hill, and because storms frequently swept inland from the Pacific Ocean, we had some serious problems with lightning strikes on the IR break beams. It turned out that electricity from the sky found a ready path to ground through these systems, and we lost a number of these units to storms. When a system failed, since they terminated in the guard booth, we would get a report from the guards that a system was out and would send someone up to the Residence to repair the system. Some of the damaged units that we took out had actually *melted* inside.

On the first Easter that I was in Panama, Embassy personnel were invited to an Easter egg hunt at the Residence. Having children aged seven and five at that time, we were looking forward to the event. Quite a number of kids fanned out across the Residence grounds with Easter baskets looking for eggs. After nearly an hour, the children returned with their baskets full of eggs and jelly beans. It was a good outing.

The next day we received a call that *all* of the IR breakbeams at the Residence were not working. We had not had any rain at all for a couple of weeks, so we could not put the outage down to a storm. On arriving at the residence, it became apparent that all of the transmitters and receivers were out of alignment. Why? The kids were swinging from the alarm systems during the egg hunt, and some of the Easter egg nests had actually been placed atop the IR units where kids could find them easily.

Sadly, this pattern was repeated every year at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter, every time children were allowed to play on the Residence grounds. We became fairly adept at realigning these systems, and it did not take long to bring them back up, but we knew that this effort was coming each time a Holiday arrived.

40. THE CONAKRY PLAYBOY CLUB

In 1978, our Embassy in Guinea was located in a building that had once housed a Peugeot dealership. The lower floor (the former car showroom) was occupied by USIS (at that time an independent agency), and the Embassy was located on the upper floor, which you reached by walking up a spiraling four-foot wide grand staircase and passing through a door with a cypher lock at the top. It was a small and very crowded facility. At the back of the building on the third floor was a small dining area next to the Comm Center that had once been a communicator's apartment. On my first trip to post, this area (with a small kitchen) was used as a lunch room by Embassy personnel: they called it the Playboy Club. The roof of the Embassy was formed of corrugated iron sheets, and the roof leaked. Large water stains discolored the interior suspended tile ceiling, the support slats for which had begun to rust. Here and there you could see holes in the suspended ceiling where someone had evidently lost their footing above the ceiling and stepped down onto the tiles. The flooring of asbestos tiles showed a lot of wear and was coming up; the sink fittings leaked but the refrigerator worked, there was food available and the space was air conditioned.

There was an access door to the attic above the Playboy Club. The attic was L-shaped, with the short arm of the "L" over the dining area and the long axis running over the Comm Center and the rest of the Embassy's second floor. I went up into this area during my first inspection of the building and found the attic to be completely full of stray wires. It looked like a snake's nest here and there: piles of wire intertwined on the floor, with the origin of any given wire and its destination a complete mystery. Adding to the charm of the attic was a corroded incinerator stack that allowed the burner below to dump its ash inside the attic. Everything in sight was covered with black fly ash; wiring colors were hidden by the ash. It was not possible to inspect the wiring inside the attic effectively, and I decided to do something about it. After my first inspection, I discussed a wiring removal project with the RSO and the Post Security Officer. Both men were supportive of the project, and we put it on the schedule.

To get to the area where the wire bundles lay (primarily over the Comm Center) you climbed a ladder just outside the back door of the Playboy Club, went through a locked roof hatch and stepped inside the attic. Once inside, you turned on a light and realized that the only way to the long axis of the L was to traverse a long, rusted I-beam about four inches wide. (Think of the women's gymnastics balance beam in the Olympics, but about thirty feet long.) There was nothing to hold onto as you crossed the beam, helping to account for the holes in the suspended ceiling below. I proposed to the post that we would go up into the attic at night when the air underneath the iron roof was cool. We arranged for two local FSN employees from GSO to work with us as porters, with myself and a Seabee electrician serving as escorts and wire removers. We took a multimeter and an ammeter into the attic with us, parked two empty fifty-gallon drums at the bottom of the ladder as wire receptacles, stuffed paper tags with strings and markers in our pockets and went up into the attic at about 9:00 at night to do battle with the wiring.

Pete, our electrician, had just received a new pair of Crescent linesman's pliers from the States. This was a heavy-duty tool, well suited for our task. Wearing gloves, and wiping off the wires as we proceeded, we started with wires we could easily identify that we knew were no longer needed, such as TV antenna wiring that was disconnected at one end. This wiring was removed and placed in a pile at the near end of the beam for later transport to the drums. We then identified coaxial antenna cables, removing cables that were no longer connected (a lot of these) and tagging the antenna cables currently in use.

Then we turned to the power wiring. Pete used the ammeter to look for any wiring that was presently carrying current: those wires were deemed to be "in use" and were tagged as "active" and left alone. The remaining wires were gradually separated from the shrinking bundles on the floor. Wires which were no longer terminated were removed first, then inactive wires that showed considerable age, especially runs of common house wire. This left us with four or five heavier power cables that were not carrying any current. Our agreement with the PSO was that any circuit needed by the Embassy that was interrupted by our efforts would be re-run and tagged by us in the evening on the following day.

Our two laborers, under our escort, waited for us to complete our task, watching us as we worked. Pete wiped off one of the larger cables, found it to be blue, and traced it through the now much smaller bundle. The ammeter said it was dead. The end of the blue wire seemed to be unattached, but it was snarled in the bundle and Pete found a point within the bundle where the wire seemed easier to remove. He snipped this wire with the new sidecutters.

There was a blinding flash in the attic and all the lights we were using went out. The two African men we were escorting completely disappeared in the dark. Pete turned on a flashlight, looked at his pliers and swore. The wiring cutter had a 1/8" hole in the middle of the cutting surface.

I stayed up in the attic with the laborers and the flashlight; Pete went down to the power panel and reset circuit breakers to restore our lights. When he returned, we formed a chain across the long 4-inch beam and passed the cut wiring from hand to hand until it could be dropped into the drums. We filled both drums to the top with unneeded wire, traversed the beam, closed up the attic and locked the trap door. Then, looking like coal miners from the fly ash covering us, we walked back to our TDY apartment, cleaned up and hit the sack.

41. MARV COOKE AND THE KANGAROO

When I was in Seoul, I tried to get out and visit each of the six ESOs in my territory at least twice a year. On each visit, I hoped to travel with the OIC or some of his personnel to one of their constituent posts. This procedure allowed me to see my region, visit most of the posts in my territory, and to work directly with the people I was supposed to evaluate. All of the ESOs in the EAP region were interesting places to explore, and I was always treated with great courtesy by my hosts as I visited.

I especially enjoyed trips to ESO Canberra after Marv Cooke arrived there. Marv and Bev, his wife, were great hosts. I had a number of dinners at their house, but Bev really enjoyed cultural experiences and we might go to a theater or a movie or a museum over a weekend.

On one visit, Marv and Bev invited me to see an Australian Zoo just outside Canberra. We drove through open land on a two-lane road for quite a while until we arrived at a parking lot. In the Zoo, there were Koalas, Emus, colorful birds from Australia and a wide variety of kangaroos. In one area of the Zoo there was a stand where you could buy a container of kibble that the kangaroos liked to eat. You could then walk over to the kangaroo compound, stand still and a kangaroo would hop over to you and wait to be fed. I should mention that biodegradable ice cream cones were used as the kibble containers to combat clutter around the Zoo.

Marv and I each purchased a cone of kibble and walked over to the kangaroo compound. A very large red kangaroo hopped our way. The kangaroo's eyes were level with my own; he seemed tame enough, but he was a big guy and I kept my distance from him, scattering a little kibble on the ground in small doses to make the feed last. Marv was talking to me as I fed the kangaroo, explaining the differences in types of kangaroo, pointing out Wallabies to me and otherwise helping me to appreciate the animals on exhibit.

When my cone was empty, the kangaroo hopped over to stand in front of Marv. Marv stood his ground and continued talking to me. The kangaroo looked at him, looked over at me, looked back at Marv and then clapped its forepaws together with great force around Marv's cone of kibble. The kibble fairly exploded into the air, showering both of us and falling onto the ground in a rough circle where the kangaroo was able to consume all of it. The ferocity of the kangaroo's clap startled us, but the kangaroo was otherwise peaceful, got what he wanted and hopped off after finishing his meal.

42. BAO ZHENG AND LADY YANG

If you go to my Facebook Page, you will see me and my wife in Chinese Opera costumes. There is a story behind those outfits.

Filling in at ESO Beijing between three different assigned SEOs, I had a lot of time in which to explore China's capital city. It was a wonderful experience, due in no small part to the immense changes taking place in China at that time. The skyline was changing rapidly, with sleek skyscrapers and European-looking shops going up almost overnight along the major roads near the center of the city. Around these new buildings, however, were *hutongs*, old Chinese neighborhoods where the houses were made of wood with pitched Chinese tile roofs, the doors were made of heavy wood with brass or iron fastenings, and the front entrances might have old, worn marble steps where men and women sat by the road in the evenings and smoked and talked and ate watermelon, spitting the seeds on the ground. A walk through a hutong was like a step back in time, with coal cake or charcoal providing fuel for Chinese dinners, the odors of which wafted out to the street and intermingled. Women fanned themselves on low porches and watched visitors to their neighborhood walk by, children played with tops and other toys in the streets and men could be seen watering potted plants, listening to radios or talking to each other.

At the far end of Tiananmen Square, on the opposite side from the Forbidden City, there was a huge and very old multi-story Chinese barracks building in dark stone that may once have been a gateway into the City of Beijing. This building is at the upper edge of Quienamen Dajie, an important shopping street, and I often used it as a landmark. It looked to me as if this building might have housed several companies of soldiers at one time, who were probably on hand to keep order in the city. The Beijing of my experience had little pockets in which similar stores were located: a hardware area, for example, or a series of electrical stores might line one side of a street. Below the barracks building, to your right on Quienamen, was the Beijing Opera House. Several streets away, in a hutong two streets behind Quienamen on the left, were three stores of old Chinese shops that sold Chinese Opera costumes to the Opera House.

Chinese Opera, for those of you not familiar with it, is quite an experience. Periods of dialogue are interspersed with high-pitched singing, theatrical music sounds and acrobatics, especially when characters are fighting each other. Traditionally, the parts of women were played by men. "Women" wore tunics over long skirts or skirt-like pants; men wore court robes or court uniforms. Many of these costumes were fitted with long white "waterfall" sleeves, which the actors learned to drop or retrieve to emphasize certain moods. Generals wore military hats and little frames on their backs on which flags were mounted. Women wore elaborate hats of silver filigree set with electric blue Kingfisher feathers, colored ribbons and pearls. To make it easy for all Chinese to identify specific characters, each character has their very own traditional face, achieved by painting the actor's face in a specific manner for that part. Certain facial colors mean specific things, making it possible for Chinese audiences to immediately recognize heroes or villains.

I wandered into this small group of stores one afternoon, attracted by a long Chinese New Year's dragon on the far wall in one of the shops. I walked into a very plain and dusty building

with a rough concrete floor, long glass cases holding bundles wrapped in white paper, a few spears and hand axes leaning against walls because they would not fit into the cases, and a big book that looked like a Sears Catalog on a countertop. There were three Chinese merchants in the store, all of whom got up when I walked in. I looked around, then opened the catalog at the urging of the men.

The book was filled with colored scenes from Chinese Opera, showing all the important characters in each opera, their costumes and accessories. Many of the actors wore false beards; others wore helmets, Mandarin hats, silk beanies with long braids behind them, and high boots with thick white soles and raised toes. Some characters carried swords or other weapons; most of the costumes seemed to be made of embroidered silk. I did not see any of the costumes on display in the store. I threaded my way through the catalog, and decided I liked a black-faced character in black robes with a false beard, gold dragon embroidery and a Mandarin hat. I looked at the men in the store and pointed to the character. One of the men smiled and said “Bao Zheng” which sounded like “Bao Jung” to me. I nodded and the men went to work. One of the men went into the back of the store to fetch one of the white paper bundles containing the costume. Another man went to the store next door for a Mandarin hat and a false beard. The third man went to the remaining store for Chinese boots.

Bao Zheng was a Song Dynasty judge who is famous in China for his honesty, bravery and his cleverness in solving difficult cases. He is admired for having the guts to put a relative of the Emperor to death for murder. Bao appears in six Yuan Dynasty plays, in four Quin Dynasty novels and in five Beijing Operas. (He also appears as the central figure in a television series shown in Hong Kong.) He is notable for his unmistakable face mask, an elaborate white birthmark like a question mark poised above a black and brown face. He wears a long false beard and a wide Mandarin hat, and usually wears a golden belt set with precious jade.

I opened the white bundle to expose a black silk robe just covered with heavy gold embroidery, forming several dragons circling the robe. The robe fit me, the belt fit me, and the beard and the hat fit. The boots were a little small, but I could get my feet into them and I realized that they looked a lot like Norwegian snow boots if I needed to replace them. The hat was made of four sections of paper-mache that fit together to form a headpiece with winglets protruding from the back, each about eighteen inches long. Holding my breath, I asked about the price of the costume. It was mine for \$120.

Before returning to Seoul, I visited a Chinese book store and bought a couple of guidebooks to Beijing Opera and to the makeup required for opera characters, including a fabulous book of masks. I showed the costume to my wife on my return. She said: “Neat! I want one!” So, the next time I was in Beijing, I went back to the same store.

After another romp through the Opera Catalog, I settled on a costume for my wife. A very elaborate hat with long tassels sits above a tunic of pink and white silk which is attached to a white silk skirt; the tunic has waterfall sleeves. This was the costume for Lady Yang, who appears in a single Tang Dynasty opera titled “The Drunken Concubine”. Lady Yang was the favorite concubine of Emperor Ming-Huang. Her character and the opera itself were developed

by the famous (male) opera star Mei Lanfang. (The plot of the opera is available through Google.)

My wife and I sometimes use these costumes for Halloween. It takes over an hour to apply the face makeup properly, and the major drawback of my costume is the false beard: you cannot eat or drink anything at a party without taking off the beard, which immediately gives away who is wearing the costume. The Mandarin hat is also a hazard at parties: while seated, I have turned my head and spilled a lady's drink by hitting her hand with one of the winglets.

After I retired and started teaching, teachers at our high school were encouraged to wear costumes on Halloween. I decided to wear Bao Zheng's outfit to school, and drove in wearing the costume but not the hat or the beard. On arriving at school, I pinned on my teacher's ID card, put on the beard and the hat and walked into the building. Students sitting on the floor near the entrance got up in astonishment and stood aside, and a large group of kids parted respectfully to let me through. All was well until I heard a student's voice behind me say: "Wow, man, look at that: *Darth Vader!*"

43. THE NEW SEWING MACHINE

When I was a boy in Pakistan and later in India, every tailor shop or dressmaker's shop I entered had at least one Singer sewing machine in it. In Pakistan, they were operated by foot treadles, but by the time we got to India electric motors were widely in use and these rugged machines occupied places of honor on the floors of businesses that used them.

My wife is an excellent seamstress, one who made some of her own clothes in high school and college. For years, she worked with a very basic sewing machine from Sears. By the time of our first overseas trip for the Department to Abidjan in 1978, her sewing machine was starting to fall apart. She asked about a new machine, and we went out to a Singer store to look for one.

At that time in history, sewing machines that could generate intricate patterns were beginning to appear on the market. Singer made a number of these, most of which used a cam and a cam follower to generate the desired pattern. This resulted in a big sewing machine with a lot of accessories to carry around: each different stitch pattern required a different cam.

It was also the time when medium-scale integrated circuits had begun to appear in consumer electronics. Singer was in the middle of this trend, and it had begun to manufacture smaller, sleeker sewing machines with a great many more pattern stitches than the cam-based models. Surprisingly, the electronic machines cost a little less than the apparently more rugged cam models.

I was not sure that a fancy IC-based sewing machine was the right choice for Africa, so I asked the sales lady if I could remove the top of the machine and look at the circuitry. After a check with her manager, I was allowed to open the top and I liked what I saw. The machine that we liked had four MSI integrated circuits and they were plug-in chips, at that. The internal wiring was beautifully done and the power supply looked very rugged. The machine was designed to operate on 120 VAC 60 Hz or, with a transformer, on 220 VAC 50 Hz. I was sold and we bought the machine. We were so busy after we bought it, however, that Gail could not use it until we got to Africa and our household goods caught up with us.

After we unpacked our surface shipment, I brought the new sewing machine carefully into the house and set it aside, as I knew Gail planned to make a dress for our daughter. I left for work the next morning and asked her to call me and tell me how she liked it. I received a call at about 10:30, only to hear very deep disappointment. Already frustrated with Africa, she choked out "My new sewing machine doesn't work!"

When I returned to the house that evening, Gail was fuming. Plugged into a transformer, the sewing machine hummed and its light went on, but it went *backwards* when you stepped on the floor pedal. I turned it off, turned it back on, checked her connections and became really angry, in no small part because I had recommended that machine.

I sat down with the owner's manual and found the addresses of our nearest support locations. I saw that there were several service centers on the West Coast of Africa, but the major repair facility appeared to be in Lausanne, Switzerland. Fuming, I wrote a letter to the Chief Operations Officer at the Lausanne office. I told him of my past acquaintance with Singer products as a boy, of our effort to find a suitable machine for African service in the Washington area, of my frustration and anger at finding a brand-new machine would not work at all, and asked for my money back. I told him that the next time I went shopping for a sewing machine, I would buy a Bernina. I sent the letter out the next day.

Two weeks later, with the sewing machine still sitting in the dining room, I received a very courteous reply from the man in Lausanne. He pointed out that our machine was under warranty, and that I should not worry about my purchase. He said that I could send it to the Singer Service Center in Dakar, where they would repair the machine and send it back to me free of charge. He further said that if I had misgivings about having the new sewing machine worked on in Africa, I could send it to his factory in Lausanne for repair and return, again free of charge. Finally, he promised that Singer would return my purchase price if I was in any way dissatisfied with their service.

Then he wrote: "Before taking any of these steps, however, I would recommend that you try the reset procedure explained on page 64 of your owner's manual." I got out the manual, turned to page 64 and was confronted with a picture of a reset button on the bottom of the sewing machine. I turned the machine on its side, but did not see a button. After looking at the base for a while, I saw an indentation that was about an inch deep. Looking deeply into this recess with a flashlight, I saw a red button. I hooked up the machine, reached into the recess and pushed the button. The sewing machine ran beautifully, and has worked fine ever since.

44. BREAKFAST WITH CHAMPIONS

I made a number of visits to Canberra, Australia over the years that I worked for DS. I always enjoyed visiting Australia: I like Aussies, the personnel we had assigned to our office there were fun to be with, Canberra was beautiful and I was able to meet with our Australian counterparts on nearly every visit. The Aussies enjoyed these meetings, too, and DS/ST management encouraged rapport with Australia, gradually melding our programs until the point where we agreed to exchange personnel.

Usually, on trips to Canberra, Embassy visitors were housed in the Pavilion Hotel near the Foreign Ministry. This was a pleasant place to stay, hosting government visitors and tourists from all over the world. In the (Australian) summers, there were often rows of backpacks lined up in the lobby near the hotel entrance, waiting for buses that would take tourists to places of interest around the capitol or out to trek in the Outback. The hotel was also enjoyable because it featured a buffet breakfast on weekends that was more than ample. As at many of the larger posts I served, especially where DS/ST had personnel assigned, I tried to schedule a weekend into my Australian visits in order to meet socially with our personnel and to see a little of the countries I was visiting.

On my second trip to Canberra, there was quite a line waiting for breakfast on Saturday morning. As I stepped into the “queue” to wait my turn, I noticed that there was a line of Buddhist monks both in front of me and behind me, also waiting for breakfast. They were all wearing saffron robes and had shaved heads. At that point in my career, I was almost bald and I felt comfortable in line. The monks seemed to be in good humor, so I confided to the monk in front of me that I probably should have shaved my head before coming down. He looked at me, looked at my head and said “It looks like you already did!” We both started to laugh and I asked if they were touring the country. The monk explained that they were on a goodwill tour of Australia and were really looking forward to it. We gradually approached the breakfast line, laughing and comparing notes on Australia as we progressed, and then worked our way through the food line to fill our plates with breakfast items. At the end of the breakfast line, both of us pleased with an active conversation so early in the morning, we said goodbye and headed for different tables.

When I went into the Embassy on Monday morning, there was a newspaper from Canberra on a desk in the ESO. It mentioned a State Visit to Australia by the Dalai Lama and an entourage of monks. The face of the man who had noticed my haircut was in the center of the accompanying photo, taken outside the Pavilion Hotel. He was, in fact, the Dalai Lama.

Maybe my hair will grow back.

45. LOBO JACK'S

I was in Panama from 1983 until 1986, and my territory included Nicaragua in Central America. There was a war in progress at that time between Nicaragua and El Salvador, and we were supporting El Salvador. The Russians were supporting Nicaragua and its Sandinista government, and they were aided by the government of Cuba. Because there had been a massive earthquake in Managua in 1972 that destroyed the center of the city, our Embassy was housed in a makeshift "Butler Building" with a concrete slab, a steel frame and corrugated sheet metal sides. We had a 10-foot chain-link fence with a little barbed wire around the compound, but we were in a precarious position: a rifle bullet would have gone clean through the Embassy, and a car could easily have motored through our gates and into the front of the "Chancery". Around the Embassy was a large community of Sandinista supporters who had been given low-cost housing by the government and who would turn out in large numbers for loud demonstrations immediately whenever the Government wished to express their displeasure at something the U.S. Government did. This happened fairly often.

Because of the large foreign military presence, the Marines were on alert whenever I visited Nicaragua. There was not much for them to do in town, and they mostly kept to themselves. There was, however, a club outside of town that they liked to patronize: Lobo Jack's. This club had a disk jockey, a bar, elevated tables looking down on the dance floor and was filled with pretty Latina girls. It was also popular with foreign troops and Nicaraguan troops, and the dance floor was filled with Russians, Cubans, local troops and our Marines all chasing the same girls. On each table, there was a bottle of Black and White scotch that cost \$100: this was the cover charge, and we usually split the price among our group. The Scotch would typically go back to the Marine House and we would all drink beer and order food (which was good, and reasonable) once we sat down. It was a rough place that could easily have become dangerous, but all of Lobo Jack's patrons seemed to be on their best behavior and we never had any trouble there during my visits.

After I retired, I went into teaching at the high school level in Montgomery County, Maryland.

The school where I taught (Montgomery Blair) had a large number of students whose parents had come from Central America, and my FSI Spanish was useful in talking to those students after class. Some of my classes were peopled with tough guys whose families had survived wars and who were living in an area of Maryland with a substantial gang presence. One of the "ringleaders" in this set of students was a stocky, self-assured young man from Nicaragua named Tito.

It was hard to turn Tito into a student. His interests seemed to be in earning money after school so that he could buy a car, into spending time with his friends and surreptitiously playing video games on his cell phone. This was an Earth Science class, and I assigned students a project in modelling crystals. Tito picked mica for his subject and became interested in the project when I let him separate a couple of layers from a sample of the mineral after class. I showed him how

the layout of his crystal's molecules contributed to the cleavage properties of the mineral. As he was packing up his book bag, he asked:

“Hey, Mr. Herrmann, have you ever been to my country?” I told him that I had been to Managua several times and that I had taken the cable car to the mountain above Managua to see the city better. Then I mentioned that I had been to Lobo Jack's.

It was as if I told Tito that I used to spar with Mohammed Ali. He actually gaped at the news, and then asked me a half-dozen questions about the place. Apparently, the club had a reputation as a very dangerous place, and only the really hardy went there. As he went out into the hall, he shouted to two of his buddies in Spanish: “Hey, Mr. Herrmann knows Lobo Jack's!” My stock among the male Latino students in my classes soared overnight, and I became something of a celebrity that semester.

46. THE HEAVY DUTY GATE LOCK

Every once in a while, the Department would surprise us with a new lock. When they arrived, we would consider our territory and decide how many of the new locks would be required. Before shipping them to constituent posts, we would usually install a few of the locks at our post of residence in order to become familiar with their features and test their durability. This was especially important in Africa, where heat, humidity and dust all conspired to reduce the operating life of any lock. Here's another lock story.

When I arrived in Abidjan, Russ Waller's Lock Shop placed annual lock orders for all of the locking hardware we installed in embassies and residences. Initially, our locks were supposed to be for official residences, such as those of the Ambassador and DCM, but we had some leeway in Africa concerning the installation of hardware on lesser Embassy-leased properties. As the number of RSOs grew around the world, the demand for more locking hardware at regular residences increased. So did the specificity of demands. For example, most of our residences featured big metal gates which burglars could easily open by hand. RSOs began asking for chains and heavy-duty padlocks that could hold up in monsoon weather. The lock shop responded strongly to these requests.

First to arrive at our post of residence were the chains. Made of chromed high-grade heavy steel, these chains were about five feet long and were packed in bags. They were sturdy enough to pull a big mobile home out of a swamp, not that we had mobile homes over there. All that we had to secure these chains, however, were small padlocks that began to fail when they were filled with rain water.

Advised of this limitation, the lock shop overdid itself. Shipped to the field were massive Sargent and Greenleaf all-weather padlocks, made of weatherproof steel and fitted with a hinged bottom that swung away from the lock to expose the keyway and which flipped back to keep water out of the lock. These padlocks were about six inches long and weighed a couple of pounds apiece. These locks also featured removable Medeco cores, so that they could not be picked and so that new keys could be cut by number if keys were lost (which often happened). The chains and the massive padlocks were sent to us for stock, and were also sent directly to RSOs by lock shop vendors. Each of these padlocks cost \$220.

A few months after the chains and locks hit the field, ESO Abidjan started receiving requests for more chains and locks from the posts in our territory. Our stock of locks dwindled quickly; we sent out what we had and ordered more. Apparently, so did other ESOs and ESCs, because we received a telegram from the lock shop asking us what we were doing with all this expensive hardware.

We put this question to our customers, Post Security Officers and RSOs. Several of them said that the locks were being stolen or that they just fell apart. Since the padlocks would have held up in San Quentin, we did a little research into these claims. Here's what we found:

The S&G padlocks arrived with three sets of keys. There were two sets of keys with rounded bows, two keys to each set. There was one key in the box with a square bow. On issuing a lock, the RSO would keep the keys with the rounded bows. Two keys went to the resident of the house being protected; one went to the RSO's key locker while the fourth went to GSO. The single square-bowed key was usually given to the night watchman at the residence after the RSO demonstrated the correct use of the lock and the chain with the other keys.

The actual purpose of the square key was to remove the Medeco core. When this key was turned in the lock, the core fell out, the shackle of the padlock fell out and the entire padlock seemed to come apart in the hands of whoever had that key. If it was a PSO, he usually thought the lock was defective and ordered a new \$220 padlock. If the lock was opened by night watchmen using a square key, the collapse of the lock was very unsettling. The watchmen became really fearful of losing their jobs because they had obviously ruined something valuable. To shift the blame elsewhere, they would throw away the padlock *and* its chain, report the equipment stolen and wait for a new padlock and chain to arrive.

47. THE DUTY SNAKE

When we were assigned to Abidjan in West Africa, home burglaries were common. To help prevent these crimes, Embassies would usually hire a night watchman for each residence. Called “guardiens” in French-speaking countries, these men were often from very poor neighboring countries such as Upper Volta or Ghana. Our house had a small exterior room with a toilet near our outdoor car park: this was probably built as a maid’s quarters, but it served as a home for Dharman, our gardien.

Most gardiens were eager to earn additional money from these jobs, often to send back to their families in other countries. I wanted our lawn cut and our car washed regularly although I knew I would be on travel frequently, so I worked out an arrangement with Dharman that he would keep the car clean, the bushes trimmed, the lawn cut and the grounds picked up for twenty dollars a month. Except for the mowing, for which he used a push mower from GSO, all of his trim work was accomplished with his Embassy-provided machete.

It was not possible for the gardien to work during the day and stay up at night, but we wanted the emphasis to be on guarding the house at night, with the day work taking second place. To make this happen efficiently, the gardiens on a given residential block would work out an agreement wherein one of them was always on patrol at night and would wake the others if there was trouble. In our neighborhood, the gardiens each took a two-hour watch and then went to sleep.

There was a lot of African jungle around the small wooded road we lived on, and occasionally one of the gardiens would spot a good-sized snake slithering along the ground. Some of these were poisonous, especially the Mambas. The gardien would usually decapitate the snake with his machete. Then, with his machete and the two pieces of the snake in hand, the gardien would take the snake up to the door of the house he protected and show it to his “Patron”, “the resident of the house. Realizing that your watchman had incurred some danger in killing the snake and had accepted this danger to protect your family, a monetary bonus was called for. Depending on the size of the snake, I would tip the equivalent of ten to fifteen dollars in Central African Francs.

Once the snake-catcher had obtained his bonus, he would turn the two parts of the serpent over to the next-closest gardien, who would repeat the process. “Patron, j’ai trouvé un serpent!” The resident of *that* house would tip *his* gardien, and the snake would make its way through the neighborhood.

I used to car-pool with my neighbor, an economic officer at the Embassy. The first time that I was approached with a dead snake, I was pleased with Dharman and told my neighbor about it. He started laughing and said that he, too, had seen the snake and was proud of *his* gardien. This happened about once a quarter for the three years I was in Abidjan, and we began calling the gardiens’ money-makers “duty snakes” as they were clear indications that the guards were up and awake and active on duty.

48. CROSSING THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA

In both Panama and later in Korea, we were co-located with a lot of military personnel. After our tour in Africa, it was refreshing to go shopping in a military commissary or a Post Exchange, and to have permission to order from the AAFES Catalog. In Panama, our Embassy was supportive of the military and that support was reciprocated. Each time a U.S. warship docked in Panama on its way through the Canal, the Admin Counselor would be informed of the number of guests that ship could accommodate. He would put a slotted box on his desk, announce the ship crossing to the Embassy, and employees who wanted to traverse the Canal on a Navy ship would express interest. Names would be drawn from the box until the guest roster was full. The Embassy tried to give employees who had not had this experience a turn before allowing former riders a second chance at a crossing.

I always seemed to be on the road when these ships came in. I was hoping for a submarine ride, but I did not have that experience during our tour. My wife (Gail) dutifully put our names in each time a ship came through, but I would not be back in time for the voyage and she wanted to make the trip with me. Gail did take our kids aboard the *U.S.S New Jersey* when it tied up over at the Navy yard and was stunned with the size of the ship.

Towards the end of our tour, the *U.S.S. Iowa* came through Panama City on its way to the Atlantic. Gail had put our names in the box, I was going to be in town and we were selected for the "cruise." I had worked with both submarines and guided missile cruisers before joining the State Department, but I had never been on a battleship before and the size of the *Iowa* was impressive. So were the turrets of 16-inch guns. About thirty couples from the Embassy joined an equal number of military personnel for the voyage through the Canal.

As each couple stepped aboard the *Iowa*, a crew member stepped up to serve as their escort. Our escort was a Navy fireman, who was right out of high school and Navy boot camp and had never been an escort before. He asked what we would like to see on the ship and I asked him to show us the fire-fighting equipment, his area of specialty. This gave the young sailor some confidence and we set off for the bowels of the ship. In the course of three hours of walking, we went through most areas of the *Iowa*, from the bilges up to and above the bridge. Every compartment on a battleship has fire-fighting equipment in it, so we got a good tour. Of special interest to me were the water-tight compartments which seemed to offer us a wall and a water-tight door every sixteen feet. The *Iowa* was 887 feet in length, so there were more than fifty compartments to walk through on each of the lower decks of the ship.

After our tour, we went up to the bridge and then into the CIC area. I was interested in the Harpoon and Tomahawk batteries, and we were able to compare the digital guidance systems of those weapons to the mechanical range-finders and aiming mechanisms for the guns. After lunch in the Ward Room, we went out to one of the 16-inch turrets and listened to a gunner explain the process of loading a shell, filling the chamber behind the shell with bags of nitro-cellulose, inserting an igniter among the bags and reporting the gun ready to fire.

For the rest of the day we sat on deck and watched the jungle pass us by, hearing about the Smithsonian Institution's Tropical Research Center on an island in Lake Gatun as we went by. From the lake, we descended through the Gatun locks to the level of the Atlantic Ocean. The ship was designed to pass through the Panama Canal, but it was a tight fit through all three locks. We docked in the Port of Colon; buses from the Embassy were waiting there to take us back across the Isthmus to the Pacific Side. It was a long day, but a once-in-a-lifetime experience and we enjoyed the outing.

49. OUR DAUGHTER'S FIRST ILLNESS

When we arrived in Abidjan in 1978, our daughter was one year old and my wife was carrying our second child. This was our first overseas tour for State: we arrived in town on a Friday and were taken right to our residence, which was on an old road mostly surrounded by jungle. We went to the ARSO's house for dinner, went home, spent a little time on the porch and then turned in for the night.

The next morning our daughter, who had never been sick before, came down with a raging fever and began to quiver frequently as if she was cold. We were scared to death. Our child was sick for the first time, we were in Africa and away from the medical support we were used to. We did not know whom to call and were reluctant to turn to a local clinic in Africa on a medical matter without knowing what resources were available. We tried to keep our daughter cool and give her fluids, but her fever kept up and we became very concerned. All that we could think of was that she had been bitten by a mosquito as we walked around and had come down with malaria. It was a weekend and I did not want to trouble anyone at the Embassy, but on Sunday morning I took out our Welcome Kit and discovered that the Embassy had a Regional Medical Officer. I called Dr. Goff on his home phone.

I apologized for calling him on a Sunday, described our daughter's symptoms to him and asked what we should do. He could hear the worry in my voice. He offered to come by our house, pick up my daughter and myself and take us to the Embassy, where he had a small clinic. My wife and I were relieved. We wrapped our daughter in a blanket and I met the doctor on our driveway. He was a relaxed, friendly man a little older than me. We went to the Embassy; the doctor introduced me to the Marine as a new employee coming in and said we needed to go up to the clinic. We walked into a three-room suite with two small offices and the clinic, which was about the size of a small dining room. In the clinic was an examining table, a desk and chair, apparatus mounted on the wall to check blood pressure, a scale, cabinets with medication, some file cabinets and a door to a toilet.

Doctor Goff put our daughter on the examining table and took her temperature. He took her pulse, checked her eyes and ears. Then, with me holding her, he drew a tiny drop of blood from her foot. He caught the blood on a microscope slide, slipped a cover over the slide and crossed the room to the desk, where he took out a microscope. He stared at the slide for a couple of minutes without referring to any source at all. He then turned to me. "It's not malaria", he said "she has German Measles". He gave my daughter some fluidic children's aspirin for the fever, gave the rest of the bottle to me and said she would be O.K. We bundled up my daughter and returned to the hotel.

The fever broke that evening. Two days later, our daughter came down with a bright red rash: German Measles.

This simple story does not begin to capture the relief my wife and I felt after the malaria scare. The knowledge that we were supported by a competent and concerned doctor went a long way toward helping us feel comfortable in Africa.

On a later visit to the health clinic with my daughter, I encountered Margaret Keys, the wife of SEO John Keys. Margaret was an American doctor who had previously worked for a Missionary community in Cameroon; she filled in for Dr. Goff when he traveled regionally. She took my daughter's temperature by placing an oral thermometer under my daughter's arm and just holding her and talking to her for about three minutes. I had never seen this done before. Margaret explained that the difference in temperature between an oral thermometer in the mouth and one under the arm was generally three degrees, and that in primitive clinics it was not always possible to properly sterilize the thermometer for oral use between patients. Children are often apprehensive about seeing a doctor, and her technique made children feel comfortable and welcome in the clinic. The lollipop she gave my daughter on the way out contributed to this cozy relationship.

50. BUYING A CHESS SET

In 1977, I went on a trip to Mexico City with Special Agent Chris Disney to gather information for a computer program I was helping to develop. We spent several days in the Embassy, with me gathering information and filling in coding sheets; Chris conferred with the RSO. We stayed in a hotel behind the Embassy that received a lot of TDY personnel. (Both Chris and I received Christmas cards from this hotel for about ten years after we left Mexico.)

Much of our time during the evenings was spent in the Zona Rosa across Avenida Reforma from the Embassy. Reforma is one of the principal traffic arteries through Mexico City, and the Zona Rosa was an eight square block cross between a tourist trap and a good neighborhood to explore. There were well over a dozen restaurants in this area, jewelry shops, clothing stores, stores selling Mexican artifacts and flower shops. The streets in this area were named after European capitals: I liked an outdoor Mexican restaurant on Calle Hamburgo that served personal deep-dish paellas.

We were scheduled to leave on a Sunday. On that Saturday, we went to see the fabulous National Museum of Archeology with Olmec, Mayan and Aztec exhibits, visited Chapultepec Castle (the “Halls of Montezuma” location from the Marine Corps song) and watched children being taught about foreign oppression as they sat in front of a huge mural of U.S. Marines bayonetting and throwing Mexican military school students from the top of a high spiraling staircase. We then headed back to the Zona Rosa to explore Mueller’s Onyx Shop.

Meuller’s (not to be confused with Dr. Meuller’s in Frankfurt) was an interesting place. Everything in the store was made out of onyx, a form of finely crystalline quartz. Onyx comes in a lot of different colors, but most of the material in Meuller’s shop was cream-colored with salmon-tinted swirls. They had huge coffee tables formed of slabs of onyx, lamps made of onyx, lots of vases and sinks and interesting inlaid boxes. We looked around this very large store for about an hour. Chris, at the end of our visit, decided to buy a chess set. He chose one in green and white onyx; it came with onyx chess men and polished onyx discs for checkers. The cashier rang up his purchase, then carefully wrapped the chess pieces up, put them in a bag, wrapped the chessboard up carefully in several layers of paper, and merged the board with the pieces. She then wrapped string around the merged package to hold it all together and to form a string handle for the package. Why? Because the package weighed about *thirty pounds* with all that stone in it.

We then headed back to our hotel. After walking about a block with the package in his right hand, Chris transferred the chess set to his left. At the end of the next block, with both of his hands showing deep red marks from the string, I offered to carry the package for a while. I also made it about one block before I had to switch hands. I walked one more block, then gave the package back to Chris, and we passed the package back and forth all the way to the hotel.

We parted ways at the airport. I went to Los Angeles to discuss my data with programmers at TRW in Redondo Beach; Chris returned to Washington. He told me later that it

was hard lifting the chess set into the overhead compartment above his airline seat, and he worried about the overhead bin collapsing all the way back to the States.

51. A GUIDE TO RIO FOR THE WEEK

I felt very fortunate to have slipped into the FSI FAST Spanish Language Immersion course before my assignment to Panama. The school was in the old building over in Rosslyn at the time I went there, and our first teacher was a lady from Castille, Spain with a pronounced Castilian accent. Three weeks into the course, she was suddenly replaced by a young woman from Mexico, who remained our primary teacher through the seven remaining weeks. From time to time, however, FSI would throw in a teacher from Argentina, or Peru, or Guatemala so that we heard a great variety of regional accents as a part of the course. FSI was more laid-back in those days, and we held weekly Friday parties, usually choosing cheese and crackers with wines from Chile “to prepare for our assignment”. Our teachers joined us, and we tried to invite students from the classes behind us to these parties, so that we could try out our new vocabulary words and so that they could see what was coming their way the next week.

Not all of Latin America spoke Spanish, however. Haiti used French as a language, English was used in Jamaica and I really felt lost in Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken. After my first visit there, however, I saw that I could largely *read* Portuguese even though I could not speak it, as many words are similar to those in Spanish.

To get from the Leme Palace Hotel to the Consulate in Rio, we usually took taxis. I came out of the hotel on the second day of my second visit and spotted a yellow Volkswagen bug in taxi trim, with an elderly man leaning against the door. I went over, showed him a card from the Consulate and asked for a ride. The cost of the trip was very reasonable, even though we went through three taxi zones. As we rode in the car, I asked the driver if he spoke Spanish. He told me that he was originally from Italy, and he did speak Spanish. I told him that I would be needing rides to and from the Consulate every day that week, and that if he would show up at the Consulate at around five o'clock, I would use him for the return trip. He said that he did not get many fares in Rio and that he would be happy to wait for me at the Consulate. Suddenly, I had a Spanish-speaking driver.

On my many subsequent trips to Rio, I always looked up the old Italian gentleman as soon as I got into town. I was allowed daily taxis for transportation to and from work. We made a deal. I would use him as my transportation to and from the Consulate each day; he would take me anywhere in Rio that I wanted to go when work was done, charging me the metered fee. Moreover, he would explain things about the city to me if I was interested. I was.

On one of our first trips together, I asked him to take me to Pao de Azucar (Sugar Loaf Mountain) which dominates the harbor of Rio. I had been up there once before with Rudy Jackson and wanted to see the place again. The approach to the mountain is by cable car from an adjoining hill; there is a little bar up on top of the mountain with a fabulous view of one of the world's most beautiful cities and harbors. When we arrived at the cable car terminal, I invited him to come along. Prices were low in Rio, so I picked up his cable car ticket and his lunch at the top. We sat together watching aircraft take off from the Rio airport, sailboats and power boats leaving the harbor below us and the swirling mosaic sidewalks for which Rio is famous stretching down the beach away from us. I talked to the man about his home in Italy (Florence;

he left after World War II as a boy) and asked him about things to do and see. I paid for his meals when he was willing to join me, and together we explored the Ipanema area, the Rio harbor area, Corcovado and a few Brazilian *Churrascarios*, all-you-can-eat grilled meat and salad restaurants. I found these places similar to Chinese *dim sum* restaurants: the food kept coming until you could not eat another bite.

One weekend I decided to go beach-walking. I arranged with the driver to go to the end of Ipanema beach and wait for me. I doused myself with sun block, then walked from Leme Beach down Copacabana beach, turning the corner and continuing down Ipanema beach to the end. I saw the city of Rio engaged in its Carioca lifestyle, playing volleyball on the beach, playing badminton, kicking soccer balls and going in for dips in the sea. I was surprised to see so many mixtures of Portuguese and Asian people, until I learned that the largest colony of Japanese outside the Japanese home islands was in Brazil. Had I been a movie director, I could have hired several casts of beautiful people as I made my walk, young adults enjoying each other's company, trying wind-surfing equipment, shaking sea water off their bodies and just draped out on the beach on towels. I believe that pictures of last year's Olympic Games captured some of the scenes I observed.

When I got to the end of Ipanema, I was worn out from the walk, but my driver and guide was waiting for me. At the junction of Copacabana and Ipanema beaches there used to be a great outdoor Italian restaurant, and we had hand-made ravioli with red Brazilian wine, watching bathers from the beach walk by.

On my last trip to Rio, I went looking for the Italian gentleman. No one seemed to know where he was or what had happened to him. Sadly, I took another cab, listening to the Samba music preferred by the driver. Nothing lasts forever.

52. A CLASH OF CULTURES

With this posting, Story Number 52, I have reached an anniversary of sorts: one story a week for a year. I was delighted to see Jules tell a story over the last several weeks; I know that I am not the only historian on this list and that many of you have tales to tell. This week, I want to introduce a new theme which you will encounter from time to time in the coming year. This is one of my favorite stories.

If you were to look at a Chinese, Korean or Japanese watercolor mounted on a wall in a museum, you would probably be able to find one or more red-ink stamps on the painting, often located under a burst of calligraphy. This was usually added to the painting by the artist, with the calligraphy identifying the scene or the artist's feelings as he painted. The red mark would have been made by the artist's chop. On rare or important paintings, famous owners of the artwork would sometimes add their own calligraphy, thoughts or poems, and their own chops.

Chinese writing evolved from a series of pictorial lines which represented objects in life. A few horizontal and vertical lines might represent a tree. If those same lines tilted sharply to the right above a stump, that *character* might now represent a falling tree. In the same manner that we read and enjoy cartoons, with characters of their own, merged Chinese characters were used to tell stories. Among the earliest forms of this writing were scapula-bone characters, marks made on the shoulder bones of animals in ink. Over time, these characters developed into several formal styles of writing.

Chinese and Korean names generally have three parts. The family name is first, represented by one character. Two given names follow, represented by two characters. Each character is given a sound, but the calligraphy *behind* the sounds may mean many things. When I was taking the Korean language course at FSI, our instructor gave us each a Korean name and offered to make up names for our family members. The last name he gave my family was "Han", a common name in both Korea and China. My daughter's nickname is "Jeana": the instructor turned this into "Ji Nah" expressed by two characters that meant "Elegant Flower". So, her name would be Han Ji Nah if spoken, but would be *seen* as Elegant Flower Han to a reader of Korean, Chinese or Japanese.

For business and cultural purposes, those three characters were often cut into wood or stone to form a stamp which, pressed into red paste and then onto paper, put the person's name indelibly before the public. This imprint was called a "chop" and chops could be the size of your hand or as small as the nail on your ring finger. To reflect scholarship, the characters used to make the chop could come from a variety of traditional Chinese writing formats, as we can select fonts for our letters and business cards today. Cutting these elegant characters into stone is an art form all its own, and there is an industry in China that produces specialized, very finely grained stones for use as chops.

Some of you may remember a time in America before ATMs, when we walked into banks to cash checks against our accounts. You would present the check, perhaps show your driver's license if the teller did not know you, and the teller would count out the money you had

requested. In that golden time before automatic money counters, the teller would usually count the money first, then hand it to you. To aid you in counting the money, there was often a small tray of fingertip moisturizer on the counter near the captive pen. You dipped your thumb and index finger into the moisturizer, which gave you a better grip on the money, and counted your withdrawal.

When I got to Seoul, I was still travelling with traveler's checks. There was normally a fee associated with the purchase of those checks, but our Embassy had worked out a deal with the American Express office that Embassy employees could obtain AmEx traveler's checks without paying a fee if they purchased them in U.S. dollars at the teller window in the American Express Bank. This was across the main road through downtown Seoul and several buildings to the South, up on the eleventh floor.

Preparing for my first trip out of Seoul (to Beijing), I cashed a check for my expected per diem amount at the Embassy Admin teller's window, then walked over to the American Express office to buy traveler's checks. I had my U.S. currency in an envelope tucked in my suit jacket. I came up to the window, showed the teller my passport, explained that I wanted a certain amount of traveler's checks, and took out my envelope full of money.

I then reached for the fingertip moisturizer on the counter.

Except, in Korea and China and Japan, that little tray was not moisturizer, but a tray of red paste for use with chops.

I raised my bright red hand in front of my face, noting with interest that I had made something of a mistake. I was laughing at my own stupidity. The Korean behind the teller window, however, was staring at me with his mouth open in horror. What was this stupid foreigner doing, putting his hands in the chop paste, then laughing at his idiocy? He looked very unsure of my sanity and backed away from me when I poked my red hand through the window, reaching for a piece of Kleenex. Finally, he understood what I was looking for, and found me little roll of toilet paper from within one of his drawers. I wiped up, counted out the dollars to him, signed each of the checks as required, and left with my travel money, embarrassed but much wiser.

YEAR TWO

53. ARRIVING IN CHENGDU WITH FIELD COOPER

Here's another theme: Airports. All of us have spent a lot of time traveling and have stories about airports we have transited. These days, we are used to modern facilities where aircraft pull up to a terminal to be met by a moving walkway that provides rapid access to the interior of the building. Most airports were not originally built this way, and many older airports have other systems for collecting passengers. Consider this story:

SEO Field Cooper, for those of you who did not meet him, was a big guy. He stood at least six foot six and gradually gained weight over the course of his career with Diplomatic Security. When I visited him in Beijing during my tour in Seoul, he weighed about three hundred pounds. He stood out a bit in China, where most men were about five foot six in height. He was a good sport, but he was a little sensitive to groups of Chinese children clustering around him in open-mouthed wonder and spreading out their arms like he was a giant.

Field and I made a constituent post visit to Chengdu in 1993. This city sits in a dusty basin in the middle of China and is surrounded by distant mountain ranges. The airport (in 1993) was a bit primitive by modern standards. It did not have moveable fingers on the terminals that could swing out to connect with planes. Instead, planes would land, taxi up and park on the concrete apron. A wheeled staircase would be pushed up to the door of the aircraft by hand. Travelers would descend and would be met by passenger buses that would take them to the terminal.

The buses that met us in Chengdu were built for Chinese people, not Field Cooper. Each bus held only about thirty passengers. The interior ceiling height was about five foot ten inches, low enough that I had to stoop while standing and carefully avoid the ceiling light fixtures. The seats were too narrow and too close to each other for Field to get his legs into a sitting position. The climate was hot at that time, but the buses were not air-conditioned. Instead, there were three ventilation hatches along the roof of the bus that were opened to bring in outside air as the bus moved. Bent over and uncomfortable inside the bus, Field ambled over to a ventilation hatch.

When he stood up under the open window, Field's shoulders went past the ceiling of the bus and his neck and head protruded completely through the vent. From outside, the bus strongly resembled a Lego toy with an action character clipped to the top of it. Field was comfortable; the other passengers seated themselves and the bus began to move.

Most of the passengers on the bus gaped in awe at Field's size as he stood up and continued to watch him as the bus drove away from the aircraft. As we approached the terminal, airport workers noticed the head emerging from the top of the bus and yelled to each other to look at it. Baggage handlers, police officers and airport employees all turned around to stare at the bus and would tap people standing next to them to share the spectacle. We got off the bus, cleared the terminal without incident and took our baggage to a Consulate car.

On the first evening that we were in town, Field took me out onto one of the major streets in Chengdu, which featured a wide sidewalk along which flowering trees had been planted.

Between the trees, local artists had tied lengths of string to support artwork mounted on heavy backing paper. Most of the artwork was in the form of exquisite watercolors expressing traditional Chinese themes: birds in winter on orange persimmon trees, birds in spring on cherry branches, pictures of cranes nesting in craggy mountains and groves of long-needled pines with cranes perched on the trees. The artwork was secured to the strings by plastic clothespins, and each artist had a wooden or metal trunk at the base of one of the trees. When rain came up suddenly, which happened frequently in Chengdu, there would be a mad rush to get the artwork tucked away in the trunk before raindrops ruined the paintings.

I bought six small paintings with similar colors and seasonal scenes for less than ten dollars' worth of Yuan. I packed those paintings in a notebook to keep them from harm until I returned to Seoul. I gave them to my wife, who took them to a framing shop on one of our military bases. She had the paintings double-matted, with the outer mat covered in patterned green silk: this made the pictures quite a bit bigger, but cost about thirty dollars per painting. Subsequently, she had the matted paintings placed behind non-glare glass in wooden frames finished to look like rosewood and fitted with brass Chinese picture-hanging hardware for another thirty dollars a picture. The resulting group of pictures graced our living room wall for many years. I would occasionally show guests who commented on the artwork little spots on the pictures where rain arrived before the artist could put the paintings away.

54. THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM

While I was assigned to Abidjan, the State Department and USIS started a new program which was administered by Cultural Affairs Officers. Intended to support the arts in the United States and to share America's art with the rest of the world, the program sent government buyers to art shows and art studios throughout the U.S. to look at the work of emerging artists and to buy some of their material. The acquisitions were then sent to American Embassies around the world, where they were put on display with plaques identifying the artist and the work that visitors were seeing.

Not all art is equally compelling, and somehow the best artwork seemed to go to Europe: perhaps USIS thought it would be better appreciated there. The Far East and Latin America got second pick of the art work. What remained went to the Middle East first, and any leftover art was sent to Africa.

Because of the quantity of artwork purchased, there seemed to be quite a variety of artistic material available, even in Africa. Statues, pottery, sculpture and mixed-media works gradually appeared at a number of Embassies. Paintings, however, were the main artworks procured because they were hardy, lightweight and easy to ship. Paintings of all sizes were shipped to our Embassies in Africa. On opening the shipping boxes, posts had to make a determination as to whether or not they wanted to hang the paintings in the Embassy. For many of these paintings, one look at the canvas was enough: it was put back in the box and sent out to GSO for storage.

Some of these canvases were oversize, and the artists who created them were apparently "inspired" by famous artists who had already made their mark on the world. There were Jackson Pollock imitators, surrealists, cubists and collage artists, some of whose paintings were six feet square. The larger pieces started to pile up in Embassy warehouses, and the Art in Embassies program seemed in jeopardy, at least in Africa.

Ambassador Bill Swing, who was assigned to our Embassy in Brazzaville, thought highly of the program and wanted to see it succeed. He had an unusual residence with very high ceilings and a fabulous stone fireplace in the living room. A single man, he also had a sense of humor. He appealed to Embassies up and down the coast of West Africa to send him any of the artwork Embassies did not want. A flood of canvases appeared at his Embassy's warehouse almost overnight. With the aid of personnel in his Embassy, he hung the most eclectic collection of large, awful paintings I have ever seen on the walls of his living room, with Salvador Dali-like melting objects in oil right next to graffiti-like symbols in spray paint. The entire living room was decked out in huge but mediocre art whose colors clashed from frame to frame.

Guests to his residence loved his collection. It was so bad that it was fun to look at, and his cocktail parties were filled with foreign diplomats who looked at the walls, shook their heads and laughed. Ambassador Swing (who later became Director-General of the Foreign Service) memorized details of many of the paintings, and would discuss these works of art as if they belonged in the Louvre. West African Embassies sent back word that there seemed to be a

demand for American art in Africa, at least as far south as the Congo River. Emboldened with success, the buyers in the United States were sent out once again to help starving artists.

55. HEAVY JUMBO

Like an earlier story concerning Field Cooper and the airport in Chengdu, this story (and others that will follow) is about an airport. All of us have seen unusual glimpses of the world at airports: think back on your own experiences.

When the Jet Age arrived, West Africa was not ready for it. Accustomed to the leisurely arrival and departure of propeller planes, most of the West African countries spent the money to lengthen their runways, but did not install the other accoutrements that we all now take for granted. Where western airports featured moveable ramps to deplane passengers and baggage carousels to handle luggage, African airports on the West Side of the continent went on as before, using mobile stairs to embark and deplane and ramps with rollers to handle cargo. Inside the terminals, porters stood in wait for customers, sometimes earning respectable sums for their assistance and sometimes getting crushed by the demands of African patrons.

When I arrived in Abidjan in 1978, the terminal at the airport looked the same to arriving aircraft as it might have looked to propeller-driven aircraft in the late 1950's. You walked down a shaky wheeled staircase that was pushed up against the side of the aircraft, walked to the terminal and went inside to clear customs. In the Ivory Coast, this amounted to presenting your passport and landing card to a uniformed Customs Officer sitting in a little white booth. This official looked at you, looked at your passport and passed the card and the passport into a slot in the booth behind him. After what seemed like a long delay, a curtain on the other side of the booth would move slightly and your passport would slide down a little ramp onto a table. Then you waited for your luggage.

In Abidjan, your luggage was transported from the belly of the aircraft to the terminal building on a wheeled dolly. If a tractor was available, the dolly was moved with the tractor, but at other times aircraft workers simply pulled the dolly over to the baggage area by hand. This area was fitted with three long baggage counters equipped only with steel rollers, over which all of the incoming cargo was pushed by hand. There were suitcases, crates, cardboard boxes carrying big TVs, huge bundles of clothing and food and toys wrapped up in sheets or blankets, footlockers, equipment cases, expensive leather valises from Paris, back packs, cases of food and a host of small appliances. You would usually try to grab a porter after reclaiming your passport, watch for your suitcase and toolboxes and head to the parking lot where an Embassy van would usually be waiting.

The pace of modern business, already hard for West Africa to meet, really bogged down when the Jumbo Jets arrived. Where a DC-8 or two could be accommodated at the above 1950's-era airport, even one 747 and another aircraft just overwhelmed the little terminal with passengers and cargo. New (and much taller) passenger staircase ramps were ordered just before the planes were scheduled to arrive, but everything else stayed much the same except that a few more porters were hired.

I came into Abidjan with a Seabee electrician one evening from a trip to our South. We each had a suitcase and we were carrying tools in two unclassified white canvas bags. We were

travelling on a DC-10, almost a luxury after the Air Afrique 727's we were used to, and the flight was very enjoyable. As we landed, we noticed that there were two 747's on the tarmac ahead of us, both taxiing towards the terminal. We realized that we were in for a long night.

First come, first serve. The passengers and the cargoes of both 747's had to be unloaded and pushed through customs before we could be processed, so we headed for the cleared side of the passenger lounge to wait our turn. With the passengers from two jumbo jets looking for tables, hitting the bar, searching for seats or just standing next to the lounge walls for support, the waiters in this area were frazzled. The airport quickly ran out of food, soft drinks and then bottled water. The restrooms had long lines waiting at the doors, especially the women's rest room. Looking through the windows into the terminal area, we could see mountains of baggage coming in on the dollies, and heavily-laden porters struggling to keep up with the work load.

We were traveling on diplomatic passports with long-term permanent Ivorian visas, so we received preferential treatment at the Customs booth and were able to escape the lounge. We noticed that the largest assemblages of baggage seemed to come in with apparently wealthy Ivorian citizens, who usually traveled in elaborate African national dress with fancy headgear. Since the porters generally came from poor surrounding countries like Mali and Upper Volta, their status among Ivorians was very low. The porters were routinely given loads that should have gone to two men and were criticized as to their handling of suitcases and lack of speed.

There were six porters working the terminal on this particular evening, and they were all very busy. No sooner would a porter shuffle out to a taxi with three suitcases and a clothing bundle, someone else would engage them to carry four suitcases, a trunk and a packed-up bicycle. After the first jumbo planeload of passengers and cargo, the porters started to flag a bit, only to encounter frustrated travelers from the second 747 who were anxious to get home. The porters tried to keep up with the work, but began to slip a bit and were yelled at for their apparent sloth. The porters were tired, the passengers were tired, and the normal noise of the uncarpeted airport dropped substantially.

Having come in on the third plane, we were still waiting for our stuff when we saw a wooden crate placed onto the rollers by a baggage handler. Looking at the crate, we could see that it apparently contained a live animal. It was not bright in the terminal area, however: most of the available light at night came from multi-tube fluorescent fixtures, which often were missing a bulb or two. A group of Ivorians engaged an older porter, pointed out their considerable mass of luggage (to include the crate) and went to find transportation. The porter picked up four suitcases and followed his customers to the taxi stand; he returned with one passenger to get the rest.

As the porter picked up two more suitcases, he put one under his left arm and took the handle of the other in his left hand. The man looked dead tired and was sweating profusely. He picked up the wooden crate with his right hand and headed for the taxi stand. As he walked, a hairy black hand emerged from the top of the crate and grabbed the porter firmly around the wrist. Looking down at his hand, the porter saw that a piece of luggage had a grip on *him* and was terrified. In the otherwise quiet terminal, he started to scream, dropping the suitcases, trying

to run away from the crate, shaking his arm and banging the crate on the ground to try and break the hold of a good-sized monkey, who appeared to be pretty strong.

The terminal, filled with tired and bored passengers, came alive at the poor porter's predicament and started to laugh. After almost two minutes of shrieking in the monkey's grasp, the porter finally freed himself and began to yell at his customer, who yelled right back at him. They were still arguing when our luggage and bags arrived. We carried our own stuff to the car, stepping around the monkey crate on our way out.

56. BAR HOPPING IN SYDNEY

After John Bagnal left for Hong Kong in 1977, I took over his introductory technical security lectures to Junior Foreign Services officers, Post Security officers, Special Agents and new Embassy Marines who then trained at the Navy Annex near the Pentagon. I first met Greg Bujac while working with the Marines in the Department at night, as I addressed their technical training and Greg collected and wrote up the security violations found by the Marines.

Years later, Greg became the DAS for Technical Security: my boss. I was the Division Chief for Countermeasures at that time, and I was invited to a conference in Canberra. Greg decided that he wanted to attend the conference, too, in order to meet the Australians with whom we worked.

Greg had been the RSO in Tel Aviv on a previous tour with State. While there, he worked closely with two men in the Australian Embassy, both of whom had retired and moved to Sydney. As our flight from the States stopped in Sydney, Greg decided that the two of us should visit the Consulate in that city, look over their security arrangements and then move on to Canberra. Greg, who became Consul-General in Sydney after his last tour with DS, was also interested in exploring that option while we were there.

Our Consulate was in a high-rise building in the business section of Sydney, with a beautiful view of Sydney harbor and the Opera House. We looked over the two-floor Consulate; Greg and I met with post officials and we reviewed their CCTV coverage, emergency power and door control systems.

That evening, we were invited to have dinner at an outdoor restaurant near the water under the edge of the Sydney Harbor Bridge by one of Greg's former friends from his tour in Israel. This gentleman owned a large construction company in Sydney and was building a number of tall buildings in the city and around Australia. The other friend of Greg's, Jake, also joined us for dinner. Jake now owned a bar in a historic part of Sydney called "The Rocks". We had a good meal and some good discussions. After dinner, Jake invited us to come see his bar.

When Sydney was first established, all of the bars in the city were in "The Rocks" area. This was a region just South of the Harbor Bridge and uphill from the restaurant. Men would work in the factories of Sydney until just around five, after which many of them would hit a bar before heading home. Men drank a lot during those visits, and I mean *a lot*. The entrances and the walls of the bars were lined with tiles that sloped down to the floor in a curve so that the entire bar could be easily cleaned with a hose after the men went home.

We walked into Jake's restaurant and sat at the bar. A small wall of different Aussie draft beers appeared in front of each of us. Jake said "Drink up, Mates: I want to introduce you to my neighbors." We worked our way through the drafts in front of us and went next door. (I found that I preferred bitter ales, such as Victoria Bitters, while in Australia.)

At the second bar, the pattern was repeated, but the walls of beers were longer; after all, we were friends of Jake. We drank our way through the second set of beers, and Jake took us across the street. “Hey, Jake!” was the cry from the bar “What’s up?” Jake introduced us as his mates, and a third wall of beer appeared in front of each of us.

At the end of that wall, I had reached my limit. Jake wanted to take us on to other bars and reminisce with Greg, so I excused myself, wobbled out to the curb and found a cab to the hotel. I had learned what it meant to go bar-hopping with a bar owner, at least in Australia.

57. LET ME BUY YOU A BEER

Once in a while, we were engaged in cooperative programs with other agencies. This was often enjoyable and a good learning experience, but not always...

In 1989, I became the Division Chief for Countermeasures, replacing Jon Lechevet. We were initially housed in an office on K Street, which was not exactly convenient to the Department but was great at lunchtime. It was usually easier to walk down to the Department than to hunt for a cab, and all of us got lots of exercise.

In 1989, DS wanted its RSOs in Europe and in Africa to receive more training in Counter-Espionage and Counter-Terrorism. An arrangement was worked out between the DS Front Office and the FBI wherein the FBI would provide training to overseas RSOs in two batches. RSOs from Europe would come to the designated briefing area first for three days in front of a weekend and would return to their posts; the weekend would pass and RSOs from Africa would come in for a second three-day training session. My division was new to most of the RSOs, and I was asked to attend the two training sessions and explain where we were going with technical countermeasures.

The FBI was taking point on this exercise, and was responsible for logistics. I had a slide briefing prepared which discussed some of our programs, including ones I was hoping to sell to DS management like the DS Embassy Certification Program for new Embassies built by FBO. I walked my slides and speaking notes over to the FBI building, looked up the Special Agent who was handling logistics for the conference and reminded him that I was due to speak on the morning of the second day of each session. He seemed offended that I would remind him of this timetable, and casually assured me that everything would be fine with the FBI in charge.

We were scheduled to meet at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, the Headquarters for the U.S. Army in Europe. The FBI managed to borrow their secure conference area and arranged for it to be inspected before the training took place.

I arrived in Stuttgart with the rest of the instructors two days before the beginning of the first training session. My slides did not arrive. I was upset; the FBI Logistics Officer was mortified. Looking around for help, I discovered that Patch Barracks had a TS-cleared audio-visual section. The conference area was fitted with a computer-coupled overhead projector (the first one I had ever seen) and they had a Specialist who was adept at PowerPoint. I asked if I might borrow the services of this Specialist to re-create some of my slides and received permission. We sat down together and began to work.

Over a day and a half, we were able to develop an excellent briefing. It did not feature pictures of the equipment I wanted to talk about, but it covered our programs well and the Specialist was able to make the presentation visually interesting using some canned artwork. With PowerPoint, he was able to make slides dissolve and new ones appear. These new slides,

coming through the projector, were bright, easy to read, consistent in theme and coloration and controllable by me using a wireless remote.

The training progressed without event and I received a lot of good questions on our program. Compared to the slides used by my fellow lecturers, my presentation was “high-tech”, befitting a new technical security program.

My father’s family originated from Oberstetten, a mountain village in Swabia which was due south of Stuttgart. I was interested in seeing the village, and I had a weekend in which to explore Germany, so I arranged to rent a car at Patch Barracks at military rates. They provided me with an Opel sedan that seated five people. Over dinner on Friday night I explained my intended trip to a couple of other instructors, who were looking at a weekend in the hotel. They asked to accompany me and offered to split the costs of both the car and gas. How could I refuse?

With four of us in the car, we left Stuttgart Saturday morning, drove through Reutlingen and then South to Oberstetten. The town my ancestors came from had three main streets. We motored further South, had lunch at Triberg in the Black Forest, and crossed the Swiss border to reach Basel. We then headed West along the German Autobahn to Heidelberg, visited the University campus there and then returned to Stuttgart.

My original slides came in on Monday morning. Working with the Army Specialist again, I was able to replace his canned artwork with pictures of the actual equipment from my slides, resulting in a better PowerPoint briefing with the same bells and whistles. The new briefing was well-received and was more meaningful than the first one. On Thursday, we struck the tent and prepared for a Friday return. I gave the original slide briefing and a copy of my revised PowerPoint show to the FBI Logistics Officer, asking him to call me in Washington when they came in. He was chagrined and very apologetic.

That evening we all gathered for drinks in the hotel bar. I sat next to the logistics officer, who started to apologize again. I said “No hard feelings. Let me buy you a beer.”

On a shelf over the bar was a German drinking boot. Made of glass, it looked like the boot of a Prussian Officer, reaching up to touch the knee. This drinking vessel held about ten bottles of beer. I went to the bar, ordered a boot filled with Wurtzburger Hofbrau, and set it on the table in front of the Agent. We took turns drinking the beer until we emptied the boot.

58. MOPEDS AND CLIPBOARDS

Every once in a while, I encountered someone in the Foreign Service who really had their act together. Sometimes, an employee with a military or a business background would join the Foreign Service and put their prior training and experiences to work for the good of the Embassy. We were lucky in Abidjan.

On our first tour in Abidjan, the Embassy and its facilities were spread out over a wide area. The Embassy was downtown on Jesse Owens Street, the USIS Library was some distance away and there was a small Embassy compound (Sept Villas) on the way to Treichville, where the GSO compound was located. The airport was further out, past Treichville. The city had several residential areas, some luxury hotels just outside of town and an elegant Intercontinental Hotel on a lagoon outside the city with a golf course and a beautiful pool equipped with water slides and mechanical elephants that squirted water at kids on the slides.

We received our residential support from the GSO compound in Treichville. When we first arrived, if something needed to be done at your house, you would send a work order to GSO through the Embassy mail system and they would put your problem on their list. Eventually, a truck would show up with the worker or workers you needed: a plumber, a roofer, an electrician or a crew with a new cylinder of gas for your kitchen. Oversight of these crews was spotty, however, as transportation for the supervisors was hard to come by.

Shortly after our arrival, the Embassy received a new GSO. This was Jim DeKeyser, who had been a Seabee Master Chief before he joined the State Department. Jim settled in at Post, looked around at the GSO facility and immediately made some changes. He first persuaded the Admin section to let him purchase a dozen mopeds.

In Jim DeKeyser's GSO, if you were an electrical supervisor, a plumbing supervisor, a leader of masons or a roofing supervisor, you got a moped. You could gas this vehicle up at the GSO compound and you could take it home with you. On weekends, you could use it to take your wife shopping if you were not on duty or on call. This single move by Jim gave instant status to the supervisors, and made a lot of their subordinates want to be supervisors themselves. With the mopeds, separate crews could be dispatched to different homes on a single truck, and a supervisor with a moped could visit one crew, give instructions or make changes to their work, and move on to the next work site. Each supervisor was given a two-way radio on the Admin net, and Jim's head supervisor would check on their whereabouts and requirements during the day.

Jim next purchased several dozen aluminum clipboards with hinged aluminum covers. These clipboards would hold a pad of 8 ½ by 11 paper, and they allowed Jim to write out assignments for each crew and each supervisor each day. The aluminum clipboards fit onto the luggage carriers of the mopeds, so that a supervisor could carry his assignment with him safely without using his hands to hold it. The aluminum covers kept the paper dry even in Abidjan's monsoon-like rains. Each crew chief would receive a clipboard each morning with his crew's assignments; each supervisor would have a list of residences to check and their addresses. After

several months of working at this system with the head supervisor, Jim's participation in the process was no longer necessary: the head supervisor and his subordinates understood the system and could manage it by themselves. As crew supervisors retired or made serious mistakes, they were replaced by the most-qualified members of their crews, and their replacements received a moped.

All of these little improvements cost far less than the price of a single Embassy vehicle and its shipping costs to post. Service from GSO improved dramatically.

59. FINDING THE KODOKAN IN TOKYO

I studied judo at Kagnew Station in Ethiopia when I was in the Army. We had a great instructor, CW2 Hartwell Hubble, a Warrant Officer from Georgia.

Judo was developed in Japan from other martial arts in the late 1800's by a man named Jigoro Kano. In Japanese, "Judo" means "the gentle way" and much of judo depends on moving an opponent until he is just slightly off-balance, after which you remove the remaining leg that your opponent is standing on. The school of Judo founded by Jigoro Kano is famous: It was called the "Kodokan" and it was a two-story building under a Japanese tile roof with a central area of tatami mats, locker rooms, offices for instructors and elevated viewing platforms. Judo is played in a "gi" which consists of cotton trousers, a thick and heavy cotton tunic that reaches mid-thigh, and a thick cotton belt which holds the tunic on, serves as a handle in many throws, and signifies a Judoka's rank by color.

On my second trip to Tokyo out of Seoul, I wanted to go see the Kodokan. I went to my hotel's concierge on a Saturday morning and asked for directions. They smiled. They gave me a marked-up city map which showed me how to get there by the subway, and wrote down what I wanted to see in Japanese at the top of the map so that I could ask for directions when I got there. I left the hotel, went into the subway system, and got off at the Korakuen Station.

When I came up from underground, I found that I was in the *banking* section of the city. The famous school which I had learned so much about was nowhere to be seen. I checked my map, assured myself that I was in the right place, then looked around at all the banks. Finally, I took my map over to a Japanese Policeman's box. I bowed, held out my map to the officer with both hands (to be polite) and I pointed out the Japanese script at the top of the map. The police officer bowed, extended his arm with a white-gloved hand and pointed to a bank building down the street. Then he smiled.

Confused, I walked down to the bank building and looked around. I was about to go back to the hotel when I saw a statue of Jigoro Kano on a pillar off to the side of the building. I walked around to the side of the bank and ran into glass doors leading into a hallway. To the right of this hallway was a desk with a man seated behind it. I showed this man my passport, then pointed to myself and said "Judoka." The man smiled, nodded, and indicated that I should take the elevator behind me to the third floor.

When I stepped out of the elevator, I was in a different world. The best dojo that Japanese money could buy lay before me on the ground floor of the building. The space above a huge tatami mat was open for two stories, with the second and third floors fitted with long, tiered viewing benches to watch the training and competitions below. All of the wood in sight was carefully-fitted light-colored oak, and the benches were each topped with a three-inch pad covered in light green leather. The lighting was bright without being garish, and the blonde reed mat was beautifully made and trimmed with lines of black near the edges.

Land is so valuable in Tokyo that amazing deals are closed to obtain property. The original Kodokan had sat on the land where the bank was now located. To obtain the land, the developer had to agree to buy a much larger tract of land outside the city and build a new, bigger and more modern Kodokan at that location. Because the original site was a Japanese National Treasure, however, the dojo I was looking at had *also* been constructed, *inside the bank building*, as a training area for the country's best judo instructors.

I sat down on a bench and soaked up the beauty of this training area. As I watched, a door opened on the ground floor and an instructor of advanced age walked out. He was in a white *gi* with a red-tabbed black belt, the first I had ever seen. This denotes a Judoka of very advanced skills, of a high *dan* or rank. He stretched a bit and then began to run evenly around the mat.

Within two minutes, a class of perhaps twelve other judokas, all in black belts, emerged from the door and began to run around the mat with the principal instructor. When all of the students were warm, they paired off and began to practice falls and throws. There were a number of throws that I recognized, and many more that I had never learned. After about twenty minutes of informal practice, the class began. I watched the class for ten minutes and then took the elevator back to the ground floor.

At the desk, the school had placed an instructor who spoke English after hearing that a diplomat was in the building. I explained to the instructor that I was a beginner and that I had wanted to see the Kodokan. He invited me to come back and play judo with the black belts any time I was in town. Then *he* smiled.

60. GETTING ONTO HOWARD AFB

Embassy Marines are armed and need to requalify with their weapons once a year. During my tour in Panama, one of our jobs was to ship ammunition to RSOs in our region for use by the Marines. For this purpose, we used U.S. Air Force planes, which flew to many of our posts. We would receive a large consignment of ammunition from Andrews AFB and break it down for RSOs in, say, Brasilia, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Those smaller boxes would go over to Howard AFB in Panama from our warehouse in an old Panama Canal Zone building and would be flown to their destinations in a C-141.

We did not have a truck of our own when I first arrived at ESC Panama. Instead, we were able to borrow the Mil Group pickup truck when they were not using it. There was one catch to this process of which I was unaware. The Mil Group occasionally used this yellow truck in areas where they did not want to announce its affiliation with the Military. To break this relationship, the base sticker, which was usually placed on a car's front bumper or windshield, was placed on the sun visor of the truck, where it could easily be flipped down for the gate guards on our military bases.

The first time I took a shipment of ammunition to Howard, it was a nice sunny day and I was driving by myself. I pulled up to the front gate of Howard in the (old) pickup truck and was stopped by an Air Force MP. I asked him for directions to Transportation; he looked in the back of the truck and frowned. He said, "May I see some identification, Sir?" I took out my Embassy ID card and showed it to him. He walked back to his booth, made a call, and then returned to the car. "Do you have any other identification, Sir?" he asked. I took out my DS Credentials and showed him the badge and the two identity cards therein. He looked at them closely, went back to the booth and made another call. This one took longer. Finally he returned and said "I need to ask if you have any other identification, Sir."

I thought for a moment, then took out my PX pass and showed it to him. He brightened up. "Thank you, Sir, that's acceptable" he said, and then he opened the gate for me. When I arrived at the Transportation Building, I looked through the glove compartment for a base pass, finally finding what I needed right over my head on the sun visor.

61. WIRING WELLINGTON'S DELTA BARRICADES

This story is longer than most of the ones I have previously presented. It attempts to capture some of the problems faced by a Contracting Officer's Representative and by site security officers.

I may have mentioned in a previous story that I had been given two concurrent jobs in Wellington. As the Contracting Officer's Representative on the Security Enhancement Package, I was required to work closely with the architect of the package (a New Zealand woman who had designed a number of buildings in the city). This woman had been appointed by OBO as the Quality Control Inspector for the project. The contractor was a major constructor of office buildings all over New Zealand, and he did not like taking instructions from an architect or a woman. Neither did he like receiving directions from an Embassy nobody who could be seen wearing a tool belt around the grounds as he worked on key card readers and the occasional mag lock.

The contractor was a little concerned about the installation of the two Delta Barricades, which had never been seen in New Zealand before and which most Kiwis considered "over the top" as they saw them going in. These were DSC 501 barriers, the largest I had ever seen (Google "Delta Scientific Corporation" to see what they look like). They were supposed to be set in an elaborate bed of concrete reinforced with a lot of rebar. The contractor asked me who was going to wire in those gadgets: I told him I would do it. He was also concerned about the door controls to the two new guard booths, and who was going to do that wiring. I told him I would do it. He was certain that both jobs were way beyond my ability.

The installation of the North gate and guardhouse was initiated first. The old fence around the working Embassy was torn down, temporarily replaced with barbed wire, and concrete footings for a new steel fence were put in place. The poured-concrete guard booth was constructed and two Norshield doors and a slew of ballistic windows were installed there. A large hole for the Delta Barricade was dug with a backhoe, and the installation of an elaborate rebar cage began. Then the contractor hit us with a little surprise: "Who's going to come and install the concrete for these barriers?" We went back to the contractual agreement and behold, the contract did *not* specifically say that it was the Contractor's responsibility to provide and pour the concrete for the barrier. He said that he had not included the two concrete pours in his bid. If we wanted the work done, his firm could do it, but he wanted twenty-two thousand more dollars for the additional work at two gates.

I contacted OBO with this news. While the Delta Barricade hole and rebar cage turned into something of a mud hole, the Contracting Officer flew to New Zealand to review the problem. Meanwhile, construction of the steel fence continued.

Following directions from OBO and the Architect, the contractor installed each section of steel fencing with four footing bolts at either end. Two of the bolts were sunk in the concrete pour, threaded at the top and were secured with nuts; nuts were also used *beneath* the footing to keep the fence sections plumb. After each fence section was set in place, holes were drilled in the

concrete through the remaining two fence footing holes and a massive carriage bolt was pushed through each hole, aligned from below with a nut or two and the hole was filled with an industrial cement that was harder and more durable than concrete. Once the carriage bolts were in and the cement cured, no one could remove a section of fence. The nuts used to adjust the fence could be clearly seen below the footings.

The Contracting Officer showed up, conferred with me and the architect and looked over the agreement with the Contractor. The Contractor was given his additional twenty-two thousand dollars. Then the four of us walked around the site together. The CO noticed the exposed nuts. He casually commented that the drawings showed each fence footing to be *sitting on a bed of mortar* to prevent rust, a detail the Contractor had overlooked. He thought the fence might have to be redone to fulfill the terms of the contract. Since the fence sections were no longer removable, this meant new footings and new fence sections, about a quarter-million dollars of new work which the Contractor would have to pay for out of pocket. It would also delay the project, meaning a major fine for the contractor. We all checked the plans together and behold, the Contracting Officer was right.

Greatly concerned about his profit margin, the Contractor researched the problem and found a stronger-than-concrete industrial paste that could be injected beneath the fence footings. He asked OBO if this solution could be used. The Contracting Officer grudgingly permitted this substitution, but warned the contractor not to take any other liberties with the drawings or to ask for additional funding. Suddenly, I had the Contractor's complete attention. The concrete footing for the barrier was completed smoothly.

Surprisingly, after all this time, none of the wiring or equipment for the Security Enhancement package had arrived at post. We were scheduled to receive an installation team for the SEP, but the team would not come to post until the equipment was there. Also, the two-guardhouse setup meant that the team would have to fly to post twice, a significant expense and scheduling problem. Post wanted to move forward with the South guard house, and did not want any further delays with the project.

In the RSO's storeroom, I found one of the old Peter Stella-designed four-door AES modular door control boxes in Wellington. I also found an AES 24vdc power supply. I proposed to OBO and ESO Canberra that I should buy some wire locally, get the guardhouse control doors working and install the Delta Barricade Control Panel, which arrived with the barriers. OBO and Canberra concurred.

The door control system was easy, with only three doors to connect, but the hydraulic aspect of the barrier installation needed to be done with finesse. We had put in heavy-gauge PVC pipe to house all the hydraulics and all the wiring; this prevented the hydraulic hoses from wearing out from friction as they jumped with sudden bursts of fluid. We needed precisely-cut heavy-duty hoses and special fittings. I turned to the Hose Doctor.

New Zealand has a number of construction sites in remote areas with bulldozers, cranes and diggers; these machines sometimes need hydraulic hoses repaired. You don't move the bulldozer to Christchurch for a new hose; you bring a special van with all the fluids and hoses and fittings you might ever need to the construction site. This would be the Hose Doctor, who

showed up in a red van in a red jump suit. He looked over the Delta Hydraulic Pallet, recognized the Vickers valves, and together we pulled string from the pallet to the barrier to get a precise distance. Then he laid out hoses on the ground, cut them, put the correct fittings on them and we pulled them through the pipe. I did the connections in the pallet room; the Hose Doctor made the connections to the side of the barrier. He even helped me to pull the control wiring between the pallet room and the guard house. I wired in the control panel, wired in the pallet, and the Hose Doctor filled the tank with hydraulic fluid: no leaks at all. There was only one remaining task.

I had to crawl under the massive barrier to set the limit switches.

I bolted the safety legs in place on either side of the barrier, got a handful of tools and some tie wraps, and slithered under the massive steel plate. I am not claustrophobic, but it was very apparent that if the plate came down I would be crushed flat. This gave me an incentive to finish the work and get out of there, but an even greater incentive to do the job well the first time so that I did not need to come back. It did not take long to set the limit switches or to secure the wiring properly beneath the barrier, but I will remember being under there all the rest of my life.

While I was setting the limit switches, the RSO walked by, saw me under the barrier and gasped. The look of concern and worry on his face was worth the time taken to write this story. I invited him to come join me under the barrier; he looked a little green and declined the invitation.

62. AN ELEVATED THREAT LEVEL

During my tour in Abidjan, when we visited very poor regional capitals, the RSO would sometimes board us in an empty Embassy residence while its occupants were away from Post. This discouraged burglaries by having a visible presence in the house, and often resulted in excellent accommodations. During a trip to Accra, Ghana, for example, the RSO put us up in the DCM's residence. This was a beautiful home, with a circular driveway lined with palm trees, manicured shrubbery and an imposing façade. As we drove up to our temporary palace, one of the two Seabees with me said facetiously: "What a dump! They don't have a pool!" While that was true, the interior of the house was beautifully decorated, clean as a whistle and air conditioned.

Although the DCM was on vacation, he had a small domestic staff on the Embassy payroll. They were supposed to continue to report to work while the DCM was away, and they became *our* staff for the duration of our trip. We went to the Embassy commissary, purchased enough food for a week for three people and gave it to the cook. We would come down from our bedrooms in the morning, find breakfast waiting for us, go to work, come "home" for lunch, go back to work and return to the DCM's house for dinner. The meals were beautifully prepared. Each time we arrived, the butler would open the door for us; dishes were washed by the scullery maid. From time to time, we would see an Embassy gardener trimming our bushes or mowing our lawn.

When we went to bed at night, the DCM's staff had departed for the day, and we would check to be sure the exterior doors were locked.

At the back of the house was a sunroom with windows covered with curtains. These curtains had just been removed, washed, pressed and re-hung and they blocked any view of the back yard. The ladder used to install the drapes had not been put away when I checked the doors on the second day. As I entered the sunroom, I could hear someone jiggling the solid core back door. To see what was going on, I moved the ladder over to the doorway and quietly climbed it to look *over* the drapes down through a transom above the door.

A Ghanaian man stood outside the door, trying to force the lock open with a screwdriver. Fascinated to be watching a burglary in progress, I watched him for a while. He was not able to force the lock bolt back with the screwdriver, so he picked up a rock to drive the screwdriver into the door and use it as a wedge. Before he could damage the door, I yelled at him.

The man looked up with a great deal of fear on his face and saw a giant looming over him. The look on his face changed from fear to terror. He went running across the grounds and jumped over the fence surrounding the property. I never saw him again.

63. ASBESTOS ABATEMENT IN SEOUL

For many years, a number of the products that surround us were made in part of asbestos. Floor tiles, brake pads, ceiling panels, wrappings for hot water pipes and many other products all used this fibrous material. Then we learned about mesothelioma and lung cancer and their relationship to asbestos: use of the material was sharply curtailed. Here and there, however, there were older buildings already constructed of material containing fiberglass.

One such building was our Embassy in Seoul. Built in 1962, this eight-story building used ceilings of fiberboard infused with asbestos throughout the building. Above these ceiling panels were ferrous hot water pipes wrapped with asbestos fibers and a plaster compound for insulation. Over time, the hot water pipes began to leak, requiring that the ceiling panels be cut open for access. This disturbed the material in the panels, generating a fine spray of asbestos particles anytime it was necessary.

The Embassy requested funding for an asbestos abatement project throughout the entire building. The aim was to cut open the asbestos ceilings throughout the Chancery from the outer walls into a distance of about ten feet, a wide enough expanse to access all of the overhead water pipes. Once this was done, the edges of the exposed ceiling tiles were to be sealed throughout the building and the open area of ceiling thus created was to be filled with suspended acoustic tiles, allowing access to the water pipes whenever it was necessary. The funding was granted, and the work started sometime in 1993.

When I arrived in Seoul as the RSEM, I was given an available cubbyhole as an office. The room I occupied used to be the storage room for the Communications Center; it was windowless and hard to find inside the 8-storey Chancery. I was positioned along an outer wall, however, so I was right beneath the hot water pipes and my office was impacted by the abatement project.

The asbestos work began on the lower floors of the building and progressed upward. A firm from the U.S. specializing in asbestos abatement was brought in to address the ceiling modifications. This type of construction work was unusual in that all workers needed to wear hoods, eye protection, special respirators, full-body jumpsuits and gloves to keep the asbestos fibers from contacting their skin or lungs. Each room receiving the treatment was sealed off from the rest of the building with thick transparent plastic sheeting that was duct-taped to the ceiling, walls and floor. Workers would labor behind these plastic sheets on a rolling scaffold, exit the area through a set of baffles forming a door to the work site, and would actually wash off in a portable shower set up at the end of the baffles, keeping any fibers on their person within the abatement area. It was a dirty, noisy, and elaborate process, but the removal and installation team picked up speed as they moved upwards in the building and could usually finish working on a large office area in a few days.

As modest as my office was, I tried to keep it in good order. I had several safes in my room, a desk and desk chair, a couple of side chairs, a coffee table for visitors and some office decorations acquired from tours in Africa and South America. I have become sloppy with the

passage of time, but while in Seoul I liked to keep my desk organized, too, such that I could open a drawer and take out a pencil or post-it notes or a pair of scissors without having to look for any of those items.

I went home from work that September on Friday of a three-day weekend. I checked my desk carefully for material that should not be there, locked up my safes and checked them, dumped the trash and straightened out a couple of magazines on the coffee table. I went out past the Marine, turned in my office key and caught the Embassy bus back to Yongsan Army Compound, where our Embassy housing was located. We had an uneventful weekend, went out to dinner on Saturday night, enjoyed our extra day off and returned to work on Tuesday.

When I opened my office door, it was evident that the asbestos abatement project had reached the RSEM. The floor to my room, the safes and the walls were all covered in plastic sheeting. Layers of white dust obscured any view of the work on the other side of a plastic wall. My desk was missing: it had been turned on its side and pushed into a corner along with all my furniture, then covered with plastic sheets. Where my desk had previously sat, there was now a shower stall. One of the workers from the night shift was in the shower, scrubbing any remaining fibers off of his body: he looked up at me in surprise. It looked like it might be a long day if I worked in my own office, so I went downstairs and asked to share the ARSO office for a couple of days.

64. BREAKFAST IN COPENHAGEN

I am a breakfast person. I like to begin the day with a good breakfast, and enjoy going out for breakfast or brunch on weekends when I can. I don't mind missing a lunch or two and need to keep my dinners modest to drive my weight down, but breakfast is an event. And so it has been for years.

On my very first trip out of the Department in 1975, we were headed for Copenhagen. The Embassy had intended to house our group in a modestly-priced hotel near the Embassy, but that hotel was booked for a conference for the first two days of our stay. Accordingly, with apologies, the post put us up in the very expensive and over-per diem Sheraton Hotel, then arranged for a small fleet of vans to pick us up for our first two days in town. Our flight from Dulles came in on a Sunday evening, and we were to meet the vans at eight the next morning.

I was up at 6:00, sure that I would be able to get a good breakfast downstairs. I went into the dining room and looked at the menu; my choices were a prohibitively expensive a la carte breakfast, an expensive buffet breakfast for \$20 U.S., or a "continental" breakfast of coffee and a brioche or croissant for \$10. (This was over 40 years ago, when prices like that were astonishing.) I reluctantly decided to have the buffet breakfast. I gave the waiter my order and asked for coffee. He brought me the coffee and a little paper disk with a metal rim around it the size of a fifty-cent piece. The disk bore the number "5".

I walked over to a long table that was laid out with folded bakelite signs announcing the contents of fancy silver-plated chafing dishes. There were perhaps twelve of these little signs, but only two chafing dishes. One held porridge; the other one held smoked fish, which I believe was herring. There was a plate of Rundstykker (Danish breakfast rolls) next to the fish. On another table was a toaster, several types of rye bread and some dry fixings for muesli. That was it, for \$20. I was astonished; I asked the waiter when the remaining food was coming out and he indicated that some would be there in the next hour or so. I sat down to a \$20 breakfast of coffee and Danish breakfast rolls, not at all like the Danish pastries I was hoping to find.

While I was eating, a number of businessmen participating in the conference walked in to the dining room. They also ordered the buffet and began with coffee and rolls. I got up to go to work and noticed two new chafing dishes come out as I left, containing scrambled eggs and sausages. While waiting out front for the vans to appear, I saw many more businessmen enter the dining room and the serving table gradually fill with dish after dish. It looked like a better deal than I received, but still seemed to be a lot to pay for a breakfast.

I discussed this with the RSO when we reached the Embassy. He started to laugh. He informed me that the Sheraton buffet breakfast was their daily *smorgasbord*. The meal went on *all morning long*, and diners used the little disks like I had received to enter the dining room several times. Many of the conference attendees would be conducting business at their breakfast tables, leaving for a meeting or to listen to a speaker and then returning for a Belgian waffle or eggs benedict and another coffee. They were welcome to do so until noon.

On the second day, I had the *Continental* Breakfast, and ate a big lunch.

65. BREAKFAST IN BENIN

Readers who are used to entering one of our Embassies through an external gatehouse with CCTV cameras and monitors, metal detectors, X-ray systems, Delta Barriers and explosives detectors might feel that these protective features have always been in place. Some of you may remember more primitive screening arrangements. In fact, when I was in Africa forty-three years ago, our physical security systems were much less robust. Consider the following story.

During my tour in Abidjan, we were not staffed the way we are today. ESO Abidjan covered twenty-eight posts with three SEOs and two Seabees. RSO Abidjan covered many of our posts; the rest were covered by RSO Lagos. With only two RSOs and a couple of Assistant RSOs in West Africa, most posts had Post Security Officers, usually Admin Officers or General Services Officers who were given an additional task. SY had a rudimentary training program in the Department for such personnel before they were assigned to post.

Of our twenty-eight posts, only seven had Marine Security Guard detachments in 1980. At other posts (called “Lock and Leave” Embassies) the facility was secured at night and opened in the morning by a cleared American employee, usually the PSO. Thereafter, an FSN sitting next to a receptionist operated an electric lock to allow personnel to enter the Embassy. There were usually two sides to the entry way; one led to the Embassy proper and the other to the Consular section.

Most of our Embassies in those years were located either in the business district of the host country’s capital city or near government offices like the Foreign Ministry. Embassy personnel lived in upper-scale housing areas, and the hotels in which visitors to the capital city stayed were at a modest distance from the Embassy. Between the hotels and the rest of the town, in Africa, South America and much of Asia, there were usually places to the side of the road where locals could obtain inexpensive meals. These outdoor eating areas often featured a charcoal grill set up by the side of the road, a couple of picnic tables covered with vinyl tablecloths under a stretched tarp, board seats like those on a picnic bench and usually some spicy condiments like *peelee peelee* pepper sauce in Africa. Bottled sodas or bottled water served as beverages. It was not uncommon to see a string of perhaps five such eating areas on the same side of the road near a local bus stop. Passengers would step off of the bus, head for their favorite local eatery and get breakfast, then go to work. The smell of charcoal fires and strange food odors stayed with you as you passed these eateries.

In the poorer countries of Africa, the charcoal grill was more frequently a fire on the ground, with an aluminum pan over the fire in which food was prepared. Customers squatted by the side of the road and were served on plates which were later washed in streams or gullies alongside the roads. For visitors like myself, who preferred to eat in our hotels, the odors of local foods over charcoal fires were sometimes compelling as we walked to work.

On a trip to Cotonou, Benin in 1980, my walk to work from the hotel took me past such a campfire eatery. On this particular morning there were no customers around the closest cook to our Embassy, but the cook was finishing up a meal cooked in a tomato-based sauce that smelled

pretty good. As I approached him, the cook took out two convex dinner plates, scooped a good amount of the food he was cooking into one of them, covered this dish with the second plate and wrapped a clean red-and-white checkered dish towel around both plates. He put his aluminum pan away from the fire, covered it, and then walked in front of me down the road to our Embassy.

There was an embassy guard at the vehicle gate to our building. The cook spoke to the guard, who opened the gate for him and who held the gate open for me when I showed him my passport. The cook walked up to the front door and was buzzed in: so was I. Intrigued, I followed the cook into the Embassy and down a hallway to a sign reading “Communications Center” on the first floor. There were two buzzers on the wall under this sign. The cook pressed the buzzer labeled “TCU”.

After a short pause, the wooden door leading to the TCU section opened, and a communicator emerged. He saw the cook, expressed pleasure at seeing him and held out some Central African Frans. Then he reached over to the cook for his breakfast. The cook turned away and retraced his steps back to his kitchen area.

The communicator saw me looking at him and asked who I was. I identified myself and asked about the rather loose security system that would permit a local food vendor to march directly up to TCU without an escort. He explained that everyone knew that particular cook and that he and other employees had been eating the local food for over a year from that vendor without ever getting sick. He then offered me a bite of his breakfast, which turned out to be fried bread in a garlicky, tomato-based sauce with a lot of fire in it. I swiped a piece of bread in the sauce and popped it in my mouth: it was delicious.

Our security program has changed quite a bit in the last forty-three years.

66. BREAKFAST IN SINGAPORE

In 1994, there was an RSO Conference held in Singapore. Participants were informed by DS that we might bring our spouses at our own expense. I welcomed a chance for my wife to see a little of Asia, so I bought her a ticket. Arrangements had been made for us to stay at a hotel convenient to the Embassy, and we stayed there, but what I wanted Gail to see was the Raffles Hotel.

Raffles is a large, white colonial-style hotel on the Esplanade across from City Hall in Singapore. It was established in 1887 by an American firm. Raffles is a Singapore national monument. Famous authors such as Hemmingway and Maugham stayed there, and the Singapore Sling, a gin-based cocktail, was first prepared in its Long Bar. Over the years, many expensive boutiques have opened in and around Raffles Hotel. It's an interesting place. The hotel has been added onto over the years and I can hardly recognize its setting today on Google Map; at the time we were there, there was a grassy parade field between the hotel and City Hall.

The Conference I attended was straightforward and useful. We discussed a number of security issues in Asia, and what might be done about those issues. I was surprised to find that Pat O'Hanlon, the RSO from Manila who had always struck me as an ogre, was very bright and had a lot of good ideas. I listened to his arguments and reasoning and was impressed.

Meanwhile, the wives toured Singapore and shopped.

At the end of the conference, Pat and his wife and Gail and I met at the Raffles Long Bar for Singapore Slings. We sat on high bar stools and ate peanuts with the drinks, tossing the peanut shells on the floor to join the shells dropped there by other patrons. We had an interesting evening and walked back to our hotel.

The following morning, instead of eating at our hotel, we walked up to Raffles and went to the breakfast room around the corner from the hotel. This was a fascinating restaurant: the floor was made of tiles, the walls were plastered and the ceiling held a number of electric fans. There were columns around the room and from column to column a wire rope had been stretched near the ceiling. From this wire rope, at about 15-foot intervals, were suspended Chinese bird cages. In each cage there was a bird.

These were songbirds. After we sat down and the waiter took our order, one of the birds began to sing. Its beautiful voice filled the breakfast room, which quieted to listen to the singer. The song bounced off the tile floor and the plastered walls, making it seem louder than it was. When the first bird finished, another bird on the same wire began to sing a different song, hopping from perch to perch as it sang and letting other birds on the wire feel the vibrations of its movement. During the course of our breakfast perhaps six birds sang to us, all with different tunes.

The breakfast was excellent, too.

67. LOVE ME BRAS

Our daughter Jeana attended high school while we were in Korea. Shortly after our arrival, my wife Gail was approached in the PX by a Korean woman who was married to an Army Sergeant. She was looking for American women to model Korean fashions and asked if Jeana would like a job. We were a little skeptical at first, but the lady assured us that she accompanied all of her models to their shoots as an agent and as a chaperone. She offered to let my wife go along on a few fashion shoots, which would also serve as screen tests for Jeana. After sitting for several such assignments, our daughter began to amass a large portfolio of professional pictures and the amount she could request for a shoot began to rise as she posed for different Korean firms.

We were surprised at the amount of makeup that the Korean fashion industry applied to our daughter's face, especially on the first few assignments. In our view, Jeana didn't need any makeup to start with, and the heavy pancake makeup that the Korean fashion industry used seemed out of place. Gradually, we realized that it formed a glare-reducing surface for photography when umbrella lights were used, producing better pictures.

With her Korean agent, Jeana went on a number of photo shoots around the Seoul area, and several more distant trips in the Northeast region, Cheju Do Island and even to Japan on modeling assignments. She modeled slacks, blouses, jackets and sports clothing. One day, her agent informed us that one of her pictures was getting a lot of exposure as an advertising poster in the Seoul region. Shortly thereafter, a Korean FSN in the Embassy mentioned that she had seen our daughter's new poster on a column in the main subway station in Seoul. This station was not far from the Embassy, so Gail and I scooted over to the station at lunchtime to try and find it. There were *hundreds* of posters on columns in the station, and we rushed from pillar to pillar in search of the poster we wanted to see. We finally found one showing a model that looked very much like Jeana, but was actually someone else.

During the summers in Korea, the Military Special Services Office in Seoul made arrangements for college students from the U.S. to travel to Korea and serve as sports coaches at the various military installations around the country. Our children were on the swim team in Seoul; swim coaches were provided under a contract with the University of Northern Idaho. That school contacted swim teams in the U.S. Northwest area to find coaches; ours came primarily from the University of Washington and the University of Oregon. These students were housed in old military barracks and received a salary, transportation to and from Korea, and not much else. My wife has a soft spot for starving college kids, and our coaches spent much of their free time eating at our house.

As we gained confidence in the Korean agent, she began to find higher-paying jobs for Jeana with premier Korean brands. This reached a high point when Love Me, a Korean manufacturer of undergarments, chose a picture of Jeana wearing their new bra for the cover of the box in which the bras were marketed.

One evening the swim coaches walked past a clothing shop in downtown Seoul and found the storefront window filled with a wall of boxes sporting pictures of our smiling daughter wearing nothing but a Love Me bra from the waist up. Surprised at seeing one of their students in *dishabille*, the coaches returned to tell us about the impact of our supermodel on the Korean populace. They also brought back a Love Me box that our daughter has to this day.

68. THE LOAN

Africa put us in some strange situations. This is another “clash of cultures” story, and one of my favorites.

During the last year of our tour in Abidjan, our Embassy-provided watchman knocked on our door one morning with a letter in his hand. Dharman was a Muslim from Upper Volta and could not read or write; he had evidently asked a friend to prepare the letter he handed me. It was a yellowed piece of paper that had been folded twice; the letter was written in pencil with a number of erasures. On opening it, I saw that the letter was filled with a mixture of French, English and African words, which I began to peruse. It was quite a letter: the square brackets house my interpretation of some of the smudged writing in the letter; the words in italics were in *Bobo*, Dharman’s native dialect. Dharman stood politely by the door as I read his communiqué.

“Mon cher Patron: Ma femme habité á Diebouougou [small village in Upper Volta]. Elle connais les hommes. She stay Diebouougou avec family, house, farm. She say me need femme nouveau pour *whabu* [conjugal bliss?] Elle n’aime pas les femmes á Abidjan [big city gold-diggers]. Elle a trouvé une fille de Diebouougou [nice village girl from good family] pour ma femme deuxiemme.

Ask borrow CFA [Central African Francs, local money]. Ask for loan only 65 mille CFA [a little over \$100]. Money pay prix de mariée [bride price], buy vêtements, voyage avec le train á Abidjan. Buy maison petite [grass shack in an encampment down the hill]. She cook she wash she sleep not here.

I work hard and stay not sleep. See second wife in day when work finish. Then see wife and eat and *whabu*. Votre gardien Dharman”

I was a bit surprised to be asked to fund our watchman’s second wife, and I wanted to be sure I wasn’t breaking any laws if I helped him out. I took Dharman’s letter to the Consular Section to ask about the propriety of such a loan. They liked the letter. They said that legally I was OK, but that I should not expect to see the “loan” money again. It would be more of a gift. I thought about the request for a day. Dharman had been a good watchman and had done the small jobs around the house that I asked him to do, for money. I thought that honoring his request would result in continued support and might bring him some joy. I cashed a check for 65,000 CFA and handed him the money, explaining that it was a cadeau rather than a loan. This delighted him, and he was in excellent spirits for about a week.

We never met the new wife. However, little jobs that Dharman had done before (washing the car, trimming the garden shrubs, mowing the lawn) were all done without asking for the remainder of our tour. And each day, from noon until sundown, Dharman disappeared, returning with a smile.

69. SPENDING AN EVENING AT A PEÑA

When assigned to the ESC in Panama in 1983, I did a lot of advance work for the Security Enhancement Program. Posts needed to know what was involved, where conduits and wiring would be run, what sort of staging area the team would require, how long the job was likely to take and what new maintenance, if any, would fall to them. Other buildings needed to be surveyed for the above applications. I tried to be a participant in many of our installations, but I also spent a considerable amount of time on the road by myself. I have mentioned the importance of my FSI Spanish course before, and as my technical vocabulary grew I was more and more able to brief bidders and contractors on what we needed them to do.

I made several visits to Lima, Peru on my own as the Embassy was forced to move its Consular Section to a different part of town while it rebuilt one of the buildings on the Embassy compound where the Consulate usually sat. Charlie Sparks, the RSO, was doing about six jobs at this particular time. The Consulate was going into a new building, so new that the floor had not even been poured, and I saw a chance to get all of the conduit needed for the security wiring run *under* the floor before the concrete went in. In this effort I was very lucky: U.S. standard conduit and fittings were *manufactured* in Peru, and there was a Westinghouse warehouse in town where I could pick out and specify every type of floor box and fitting that I wanted to use. When I explained this availability to the RSO and Admin Officer, they added my conduit requirements to the contract and I was actually able to walk through the warehouse with the contractor, identify the stuff to use and explain the application of each item I wanted in place. When we came in to do the installation, there were even labelled pull wires in place to help us out.

Since the new Consulate building was in the Miraflores area (think of it as the city's artist colony), I had several evenings in which to explore the town. I found that if I walked downhill from my hotel through a park, I ran into a very fashionable part of the city named El Sucre ("The Sweetest Spot" might be a fair translation). There were restaurants there, and bars, and stores with high quality merchandise. I roamed through El Sucre the first night I was in town and stumbled onto a Peña.

In Andean Latin America, a Peña is a bar or a hall or a house in which people gather together to play music, drink together and sing. This particular Peña was an open room with some chairs and tables in it above a bar and restaurant. I could go there to eat, then go upstairs to watch and listen. Traditionally, each participant in the Peña arrives with some musical instrument and jams with the other players. Those who do not play instruments or sing buy drinks for the others. I was more than willing to buy.

On the first night, I observed two guitars, a saxophone, some small drums, maracas, a tambourine, *flautas* and a *Charango*. This is a ukulele-sized miniature guitar made out of the shell of an armadillo. *Flautas* are paired Andean flutes of different pitch: the players move two layers of pan-like flutes up and down and back and forth while playing to create different notes, producing a measured lilt that always says "Andean music" to me. The sax player and a guitarist

started the evening off, then others joined in, and still others began to sing. I ordered a round of drinks and some finger food, securing me a place at the center table.

While the musicians at this particular Peña were men, some had brought their wives and girlfriends along, and these ladies would join in song if they knew the music being played. The overall effect of sitting in the Peña was of participating in a Spanish Hootenanny, for those of you who remember the term, and of having a lot of fun. I lasted for about two and a half hours, all my wallet could handle that evening, and was invited back for other nights of song. I tried to visit the bar each time I went through Lima, but only encountered the musicians twice.

70. SCHIPHOL AIRPORT, AMSTERDAM

On my first overseas tour, flights to West Africa generally originated somewhere in the U.S., flew to Monrovia and required a change to planes to reach your final destination. The alternate route was to fly from the States to either France or Switzerland. From either of these locations, a variety of African airlines and a few European ones could carry you the rest of the way.

Once I started to travel as an Operations Officer, I began to see a little more of the world. Airports were usually just travel terminals to me, some better than others, but I had never been to an airport designed primarily for the benefit of passengers until I landed at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam.

Schiphol was super-modern. Its architecture was appealing, with the terminal building letting in a lot of light and with the interior finish looking like a colorful Scandinavian design effort. You entered the building through mobile fingers that swung out to meet the planes and walked right into a comfortable international lounge with sofas, restaurants, snack bars, all sorts of elegant shops, a duty-free area, banks of telephones, temporary business offices with available secretarial help and clean, modern bathrooms. The lounge was on the second floor of the terminal. It was wrapped around an open atrium that looked down on many more shops on the lower level, including two bars, one at each end of the atrium. I had about four hours in the airport between international flights, so I started to look around.

In most airports of my experience, there were booths both inside the secure area of the terminal building and outside the secure area where money could be exchanged. In those days before the European Union, you could exchange dollars for French francs, Dutch guilders, German marks and a host of other currencies, generally paying some hefty fee for the privilege. When you left the airport, if you had some of the local currency remaining, you could exchange it back to dollars, again paying for the service. Coins could generally not be exchanged once you acquired them. (I have several Tupperware containers of foreign coins in my basement downstairs.)

Schiphol was different. If you went into a store anywhere in the lounge area, you could pay for your purchases in almost any foreign currency right at the register. If you were using a major currency such as dollars or marks or yen, *you could usually receive change at the register in the money of your own country, to include coin change*. Schiphol did this by linking cash registers throughout the airport to a computer managed by a bank and equipping most registers with multiple drawers that housed different types of money, including coins.

I bought a scarf for my wife and received some change. The scarf was beautifully wrapped and was handed to me in a colorful Schiphol Airport bag. I walked downstairs at about lunch time and decided to try a beer from Holland. I walked over to the bar, expecting a Heineken, and was surprised to see a variety of European beers on draft. I called the bartender over and asked him what beers from Holland were available. He pointed to a poster above the

bar advertising “Oranjeboom”. I asked for a large beer and something to nibble on as I tasted it. The bartender slipped away and returned with a frosted mug full of wonderful beer and a small bowl of carrot sticks to chew on. I sipped my way through the mug, ate the carrots, paid my bill, left a tip and went on to explore further.

I stopped at a small snack bar featuring German food, had two Bratwursts and some *Rotkohl*. I found a toy shop and bought a toy for each of my children. I walked through the other stores, ogling Rolex watches, Grundig travel radios, Hermes scarves and the other unaffordable delights of an upper-class shopping area. By this time, I had two hours left to go before my flight boarded. I looked around, thought a minute, and knew what I needed to do.

I went to the *second* bar at the other end of the atrium and ordered another Oranjeboom. (For you *aficionados*, this beer used to come from Rotterdam out of a brewery established in 1671.)

71. THERE'S A CALL FOR YOU

I have, to date, posted several lockwork stories to this forum. As most of you will remember, working on locks was a skill that you initially learned in the Department and then developed during each assignment. Gradually, most of us became fairly adept at this part of our profession, and that talent was sometimes put to unusual tests.

In 1992, I was on the second year of my tour in Seoul. I tried to get out to each of my six constituent ESOs twice each year, and to see as many of their constituent posts as I could during those visits. This schedule tended to move me through Bangkok with some frequency. Bangkok was a major travel hub for flights to Australia and New Zealand; it was also easy to get a direct flight from Bangkok back to Seoul if I was returning from Jakarta or Singapore.

In 1992, the Embassy in Bangkok was in a large compound on Wireless Road where they had been located for years. The Embassy had acquired a smaller piece of land right across the street and was about to build a high-rise Chancery at that location. Tim Daly was the OIC of the Engineering Services Office in Bangkok at the time; when I visited Tim, we usually ate lunch at the Embassy snack bar to save time. The snack bar was set up like a cafeteria, with a daily menu, a salad bar, a dessert area and the ability to prepare burgers or sandwiches. On this trip, Tim and I planned to visit Chiang Mai once we finished with the inspection of his office and the preparation of his Statement of Work Requirements. Tim took me through the equipment stored in his lab on this particular morning and we went over to the snack bar to eat.

The snack bar was full of Embassy staffers; perhaps fifty people were either eating or were waiting in line to order lunch. We had just paid for our lunch and sat down when a wall telephone mounted on a pillar in the middle of the snack bar rang. One of the cashiers walked over to the phone and answered it, then held her hand over the mouthpiece and said "Is there a George Herrmann here?" Leaving my lunch for a minute, I walked over to the phone. There was no place to sit as I answered the call, but I could lean against the pillar on which the phone was mounted.

On the line was the Administrative Officer from the American Consulate in Osaka, Japan. He explained that Mike Jacobs and his Seabee from ESO Tokyo were on travel, and that he had called Seoul looking for me. He was locked out of an important safe that he needed to get into right away.

I asked him to describe the safe, the lock and the problem he was having. It was a Mosler Class 3 with an 8400 lock. He said the combination *usually* worked but did not work on this occasion, and it sounded like a slipping wheel ring problem to me.

I asked him to get out a piece of paper and write his current combination down on a piece of paper. Then I explained to him the process of incrementing each wheel a number higher, wheel by wheel, and the subsequent process of decrementing each wheel a number lower, wheel by wheel. I explained what might be happening within the lock and why that process might

solve the problem. I had him write those number progressions below the first numbers he had written, one combination at a time, so that he could try each possible solution smoothly without needing to calculate numbers again once he started.

While I was talking to Japan from the snack bar phone, life went on around me. Embassy staffers carrying trays of food passed by me, with the odors of interesting lunches wafting past my nose. The offerings on the dessert cart were refreshed from time to time. Luncheon eaters got up, went over to the beverage table for cokes or iced tea, then returned to their seats. I found myself getting hungry.

The first three efforts to open the safe bore no fruit. I had him try the original number again, then move on to the lower number approach. On the second try, going to a slightly lower number on the middle wheel allowed the lock to open. I could hear the handle of the safe go down over the phone.

At the other end, I heard the Admin Officer shout "I did it! I did it!" He was delighted at the success of his efforts, and the cafeteria wall phone captured his enthusiasm and relief. Diners looked up at me with curiosity. I reminded Osaka to move all of their classified material to another safe until Mike could get the current one repaired, hung up the phone and went back to my lunch.

72. CHINESE HOT POT

When my wife and I were assigned to Korea, she worked with Mary Anne, a young mother of two. Mary Anne had lost her husband and was doing her best on a secretary's salary to raise her children overseas; they were seven and nine. About midway through our tour, Mary Anne moved to the Embassy in Bangkok. On my next trip to ESO Bangkok, Gail asked if I would call her friend and invite Mary Anne and her kids out to dinner.

I was staying in the Imperial Hotel on Wireless Road, which had been gifted to a girls' school by one of the Thai princesses. The hotel was a short walk from the Embassy, featured a number of interesting stores and had several great restaurants, including a seasonal Thai restaurant, a Japanese restaurant and a "Shabu Shabu" Chinese hot pot restaurant. I called Mary Anne and invited her and her children to eat at the hot pot restaurant the following evening.

Mary Anne had serious misgivings about my choice of restaurant. Her kids, she said, were not adventurous eaters and preferred dishes like spaghetti and hamburger. I thought they might like the hot pot experience, so I suggested we try it and perhaps go somewhere else if her children were uncomfortable there.

A Shabu Shabu restaurant is like a cook-it-yourself buffet. The meal begins with the restaurant bringing a charcoal-heated basin to your table; the charcoal gradually brings a gallon or so of water within the basin to a boiling point. Things to cook in the pot are neatly laid out on nearby tables: thinly sliced beef, pork and chicken, shrimp, chunks of fish and exotics like cuttlefish slices and small octopus. There are bean sprouts, slices of cabbage, slivers of a variety of vegetables and several types of noodles. The idea is for each diner to select a plate full of uncooked food, bring it to the table and place it into the hot pot. The pot sits on a Lazy Susan so that all sides of the vessel are easy for everyone to reach.

I had Mary Anne and her children sit down, drink a coke and listen to an explanation of the dining process. We then went over to the raw materials tables. Mary Anne chose sliced chicken and some bean sprouts. Her kids went right for the octopus and squid because they sounded cool. I prevailed on them to take a little cabbage, greenery, vegetable slices, other meats and noodles, and we returned to the table. We dropped our food into the water and sat back to watch it boil.

When the squid turned white, I told the kids that they could start with cuttlefish slices. They each speared a morsel of squid, let it cool for a minute and then ate their selection. They were delighted, eating more squid and trying the occasional slice of beef or pork. Then they went after the octopus, enjoying that as well as the squid and persuading Mary Anne to try a little squid, which she did and which she enjoyed. We then got up as a group and went back to the raw materials tables for a second batch, mostly squid and shrimp. By the time the second course of food was consumed, the kids were comfortable with how long each type of food should stay in the hot pot, were enjoying the noodles and the vegetables and the resulting soup.

We had a dessert after the hot pot and I signed for the meal. Mary Anne was proud of her kids for trying new things, and I think she enjoyed the experience.

74. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AMBASSADOR GAVIN

What are the characteristics of an effective Ambassador? Should an Ambassador who is a political appointee delve into the management of his assigned post, or leave that work to “Professionals”? Consider this story.

When Ronald Reagan came into office, a good number of his friends came from the entertainment industry in Hollywood. As he appointed personnel to his Cabinet, he also made some recommendations as to who should become Ambassadors. Once such recommendation was for John Gavin, a Hollywood actor whom I had only seen in movies once, as Mary Tyler Moore’s love interest in “Thoroughly Modern Millie” with Julie Andrews. Mr. Gavin was confirmed by the Senate as our Ambassador to Mexico during my tour in Panama. Paul Tubbs was the OIC of our ESO in Mexico City at that time, and I went up to visit him and to go see a new U.S. Consulate that was under construction in Hermosillo.

On arriving at the Embassy, which I had visited before, I noticed that it seemed to have been redecorated. The halls were very clean and the paint inside the building seemed to be fresh. Artwork along the walls in the Embassy corridors was tasteful and was framed well. The floors were polished, free of skid marks from shoes and there was a noticeable absence of neglected trash cans or messy wiring. Several of the corridors had new ceiling tiles installed, helping to keep the hallways bright.

On the second day of my visit, I ran into the Ambassador in the Embassy hallway. He was making what Paul described as a weekly circuit of the Chancery, with his GSO and the principal FSN from the GSO section in tow. Both of those men were carrying clipboards. As they walked through the halls, the Ambassador pointed out little discrepancies that he wanted fixed: scuff marks on the walls, dents where a cart had hit the shoe molding, an overhead light bulb that had gone out, a dirty carpet that he wanted to be cleaned, and so forth. Not much escaped his critical eye, and he would occasionally look over at one checklist or another to make sure that the items he pointed out would be addressed. I had never seen an Ambassador get personally involved in the appearance and cleanliness of his embassy before, and I was both interested and impressed. The clean and bright working environment ushered in by the Ambassador’s circuits made our facility in Mexico City seem like a new building and helped make it a pleasant place to work.

On another visit to Mexico City, we were going to install a phone booth for the Ambassador’s secure phone. Next to the post’s large conference room was a small room that the Ambassador had been using as a small kitchen and staging area for occasional working lunches

with members of his staff. Space in this small area was tight, and we were not sure that the room could house both the phone booth and the kitchen.

From previous experience, to be sure that the phone booth door had enough space to open, we laid out the floor plan of our room with masking tape, setting the booth about four feet back into the small room. As we finished this layout, the Ambassador walked in and asked us what we were doing. We explained the purpose and function of the phone booth we were planning to install. Ambassador Gavin immediately recognized that our phone booth layout would conflict with his use of the storeroom as a kitchen.

Rather than simply saying “You’ll have to put it somewhere else” or “I don’t really want that phone booth”, the Ambassador looked at our tape on the floor. After thinking a moment, he asked “What if you put it in catty-cornered?” He picked up a napkin and drew a quick sketch of what he thought might work. We said that we would give in a try and pulled up our masking tape. We made some measurements, again laid out the room on the floor in tape using a diagonal arrangement. We found that the booth would fit easily into the room and yet allow access to the kitchen the Ambassador wanted to keep.

We showed the Ambassador the new layout: he was pleased. We asked for his permission to install the phone booth as he had suggested: he granted it. We then asked him if he would like an engineering job in the ESC, which he reluctantly declined.

74. THE OUAGADOUGOU DISINTEGRATOR STORY

When I arrived in Abidjan, I discovered that one of our constituent posts had a great African name: Ouagadouou, the capital of (at that time) Upper Volta. Ouagadougou could be reached by air in a few minutes (it took longer to get in and out of the two airports than it did to fly between the countries) or by a little eight-car train with a diesel motor and cars that looked like dull yellow Airstream mobile homes with bigger windows.

Our Embassy in Ouagadougou was a single-storey building constructed of cinder blocks on a concrete slab. It had a flat roof, was painted white and had a low fence around the property. The grounds were landscaped with plants like oleander, which does well in climates with very little water, and the roads and parking areas were nearly always sandy, because Upper Volta was right on the edge of the Sahara Desert. There was a Marine detachment at Post: an American flag on a simple flagpole near the front of the building completed the picture. The Embassy also had a recreational facility a couple of blocks away with a restaurant, dining area and swimming pool.

The small Embassy did not have extra office space, and we usually worked out of the Communications Center when we were at post. On my first visit, I worked up to lunch on the first day, then walked down the street to the Embassy Club to have lunch. I noticed that nearly everyone I had seen in the Embassy was in attendance at the club, either swimming laps or eating lunch. I resolved to bring my swimming suit to post on future trips and went back to the Embassy.

On my second day at post, I stayed in the Comm Center over lunch. I noticed that there was a pile of burn bags over by the exposed 1012 disintegrator right in the middle of the Comm Center. At noon, the Marine on burn duty started up the 1012, and it became easy to see why everyone left for lunch. The disintegrator was mounted on small metal wheels that sat directly on the floor and was unbalanced: it made an awful racket. The machine pounded on the concrete slab and shook the entire building, creating a noise somewhat like a jackhammer tearing up concrete on a street but with the noise reflected back at you from the Comm Center walls. When the "burn" stopped, I noticed that there were small cracks in the cinder block wall behind the 1012 where the vibrations had loosened the mortar between the blocks.

I visited the Admin Officer and asked him why the post had not installed an isolation cradle or a sound enclosure for the 1012. He did not know about either gadget, but he was all ears as I described them and their purpose. I told him that we would install both of these items and new disintegrator blades if post would order them, and I obtained the ordering information he needed from Abidjan before I left Ouagadougou.

Several months later I received a telegram that the isolation cradle had arrived. I asked John Keys to send me back to Ouagadougou with a Seabee so that I could put in the cradle and change the 1012 blades. Installing the cradle was very easy; I had not changed disintegrator blades before and learned how from the Seabee, who showed me how to use masking tape to adjust the blades easily and precisely. After we completed the installation, we volunteered to do “burn” for the Post, announcing our intentions to start at 10:00. I won’t say that the disintegrator was whisper-quiet, (the sound enclosure was still on order) but it now sounded more like a lawn mower than a jackhammer, did not vibrate the building at all and could not be heard outside the door of the Comm Center. Post was really pleased with the results of our visit; so were we.

On future trips to Ouagadougou, I would pack my swimming suit and a towel inside my toolbox. At lunchtime, I would walk down to the Embassy club, order lunch, change clothes, do some laps and dry off when lunch was ready.

75. DINNER IN NAIROBI

I went to Abidjan in 1978, at a time when John Wolf was the OIC of the Engineering Services Center in Nairobi. Don Hoover was assigned to Nairobi, and Mark Stevens was assigned to our ESO in South Africa. John had a project that he wanted to complete in Nairobi, and he wanted me to see the ESC, so he asked me to make the trip across the continent and assist with the installation. This was to be my first trip to Kenya, and I was eager to go.

In Nairobi, the Embassy made reservations for me at the Thorn Tree Hotel, an older place to stay that was convenient to the Embassy and which attracted a large number of tourists from all over the world. Tour groups often started tours of Kenya and Tanzania from this old, British-style hotel, which had a wide veranda above the city streets, served tea in the afternoon and was full of travel posters showing Kenyan game parks. The Thorn Tree was not air-conditioned and relied on windows for cooling.

It took most of a day to get through customs in Abidjan, catch my plane, fly to Kenya and get through customs there. Don Hoover picked me up at the airport and took me to my hotel, saying that he would pick me up at 8:00 the next morning. I had a light meal and, being somewhat tired, decided to turn in early. I went upstairs, took a shower, closed the blinds to my room and hopped into bed.

Almost immediately, I was surrounded by mosquitos. I tried to get to sleep but as soon as my head hit the pillow there would be a buzzing sound by one of my ears and a mosquito would find its target. After about half an hour of this, I turned on the light and found that the walls and ceilings of my room were almost covered with mosquitos.

I took a shower shoe and started to hunt mosquitos. They were good-sized insects, however, and the ceiling was high enough that I could not reach the mosquitos that flew up there. I had a little success tossing my shower shoe at the ceiling, but eventually I went back to bed, now quite tired.

The mosquitos returned. I again turned on the lights, made sure all the windows were closed, and started swatting insects again. The walls of my room looked something like a crime scene by this time, but I kept at it until only the midges on the ceiling remained.

Then I had an idea. I opened up a new bottle of aspirin that I had brought with me, and I took the packing cotton in the aspirin bottle, divided it in two and put one piece in each ear. Unable to hear the mosquitos any more, I fell asleep. Unfortunately, I could not hear my alarm

clock the next morning, and slept in a little. I woke up with a start when the room became bright with daylight. I dressed hurriedly, skipped breakfast and went down to meet Don in the lobby.

I was covered in mosquito bites. We finished our project over a three-day period, with me repeating the mosquito-feeding experience every evening. On Saturday, I took a one-day tour outside Nairobi into a game park in a big Land Rover. I went back to Abidjan on a Sunday morning.

The dinner in Nairobi? Me, five nights in a row.

76. THE JEWELRY OF RIO DE JANEIRO – PART TWO

On my first visit to Rio de Janeiro, my host was OIC Rudy Jackson. Rudy introduced me to personnel at post, showed me his office, the Seabee's office and our shop and storage rooms. For one dinner, we ate at Rudy's apartment, which had a panoramic view of the city. Rudy's wife was the Community Liaison Officer at the Consulate, and she had more activities available for Consulate employees than could be grasped on a single visit: trips to the Amazon, trips to beautiful beaches, tours of Brasilia and so forth. For a different dinner, we went to a Churrascaria, an all-you-can-eat Brazilian BBQ that really merits a story of its own. Rudy showed me around the city and its beaches and tourist attractions: Copacabana Beach, Sugar Loaf, the huge Christ the Redeemer statue that overlooks the city. After I had been in town a couple of days, Rudy asked me what I would like to do or see while I was there.

I had heard a lot about the jewelry of Rio and had seen some of it in stores that we passed while walking around the Consulate. I remembered from a trip to Bangkok that Embassy employees often found a favorite place to buy jewelry at lower cost, so I asked about such a store: Rio had one. On a Friday afternoon, Rudy took me to a strange apartment building just outside the downtown part of Rio.

I say "strange" because it was a completely normal apartment building from the outside except for the third floor, the windows of which were secured with massive steel bars fixed to the outside of the building around two sides of the structure. We parked the car, entered the building and took an elevator up to the third floor. There was an armed security guard with a shotgun and a CCTV camera outside the door, which had a thick glass pane and was opened electrically from inside. We stood in front of the door, which buzzed after the personnel inside had a chance to look us over. Allowed entry, we went inside.

At first glance, the Consulate's favorite jewelry shop wasn't much to write home about. There was a long steel and glass case towards the left side of the room which served as a barrier. The glass top of this case was cracked in several places and had been repaired by scotch tape. There was a thin rug over a terrazzo floor on our side of the barrier, and we faced a wall of government-grey small parts cabinets behind the jewelers. There were some suspended lights over the countertop, a couple of cash registers and not much else to see.

My sister-in-law's birthstone is aquamarine, a light blue form of beryl. My wife had asked me to look for aquamarine earrings in Rio if there were any available. The jeweler asked me what I was looking for and I mentioned aquamarines. He said: "What grade?"

It turns out that there are twenty-six grades of aquamarine, running from Grade One which no one can afford to grade twenty-six which were barely recognizable as gemstones. I

asked the jeweler to explain the differences to us, and he produced a framed black velvet tray from under the counter. Turning to the grey cabinets, he took out five little paper packets from one drawer and dumped part of the first package onto the velvet. Of assorted sizes, these were Grade One aquamarines, all of a square or rectangular cut, and they looked like iridescent blue ice. He selected two stones from this envelope and left them on the tray, putting the other stones away. Subsequently, he laid out a few stones from the packets for Grades Two, Three, Four and Five. I began to ask about prices and was delighted to find that I could actually afford cut stones in Grade Three that were a little larger than the erasers at the end of a pencil. The jeweler carefully put away all the other stones and increased the number of Grade Three stones on the tray.

I then asked about settings for earrings. The jeweler went to a different grey cabinet, pulled out a couple of packets and dumped their contents on the tray. There were yellow gold settings, white gold settings and silver settings, all for pierced ears. With assistance from the jeweler, we matched stones into sets and tried the selected stones in various settings. I ordered two pair of earrings, one in yellow gold, another in white gold and three larger cut stones without settings. I paid for the jewelry, obtained a receipt and was told by the jeweler that the earrings would be ready the next day.

My wife and her sister have been wearing those earrings (periodically) for over thirty years.

77. MEETING THE STAFF AT RTC FRANKFURT

As I have found by personal experience, there is a right way and a wrong way to meet new people:

My first overseas trip for the Office of Security took place in 1975. We began with a week in Copenhagen and then moved on to visit the Regional Technical Center in Frankfurt, where Casper Pelczynski was the Officer-in-Charge. I was traveling with my boss, Don Fischer: he and Casper had much to discuss and I was told to look around the RTC and make myself useful.

I walked through the RTC, looking at office spaces, storage spaces, equipment rooms and laboratories. Since no one in the facility knew me, I usually received a once-over from each person I encountered, but everyone recognized me as a visitor and kept on with what they were doing. The whole RTC seemed to be a quiet, industrious place.

As I entered the third-floor laboratory area, I ran into Lucius Jackson, whom I had previously met in the Department. Lucius was preparing a set of equipment for an inspection trip, and I believe he was soldering a small capacitor inside the Cooke Telephone Analyzer back in place at the time I entered the lab. We talked for a while as he packed instrument after instrument into small shipping cases that looked something like little footlockers. When he was ready, I believe he had eight separate cases ready to ship. I offered to help him with the movement of his equipment, and he accepted my offer.

At that time, the RTC prepared diplomatic pouch shipments in the basement of the RTC, then rolled the pouches over to the Communications part of the Consulate Annex on a pallet. To move equipment from the lab area to the basement, there was an electric hoist mounted on the third-floor ceiling above the center of a stairwell. There was a start/stop set of controls for the hoist on a cable suspended from the hoist that was draped across the upstairs banister. Hanging from the hoist was a canvas sling. Normally, you pulled the sling over to the railing, set it on the floor, loaded the sling with equipment cases and swung the sling out over the opening in the staircase. Lucius and I loaded four shipping cases into the swing, with Lucius explaining the process to me. He then said that he would go downstairs and find a pallet if I would operate the hoist. I agreed.

After a short delay, Lucius called up to me from the basement and said he was ready. I swung the sling out into the open space and picked up the hoist control. I pushed the button and it started to drop, faster than I expected. I pressed the stop button, then pressed the start button again. This little hesitation on my part caused the equipment in the sling to bounce: all of the containers in the sling shifted. The sling could not contain its load and all four containers

slipped out and bounced down three flights of stairway railing to the basement, making an incredible racket. Lucius heard the first container hit the stair railing and wisely ducked back under the stairs at the bottom.

As I looked down the stairway, still in shock at what had happened on my watch, I saw a series of eight heads on different levels of the staircase emerge from the offices and storage rooms and labs below me. Each head poked out into the stairway, looked down, and then looked up at me in disbelief. Comments like “What happened?” “What the hell were you doing?” “Was anyone hurt?” and “Why are you working the hoist?” came bubbling up to greet me. I put the hoist control down and walked downstairs past all the people I had just met to see if any of the equipment was damaged.

Nothing appeared to be broken, but Lucius insisted on taking all four cases back up to the lab to check them out before making his trip. I offered to help him, but he declined my offer.

For years after that incident, every time I ran into Casper, he asked me if I had learned to operate a hoist.

78. THE DART QUEEN

From time to time during my travels with the Department of State, I was able to see a SEO emerge from a life spent entirely in the United States and either date or marry a foreigner. I also observed a Seabee and his wife move from a fear of the unknown to an appreciation of their host country and its traditions. A classic story along these lines is that of Dave and April Sutton, a Seabee and his wife who were posted to Beijing.

Dave was an electrician who came to post between the tours of Field Cooper and Steve Klein. His wife, April, had never previously traveled outside the United States and was very uncomfortable leaving her apartment and going out anywhere. She was reluctant to eat at Chinese restaurants, resisted going out sightseeing, and was obviously not enjoying her tour at all. I suggested to Dave that she might be more comfortable if the two of them went to see some of the sights of Beijing with me, since I had previously lived at post for over a month and had had several opportunities to see the city. Dave was able to convince April that a sightseeing trip might be enjoyable.

On a Saturday morning, we caught a taxi to the Temple of Heaven. I engaged a Chinese guide for the morning so that we could explore the Temple at our leisure, and we started our tour on a plot of land a little way from the main building. The Guide explained that once a year, during times many years behind us, the Emperor of China had arrived at the Temple once each Spring to plow a single furrow in that plot of land with the aid of a team of oxen. This was seen by the people of China as a good omen for the coming seasons of planting, growing and harvesting. After the plowing, the Emperor and priests would withdraw to the Temple and ask for divine support in those endeavors.

Walking toward the Temple, there was an enclosed marble patio designed in such a way that a whisper at one end of the patio would carry clearly all the way to the other end. April and Dave tried this out, and it was true. We then entered the Temple and looked around, enjoying its timeless symmetry and throne room.

A couple of days later, I invited Dave and April to dinner at my hotel. I always enjoyed the Traders Hotel in Beijing: it was a short walk from our old Embassy, it was clean and well-kept and it had a modern dining room with Chinese-themed furniture, crisp white table cloths, a staff that spoke some English and seasonal menus that explained the background of Chinese dishes which were popular at certain times of the year. I ordered the food and talked about it; Dave and April ate.

Over the next couple of weeks, while waiting for Steve Klein to arrive, the three of us went to some other interesting places in Beijing. I took Dave and April to some of the specialty

stores for foreigners that sold beautiful reproductions of Chinese artifacts, from cloisonné to stone carving, from watercolors to calligraphy sets to ink stones. They were able to see carved Chinese carpets, carved cinnabar plates and boxes made of the shards of old hand-painted vases. Gradually, April became more comfortable about venturing out, and started to look at the city around her.

I returned to Beijing about six months later to find a changed couple in the Embassy. Dave and April had visited the British Embassy, played darts and began to enjoy the game. April organized an inter-Embassy dart league and worked with our Embassy to set up a safe area in the Embassy cafeteria in which to throw darts during the evening. Turnout for Dart Night was usually around thirty people. Food was brought in for these gatherings. It was often pizza, but April sometimes went out for Chinese food and got a good bargain on the food she ordered. She was outgoing, helpful to new personnel in several Embassies, a source of pride to our Mission and was well on the way to enjoying her tour.

79. LEARNING ABOUT EMERALDS IN BOGOTA

On my second trip to Bogota, I found myself in the city on a rainy Saturday. The capital of Columbia sits on a mountainside, with the wealthy homes, banks and businesses near the top of the mountain and the poorer folk located further down. (The area handbook for Columbia indicated that when the Spanish raised cities in Central and South America, they moved their cities up into the mountains to avoid mosquitos and the malaria they carried; this appeared to be true with Bogota.)

Even then, in 1983, there was a war going in in Columbia between the government and *narco-traffickers*, drug cartels. To outward appearances, the city was calm, but the Ambassador's residence was a fortress with shotgun-armed guards in foxholes in the back yard and TDYers were brought into the Embassy in light-armored vans each morning. On this particular morning, I was walking uphill when it started to rain heavily. I looked around for a restaurant or a coffee shop in which to avoid the weather but did not see one. Then, just up the street to my left, I spotted a jeweler's shop. I stepped in the door and found myself in Emerald City.

Emeralds come from all over the world, having been found in over thirty countries. Most of the world's high-quality emeralds, however, come from three mines in Columbia. At that point in time, the only emeralds I had actually seen were on display in the Smithsonian. I was interested in buying an emerald for my wife, and I stepped up to the counter to ask about stones and prices.

Behind the counter, the only other person in the store was a young woman in her early twenties. She did not speak English, but my needs were simple and she had nothing to do that rainy day but to talk to me. I explained that I would like to see a variety of emeralds from Columbia and look into rings for the stones. She took out a small black velvet jeweler's tray, took a small box out of her safe and dumped a handful of emeralds in front of me.

I must have looked poor. The size of the emeralds she brought out varied from stones the size of a small sequin to stones the size of a pencil eraser. The quality of the stones was good, although I could see black inclusions in a number of the gems. This is normal with emeralds, and the lady showed me several stones with heavy inclusions from her drawer so that I could see what a less valuable stone looked like. The stones were cut in a variety of ways, but the only ones that interested me were polished cabochons and, well, emerald-cut emeralds. The lady showed me stones from the Chivor mine, from the Coscuez mine and finally from the Muzo mine. All of these mines were in the Muzo area, from which the world's best emeralds originate. After I felt I could recognize a good stone, we started to talk prices. I was saddened to find that

even a small eraser-sized Muzo emerald cost about four thousand dollars when set in gold: that was more than I felt I could afford at the time. I thanked her for the tutorial, hoping that I might return on a later trip and acquire a stone on sale, but that did not happen. The rain, however, had stopped and I was able to find lunch.

During my Panama tour, the RSO in Panama was Chris Leibengood. His wife Allegra was a Special Agent, and her presence in Panama gave the two RSS officers there some flexibility when RSOs in their territory needed help. On one occasion, Allegra went to Bogota for a one-month TDY. While there, she visited an emerald store and treated herself to a small ring with a beautiful Muzo emerald that seemed to glow a deep, clear green color when the light hit it. No one asked her how much the emerald cost, but it was beautiful.

Many famous gemstones have *names*. There is the Hope Diamond, for example, and the Black Prince's Ruby in the Crown of England. There is the Star of India and the Kohinoor Diamond. Chris Leibengood took one look at his wife's emerald and knew that it needed a name.

He called it the *Per Diem Stone*.

80. JAWSAH

The breakup of ESC Manila after the Mount Pinatubo eruption happened fairly quickly. First Clark Air Force Base was forced to close because it was buried under volcanic ash. Subic Bay Naval Base lasted a little longer, but the Government of the Philippines saw an opportunity and asked us to close the Naval Base as well. With the loss of both the access to the military commissary at Clark and the need to support two large military bases, the Embassy began to unload its regional offices, which gradually dispersed throughout the Pacific. We opened new offices and redistributed personnel until we had ESOs in Tokyo, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Canberra. We kept a small Engineering Services Office in Manila.

While in Seoul, I looked for projects that might allow me to bring these personnel together to work with each other for short periods of time, recognizing that each of our personnel had projects of their own in their assigned territories. I found one in Taipei, where a new conference room was required. I checked each office for their schedule, worked out a best fit time with the post, and asked regional personnel to meet in Taiwan.

We scheduled about a week for the project, intending to meet and discuss regional support after our project was finished. Because our government no longer maintains an Embassy in Taiwan, all of us had to get standard U.S. passports for this particular trip. All of us did so except for one officer who came in on his diplomatic passport and was treated like royalty at the airport. We met with officials at the post, looked over our work area, and got started.

For lunch on the second day of work, the Administrative section of the American Institute in Taiwan offered to show us a good place to eat. We were dropped at a Chinese restaurant by two Institute vans, and walked in past a counter to the bottom of an iron staircase that spiraled up three floors; the kitchen was behind the counter to the rear of the building. Hanging down the center of the staircase was a string of the largest firecrackers I have ever seen. We went up to the top floor and sat at a large, round table with a Lazy Susan in the middle of our group. We asked the Institute officer who accompanied us what we should order at the restaurant. He said "Jawsah". (It sounds like "Jao-zah".)

"Jawsah" turned out to be steamed Chinese pot-sticker dumplings, the specialty of this restaurant. These were not the crescent-shaped dumplings found in Korea and Japan, but were small round delicacies about the size of golf balls, with a pastry shell pinched together at the top. Following our guide's guidance, we ordered a quantity of dumplings with different fillings: roast pork with cellophane noodles, crab with vegetables, spinach with garlic and finely-chopped chicken with minced wide noodles. We sipped iced tea as we waited for the lunch to arrive. When it did, we were astonished: the dumplings arrived at the table in six Chinese bamboo

steamers. Each steamer was twenty-five inches across and five inches high, with each steamer holding about two dozen dumplings of one type. The steamers were placed on the Lazy Susan in a single stack: lunch was thirty inches high!

Using chopsticks, we ate our way down to the table one layer at a time, dipping the dumplings in soy sauce. Although we were hungry, we filled up quickly, eating about 14 dumplings apiece. At the end of lunch, we lumbered slowly down the stairs, got back into the cars and went back to work.

81. THE EL SALVADOR MARINE HOUSE

At the time I was assigned to ESC Panama, there was a war going on between El Salvador and Nicaragua in Central America. Our Embassy in El Salvador received fire from time to time and had been heavily fortified. Heavy steel plate had been bolted to the outside of the building on every floor to provide a measure of armor: a very tall and poorly-built chain link fence was constructed all the way around the Embassy at some distance from the building to try and protect the structure from Rocket-Propelled Grenades. There were several Marine Posts around the building and Post One was very large with a lot of equipment in it. They had a senior Master Gunnery Sergeant running the Marine Detachment and the Marines were dressed for combat on the job: fatigues, flak vests, helmets, M-16's and lots of ammunition. The outside posts were protected by sandbags. During the war, the Marine Detachment in El Salvador was twice the size of most other detachments in my experience.

To house all of these Marines, the Embassy leased two adjoining houses near the Chancery, knocking down the fence that separated these properties near the houses so as to form a compound in which you could easily walk from one house to the other. Being Embassy leases, these were elegant homes: being in Central America, palm trees were much in evidence, and the walkways up to each house were lined with Royal Palms about eight feet apart.

On my first visit to the Post, I was invited to come to the Marine House on Friday night by the RSO. He picked me and a Seabee up at our hotel and drove us to where the Marines lived. From the street, I noticed that the gate to the house on the right was secured, and the gate to the house on the left was open with an armed Marine manning the gate for security reasons.

On walking through the gate, the first thing I noticed was that most of the trees along the far walkway seemed to be connected by hammocks. A few of the trees along our walkway were also connected by hammocks. Some of these hammocks had two people inside them, and the hammocks were moving.

Some of the enlightened citizens of El Salvador understood that if someone in their family was to marry an American citizen, they might have an opportunity to leave El Salvador and escape the war. There were not a lot of single Foreign Services Officers in the Embassy, but none of the Marines were married. Wealthy families sent their daughters to the Marine House in search of eligible suitors, and many Marines assigned to El Salvador left the post as husbands.

Walking into the Marine House, it was apparent that the Marines had a wide selection of potential spouses. The house was full of pretty girls, many of whom spoke fluent English. Those who did not gravitated toward Marines who spoke Spanish or who were taking Spanish

language lessons at the Embassy. The RSO, Seabee and I remained at the Marine House for about an hour and a half.

On our way back to our hotel, we noticed that every hammock was full.

82. THE TEMPLE OF THE EMERALD BUDDHA

Thailand is a great place to both visit and to live. A wealthy Buddhist monarchy, the country has a great number of temples and stupas in each of its cities. The center of the country features a large ring of ancient stone temples surrounded by a river, each of which can be reached from boats. As you approach the capital from the North, the temples get more and more ornate and more modern. Chief among these is the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, which is on the grounds of the Royal Palace in Bangkok, right on a wide curve of the river.

The Emerald Buddha isn't made of emerald. The statue is light green, and to my eyes looks like it might be made of nephrite or serpentine, but it is a sacred object to Thais and they are not about to send the Buddha to a lab for analysis. The statue has two sets of clothing; a gold outfit for the summer months and a black outfit for the winter. Within its very ornate gold-leaf temple, the statue sits serenely atop a pyramid of tiers, each higher and narrower than the others. Visitors to the temple must raise both their eyes and their heads to regard the Buddha in all his splendor.

Buddhist temples are maintained by monks, and devotees who come to visit each temple routinely bring gifts for the Buddha that are intended for consumption by the monks. The people of Thailand are very devoted to their religion, and very generous. At the Emerald Buddha Temple, I noticed four long tables of gifts set on the terrace below the statue. Each table was piled high with flowers, fruit and collection boxes for money. There were orchids, popular in Thailand, but there were also gardenias, roses and frangipani. The tables were filled with fruit: There were mangos, loquats, grapes, green bananas, lychees and custard apples. There were offerings of food in a great variety of containers, some oriental and some of Tupperware. Monks from the Temple counseled visitors as to their spiritual questions and needs. They took pilgrims on walking tours of the palace, through an ornate religious history museum on the palace grounds with the entire life of Buddha hand-painted on the interior walls, and to the other temples near the palace.

Looking closely at the heavily-laden offering tables, I spotted a can of Pringles in the middle of the center table. At that time, Pringles were rather new, and I wondered at their origin. Did a devotee from the States return to Thailand to offer the Buddha this new food? Had this product reached Thailand and achieved the same popularity there that it met with in the U.S.? What would the monks do on opening the can? There was no answer from the Emerald Buddha, who simply sat on his podium, smiling gently and observing the world below.

83. THE LAO SHE TEA HOUSE

On my many trips to China, I found that there was almost always something new to discover. One afternoon in the Embassy I expressed interest in watching a Chinese Opera to the Admin Officer. He suggested that I try the Lao She Tea House. He gave me rough directions to the tea house, using the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant just off Tiananmen Square as a landmark. I walked across the square, turned the corner, passed KFC and found an imposing Chinese building with two huge red and gold silk lamps suspended in front of an impressive double door.

Named for a 20th century Chinese novelist and playwright, the Lao She Theater is a permanent Chinese variety show in the Chinese capital. The theater is downstairs in the building and consists of a small stage surrounded by tables and chairs in progressive half-circles. The chairs and tables closest to the stage are reserved for government officials, bigwigs from the Provinces, senior officers and the like, but lesser people can get quite close to the stage by paying a slightly higher price for seats. The ticket price includes an endless pot of tea and a tray of Chinese cookies, candies and edible novelties.

After I was seated and a number of other spectators arrived, the house lights dimmed and the stage lights came on. A Chinese magician walked out on stage and began to make things living and inert appear and disappear. Flowers, scarves, metal rings and a dove all seemed to pop out of nothing and return to thin air.

Following the magician, a group of four acrobats in matching costumes took the stage and began to balance spinning plates on long sticks, juggle balls and bars and form pyramids while juggling. Towards the end of their act, they switched to gymnastics and tossed each other back and forth to applause from the audience.

Several scenes from different Chinese Operas followed. Men and women interacted, sang to each other in high-pitched voices, engaged in sword fights and additional acrobatics. Generals wore backpack frames studded with small pennant-shaped flags (giving new meaning to “Flag Rank”, I guess) and their antics were accompanied by a small orchestra with drums and tambourine-like bells.

After a short intermission, another family of acrobats took the stage. Some of these players were quite young; graceful teenage girl acrobats received a lot of audience applause. They worked with ropes, hoops, ribbons and a small mini-trampoline.

More Chinese opera scenes followed, these seemingly more serious than the earlier ones. Some of these seemed to be directions given out to Army officers before a battle, followed by the sounds of fighting off-stage and the periodic appearance of heralds giving news of the conflict.

Two girls (or male actors taking the parts of girls) then appeared and sang a duet. My ears did not detect any efforts at harmony, but it might be that by not speaking Chinese or understanding the intonation of the language, I was missing it.

When the girls left the stage, the lights dimmed and all of the players came out for curtain calls. The range of acts on the playbill, the costumes, the makeup and the music all made the price of admission a great bargain for what was presented. And the tea kept coming all through the show.

As I walked up the stairs to the street level, I saw a large display of enlarged photographs of former President Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the Lao She Theater during their first State Visit to Beijing. They probably sat a little closer to the stage than I did.

84. TESTING THE AQUEOUS FOAM SYSTEM IN BOGOTA

The Security Enhancement Program, blessed with lots of money to invest in new systems, came up with a comprehensive way to protect the lobbies and ground floors of Embassies from attacks by both armed gunmen and by Molotov-cocktail throwing terrorists. The system was more complex than any of us old field hands ever imagined, and the amount of Embassy real estate and installation time required to put in the system was alarming.

A huge tank of water was installed somewhere in the Embassy, usually the basement. Next to it was a smaller tank containing concentrated detergent. Both systems were pressurized by a compressor. In the ceiling of the Embassy Lobby and at the top of every stairwell, giant fans were installed. Water under pressure and detergent under pressure were piped to a point above each of these fans, with electric valves holding the fluids in check. (The pipes alone took over a year to install in an Embassy.)

If the Mission were ever attacked, Marines would pull coils of razor wire across the open lobby, take up defensive positions and notify Post One when they were in place. Post One would flip some switches: the fans would spin up, then the valves would open and the entire lobby and all the stairwells would rapidly fill up with aqueous foam. (Think of this as long-lasting soap suds.) To further confound attackers, a third cylinder in the basement was filled with bulk tear gas. This could be released into the foam by Post One. Marines at their duty stations would be wearing long-sleeved fatigues, gas masks, head coverings and gloves and could walk through the foam to engage blind attackers caught in the invisible razor wire. As the foam slowly dissipated, IR break-beams at the height of the ceiling would re-connect, turning on the fans and pumps to keep the foam flowing.

Once this system was used, especially with the tear gas, everything in the Embassy lobby was contaminated and needed to be replaced. Carpeting, furniture, curtains, wallpaper and welcoming mats filled with the odor of tear gas all were tossed. Because this was expensive, and because the entire system was prohibitively expensive to procure, ship, install and maintain, only two Embassies received the aqueous foam system: Ankara and Bogota.

Walter Sargent, who died recently, was quite the Security Officer. When I knew him in the Department in the late 1970's, he was working to find suitable transparent armor with which to protect our official vehicles and the booths in which our Marines worked. He had exhibits of these materials which he would break out and demonstrate to classes of RSOs, PSOs, SEOs and Seabees. He had been a Security Officer in the Army before joining SY, and you did not need to scratch him very hard to find a soldier. He was bald, he was gravel-voiced, and he got your attention very quickly.

Walter was assigned to Bogota as the RSO after I was assigned to ESC Panama. I meant to get to Post in time to welcome him to Columbia, but I was tied up on other work and he had been at post for four months before I could stop in and visit him. In that time, Walter had looked over his new domain, checked out the aqueous foam system, and had done what came naturally to him: he fired up the system and put it through a full test. To Walter, if a security system was going to damage the Embassy's drapes and carpeting, security money should be provided to replace those furnishings, so he persuaded the Office of Security to provide that money. He explained to the Marines what he wanted them to do, and he asked for a representative from the ESC to watch over the equipment and re-train people at post on how to use it.

When everyone was ready, he ran the razor wire, put the Marines on station, filled the lobbies and stairways with foam and then sent the Marines into the foam in full battle gear, protected against the detergent and tear gas to the degree possible. He took pictures of the Marines emerging from the foam (they looked like walking marshmallows with guns) and sent copies to the Department, saving a few for his monthly report. SY/T and SY/FO were delighted to see the systems used; so were the Marines. Walter ran two drills a year after that: one where the foam was simulated, one where the foam was used. Each year, our Embassy in Bogota received new lobby carpeting and drapes, and post was delighted with its RSO who wasn't at all cautious about making sure that everything worked.

85. THE WHITE SWAN HOTEL AND THE JADE MARKET

The cities of China where our Consulates were located were fascinating places to visit. During my four-year tour in Seoul, China was moving rapidly from a culture that wore Mao jackets and depended on bicycles for transportation to a modern society with sleek skyscrapers, fabulous hotels, modern luxury vehicles and color television. Beijing was bidding on being an Olympic Games host, and one criticism of the city was that it lacked sufficient taxi support for the Olympics. Almost overnight, the city was flooded with bright yellow VW bug-sized vehicles with “Taxi” signs on the roofs.

I did not get to Guangzhou in the South of China until late in my tour. Steve Klein was assigned as OIC/ESO Beijing at that time, and I accompanied him to Guangzhou to assist with the installation of locks in our fortified Consulate. In Guangzhou, our Consulate occupied several floors of an apartment building attached to the White Swan Hotel. I say “fortified” because the entire interior of the section of the building occupied by us was sheathed by welded steel. Walking into the Consulate under construction took me right back to a walk through the yard at Electric Boat division of General Dynamics. Instead of the normal drywall dust and paint odors usually associated with improvements to one of our buildings, you smelled steel panels being welded in place and heard the noise of grinders taking sharp edges off the new walls. Everything in the building was covered with soot and metal particles from the welding and grinding.

When the European nations pressured China to open their doors to trade with the West, a single port commerce system was established on an island in the Pearl River abutting the City of Canton in 1757. European merchants were confined to this island, where factories were built; many large European residences were built along the banks of the river at this time. When China began to modernize its cities in the 1980’s, a number of elegant hotels were constructed alongside these older European dwellings, including the White Swan. Its interior featured a lot of beautiful marble flooring, modern shops selling Chinese carved wool carpets, cloisonné and carved stone and red lacquer art objects. The hotel’s bar and dining room overlooked a bend in the Pearl River, providing hotel guests with a fabulous view of old and modern China merging together.

Nearly a hundred vessels seemed to be out on the wide river at the same time. Ricketty houseboats with tiny motors chugged upstream, trying to stay away from the substantial wakes of Chinese naval craft zipping by with red flags snapping in the breeze. Chinese Junks under sail or under diesel power tied up at distant docks. Tugboats pulling barges of coal and raw materials went up and down the river. Houseboats holding several families motored by and large ferries filled to the brim with passengers moved back and forth across the wide expanse of water.

Freighters and commercial tankers and container ships moved through all of this nautical activity under the control of Chinese pilots. Much of this same view was available from the windows in our Consulate that faced the river.

When I say I was assisting in lockwork, we were putting combination locks onto welded steel doors throughout sensitive areas of the building. Each screw hole required drilling, tapping and the insertion of a machine-threaded screw. This process was new to me, and I quickly broke a couple of taps. We did not have many taps of the right diameter and thread size with us, and almost immediately a trip that seemed a walk in the park was on shaky soil. We drilled and tapped for a day or two, then went out on the economy with one of our taps and walked from hardware store to hardware store until we found some new ones of the right diameter and thread pattern. Aiding this search was the fact that a lot of the hardware used in the United States was beginning to be made in China, and we found the local hardware stores filled with familiar brands.

The first evening in town, Steve Klein and I visited a pagoda attached to a Chinese Confucian Temple. This was the Temple of the Six Banyan Trees, which you can find through Google. Inside the temple, it was possible to buy printed spiritual money in large denominations for a few Yuan. Outside, there were several bronze censers with little doors on them: visitors who had purchased spiritual money were able to send it to their ancestors by burning it in the censers. My father had passed away in 1994, so I took the opportunity to send him some scratch for use in the afterlife. Steve and I then climbed the tower to the top, got our breath back and walked back down.

I had heard that there was a jade market in Guangzhou and wanted to see what the market was like. On Saturday morning, I walked about eight blocks away from the Consulate and found myself in an enclave of old Chinese shops with upswept tile roofs and glass store fronts, perhaps nine shops in all. In each store there were glass counters showing dozens of unset jades in small white cardboard boxes with a cotton pad in each box. I do not speak Chinese, but it wasn't necessary: I would point to several jades in each store, get prices for each jade and would write them down, look at a few more stones, get prices and move on to the next store. As I went from place to place, two shops seemed to have better jades than the remaining stores, so I went back to each of those two shops a second time, saving the store I liked best for last. I tried to obtain better prices than the ones I was quoted and discovered that (as with my Beanie Babies story, Number 13) shop owners were willing to give customers a better price if they bought several stones at the same time. I looked carefully through the stones at the last store and bought three that were a brilliant shade of green with fine figuring within each stone.

Most of the jades were suitable for mounting in necklaces, pendants or rings. I bought stones that were oval-shaped and slightly curved, each intended for mounting on a ring so that

the long axis of the oval was parallel to the bones of a wearer's hand. In Seoul, I gave the three stones to my wife. She had some older gold jewelry melted down and a ring made that allowed one of the jades to straddle the ring finger on her right hand. It's a beautiful and unusual ring which she wears periodically.

86. THE FLOATING MARKET

Another “Clash of Cultures” story:

Those of us who have visited Bangkok periodically have usually managed to get a ride on one of the long-tailed boats that ply the Bangkok River like water taxis. Usually consisting of an uncovered or partially covered sampan with a V-8 car engine mounted towards the rear of the craft on a swivel, the boats get their name from the long driveshaft protruding from the transmission to which a propeller is fastened. Passengers sit toward the front of the boat; when everyone is aboard, the boatman rocks the engine back, dips the propeller into the river and you pull away at about thirty miles an hour. Thai children who play in the muddy river consider it great fun to swim into the path of long-tailed boats, duck under water as they come over head and then emerge (muddy but laughing) after the boat has passed.

On a weekend in Bangkok, I decided that I wanted to see a different attraction in the city. For those of you unfamiliar with Bangkok, it grew up as a city interspersed between roads and klongs. “Klongs” are canals fed by the river. Houses were built in straight or curved lines with little branches of the river on one side and with roads leading to the houses on the other. Occupants of the houses could commute by road or by boat to many parts of the city. As time passed, the klongs began to fill up with silt; this has contributed to the increased use of automobiles over canal traffic. Still, many homes in Bangkok continue to enjoy these two routes of travel, and well-to-do houses have little slips with power boat hoists just like slips on the Chesapeake Bay. I wanted to see a tourist attraction called the “Floating Market”, which was located on the opposite side of the river from where our Embassy sits.

To get to the Floating Market, I took a taxi across the river to a docking area where long-tailed boats served as water taxis. We did not go out onto the river but followed a series of klongs to a tributary of the river where a large group of paddled skiffs were slowly moving about. Each of these skiffs was loaded with beautifully-arrayed produce: fruits, yellow onions, heads of lettuce, tomatoes, colorful peppers, scallions, squash and produce items I had never seen before. Here and there were other boats selling watermelon, cantaloupes, spices in plasticized envelopes and pre-prepared Thai food like spring rolls. Most of the vendors in the skiffs wore black silk pants with colored cotton tops and woven wide conical straw hats to shade them from the hot Thai sunshine. If you have never seen a picture of this place, it’s well worth a Google search.

Customers who arrived in other boats were rowing among the vendors, buying foodstuff and transferring it to mesh string bags in their own boats. Some of the vendors’ boats stayed by the banks of the tributary and sold produce to customers as they rowed by. Other vendors rowed

up to meet new customers coming in. The spectacle of boats, colors, odors from the foods, oriental hats and the crowd-like noise of many Thai people speaking at the same time was memorable. Our boat tied up to a dock near a marketplace on the ground next to a small bridge that stretched over the tributary, and it was possible to take great pictures of the Floating Market from the bridge.

In the Buddhist tradition, your head is the important part of your body, while the feet, which plod through the dirt and mud, are a less important part that should not be anywhere near the head.

After our visit to the Floating Market, the small group that I had joined was taken to an outdoor Thai park for lunch. We were seated outdoors in a pavilion under a cone-shaped roof, at tables with white tablecloths and napkins. The tables were decorated with fresh orchids, a Thai tradition, and the glasses for water and iced tea were clean. I was wearing a baseball hat to protect me from the sun.

In my family, as I was growing up, you did not wear hats at the table. Nor, if your hat was soaking from perspiration, did you put it on the table where you were eating. I took off my hat when we sat down and tucked it under my leg, but even the brim was damp, so I placed it on the ground.

Almost as soon as the hat hit the floor, there was a waiter in a spotless white uniform at my side. He swept up the hat from the floor and put it on the table next to my right hand. Then he walked off to pour iced tea at another table. I was annoyed to find my wet hat back on the table, and I brushed it off onto the floor for a second time. Again, another waiter saw the hat fall and rushed to recover it and put it next to me on the table.

Amused, I saw an opportunity for a little waiter-baiting. Using the side of my hand periodically, I gradually moved my hat to the very edge of the table so that its perch was unsteady and the hat was almost teetering. When I thought that all the waiters were looking elsewhere, I would tap the hat with my finger; it would drop to the floor. The first waiter to notice this would swoop over and correct my social *faut pas*. After doing this twice, I hung the hat behind me on my chair. I also gave our waiter a good tip at the end of the meal, feeling that he had earned it several times.

87. MISS COTTON ARRIVES IN SEOUL

The Korean economy, one of the four “Asian Tigers”, produces a lot of stuff. They are able to take raw materials like Iron, carbon from coal and limestone and turn them in to high quality steel. They are deeply into the garment industry, taking in silk and wool and cotton and weaving these materials into a wide variety of cloth.

One of the major types of cloth made in Korea is cotton. If you are wearing underpants today, chances are the fabric they were made from came from Korea. Each year, to recognize and commemorate the strong relationship between U.S. Cotton and Korean cotton fabrics, a beauty contest is held in the South of the United States to elect Miss Cotton, who becomes the Goodwill Ambassador of the Cotton Industry and who tours nations which are important to that industry. First stop, usually: Korea.

Our neighbor in Seoul was Ralph, the Commercial Attaché. Always busy, Ralph went into high gear at the beginning of each Summer when Miss Cotton came to town. Usually, festivities began with a reception for Cotton Industry representatives at the Ambassador’s residence, followed by a dinner or two in Seoul and a series of tours out to Korean spinning and weaving firms to show off new ways that cotton was being prepared, blended with stretch fabrics, made waterproof, etc. Ralph did his best to get press credentials for every Korean news outlet in the country and to encourage their reporters to bring photographers and take as many pictures as they liked.

In 1994, Miss Cotton was about to arrive in Seoul. Ambassador Laney and his wife invited the entire Embassy to the residence for the late afternoon reception, and we decided to attend as a family. I had specified an audio system for the Ambassador’s Residence as a favor to the Post in 1991, but they had only used this system to play music and wanted to use it briefly as a public address system; I offered to arrive early and set up the system. Ralph sent a car for me so that my wife and kids could use our station wagon. I arrived about thirty minutes before anyone else came, set up the microphones to avoid feedback, tested the system out and watched the guests begin to arrive.

The Korean Press came in first, looking for good photography angles, and began to take their positions along the intended route Miss Cotton would be following. Embassy staffers and caterers came next, setting up bars in a couple of locations and a number of long tables with Western and Korean finger food. After that, Embassy employees and their families started to arrive.

My daughter was 17 in 1994, and she had dressed up for the occasion at the Residence. With long, blonde hair in curls and a pretty dress, she had been modeling for Korean garment

makers and looked like a cover girl for a fashion magazine. Arriving with my wife, they parked the car on the Residence lot and walked up to the front door of the building.

The Korean Press had been waiting anxiously for over half an hour. When my family walked into the Residence, one of the photographers shouted: “There she is!” and a group of some twenty-five cameramen rushed to the entrance and began taking pictures of my daughter. Electronic flash attachments lit up the foyer area of the Residence for almost two minutes before Ralph was able to get their attention and convince them that they were shooting pictures of the wrong model. Grumbling, the photographers walked back toward the food tables.

When Miss Cotton showed up about fifteen minutes later, the Press was more reserved with their picture-taking. The welcomes at the Residence were genuine, the food was splendid, and all of us were able to mingle with Korean businessmen who appreciated our hospitality. After the event was over, one of the Korea reporters and his photographer came over to me and asked if I was Jeana’s father. I indicated that I was. The reporter said: “Your daughter much better” and the photographer nodded his head.



The author’s daughter, age 38, and grandson. Taken in Scarsdale, NY, 2013

88. JOHN FITZSIMMONS AND THE MAGIC CLOCK

Sometimes, Fate smiles on us...

On one of my visits to ESO Manila, John Fitzsimmons was the OIC of the Office. In planning the trip, I told John that I had not previously been able to see the remote Pacific island-based constituent posts of Manila. It was hard to get to the Manila posts, especially Majuro and Pohnpei, because they were strung out across the Pacific, did not have daily flights and it took a significant time commitment to reach them. John proposed that we visit Koror.

Koror was the largest island in the Republic of Palau, a nation of 250 islands in the Western Pacific. It had been a Japanese seaplane base during WWII. Koror was an interesting place for divers to visit because of a famous cave with jellyfish that did not sting, because of the giant clams around the island and because of a few wrecked WWII planes in shallow water that you could actually dive to and sit in. Sadly, neither of us took tanks or regulators on this trip. There was only one American officer and a Secretary at our Embassy in Palau; they had no place to store sensitive material such as visa stamps. John was going to install one of Steve Klein's alarm systems for isolated posts.

Post had worked out an agreement with a Japanese-owned resort on the beach whereby the Embassy would agree to house their TDY visitors there if the resort would meet the Embassy per diem rate. The dining room at the hotel was a bit expensive, especially where Japanese dishes were concerned, but John and I lucked out: the hotel was celebrating its tenth year of existence during our visit, and guests were treated to a lavish but free dinner in the dining room on two of the three nights we were there. This was a buffet dinner with sushi, sashimi, carved roast beef and ham; the seafood table was piled high with spiny lobsters. You get the picture.

On our second day at post, we unpacked the rather clunky alarm system DS had sent out and began to install it. John laid out the alarm neatly, assembled the several pieces of conduit shipped with the system professionally and completed the job in a short time. To test it, we set the time into the system, secured the door to the room, gave it a while and returned to see if things were working correctly.

They were not. The timing system on the new alarm was not working, and that unit was the only one John had shipped to post. Specifically, the hourly movements of the system clock were not advancing as they should.

Suspecting shipping damage, John disassembled the small rectangular clock inside the alarm unit. To our surprise, it had nylon gears. One of those gears had been *melted* by a heavy drop of solder which actually cut a notch out of the gear train. As the clock's wheels rotated, the

clock would work fine until the solder-caused gap came up, at which time the mechanism would stop. We were looking at an expensive, wasted trip, having flown out to the middle of the Pacific Ocean without spare parts.

Frustrated, John looked up at the wall in the room where we were working. He saw a standard-issue Department of State wall clock hanging there. It had been assembled by the Lighthouse for the Blind and was not a high dollar value item. Intrigued, John took the clock off the wall and looked at the back of it. To our astonishment, the wall clock mechanism seemed to be the same as the one in the alarm system, making me wonder where Steve Klein had sourced the parts for his system. John measured the two clocks, and the footprint was identical. Beginning to smile, John removed the clock mechanism from the GSA wall clock and installed it in our alarm system. It worked perfectly: John's ingenuity saved our trip. At the end of one of the world's longest supply lines, John had fixed a unique alarm system with, literally, an off-the-wall spare part. It was a magical experience.

John buttoned up the alarm, reported to the Principal Officer, promised them a new wall clock by pouch to replace the one he had scrounged, and trained the two Embassy personnel on the alarm system and the way that it worked. That evening, we returned to the hotel, had a beer and celebrated (again) with a free lobster dinner.

89. THE SECRET GARDEN

Korea, an Asian country with its own language and culture, was for centuries in thrall of the culture of China. The palaces of Korea emulate the palaces of China in style, structure and purpose, but they are not the same. The Koreans took pains to have their buildings look similar to those of China, but appear slightly different as well. The progression of small characters perched on the edges of Korean palaces, for example, look like those on Chinese roofs, but contain different objects than you would see in China. The tile roofs of the Forbidden City are yellow; those of the Palaces of Korea are blue. There is a famous stringed Chinese instrument that was dismantled and carried into Korea centuries ago, then re-assembled improperly on the Korean side of the mountains. All subsequent instruments of that type made in Korea look like the incorrectly-assembled instrument, and it has a unique Korean name.

A short walk from our old Embassy in Seoul was the principal palace of Korea, now a national museum. It featured a number of large homes for the Korean nobility showing the Korean way of life in early times. Perhaps my favorite exhibit was a sedan chair for members of the nobility carried by four runners. In the center of the seating pallet, under the chair, there are two arms that dropped to support a single large wheel. Evidently the runners took off with the seat on their shoulders, put the wheel on the ground in smooth areas to save their strength, then picked up their rider again as they approached their destination.

Several of the buildings housing the nobility had “ondol” floors. Rather than using forced air to heat their buildings in winter, the Koreans placed a series of connected clay pipes in the mortar of their buildings’ floors, and connected these pipes to a fireplace burning charcoal. The floor became warm, and bedding was placed directly on the floor at night.

Behind the actual palace, there were a series of little villas placed along a winding path that bumped against ponds, wooded areas, gardens, pools of fish and other carefully-maintained areas. This area was known as “The Secret Garden”. In these cottages, some resembling simple little gazebos, members of the nobility would entertain their friends and business associates, drinking tea, playing board games, writing poems or drinking fortified wine. Some of the more enclosed little villas seemed designed for trysts, with doors that could be bolted from the inside for a little privacy. One would expect that somewhere in the palace, there was a “scheduler” who kept track of which villa was in use by whom, and for what purpose it was occupied.

Entrance to the Pi Wan, or Secret Garden, was by ticket. The garden was open to the public on most days and was much like a trip back in time during some seasons. Throughout the garden area, there were long-needle pine trees bent into fantastic shapes. Here and there, the process used to shape these trees was in evidence: the limbs of the trees were bent a little at a

time, were wrapped with many coils of jute string to hold that shape, and the string was covered with a thick layer of mud for a year or two, after which the mud and string would be removed and the limb bent in a different direction.

To the side of the palace was a large, ugly administrative building put up by the Japanese during the years that they occupied Korea. (I believe that this unpopular building has since been razed.) Inside that building, which then formed part of the museum, there were a great variety of copied museum exhibits on sale. Calligraphy sets with hanging brushes of different sizes, beautifully sculpted ink stones for mixing calligraphy ink, Korean hats made of woven horsehair, parchment for writing, and even reproductions of the Korean crown jewelry were waiting for your credit card.

We used the Pi Wan as a means of showing old Korea to new arrivals, always finding something new to see among the villas and gazebos hidden from sight in downtown Seoul.

90. THE CHINESE BELL MUSEUM

In Seoul, across the street from the entrance to the Changgyeonggung Palace, there is a large bronze bell about the size of two SUVs parked end to end. This hangs from the rafters of an historic timber frame building with a traditional grey tiled Korean roof, swept up at the corners to protect the eaves of the roof from being broken off by high winds. On New Year's Eve, at the stroke of midnight, a crew of Korean officials in traditional Han Bok clothing swings an external clapper made of an oak log wrapped with jute into the bell again and again, announcing the New Year's arrival. You can hear the bell through much of the downtown area of Seoul. Until I reached China, that was the largest bell I had ever seen.

After visiting most of the sites in and around Beijing favored by tourists, I found a little map of the city in a bookstore one day. On the map were many facilities, spelled out in English, which did not appear on most other maps. I was intrigued to see a geological museum on the map, for example. What initially caught my eye, however, was the Chinese Bell Museum.

In an orchestra playing Western music, we have several traditional sections. Strings, for example, and brass, and wind instruments and percussion instruments. There are counterparts to many of these instruments in Asian musical culture, but the instruments do not make the same sounds as ours and do not look like the instruments we play. A great guide to the percussion side of Asian music is in the Freer Gallery on the Mall in Washington, D.C. where, in the same area that Chinese bronzes are exhibited, there are a number of Chinese percussion instruments. Generally, these look like a mixture of objects hanging from a frame, which were meant to be struck with a metal rod or brushed together by hand. Sometimes the sounding elements were shaped like birds, sometimes butterflies and sometimes they simply resembled twisted squares, but the effect was the same: a cascade of metallic tones.

I took a cab to the bell museum one Saturday and found it back in an alleyway between the first and second beltway roads around Beijing. Entering the building, the ground floor had a ceiling about twenty feet high, which was needed to give several of the bells enough clearance off the floor to allow them to ring. In the center of the building was a higher area in which the Big Bell was hung. This was a mammoth bronze object almost thirty feet high, without a clapper. As in Seoul, these large bells were rung by thumps from big logs mounted next to the bells. The printed legends around the bells were in Chinese. Pictures hanging on the walls indicated that they came from Buddhist monasteries around the country, where they were probably used to call the monks in from surrounding fields for prayer and for meals.

Throughout the rest of the museum, there were frame after frame of bell-like percussion instruments, along with pictures of Chinese orchestras showing the instruments in use. As our

orchestra musicians frequently turn out in black tie formal clothing, the Chinese musicians turned out in court robes, each wearing a chest plaque identifying their sponsor and their rank in the orchestra.

Visitors to the museum were not allowed to touch the exhibits or ring the bells. I am sure that the curators put that particular rule in effect, to save their sanity. However, visitors could buy a CD containing the sounds of every instrument in the museum. I bought one of these and took the CD back to Seoul.

You should hear the Big Bell.

91. TAKING LANDSAT PHOTOGRAPHY TO NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS

As some of you know, I decided to become a teacher after I retired from DS. I found a program at American University leading to a Master's degree in teaching that appealed to me, and which had a good reputation in the Washington area. The commute from my house in Bethesda to Tenleytown was not too difficult, especially since many of the graduate courses were offered during the evenings when parking at the University was easier to find. The program allowed me three undergraduate courses as well, to help me, a budding science teacher, catch up on Biology, Oceanography and Astronomy.

As such courses go, I went through a year of student teaching the last year that I was at AU. The first semester was at a middle school between my home and AU, while the second semester involved teaching at Montgomery Blair High School, which was the largest high school in Montgomery County and which was due to move into a brand-new building the following year. I taught at Blair for six years before my spouse, who had been selected for her own overseas assignment, was given orders for Wellington, New Zealand. My wife had given up several full-time jobs to come to overseas posts with me, and it seemed only fair to accompany her to Wellington, so I offered to resign from teaching. As it turned out, since I was vested in the retirement system and was over fifty years of age, I could actually *retire* from teaching in the State of Maryland. And the citizens of Montgomery County had set up their own small retirement program for its teachers. I wound up with two small additional pensions for the rest of my life, sort of like a permanent car payment.

I had elected to stay in the WAE program when I retired from Diplomatic Security, and this turned out to be a real blessing during my teaching years. I drew a number of DS summer assignments, some overseas, some domestic, all at the WAE upper limit of half my salary before retirement. This was a major improvement over the funds my fellow teachers made teaching remedial science in summer school, and it occasionally produced a great assignment, like the summer I filled in for Steve Klein as OIC/ESC Athens while Steve took Home Leave.

Teachers do receive on-the-job training. While at Blair, I was selected to participate in an experimental program at Goddard Space Flight Center. The program focused on downloading data sets from the LandSat satellites and merging the various wavelengths of data recovered from the satellite to form pictures of areas of the Earth in different types of light, such as infra-red, to study landforms and vegetation at different times of the year. The program we were introduced to at Goddard was more than a little clumsy, but you might think of it as being able to run Google Map to any spot for which you had map coordinates and then change the types of light you used to look at the area. It was an interesting course, but it was computer-intensive and it really depended on each school having a fast, well-running Wi-Fi system. This was not a

problem in Montgomery County, but Howard County could not introduce it to all its schools at the time I took the course.

When I arrived in New Zealand, I offered to serve as the resident SEO under ESO Canberra if I could do so as a WAE. The Department accepted this arrangement, and there was just enough to do in Wellington to keep me busy. I was considering trying to teach at a school in New Zealand when I bumped into a gold mine. The young American Ambassador to New Zealand, Charles Swindells, wanted to try and bring some technology from American Schools over to the New Zealand school system. I told him about the program at Goddard and it seemed to be exactly the type of program he wanted to demonstrate. Letters were written to Montgomery County, Howard County and Goddard Space Flight Center by the Ambassador, requesting their help. We arranged for a major video conference call between Goddard, the Embassy and the teachers who had put the program together, and invited in a number of school teachers from all over New Zealand and some students to participate at the Embassy. Our Mission had a strong Wi-Fi router in the Public Affairs area, so we were all set. One of the attendees was the Globe System coordinator for New Zealand: New Zealand schools were already working closely with NASA to identify vegetation, rock formations and geothermic areas on the ground that were sometimes hard to recognize with LandSat. This cooperation produced an especially accurate data set for several parts of New Zealand.

Our audience was very intrigued by the program we presented, but its immediate use was blocked by a single obstacle: most secondary schools in New Zealand did not have access to Wi-Fi or the Internet, without which the program was useless.

There was, in Wellington, a fiber optic ring that tied a number of businesses, government agencies and Victoria University together and which would support Wi-Fi hookups. Several of the major bars in town were connected to this fiber optic ring, allowing them to create “hot spots” that helped to pull in customers.

I had made a number of contacts with teachers in Wellington area schools during our video conference. We were advised by Goddard during the conference that a compact version of the program was available which could run on a laptop. I borrowed a laptop from the Embassy, downloaded the program and played with it until I could produce results. A favorite demonstration allowed program operators to change the viewing angle on the terrain below, causing mountains and volcanos to rise up sharply in profile and making you feel that you were right there. This was especially impressive in mountainous New Zealand.

When I was satisfied that the program was working properly, I visited a bar near the Embassy and asked if I might set up a demonstration for New Zealand teachers using their hot spot. I demonstrated the program briefly for the proprietor and got his approval. Then I invited teachers from four Wellington schools to come and observe the program more closely. Only

three teachers showed up, a little wary of being asked to a bar by someone from the American Embassy. The teachers only had a couple of hours in which to observe and operate the program and were not sure how to act.

I asked if any of them would like a beer while we were setting up the computer. This broke the ice very well: Kiwis love beer, and drink a lot of it, and the teachers were more than willing to tip a few as the training session progressed. Remarks like “This is *real* diplomacy” were heard from time to time. By the time the teachers had to leave, we had each had about three beers, and the ladies thought that they had the hang of it. Hopefully, by now, the fiber optic ring has been extended to the Wellington secondary school system.

92. TIM DALY AND THE NEIGHBORLY OFFER

With almost no exceptions, the SEOs that I worked with were the type of people who would give you the shirt off their backs even if you never asked for it.

When I was in Africa, pouch runs to many of our constituent posts were regular but infrequent. When we were headed out to visit one or more of our Embassies that were served by our Regional Medical Officer, we considered it good manners to stop by the RMO office and ask if there were any medications needed in, let's say, Bamako that we might take with us to post. Most often there was no medicine to deliver, but the offer was appreciated.

Years later, perhaps in 1993, I made a constituent post trip to Chiang Mai, Thailand with Tim Daly and his Seabee from Bangkok. We were on an inspection trip that included a DEA facility somewhere off the Consulate Compound as well as the Consulate itself. The trip went as planned, and our activities were normal until we reached the DEA offices. I remember searching through a large number of cabinets and closets and desks that seemed filled with camouflaged uniforms, flak vests, weapons and weapons and lots and lots of ammunition. Chiang Mai, after all, was right in the middle of the Golden Triangle, from which a lot of the world's opium originates.

When we completed our support trip to post, we packaged up our pouches and borrowed lead blanks and the Post seal to secure them. Tim arranged for a ride to the airport that would accommodate us and the eight or nine pouch bags and suitcases we had carried to post. Then, in the same spirit that we used to stop by the Medical Office in Abidjan, Tim walked over to an out-building on the Consulate Compound and checked with the Operations Officer there to see if they had any classified material that needed to be pouched back to Bangkok. They said that they had a bit and would get it properly packaged and meet us at the Airport, where Tim could take charge of it.

When we reached the airport, we unloaded our bags and pouches and put them on one of the small mobile trolleys that are routinely pulled up to airplanes by tractors at small airports. The three of us stood by the trolley waiting for our aircraft to be ready to board. While we were waiting, a stakebed truck from the Consulate pulled up. A couple of Americans who came out with the truck started to load their pouch material on a second trolley. They filled that to capacity; they then started on another trolley, and finally a third trolley. The four-trolley pouch load was then linked into a little train behind the airport tractor. Tim sat in the seat next to the tractor driver, looking very much like a professional Diplomatic Courier. The Seabee and I walked out to the airplane behind the train. All three of us assisted in loading the monster pouch into the belly of the plane.

By the time we reached Bangkok, the office that Tim had visited had arranged for an additional truck to meet us at the airport, and they took possession of their three trolleys' worth of pouch materials from Tim. Our scheduled van was waiting for us, and we loaded up and returned to the Embassy.

93. THE JEWELRY OF RIO DE JANEIRO – PART THREE

It was always a treat for me, as an OIC at one of our centers, to see a Seabee arrive at one of our satellite offices and quickly acquire foreign friends. Where some of our personnel tended to insulate themselves from the environment outside the Embassy, those who embraced overseas living and the chance to learn about their countries of assignment tended to have richer and more rewarding tours. I have several stories along these lines, but today I recall a Seabee assigned to our ESO in Rio de Janeiro.

Rio was a Consulate General, and two OICs served there during my tour in Panama. The first was Rudy Jackson, who was replaced by Bob Grant. The Seabee whose tour straddled these two officers was a builder, and he had a lot of energy. He rebuilt the ESO lab and storage areas entirely by himself, getting everything organized and even topping the benches, storage bins and lab tables he constructed with the knobby vinyl flooring that many of you will remember from the airport in Frankfurt.

This builder arrived at post with a young wife, and the two of them were assigned to an apartment at the foot of Sugar Loaf, a huge rock at the side of Rio's beautiful harbor. From their balcony, you could look all the way across the harbor with its yachts and sailboats, and you could look down on several pocket-sized beaches that were a short walk from their domicile. They quickly made friends with their Brazilian neighbors, some of whom were of the same age as the Seabee and his wife. Soon after their arrival, they were introduced to local foods, shown the location of nearby markets, taken around the city and introduced to Rio's athletic and enjoyable "Carioca" lifestyle, all by their new neighbors.

One of their neighbors was a jeweler who was just getting established in Rio. This man used the "Trunk Sale" approach to selling his jewelry. Our Seabee told me about his friend; I expressed an interest in seeing some of the jewelry, so the Seabee hosted a small luncheon for me and several employees of the Consulate with the understanding that his friend would display some of his jewelry after lunch.

When we finished eating, Sergio (the jeweler) spread out a blanket on the Seabee's dining room table and covered it with hand-made jewelry. Sergio used 14 karat gold and sterling silver to mount semi-precious stones, many of which were locally-mined in Brazil. The quality of the jewelry was high and the range of items was impressive: rings, pendants, necklaces, earrings and bracelets. There seemed to be something for everyone's budget, and we all looked at the blanket wares carefully. The luncheon guests were interested, but were a little cautious about buying the jewelry.

I spotted a small pendant that I liked. It featured two connected rectangular frames of thick gold wire with a small fixed loop on the top of the rear frame. Set between the two frames was a beautiful emerald-cut citrine about three-quarters of an inch in length and half an inch across. The citrine was honey-colored and looked great with the gold wire: the pendant was offered on a thin gold chain. Sergio was asking \$125 for this piece of jewelry, which seemed modest to me. I picked it up, handed it to him and said I would buy it.

This purchase produced a feeding frenzy among the other buyers at the table. One by one, each of them purchased a ring or a set of earrings or a bracelet, sometimes buying several items. Having usually purchased jewelry through stores, it was refreshing to have the merchandize come to us after a nice lunch. Sergio and the Seabee were both delighted, and the luncheon was a great success.

94. TEPPANYAKI AT THE NEW SANNO HOTEL

During several of my trips to Tokyo, the Embassy per diem rate did not quite cover the costs of eating on the economy. Our Government had worked out an agreement with a hotel near the Embassy to place its TDY personnel there within the housing portion of the per diem allowance, but meals at the hotel would easily have you out of pocket. If you went to a Japanese restaurant you would usually exceed even the hotel dining costs. Generally, you looked for a hole in the wall somewhere that served sushi and ate light.

Fortunately, there was the New Sanno Hotel. This was leased from its owners to serve as the Officers' Club for American military personnel in Tokyo. Embassy personnel, even TDY personnel, were allowed to use facilities of the New Sanno on displaying their passport.

In the New Sanno, there were several nice restaurants, a bar, gift shops (including one specializing in Japanese cultured pearls) and a Teppanyaki Restaurant that personnel on Embassy per diem could afford. A secretary in the Admin Office in Tokyo suggested this restaurant to me on my first visit to Japan. She made a reservation for me at the restaurant, and I slipped over there by subway after looking at the menu and prices in my hotel.

The entrance to a Teppanyaki restaurant is generally hung with small flags that proclaim the restaurant's name in Kanji, formal Japanese characters. This restaurant's flags were dark Navy blue with white lettering; every other flag bore a white chrysanthemum.

When you entered, a receptionist checked your reservation, then led you to one of several high-backed stools arrayed around a large stainless steel cooktop. She handed you a simple menu as you sat. Other guests arrived and were seated at the same cooktop with you. When the number of guests reached six (two each on three sides) a Japanese chef in a samurai-looking hat appeared at the empty side and took our orders.

Our options were impressive: we could choose between filet mignon, lobster, pork loin, or scallops with a variety of vegetable to be chosen by the cook. The idea of eating lobster within per diem in Tokyo was very appealing; I ordered a surf and turf combination. After we all ordered, a small tray was placed before each guest holding a steaming hot white towel with which to clean your hands and wipe your face. The hot towel was followed by a small tray containing a half bottle of warm rice wine and a small glass.

The Chef began with grilled appetizers: mushrooms, water chestnuts and cured ham. The food was artfully grilled in front of the chef on a light coat of oil, sliced with amazing skill and flicked across the grill to each guest in turn from the tip of a knife. Once all of the guests

were served appetizers, the food was eaten with chopsticks. Another small bowl of steaming rice appeared at our elbows next to the sake.

With the grilled veggies serving as an appetizer, we were served fresh salads as the chef got the rest of our meals together.

Several of the other diners had ordered the same meal I did, and the chef turned to the preparation of lobster. He put two live lobsters on a wooden chopping block and cut them in half lengthwise with a cleaver, then flipped the sections over and cleaned them quickly with the point of a knife. He poured a little more oil on the grill from a small teapot-shaped vessel and placed the sectioned lobster halves cut-side down on the hot grill, covering each section with a small stewpot lid to help steam the crustacean.

After a moment or two, the stewpot lids began to move around the grill. It gave us an eerie feeling: apparently, the muscle tissue of the lobsters reacted to the hot steel and edged away from it, with enough force to cause the lids to move. The chef grilled our filets as the pot lids roamed around. When the filets were done, he obliquely sliced each filet and slid a stack of small medallions onto a plate for each of us. Using long tongs, he recaptured the stew pot lids and flipped each one sequentially to reveal a bright red, beautifully cooked lobster half. These he put on our plates. Guests who ordered the pork or scallops were served their meals at roughly the same time.

We were provided with small knives with which to section the lobster, and we dined on beef medallions, slivered grilled veggies and chunks of lobster, slipping in a little rice periodically and washing it down with the warm sake. Dessert was grilled apples and peaches with walnuts, served in a bowl and topped with vanilla ice cream.

Dinner cost about \$40, lots of money at that time but less than half of what the meal would have cost in a Japanese restaurant.

95. A HIKE TO THE CONSULATE IN LA PAZ

On my first trip to La Paz, Bolivia, I was accompanied to post by BU1 Bill Lampman, a Seabee Builder. I wanted to get familiar with the Post and our mission was comprehensive lockwork on that visit, checking all of the containers in the building as we reset the combinations. Our Embassy at that time was in an old bank building, about eight stories high, and our Consulate was about half a mile away up a small hill.

The elevation of La Paz is 11,913 feet. The airport is *above* the city on the top of a mountain. At one time, we were told, the Embassy used to meet incoming personnel with an oxygen tank and mask to help them breathe until they adjusted to the altitude.

The Embassy was pretty dirty inside, even dirtier than some of the Embassies in Africa I had previously supported. The Marine Booth was interesting: a raised plywood floor had been added *after* our equipment cabinets were installed, and there was no room to roll the cabinets out for service. The Optima cabinet on the right was flaking paint and had a hole in its front panel from a shotgun slug. There was an unlocked safe in the booth, but you couldn't open the safe door because of the raised floor. The booth carpeting was stained by several coffee spills and there was a lot of junk like empty soda cans and newspapers thrown behind the cabinets. There were two executive chairs in the Marine Booth, something I had never seen before, and the Marine on duty was sitting down. On the wall to the left of the Marine Guard was a medium-sized blue fire alarm panel. Its power light was on, but none of the other lights were illuminated.

Our equipment was in fair condition. The black and white CCTV systems were grainy but usable, the monitors were old and dusty but they worked. The pan and tilt controls worked, the door control system worked and there were a few alarm systems installed. As we walked through the building, it became apparent that it was a serious fire trap: above the suspended ceilings, there was a lot of dry wood that would have caught fire very quickly. Loose wiring ran throughout the ceiling areas.

There was no RSO in La Paz at that time. I checked in with the Admin Officer/PSO, told him what we were there to do and asked him if he had any security maintenance issues. He said that a shredder in the Consulate was jammed and asked if we could take a look at it while we were in town. I was intrigued by the partially-working fire panel and asked him if I might look at that as well.

Inside the fire panel, all the zone wires that connected the alarm panel to the smoke and heat detectors all over the building had been run in through the top of the panel but were not connected; the wires were just hanging there. It was apparently a new panel that had been

“installed” by a local fire company, who did manage to get the power light working by plugging in the panel. I got a ladder, opened up a smoke detector on the second floor and found that the same situation existed throughout the building. Whoever put in the fire alarm panel did not know how to wire it to its sensors.

I went back to the Admin Officer and explained my findings. I took the Admin Officer to the Marine Booth to see what I was talking about. We then sent a telegram to FBO/FIRE , explaining the situation. In the Department’s response, they said they would prioritize La Paz on their installation list. We then started our lockwork effort, which took us to the end of the first day at post.

On the second day, we continued with the lockwork. We each worked our way through the floors to which we had access, servicing locks and changing combinations and door slides. There were not a great number of safes at post, and we finished by the end of the day.

On our last day in La Paz, we decided to walk up to the Consulate in the morning , service their three safes and try to fix the shredder. Bill took his Builder’s tool box with him and we started our hike.

About halfway up the hill, Bill stopped me. I was winded, but he was carrying a toolbox. Bill was gasping for air and needed to sit down. Both of us were experiencing severe oxygen deprivation and it took us five minutes of resting before we were ready to walk any higher.

Stepping into the consulate, we noticed a large two-foot by two-foot pass-through door through the hard line on the far side of the Visa line where the Cashier was located. It was made of two panels of ballistic Lexan , each hinged on one side and secured by SafeMasters deadbolts on the inside of each door. This was the only “hole” in a ballistic visa wall I had ever seen, and I was intrigued. There was, I was informed, a reason for the door.

The money in Bolivia at that time was worth very, very little, but the national bank would not print big denomination bills. Instead, people paid for things with stacks and stacks and stacks of small bills, often grouped in bundles of fifty with a bank sticker wrapped around the stack. To pay for a visa to the U.S. at the current exchange rate, tourists needed to bring a shopping bag full of money to the Consulate, hence the pass-through. All of this currency would not fit into the cashier’s drawer, so it stayed in bags on the floor of a back room during the day and was counted after the Consulate closed to the public.

We serviced the safes, un-jammed and cleaned the shredder and went back to the Embassy. We took turns carrying the toolbox back down the hill, so that both of us might live.

96. VISITING THE FORBIDDEN CITY WITH PETER USTINOV

I had always wanted to see China, and I got my wish when I was assigned to Seoul as the RSEM. John Jomeruck was the SEO in Beijing when I first arrived in Korea, and he was about to leave; I offered to fill in for John until Field and Jenny Cooper arrived to replace him. My family was still in the States, as my children needed to finish the school year before coming to Seoul, so I was available.

John took me on a short tour of places to eat and places to buy things. He took me on a tour of the Embassy and explained our security provisions for China. He wished me well and then he left, and I was the acting SEO for China. Poof!

On the first weekend I was in Beijing, I made a beeline for the Forbidden City. I made many other trips there on subsequent visits to China, but I will always remember my first visit.

Visits to the Forbidden City, where the Chinese emperors and their families lived, start with a trip to Tiananmen Square. The Forbidden City abuts the North Side of the square, and you approach it through a huge red gate. There is a ticket booth inside the gate, and after you buy a ticket you are offered the rental of a cassette player and a headset for about \$10. I opted to rent a recorder, and emerged from the Front Gate with a headset, my recorder and a map.

All through the complex there were small numbered signs in faded orange, set in small steel drums that could be moved from place to place to guide the tour through different routes while the constant flow of renovations took place. Visitors were to stand by the orange signs in sequence, hear a narrative about what they were looking at, pause their recorder when that segment of the tour was complete and move on to the next marker. I believe the first tour I took had fourteen stops on it. I walked up to sign No. 1 and turned on my recorder.

The Narrator was Peter Ustinov. He began to tell me about the history of the city, about the vista that appeared in front of me, and how to identify “our” next stop. We were a team, Peter and I, and we were about to explore the Emperor’s City together.

The front court of the Forbidden City was constructed of paved sheets of carved marble, with a small stream winding through a channel in the marble traversed by five bridges, also made of carved marble. There was a central bridge and walkway for the exclusive use of the Emperor, carved in great detail with a series of dragons chasing pearls. On the other side of the bridges were a series of tiered steps leading up across several platforms to what appeared to be a large building, but was in fact another gate. In front of the building was a pair of huge bronze lions, a male with a globe under its paw and a female (according to Ustinov) “feeding its cub through her claws”. This was the Gate of Supreme Harmony, through which visitors called to an audience

with the Emperor needed to pass. Each visitor awkwardly stepped over a high red-painted threshold, a pattern repeated throughout the Forbidden City. (The Emperor was *carried* across these obstacles, of course, whereas lesser mortals were apt to scrape their knees and shins on the thresholds as they entered.)

After a walk down the staircase on the other side of the gate, I hiked across a flagstone courtyard designed to hold 90,000 people. On the other side of this courtyard was an immense building, the huge “Hall of Supreme Harmony” where New Year celebrations were observed and in which the results of the national scholastic examinations were announced. On the other side of this hall, I walked down a marble staircase, walked across a shorter courtyard, and walked up to another hall, the “Hall of Middle Harmony”, which was used as a changing room by the Emperor when he presided in ceremonial dress over state ceremonies.

The pattern was repeated on the North side of this hallway: over the threshold, down a set of marble steps, across a courtyard, up a set of steps and into the final hall, the “Hall of Inner Harmony” where the national “finals” of China’s scholastic exam were held.

On the North side of this hall, as I descended, there was a monumental block of marble running parallel to the stairs, carved with scenes of five-clawed dragons chasing pearls of fire. This 200-ton block was the largest piece of stone in the Forbidden City.

There were three other smaller halls past this point on the tour, but they were under renovation and Mr. Ustinov and I had seen enough halls for a day. Instead of moving directly forward, we were routed to the left after passing through the Gate of Heavenly Purity. This routing put us on a long, paved street which led through one of the living areas of the Forbidden City. Here courtiers had small homes, concubines were housed, eunuchs were placed in dormitories and teachers were quartered. All of the doors into these living areas were closed, but you could see the tops of trees over the walls.

At the end of the long road we came to a wall. I could see the strangest building in the entire city over the wall, which somehow was not explained by Peter. This was the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers, which is remarkable for having three different roofs of different-colored tiles and four large gilt bronze dragons perched on the upper yellow tile roof.

Emperor Qianlong, the longest-living Qing dynasty Emperor, made a lot of interesting changes within the Forbidden City. One of these was the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers, a shrine using different architecture than the rest of the city and the highest point within the city walls. Supposedly, residents of the city who had left their families elsewhere in China to come and live in Peiking could climb the stairs to the upper balcony in this building and look out over the city walls to the surrounding town and countryside. I recommend looking the Pavilion up on

Google: it was never open to the public while I was in China, but it supposedly cost a great deal of money to build and its gardens were reportedly exquisite.

Again under the guidance of Mr. Ustinov, I walked along another long corridor to reach the Northwest corner of the city. This area was converted to a retirement home by Emperor Qianlong, who lived there for many years after he abdicated. This area had an interesting Karst limestone garden and a number of small pavilions. Walking into one of these, I saw a flat tile floor through which a controlled stream about a foot wide wandered back and forth.

Emperor Qianlong liked drinking games. He would sit in this pavilion, probably on silk cushions, surrounded by concubines and courtiers. As they talked, a cup of liquor would come floating down the little stream and would stop by someone, who would sing a song, compose a poem, tell a joke or otherwise contribute to the gathering. If the group was pleased, the cup would move on to another person (with the stream flow manipulated by servants) who would be similarly challenged. If the group was displeased, that person emptied the cup and another started down the stream. It seemed like a good way to pass an afternoon.

Within the Imperial living quarters in the Northwest corner of the city, the Emperor's bedroom was on display. All of the furniture in this area was made of dark purple sandalwood, exquisitely carved: dragons for the Emperor and Phoenixes for the Empress. The Imperial bed was curtained with a famous Chinese theme embroidered on the fabric: "One hundred children playing". Every one of the children on those curtains was a boy.

Leaving the Imperial living area, our tour was routed to the Gate of Divine Prowess at the North end of the city. Here I turned in my cassette player, bought a coffee cup with an Imperial Dragon on it and stepped out onto a little plaza where I caught a taxi back to my hotel.

97. JFK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

On my first tour in Abidjan, we did not have access to an APO for the purpose of sending and receiving packages. This limited our ability to buy things from the United States through catalogs, which may not seem like much of an imposition until you need something rare and unique from the United States that you can only acquire through international mail.

During my second year in Abidjan, SEO Stuart Keen arrived at post. With him was his wife, daughter, son and a pretty fancy car: a two-door full size 1976 Chrysler Cordoba with a gigantic engine and soft (white) leather seats (some of you old-timers may remember ads with Ricardo Montalban singing the praises of the “soft, Corinthian leather”). Stu may not have owned the only Chrysler in the Ivory Coast, but he probably had the only one with a “lean burn engine” which took special spark plugs.

My wife returned to the States in November 1978 to spend Thanksgiving with her family, expecting our second child in January. I planned to go back to Washington for the baby’s birth around Christmas time. Just before I left post, Stu asked me if I could buy some spark plugs for his car and bring them back with me. I asked him to write down the parts he needed and took his wish list back to the States.

Our son did not arrive on time and I was running out of vacation days. I asked Don Fischer for a project to work on and he asked me to design a Computer Security program for the Department of State. I put together an outline for such an organization, describing the duties of each of the positions and the functions of the several parts of the office. As I was finishing up the outline, my son arrived (at over 10 pounds) and I got ready to return to Abidjan.

On the day before I traveled, I remembered Stu’s request and hurriedly went out to buy him some spark plugs. I had trouble finding the parts he wanted at the first two parts stores I visited, so I went to a Chrysler dealership, explained my problem and bought 16 new lean burn plugs from their parts department. I was a bit concerned about being over my weight allowance with my suitcase, so I put the spark plugs in my briefcase.

My trip back had me leaving from Washington National airport and flying to JFK in New York, where I was to change flights and travel to Africa on a United Airlines 747. Processing through National on domestic flights was easy in those pre-9/11 days. I was able to check my suitcase through to Abidjan, and only needed to clear customs and immigration in New York.

Coming into the outgoing screening area in the United terminal building at JFK, I placed my briefcase on the conveyer belt of an X-ray system and walked through a metal detector. The X-ray line had a lot of luggage on it and (in those same pre-9/11 days) I was able to actually

walk back around behind the X-ray system. I looked at its black and white CRT screen from about fifteen feet away over the right shoulder of the operator, an African-American woman. I saw purses, briefcases and back packs go through, each a jumble of possessions; none of these bothered the operator or the armed guard at her side.

When my briefcase with its 16 spark plugs hit the X-ray, the screening crew got very tense. It really looked like a piece of luggage filled with 50-caliber ammunition. The guard reached down and flicked the safety loop off the revolver he was wearing and started to look around for a perpetrator. The operator, however, took a deep breath and reached over to touch his arm. She said: "No, Hon. False alarm. Spark plugs". I identified myself and explained my unusual carry-on, mentioning that parts for Chrysler Cordobas were hard to come by in the Ivory Coast. They asked me to open the briefcase, checked out its contents and my credentials, and sent me on to my connecting flight.

98. MURTALA MUHAMMED AIRPORT LAGOS

Another airport story. I have lots of these, as do most of you...

Like many other countries, Nigeria had its principal international airport located outside the county's capital city. When the jet age arrived, the country tried to keep the existing airport in service by lengthening its runways. Nigeria's capital during my tour was Lagos, a town I may have mentioned in other stories, and the old airport was a great introduction to the city, especially on the way out.

A former British colony, Nigeria was the Land of Dash. The airport was structured so as to squeeze tips and bribes out of every passenger who passed through it. To leave the country, you arrived at the airport with your suitcase, to be met at the curb by a porter. For a tip, that porter would take your luggage to the check-in desk and leave you there. You checked in, transited border control, and went in to a lounge where the suitcases for your flight were set aside on the floor. You identified your bag to another porter, who (for a tip) moved it over to a screening area. Most passengers were required to open their luggage at this point, where guards rummaged through carefully-packed clothing, looking for anything of value that they might confiscate as "unsafe"; diplomats were usually exempt from this search. If you wanted to have your suitcase placed on the baggage cart, however, you needed to tip the porter *behind* the screening table for the additional handling.

Once your baggage was on its way, you hurried over to the departure lounge and stood closely by the door to the tarmac. Once your flight was called, you *ran* to the plane, showed your ticket to the steward at the bottom of the ramp, *ran* up the ramp, hurriedly found your seat, strapped in and opened a book or a magazine. The plane rapidly filled up with passengers, every single seat. After about five to ten minutes, several Nigerian families would get on the plane, whisper to the stewardess and hand her their tickets in an envelope with some money. The bribed stewardess would walk up and down the overbooked flight looking for passengers to throw off. The prescribed approach was to avoid catching the stewardess' eye. If she stopped at your seat to tell you to move, you would show her your ticket and put it back in your pocket. If she persisted, you would show her your passport and say "Diplomat" rather loudly, looking angrily at her for disturbing your reading. Usually, this kept you on the plane.

In the 1960's, a lot of oil was discovered in Nigeria around the Niger River delta. In the 1970's, many oil wells were bored to exploit this find and the magnitude of the deposit became better understood: Nigeria was very, very rich. Its government decided to use some of the oil profits to improve the country, and contracted with the West for some surveys. Superhighways? Hire a German firm used to building Autobahns to come in and build a highway system for

Nigeria. Skyscrapers? Hire European firms to design new buildings for the wealthy. For almost all of these projects, it quickly became apparent that concrete would be needed in great quantities. Nigeria needed cement to make concrete, so they ordered a lot of it. Their port facility, however, had only two berths for cargo ships. As you drove from the airport into the city, you could see more than a dozen freighters filled with cement sitting at anchor in the harbor area, waiting for their turn to unload.

With all that oil money, Nigeria wanted its new roads and skyscrapers and government buildings to be the best that money could buy. They sent teams to Europe and the United States looking for the best of things, including airports, and they settled on Amsterdam's Schipol Airport as the best in the world at that time. The Government of Nigeria contracted with the firm that built Schipol to come to Nigeria and build them an airport *exactly like* the one they built in Amsterdam, using the same plans. They started on this airport in the 1970's, with its runways across from those of the old airport, which became the city's domestic airport during my Abidjan tour.

The new airport (Murtala Muhammed International Airport) opened in 1979. After some of the other airports we had been traveling through, such as Conakry, the new facility was impressive. Moving fingers swung out from the terminal building to meet aircraft, moving walkways sped you along the route between arrival doors and the terminal, with many large CRT TV monitors showing you flight information along the walkway. When you reached the main building, there were escalators and elevators to move you between floors, fancy shops that had not yet opened but which carried names like Gucci and Cartier, polished floors and luxurious seating areas, quite unlike the old airport.

Between 1979, when the new airport opened, and 1981 when I left Abidjan, nearly every one of those modern new systems failed. There was no technical knowledge to repair modern electronic equipment in Nigeria, and the very irregular electrical power that characterized Lagos played hell with just about everything at the airport. Towards the end of my tour, the moving fingers had to be moved out by hand, the moving walkways were still, the CRTs were dark and all of the escalators had ceased to work.

Northern Nigeria is hot, dusty, arid and very poor. Nigerians from this region often seek work in other countries in order to send money back to their villages. The region is predominately Muslim, and the very populous country is filled with men and women who need to make the Hadj at least once in their lives, usually requiring air travel. Many of these personnel came from very rural areas of Nigeria where indoor plumbing is unknown. Those travelers regularly traversed the ultra-modern new airport with its shining new bathrooms.

The designers of Schipol had originally fitted those restrooms with energy-saving proximity switches that turned the bathroom lights on when someone walked in. Those switches

were among the first circuits to fail in the airport. Lines of rural travelers needing to use the rest rooms would walk into a pitch-black bathroom and, being unfamiliar with commodes, would simply use the floor and walk back to the lounge area. In short order, you learned to walk into the rest rooms very carefully, if at all, so as not to lose your footing on the slick marble floor. Floor mats outside the restrooms clearly indicated where passengers had wiped their feet on their way back to the terminal and, even if you wiped *your* feet as well, the odor of the new airport in Lagos stayed with you for quite a while on your way home.

99. FIXING THE FRONT DOOR IN AUCKLAND

As many of you are aware, I worked for DS as a WAE employee for 14 years after I retired in 1995. WAE work was a great fit for my follow-on job as a science teacher in Montgomery County: in the summers, when many of my new colleagues were teaching summer school, I could sometimes count on a trip overseas with WAE hours, travel and per diem. I would return to school in the Fall somewhat richer, refreshed and full of new ideas for teaching classes.

My wife came into the Department through a job with FBIS in Panama. She continued to work for the government after I retired from DS. In 2003, she snagged an assignment as a Political Officer in Wellington, New Zealand. I tried to obtain a leave of absence from Montgomery County Public Schools, where I had been teaching for six years, but those leaves were limited to one-year stretches. I was forced to resign, but I happily had enough time vested in the Maryland State Teaching system to qualify for a *second* retirement check. And then, amazingly, I discovered that Montgomery County *also* pays its retiring teachers a small stipend. I left teaching with two little monthly annuity checks for the rest of my life, together equaling a modest car payment.

When I reached Wellington, I offered to serve as the SEO in Residence in New Zealand, with responsibilities for Wellington, Auckland and the National Science Foundation's Antarctica Portal in Christchurch. Administratively, I would fall under ESO Canberra, but my presence in New Zealand would save Canberra some nuisance trips to Wellington for mag lock realignments, lockouts, CCTV swapouts and the like. I was limited to 40 hours per week (all WAEs are) but I had a steady job as a dependent for the three years we were in New Zealand.

I was an uncertain quantity to the RSO, Bill Leverett, who was reluctant to include me in his security program. I asked ESO Canberra to vouch for me, and I broke the ice by solving a knotty engineering problem in the DAO office. In the second week we were at post, DAO asked for help: their principal access door opened each time someone in the office closed the control door on a four-door safe. I laughed all the way upstairs, and was carefully watched by everyone in the DAO office as I moved the safe to show them a door release button on the wall behind it. (They had rearranged the office a couple of years earlier.) DAO and the RSO were then convinced that I might be useful.

Shortly after my arrival in Wellington, post was supposed to receive a new Facilities Maintenance Officer/GSO. The man scheduled for the assignment could not get a medical clearance, however. Post was about to embark on its Security Enhancement Upgrade, a big project involving a new steel fence around the compound, two exterior gate houses, two huge

Delta Barricades and compound lighting. Wellington did not have a Marine detachment in 2003, and the Embassy relied on local guards and a key card system for protection and access control. The Admin Counselor had explored my background; he asked me if I would be willing to take on a job as the Contracting Officer's Representative. I explained that I was already enrolled on the WAE books, but I was interested in the FBO project. We worked out an arrangement between DS and FBO (OBO, by that time) whereby I would work some hours for DS each week and some for FBO, with the 40-hour per week cap still in force. I had to keep tight track of my time and had to file two different WAE vouchers every two weeks, but suddenly I had *two* jobs, one of which was of high importance to my new post.

The RSO, for some reason, was reluctant to let me service Auckland. Once the big security project started, I did not have time to travel, and I was busy explaining requirements to the NZ general contractor (especially where the Delta Barriers were concerned). The project proceeded: the steel fence went up around the Embassy with two large rolling gates, two concrete guard booths with screening areas were constructed and two Delta barriers were set in massive concrete footings. I was involved with hydraulic hose installations, Delta barricade wiring, door control wiring, negotiations with the Contractor and a New Zealand architect as well as my SEO duties. My wife did not like me walking around the job site wearing a tool belt; however, doing so saved me a lot of trips for tools and I persevered.

Towards the end of the construction project, the Facilities Manager/GSO showed up and took over the contract from me. At almost the same time, it was announced that Wellington would be receiving a Marine Detachment. Our SEP contractor received the contract for the construction of the Marine booth, a new front entrance and the installation of a number of new ballistic doors. By this time, I was working well with the Junior RSO, Buddy Carroll, who was on his first overseas assignment. Together we surveyed for a Marine House, expanded the SIC room and hosted installation crews who arrived to install all the equipment the Marines would need.

Buddy was given the RSO job in Wellington after Bill left for Bangkok: Post asked that the ARSO be allowed to stay. Towards the end of our tour, Auckland called the RSO for help: the front door to the Consulate was broken and was in an always-open mode. Buddy asked if I could assist, and Canberra sent me travel money.

We were in a tall building in Auckland, and the main doors to the Consulate were double Insulgard doors with Von Duprin EL-33 locks. The main control door on the right was always open: an interior rod in the door to the right had broken and the Pullman bolt just flapped back and forth. There were no spares at post and the broken steel rod was threaded at either end with SAE threads of different gauges: New Zealand was almost entirely metric. I disassembled the lock, pocketed the broken part and went out to look for a machine shop.

Auckland calls itself “The City of Sails” with good reason. The Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean pinch the North Island of New Zealand tightly at Auckland’s location, resulting in harbors for sail boats on different oceans at opposite sides of the city. The huge harbor area on the Pacific side is full of impressive sailboats. New Zealand has won the America’s Cup in the past, and there are 12-meter America’s Cup sailboats available for rent in the anchorage. (Take your wallet.) They also build custom yachts in Auckland, and it is a beautiful experience to watch one of these creations head out to sea for the first time.

Companies that provide parts and service for ships are called “Chandlers”. I reasoned that a sailboat putting into Auckland might have a problem like mine and might be able to affect a repair by actually making a part. I went to two chandlers without success, then found a larger facility down on the water.

A little background here. In 1984, NZ Prime Minister David Lange announced that New Zealand would no longer accept visits from ships powered by nuclear energy or carrying nuclear weapons. Since the U.S. Navy does not say which of its ships are carrying nukes, this amounted to a closing of New Zealand ports to our ships. This greatly strained our formerly close ties to New Zealand as well as their ties to Australia under the ANZAC agreements. We continued to work with NZ on a number of other fronts, but the City of Auckland lost a lot of business from visiting American carriers and other warships.

I walked into the third chandler’s store and looked around. The store was full of life preservers, sailboat fittings, rope, advertisements for sails, navigation gear, radar systems, oars, ship-to-shore radios and a huge variety of other nautical stuff. I walked up to the counter, where a large Kiwi behind the counter was talking to another customer. They basically ignored me as I walked around the store. When their conversation was over, the store owner asked me what I needed.

I put the broken part on the counter and said I needed a part manufactured for the American Consulate. By way of introduction, I put my Diplomatic Passport on the counter. The man’s entire personality seemed to change.

He began to tell me about his father, who had been a New Zealand soldier in Vietnam for a year. He talked about how his father had said for years that David Lange had made a tremendous error that had split New Zealand and the United States apart. I mentioned that I was also a Vietnam veteran; my Army unit had a teletype circuit to Vung Tau, where his father had been assigned. Continuing to talk, he picked up the broken part, locked the door to his shop and said “Come on, mate. Let’s get you fixed.” We walked out the back door of the chandler’s shop and entered a small building behind it, which contained a beautifully-equipped machine shop.

The Kiwi gauged the thread at either end of the broken part, measured the length of the broken piece and found a cylindrical bar of stainless steel to work with. As he worked, he kept apologizing to me for the rupture in our country's relationships. He talked about watching American warships arrive as a boy, and how his father had enjoyed taking him aboard the ships when they were opened to the public. He trimmed the rod and put it on a lathe. He used Vernier calipers to measure the diameter of the broken piece. Then he trimmed down the rod on the lathe until it exactly matched the broken part. Finally, he threaded the rod, using two different dies to thread the two ends. We walked back to the shop, with me expressing the hope that our countries would find a way around the nuclear stalemate. All this took about an hour and a half.

I asked how much the manufactured part would cost. He refused to take any money for it. I went back to the Consulate, restored the EL-33 to working order, and caught a flight back to Wellington.

I read in a paper several months ago that New Zealand will again be welcoming American Naval vessels to their country.

100. THE LAGOS CONSULAR CASHIER DOOR

From 1978 until 1980, I watched our new Embassy in Lagos, Nigeria take shape. I have posted several stories to date about the experiences of moving to the new building, installing equipment there and trying out the FBO-designed screening lane and sally ports.

Even brand-new buildings, however, sometimes need improvements. Nigeria was an interesting place. In particular, members of the Yorurba tribe (concentrated around the city of Lagos) tended to be argumentative. It seemed to be a facet of the men of this tribe that they were not about to lose an argument or take “No” for an answer. In discussions, they would interrupt, raise their voices, shout and otherwise try to prevail by force. If they did lose an argument, they would try to raise the problem to a higher level by bringing in a relative who was a lawyer or who had a high place in the government to argue along with them.

When Nigerians came into our Consular Section to apply for visas to the United States, they sat in a waiting room and waited to be called to a series of windows. Their interview with a Consular Officer was held at one window; initially they were told at that window whether they qualified for a visa or not. If they did not qualify, they would argue about it. This tended to slow down the processing of other applicants. Some denied applicants would leave the building and return a day or two later with a relative who worked in the Foreign Ministry or Ministry of Defense, and both those citizens would argue until they had to be asked to leave the Embassy by a Consular Officer or a Marine.

The Consular Section then tried a different tactic. They would send all visa applicants, whether or not they received their visa, down to the Cashier at the last window in the Section. At that point, they were informed if they were eligible for a visa, and what their fees were, or were told there that they did not qualify. If an applicant began to argue at that point, the Cashier’s FE/BR window was equipped with a drop-down blind on the inside. The Cashier would simply drop the blind to cut the argument short. Even this did not work very well: angry visa applicants would stomp back to the window where their initial interview was held, interrupt the proceedings at that window and threaten to bring in their uncle, perhaps a General in the Ministry of Defense. Again, they often needed to be escorted out of the building.

The Embassy petitioned FBO to install an interior cinder block wall in front of the Cashier’s window, creating a small, private enclosure around the window to the Cashier. An armored door was installed in this block wall to admit visa applicants to an audience with the Cashier; there was no interior hardware on that door. To the side, FBO cut a doorway into the exterior concrete wall of the building and installed a solid FEBR door in this opening. Outside the door, they installed a short flight of concrete steps to reach the Embassy sidewalk from the

somewhat elevated door. There again was an interior panic bar that opened the FEBR door, but no external hardware on the door.

After this installation, all Visa applicants were again channeled to the Cashier for final processing. If an Applicant was to be denied a visa, he would first hear about it from the Cashier. Angry, such citizens would yell at the Cashier, who would simply drop the blind. The angry applicant would first try to get back into the Consular area but would find no hardware on the door behind them. Turning to their left, they saw another door. They would hit the crash bar on the FEBR door, step through the door find themselves outside the building. As they stepped out, the FEBR door would close behind them. Like the other door, there was no installed hardware to open it. The sidewalk at the bottom of the steps led only to a turnstile that opened to another sidewalk off Embassy grounds. This routing gave the Consular Officer enough time to advise the local guard and Post One about the Applicant, who was not readmitted to the Embassy.

The Consular Office and the RSO's office *loved* the new door. Confrontations with angry Visa Applicants became a thing of the past, and it was no longer necessary to send in a couple of Marines to escort citizens of Nigeria out the front door of our Embassy. The flow of visas improved, and all was right with the World.

101. VISITING THE FORBIDDEN CITY WITH MICHAEL CAINE

After my first visit to China, I was busy elsewhere in the East Asia region. I stayed in touch with Field Cooper in Beijing by telegram. We had a secure voice link, but our experience was that the telephone line between Seoul and Beijing was crystal-clear while we were setting up the calls, but as soon as we switched over to secure operation the noise level on the line climbed to a point where the two phones would no longer synchronize. How could this have happened?

After visiting all five of the other ESOs in East Asia, I returned to China. We had five facilities in China at that time (Hong Kong was still a British Crown Colony) and I tried to visit a different Consulate each time I came through Beijing. On my second visit, however, I used a Saturday to go and visit the Forbidden City again.

This time, my recorded tour Narrator was Michael Caine.

Our tour progressed just as my first tour with Peter Ustinov went forward, proceeding from one numbered orange marker to another until we were again in front of the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers. At this point, however, because the Imperial living quarters were being cleaned, we were routed into the Northeast side of the Forbidden City, where new delights were waiting.

The first surprise was the Nine Dragon Wall, a huge screen of dragons in relief made of fired ceramic tiles. The screen, according to Michael, had been erected in the late 1700s to provide privacy to the Imperial family. It was nearly 12 feet high and almost 100 feet in length, and featured a golden Imperial Dragon in the center of the screen and at each end surrounding other dragons of purple and yellow hue. From the end of this screen, we turned North to visit several small museums within the Forbidden City.

The first of these was the Hall of Clocks and Watches, a strange facility with some 200 clocks and watches on display. I was most impressed by the giant water clock, of Chinese origin, but there were many other watches and mantle clocks on display. Most of these came from Switzerland, France and Germany and were very gaudy. There was one Chinese-made clock which could hold a Chinese writing brush and which would use it to write a poem in Chinese calligraphy at the stroke of Noon.

We (Michael and I) then slipped into a museum showing a collection of bronze pieces. I had seen a similar display at the Freer Gallery in Washington, and this collection had Shang Dynasty cooking vessels, drinking vessels and musical percussion instruments made of bronze. If you are ever sight-seeing in Washington, I recommend the Freer and its many rooms of Asian art, as well as the underground Asian Museum beneath the courtyard outside and slightly to the

East of the Freer gallery. I enjoy Chinese art: I have a fake Shang Dynasty *Ting* bronze cooking pot on an altar table inside the front door of our house. (It was originally an ice bucket.)

Other Beijing mini-museums (a Jade Museum and a Museum of Paintings) were closed during this visit. I peeked into the windows of a Ceramic Museum, but it too was being cleaned and was not open to the public. Knowing that additional recorded tours would be required to guide English speakers through these additional displays, I wondered who the next actor to record might be.

Michael then guided me over to a fabulous Chinese Opera theater on the palace grounds. The Dowager Empress Cixi was apparently very fond of opera, and had this three-story building constructed to stage a palace troupe and visiting Opera companies from other cities in China. I could imagine rushing from floor to floor in my Bao Zheng costume (earlier story) and singing to an audience from several levels of the building.

From the Opera House, we again went North to see a small well. Per the recorded tape, the Empress Cixi ordered the Pearl Concubine (who was the apple of the Emperor Regent's eye) drowned in the well while rolled up in a rug. Seeing the well brought home the notion that the Forbidden City was a place of intrigue, where real people lived, real crimes happened and events that shaped China on the outside were crafted.

After the well, I went back to the Pavilion of the Rain of Flowers to take some pictures, then headed for the North Gate. As I walked, Mr. Caine told me about the guard tower on the Northeast corner of the Forbidden City, the architect of which took his inspiration from a Chinese bird cage.

There is a fabulous film out, [The Last Emperor](#), which some of you have no doubt seen. The film takes you to a number of the places I visited within the Forbidden City, but it fills the steps of the entry halls with Chinese soldiers in Imperial Uniforms, the streets with eunuchs, the halls with courtiers and concubines all wearing traditional Chinese dress. The movie helps bring this fabulous area to life and is a recommended show to watch if you encounter it on Netflix or YouTube.

102. BREAKFAST IN KUALA LUMPUR

Another breakfast story...

On perhaps my third trip out of Seoul, I swung South to visit Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. In an area initially covered by ESC Manila, five ESOs had been established in the East Asia and Pacific region. I wanted to see each of those facilities, talk to the assigned Officers and Seabees, set up Work Requirements Statements and learn about their needs.

ESO Kuala Lumpur put me up at the Holiday Inn near the city's race track. The ESO was a little apologetic: the hotel kitchen was being reconstructed, and the dining arrangements were impacted by the changes being made. The hotel could still prepare meals, good meals in fact, but to provide a dining room they had rented two very large house trailers which were parked nose-to-nose outside the front of the hotel. For breakfast, you took the elevator down from your room, walked around the construction and through the lobby, then out a glass door that led to a little bridge which took you over to the dining area.

There were *two* house trailers butted together. The one on the right was set up for Western breakfasts and the one on the left was set up for Asian breakfasts. The mingled odors from the two sides were unusual and intriguing. Beyond this, since the food was set up away from the kitchen, it was a buffet style breakfast on both sides with the food hidden in covered ball-shaped stainless steel chafing dishes to keep it hot. On the Western breakfast side, each food receptacle was neatly marked with an incised plastic sign hung on a chain: "Scrambled Eggs", "Sausage Links", "Hot Cakes" and the like.

The Asian side had very similar signs, but I couldn't read them: they were printed in Malay. The only solution was to open the dish, take look at it and perhaps try a spoonful to guess at the contents. The first serving dish read "Belut Salai"; this was recognizable as Smoked Eel, and was tasty. The second two bowls were placed together; they read "Bubur Cina" and "Ladu Kukus": Chinese porridge and Steamed Chinese Dumplings, both delicious. The fourth dish was "Kari Ikan Merah" which I had to ask a waiter about: this was Curried Red Snapper. The final serving dish was a work of art. There was a ladle in a gravy boat to its side dipped in something of a deep red color, and there were red drippings on the white cotton tablecloth under the dish. A tentacle protruded out from under the cover on each side of the lid, and the sign read "Sofong Rebus". Summoning a little courage, I opened the dish, to find it full of Stewed Cuttlefish.

The Malay people seem to be a mixture of several Asian strains, and it's a good combination: their ladies have gorgeous, exotic faces and are tall and elegant; their men are generally well-built and friendly in appearance. I posted another Kuala Lumpur story along these lines: story four, for any of you who missed it.

103. MARY RYAN'S DESK

Another lockwork story:

In the last year of my tour in Abidjan, we had a change of Ambassadors. Our new Ambassador was Nancy Rawls, a friendly workhorse of a lady who came to post with a major illness and did a wonderful job, returning to the U.S. periodically for medical treatments. Ambassador Rawls was the sort of person who walked around the Embassy gradually, visiting every office, meeting every employee and learning about their work, their families and their aspirations. The Ambassador, on being assigned to our post, requested that a very dynamic Administrative Counselor with whom she had previously worked be allowed to accompany her to the Ivory Coast. That Counselor was Mary Ryan, a tall, confident and gregarious woman who was also a great addition to our Embassy. Of this dynamic pair, the Ambassador was the first to arrive, with Mary arriving several weeks later.

On the morning that Mary Ryan reported to the Embassy, I received a call at my desk. She introduced herself, asked if I was the person in charge of the ESO, and wanted to know where we were located in the building. I answered her and invited her to come see our spaces any time. Mary then explained almost apologetically that she was locked out of her big wooden government desk. I said that I would be there to help in a minute or two. She said that I did not need to come myself, and could just send a Seabee, but I wanted to meet her and thought I could solve her problem. I dug out my lock pick kit and headed downstairs.

Picking locks was not a skill taught at the lock school I attended. In the process of working in Embassies, however, it quickly became apparent to most of us that the ability to open pinned locks could frequently be very useful. We found them on unclassified cabinets, on gates and doors, securing radios in Embassy cars and a host of other places. Looking through the GSA catalog, I found two lock pick kits listed for government employees, a small kit and a very elaborate kit. I ordered several of each and gave an elaborate kit to each Seabee, keeping a kit for myself. Thereafter, from time to time, I tried to use the kit to pick locks. This was before the Internet was available to us, but I read two books on lock-picking techniques and tried to stay current on picking mechanisms and techniques for addressing pinned locks. I had the best success with raking techniques.

When I arrived in Mary Ryan's office, I could see that she had spent a little time trying to open the drawers of her desk by herself: there were a couple of bent paper clips and a letter opener on the top surface. The desk was not new, but it was massive and all three drawers were secured by a single locked drawer at the top. I introduced myself, welcomed Mary to the Post,

and listened to her express frustration at starting her tour with a locked desk. I took my lock pick kit out of my pocket, set it on the desk and sat down at her chair.

I don't think Mary had ever seen a government lock pick kit before. The elaborate kit looked like a big wallet with several fold-out pouches containing picks of different sizes and shapes, tension wrenches of different sizes, tiny saw blades for removing broken-off keys, picks with handles and without handles and a couple of special tools for working on locks with cylindrical keys. Her desk looked as if a dental surgeon had set up a tray for work on a root canal. I looked at the desk lock, decided to try and rake it, chose my favorite pick for raking and an appropriate tension wrench. With an interested Mary Ryan watching me intently, I put some tension on the cylinder and tried a rake across the pins. The lock opened on the first try.

Mary was stunned. (So was I.) I gave credit to our Departmental training program and to blind luck, then put my kit away and talked with her for about fifteen minutes on our staffing, territory, assignments and problems. I then went back to my office.

For the rest of my time in Abidjan, Mary supported any recommendations I made for the post, helped to facilitate problems like multiple-entry visas and long-term visas with the Consular Section, supported Post efforts to provide new furniture for arriving SEOs and Seabees and otherwise backed us to the best of her considerable ability. Mary later became the Ambassador to Swaziland and the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs; the Mary A. Ryan Award for Outstanding Public Service is named after her.

104. EATING KIBBI IN CARACAS

On my last trip to Caracas in 1986, I headed a small team whose objective was to install the Security Enhancement package for the Embassy's Annex building. With me on the trip was a new Seabee builder from Panama named Rick. This young man was single, was already enjoying his tour and was a skilled builder. I had never seen Tapcon fasteners before, and Rick showed me how they could be used to securely mount a television support arm in less than half the time it would normally have taken. Rick was very pleasant, laughed a lot and was good company on the road.

I have spent quite a lot of time in the Middle East, and Rick looked like an Arab to me. He was light-skinned, had piercing eyes and a prominent Arab-like nose. However, he was from the Midwest, had an English last name (Johnston?) and had no accent whatsoever. During a slow moment in our installation activities, I asked about his background and wondered aloud how he came to look so much like an Arab with a name like Johnston. He said: "It's easy. I was adopted. My birth parents were Lebanese." Having graduated from high school in Beirut, I asked him about his familiarity with Lebanese cuisine. He admitted that he had never eaten any of it.

I asked the Administrative Office of the Embassy if there was a Lebanese restaurant in Caracas. It turned out that there was, down the hill from us in the Miraflores district. I made dinner reservations for two people at the restaurant two days later on. I told the Seabee that I thought he might like the food, and I would be a guide as to where in Lebanon each dish came from and whether or not the food was well prepared.

The restaurant was a strange place. It was in a building that was not very wide, like a row house. There was a small stage at the back of the restaurant right next to the kitchen and a small bar up toward the front by the entry door. All of the remaining space was filled with small round tables that would seat four, set two tables deep on each side with a center aisle that stretched all the way to the stage.

We sat down, ordered Polar beer, and perused the menu. I ordered hummus, some carrots and celery to dip in it, and plates of baba ganoush (roasted eggplant puree), kibbi (ground lamb with spices and pine nuts), tahini sauce for the kibbi, khubbs (mountain bread), falafel (fried bread with spices) and a shawarma cut in half, which we shared. Rick liked the food a lot and said we should eat there every night. I also liked the food, finding it very authentic. I called the owner of the restaurant over and greeted him first in Spanish, then in Arabic to express my enjoyment of the dinner: he was Lebanese. I lapsed back into Spanish to tell him about my

companion, his Lebanese background and his first experience with Lebanese food. The owner laughed and went back toward the kitchen.

As we were finishing our dinner, the lights dimmed and a group of four musicians came out onto the stage and sat on stools. They started playing Arabic music, with a woman in the group singing as the other three played. A small spotlight came on and a pretty young Arab girl in a belly dancer's costume slipped out of the kitchen door and began to dance. She did not have much of a belly, but she used her long hair, hips and torso very well. She was barefoot, about five foot five and wore flimsy pantaloons with an equally flimsy and short-cut blouse, both spangled with sequins. To help keep time while dancing, she wore an anklet with little bells above her right foot and similar bracelets on each arm.

The girl danced in front of the stage for a while, after which a row of dim ceiling lights that lit up the aisle came on, and she started to dance our way. Rick was enjoying the show and was clapping to the rhythm with other patrons of the club. The girl danced by us, caught the Seabee's eye, and kept on dancing. Just before she reached the door, she turned around, danced back our way and sat down on Rick's lap. He was delighted, laughed with her and was very embarrassed when she kissed him on the cheek, to the delight of the audience. The music came on again and she headed back to the stage, ending the show.

As we left, I asked Rick which of the food dishes he liked the best.

He said: "Food?"

End of Volume 1