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

AMBASSADOR JOYCE E. LEADER

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Leader.]

Q: Today is October 29, 2003. This is an interview with Joyce E. Leader. This is being

done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Joyce?

LEADER: Yes.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

LEADER: I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, November 16, 1942, but I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Q: Could you tell me a little about your parents on both sides? Is Leader a married name?

LEADER: That's my birth name.

Q: Where did the Leaders come from?

LEADER: I'm told that Leader is a bastardization or an Anglicization of a German name, Loeder or something like that. The family came to northern Ohio in the mid-1800s.

Q: What were they, farmers?

LEADER: Yes, for the most part. My father was the youngest of five and the older brothers went into farming. The husband of one sister worked on the railroad. My father was sickly and couldn't go into farming. He went first to Columbus, Ohio to work and then to Cincinnati to go to school. He got a degree in chemical engineering.

Q: From the University of Pittsburgh?

LEADER: From the University of Cincinnati. He had to work his way through with a couple of jobs and study at the same time. His farm family had no money to send him at all, so he was strictly on his own.

Q: Did he work for one of the big companies?

LEADER: He moved to Morgantown, West Virginia, and then to Pittsburgh to work in different companies, but I don't know much about that. He died when I was three. I don't really have the story.

Q: How about your mother? What was her maiden name and where did she come from?

LEADER: Her maiden name was Biechler. Her mother and father were from the general Cincinnati/Indianapolis/Columbus, Ohio area. Her mother was valedictorian of her high school class in Liberty, Indiana, a little tiny town in Indiana. But she never went on to university or anything and wasn't employed during her lifetime. Her father was a

photographic equipment traveling salesman. This was during the very early days of photography and he was with Eastman Kodak. So that's their background.

After my father died my mother went back to Cincinnati where her parents were, where they had an apartment building. She went back with myself and my younger sister and then got her advanced degrees for teaching. She went into teaching.

Q: You grew up in Cincinnati more or less?

LEADER: Yes.

Q: What was Cincinnati like? You got there right after the war. Where did you live in Cincinnati?

LEADER: We lived very close to the University of Cincinnati in the area called Clifton. I guess the area where I lived had a number of people who were somehow affiliated with the university or some of the hospitals in the area near our grade school. I had a rather quiet urban upbringing since Cincinnati wasn't very plugged into the world in that time. That's my impression and my recollection. When I was in the first grade, I had a young friend whose father was an exchange teacher who went over to France. I was enthralled by the fact that she came back saying that she could speak French and she could dream in French. This just really intrigued me and I got interested even at that young age in international things and tried always to read in the newspaper about what was going on in the world. In Cincinnati at that time you really couldn't find very much international news. We did have television though in my family by 1947. I remember being let out of school in 1953 to see two things: the coronation of Queen Elizabeth and the inauguration of President Eisenhower. So we did get to see those things. I don't remember much talk about the McCarthy situation.

Q: What was family life like? Who brought you up?

LEADER: We lived with my grandparents. My mother worked, so my grandmother had a lot of the responsibility for driving us around when we were kids and taking us to nursery school and making sure we got across the street on our way to grade school and so forth. But my mother was very busy with her teaching. At one point she wrote a health book. My mother was actually a physical education teacher, so every summer after we got to be about seven years old, we started going to summer camps. She would be the waterfront counselor and we were campers. This gave us a lot of exposure to other people and to sports and the lake and all of these kinds of activities. That was just part of our experiences.

Q: At home, was there much talk about world events?

LEADER: I can't say here what I remember about that because it was very derogatory about some of the leaders of that time.

Q: Where did your family fall in the political spectrum?

LEADER: Pretty much in the Republican side. Cincinnati was William Howard Taft country. It was a very Republican town.

Q: In school as a kid, in elementary school, were there any subjects you were particularly interested in or good in?

LEADER: Again, I was always intrigued with these things that were sort of overseas kinds of things. But I really can't remember too much about specifics.

Q: How about reading?

LEADER: I used to read biographies. I remember being very fascinated with them. I don't remember a whole lot about them, but I read a lot of biographies of American leaders: George Washington, Jefferson, all of those people.

Q: Would you call yourself a reader? Some kids are real readers and other kids are alright and some are completely indifferent to reading.

LEADER: I would put myself in the middle category. I didn't spend a lot of time reading for pleasure because as I got older the studies were so demanding. When I was younger, I read a lot of biographies and mystery stories. I always thought that rendezvous was "ren dez-vous." I didn't really have a model for that. I was more into after school activities and then coming home and doing my homework and going to bed.

Q: How about sports? Was this something into which you put a lot of time?

LEADER: Oh, yes. I did a lot of sports. One of the things I remember about sixth grade was that at lunchtime one friend and I would be the first ones out on the playing fields and we called the shots as to what kind of game was going to be played and who was going to play. We played kickball. But in high school, I played all the sports. In the fall I played hockey. In the winter there was basketball, swimming, volleyball and baseball. In fact, I got an award at the end of high school for being the best athlete and academic together.

Q: We're now in the era where women's sports activities are emphasized, but in the period that we're talking about, you really had to work at it to get into these things, didn't you?

LEADER: We mostly did it at our own high school. What came later was a lot more intramural activities. In fact, when my mother was the supervisor of physical education for the Cincinnati schools, that was what consumed most of her time, the intramural activities. But we didn't really have much of that when I was growing up. It was mostly

within our own school.

Q: By the time you got to high school in the late '50s, were there any particular subjects that you liked?

LEADER: I liked English a lot. I liked writing. I liked history it wasn't much fun the way we were being taught. We had to keep memorizing all these dates and things. They didn't make it live for us, which is I guess why I didn't go in that direction. I do find it fascinating. I worked on the school newspaper which is where I got interested in journalism. I carried that on into university. I liked the idea of other languages but I didn't think I was very good at them. I did study Latin and French but I didn't get very far with either. You don't speak Latin and I didn't study French long enough to speak it. I certainly never got to dream in French at that time.

Q: Did you get involved in dramatics or music?

LEADER: I was in the choir. I have, as you can hear, a rather deep voice and so as a young entrant into high school, I was recruited into the choir to be a tenor because the boys' voices hadn't changed yet and I had a deeper voice than most of the boys. I enjoyed very much the choir and the concerts that we did. I was also in some plays, not the starring roles, not the big roles, but because I had this strong voice that carried well, they liked to cast me with something.

Q: How about church? Did you get involved in church activities?

LEADER: I went to church when I was growing up. But I didn't go to Sunday school because I was very much put off by the prejudices of the people that were in the group. I was very unwilling to stay in a group that was so opposed to people who were different.

Q: Was this anti-Semitism, anti-black, or anti-Italian, anti-immigrant?

LEADER: It was anti-Semitic and anti-black and I remember once case where it was anti-Indian.

Q: What denomination was this?

LEADER: I'd rather not go into all that.

Q: Things have changed.

LEADER: These were children that were behaving like that.

Q: I'm just trying to capture the time because things have changed so much for everyone. I'm 75 years old and I recall all these prejudices. They were quite acceptable then. You could have these things and nobody would call you on it. We've come a long way, I think.

LEADER: After grade school, I went to a high school that drew students from all over the city. It was an academic high school. Now they call them "magnet schools" and things like that. And so we had a much greater mix of people than in the neighborhood schools. We had a lot of blacks and a lot of Jewish people. I was already interested in people who were different. I was thrilled to be invited to some of the Jewish homes for some of their ceremonies. It was painful to have some children speak so badly of others who were different from them.

Q: They were reflecting their parents. A certain generation which I think eventually helped bring about a change was sensitive to the fact that there were a lot of people with these prejudices and they tried to pass them down. The passing down didn't take with a lot of us, thank God.

While you were in high school, were you looking towards what you were going to do with yourself?

LEADER: I think of course in our generation, we were expected to go to college and then get married right after. If we were going to have some profession or skill, it should be something that would be portable and be compatible with whatever career your spouse was pursing. So, I wasn't really giving a lot of thought to a career, although I was pretty sure that I didn't want to be a teacher. I wasn't opposed to teaching – my mother was a teacher and I was very fond of many of my teachers, but I thought that world a little confining. Maybe this is a prejudice of mine, but I thought that many teachers didn't have the view outside the school walls and I wanted to go beyond those walls. So teaching I was pretty sure wasn't going to be the direction that I would go.

Q: You were in Cincinnati. How do you get away from all that?

LEADER: I didn't really break out much for college. I only went as far as a little beyond Columbus, Ohio, to Dennison University, which was a very good academic school. It was challenging. But in many ways, I probably should have chosen a little bit differently for my own interests. I declared English as my major and then went overseas after my junior year. I went with the Experiment in International Living to Denmark. This was a wonderful experience but fortunately, it wasn't as challenging as it might have been. It was challenging enough for a kid from Cincinnati. We flew over from Connecticut, a 17-hour propeller flight with all these kids who were going to all these different places. We landed in Paris. Then I guess we took a train up to Denmark. One of my memorable first experiences in Paris was going through a cafeteria line and pointing to what I wanted, having no idea what it was – it turned out to be tripe! I was just appalled when I found out what it was. But we had a great time in Denmark. Most of the other kids lived with families, but I lived with a young woman who was a journalist. She wasn't much older than I was at the time, probably five or six years. We had a great time chasing fires. She was the local reporter for a big town newspaper that was some miles away. We chased fires and did these kinds of things. We had a great time. I traveled around the country and

she had her newspaper do a story on me. I told them that the first thing I did in each town where I went was to go to the bakery, so they had a big picture of me eating my favorite Danish pastry. My mother always says her biggest mistake in raising me was, giving me the opportunity to travel. I took the opportunity and stayed overseas. I did not go back to college that year. I joined one of the gals from the program I was on and then we met a friend of hers. We hitchhiked up to Sweden and Norway in 1962. Then we came down and met a friend of hers in Amsterdam and went over to England and hitchhiked all around England and came back. Then we went divergent ways and I was on my own. I had a Eurail pass. I stayed in Europe until Christmastime. I happened to be in Berlin at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I had this naive idea that if anything happened I would definitely be rescued by my embassy. Of course, I hadn't registered with the embassy, so there was absolutely no way embassy personnel would have known that there a U.S. student in the German student underground. I stayed in youth hostels. "Europe on Five Dollars a Day" was our Bible. We had lots of adventures.

Then we came back. I changed my major from English to government. The only thing I wanted to do was to get out of the university and get on with life, knowing by then that there was a big world out there.

Q: Talk a little about when you arrived at Dennison in 1960. What was it like? What were the interests of the student body?

LEADER: Dennison was a school that had a very strong Greek influence. There were lots of sororities and fraternities. The men lived in their fraternity houses. The women did not live in their sorority houses. Those were strong groups. The people weren't very interested in things beyond the university and beyond their activities for Friday night and the weekends. I wasn't very compatible with that way of looking at the world.

Q: When you came back from this experience abroad, did you find yourself more restive than you had been before?

LEADER: Initially, I went through phases of wanting to transfer universities. I felt I had to go somewhere else. But when I came back, I only had a year and a half left to go and I decided that the only thing I wanted to do was finish and get out. I just had to stick with it. I made the investment there, so I didn't worry about transferring anywhere. I just stuck it out. That was when I started working with the foreign students. We had a few foreign students on campus. I tried to help with their orientation and assisted them in forming a kind of a group. Some of them didn't want to be grouped, didn't want that kind of connection, but some of them were happy to be pushed into some sort of a support network.

Q: How about the Kennedy phenomenon… Many students were attracted to the idea of government service. In his inaugural address, he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Was that a spirit among the group?

LEADER: I would say probably not, not at that university. Kennedy's death was very moving. The assassination took place at the beginning of our senior year. That was something that moved a lot of us in a very emotional way. I would say that probably the greater phenomenon was the Beatles, who made their first trip to the United States around the same time. But there were efforts to invigorate the campus a little bit. I remember the current representative, John Lewis, came to campus. It was the civil rights movement era. He came to our campus and said, "If you sit on the sidelines, you're part of the problem and not part of the solution." He was trying to encourage people to go South, which was of course something that my family would never have allowed me to do. The March on Washington was the summer of 1963. All of these things were very formative in my thinking, in my development. I did have an opportunity to perhaps have an impact on the thinking. I was editor of the newspaper. But I never wrote an editorial. In fact, they chastised me for that. The faculty advisor for the paper chastised me. The only time I ever wrote an editorial was after the Kennedy assassination. But I guess I felt so out of step with everybody there that whatever I wrote would probably have been very different from the general culture.

Q: Did the faculty have much of a political or social influence? Were they trying to open your eyes to the outside world, particularly the world beyond the U.S.?

LEADER: Certainly in some of the courses that I took in the government department, we were looking at what was going on in the world. I recall that we had a class in developing societies. The teacher really didn't know much about it at all. He was learning with us. We were talking about Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia and he wasn't quite sure what was going on there, but he knew something was going on and so we were all made aware of the fact that something was going on. Of course, we didn't have the Internet to go to and find out like we do now.

Q: What were you pointed towards? Did you have any particular goal in mind? Did you know anything about the Foreign Service?

LEADER: I took the Foreign Service exam before I graduated. I didn't pass it that time. Then a year later, I took it again and passed but I never finished the oral part of the exam before I went overseas as a volunteer teacher. So that got put on the shelf.

Q: Did anyone direct you towards the Foreign Service?

LEADER: I don't even know how I found out about it. I sure didn't know much about it. I know I was motivated to go in that direction. But there weren't as many opportunities for overseas work then as there are now. Today any field that anybody wants to go into can be turned into an international experience. But then, it was through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) or the Foreign Service that you could get into international work. And I was definitely oriented toward doing something in the international arena.

Q: How did this play out? You graduated when?

LEADER: In 1964. At the end of my senior year my mother remarried. I didn't want to go overseas directly. I applied for and was accepted into the Peace Corps. I would have been in one of the first groups to go to Africa and one of the first groups to go to Niger. Ironically, one of my good friends today was in that group but I didn't know her then. I met her much later. I applied to the Peace Corps and was hemming and hawing about actually joining up since, my mother was getting married. I thought maybe I should stick around for a while and get to know my new family. I had a stepbrother and a stepsister. I went to New York at spring break for a little conference that I recall was run by the Collegiate Council for the United Nations. Or maybe they were just participating in the conference. But it was the student group of the United Nations Association of the United States of America. I met the person who was the executive director and he offered me a job in New York working for this organization. I accepted and was headed for New York. At the same time my senior advisor at Dennison was running a program in Washington, DC that was under the auspices of the Friends Committee for National Legislation. It was called the Congress of American Foreign Policy. So I managed to go to New York and start with the Collegiate Council and then go to Washington for the summer and then go back to New York in the fall. So, I was doing Congress on American Foreign Policy here in Washington. It was my first time inside the State Department. I felt it very Kafkaesque with all these places where there were wires for telephones but no telephones. I recall we were interviewing people and we needed to take some notes and I found a place to sit right outside the Secretary of State's office, which of course you can't get into now unless you've got all kinds of badges and so forth. So, that was my real introduction to Washington. Then I went up to New York and pretty much had the run of the UN.

Q: What was this Congress on Foreign Policy and what were they trying to do?

LEADER: That particular seminar was looking at the issue of where is the origin, the formulation, of foreign policy? Is it in the State Department, in Congress, in the National Security Council? We were looking at all of these entities and trying to see who really had the upper hand in creating foreign policy.

Q: What were you doing at the UN?

LEADER: My job at this Collegiate Council for the United Nations was to provide support to affiliated groups at universities across the country. One of the things that these groups did was Model United Nations programs. So, my job was to collect information on various UN issues that might be discussed at these Model UN sessions, including both specific issues or specific country perspectives. So, I was in touch with the people at the United Nations in the Secretariat and I was in touch with missions of various countries around town to get packets of information about their policies and their points of view on the various issues. One of my constant contacts was at the Russian embassy and his name was Mr. Petre Pavlovksi. He would always say, "Hello, this is Mr. Peter and Paul." I also did a lot by telephone. I didn't necessarily go to meet the people.

Q: This gave you a pretty solid world view, didn't it, both the foreign policy conference and then the UN?

LEADER: They were both very exciting and very eye opening for a little kid from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Q: You didn't follow through on the Foreign Service exam. Was there any particular reason?

LEADER: I had actually passed it. But when I was working in New York, a lot of things crossed my desk. One was a brochure about being a volunteer for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. At the time I was going to Boston for a conference and so I went and talked with them about going on one of their programs. This was in contrast to the Peace Corps. At that time, in one's young life, a two-year commitment to the Peace Corps seemed very considerable. This other organization was only asking for a one year commitment. I said, "I'd like to go to India or Uganda." I think they may have had programs in both those countries. They said, "We want to send you to Bechuanaland." I said, "Where is that?" They showed me a map. There in the middle of southern Africa was this empty space with the name "Bechuanaland" across it. All the roads stopped at the border. There was a railroad that went across it from Southern Rhodesia to South Africa, but that was all there was. I said, "Let me think about this." I went back to New York and searched reference materials in universities, and there was nothing.

Q: You'd have to get something on hunting or something like that.

LEADER: What there was was information about the lead chieftain of Bechuanaland, who was Sir Seretse Khama. He had defied his tribal elders by marrying an Englishwoman. That was all the information I had. I said, "This sounds kind of interesting" and so I went.

Q: You were in Bechuanaland from when to when?

LEADER: I was there from August 1965 until August 1967. Of course, I extended for a second year. By the time I left, it was Botswana because it had become independent in 1966. I was there one year before independence and one year after. Of course, at that time there was no U.S. representation.

Q: What was it like there?

LEADER: It was very exciting to be in this country at that time. I was working on a project that was kind of revolutionary. It was a secondary school started by a South African exile. I was going to say "refugee" and in fact he was a refugee from South Africa. He had been in the South African diplomatic service and had been posted in Congo Brazzaville and so was getting a lot of contact with officials and others there. He

learned from them about his own society and apartheid and went back to South Africa with a different perspective. He left the diplomatic service and fled the country. I have forgotten exactly why he had to flee the country. Anyway, he started this school with the philosophy that the school could be the focal point of development in a community. He started the idea of brigades where people would come together for training such as for construction or agriculture – but in the case of these men and women, it was weaving. So he made these groups. After they got their training, they would continue as cooperatives. He was very much promoting a cooperative movement and was trying to have an impact on the community of Serowe, the largest town in Botswana at the time and also the seat of the largest tribe that Sir Seretse Khama headed. So, we were part of a very exciting project. My role was to teach English to the students, which I just adored doing. They were wonderful. They taught me to love Shakespeare. They loved it so much that you just had to enjoy it. So, we had a great time with the students. Back then in Southern Africa, the school year was divided into three 10-week segments with a month break in between. On all those breaks, I would travel around in Southern Africa, mostly by hitchhiking. So, I had a lot of experience and exposure to Southern Africa.

Q: How did you find it at that time? This was at the height of apartheid. How did you deal with it?

LEADER: With difficulty. As a matter of fact, my roommate was a woman from South Africa.

So one of the destinations on one of the Christmases was to South Africa. I didn't even realize I needed a visa, so I had to send my passport down to get the visa because there was no embassy. I told them that I was anxious to come and visit their beautiful country and I wanted to see all of the game parks and other attractions. I got my visa with no problem and went down to Johannesburg and Durban and Swaziland the first time. I recall huddling over what we called a Victrola. We were listening to a record that was banned in South Africa. I was with people who were a little bit skeptical themselves about their setup and their situation. When you would meet South Africans, they were exactly like everybody later said they were, which if they were white South Africans is very defensive about their setup. If you even asked them any questions, they would tell you – these were people that we were hitchhiking with – immediately that they don't hate their Africans, they do everything for them. It was an eye opener. Coming back from Swaziland into South Africa, we were picked up by an Indian couple. When we stopped to get something to eat, we had to go to one place and they had to go to another place in this little restaurant. When we all finished, we came back together and got in the same car and went on. We had some of these bizarre experiences.

Another vacation, I hitchhiked across the Kalahari Desert to what was then Southwest Africa, now Namibia. I went to a ceremony celebrating five years of South Africa being the Republic of South Africa starting in 1960. This was now 1965. I felt very uncomfortable. First of all, it was being held in Windhoek and South Africa was supposed to be in charge but they weren't supposed to be imposing their government on

Southwest Africa, but of course it was like it was all integrated. When we went down to Capetown there was no border control at all between Namibia and South Africa. So, the whole thing was very unsettling. But it was interesting.

Q: Was there any problem hitchhiking both with apartheid and being a woman?

LEADER: I was hitchhiking with a male teacher from my school. But we didn't encounter any problems. Sometimes even blacks would pick us up and put us in the back of their trucks in Windhoek. So I did have many experiences in South Africa. Then I went to Zambia.

Q: That had been Northern Rhodesia.

LEADER: Right, but it was now independent, so it was now Zambia. It was coming back from Zambia that I somehow ran afoul of South African law or I offended the South Africans in some way. At the border between Zambia and Southern Rhodesia, some people who were clearly South African intelligence agents searched my baggage. My baggage was a very small rucksack and they couldn't believe that's all I had for six weeks, but it was. They found a book that was by a South African, a book that was banned in South Africa. They took that away from me. They said it was banned in Rhodesia and they had to send it to Salisbury to see whether I could keep it. I never got it back.

Q: This was the time of the UDI, Unilateral Declaration of Independence, of Ian Smith?

LEADER: I think it was UDI. So, these people took away a book of mine. They also saw some newspaper clippings I had. They were from SWANU (South West Africa National Union) and SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) people that I had met in Zambia. These were anti-apartheid organizations for Southwest Africa, now Namibia. So they didn't like that. When we traveled in Southern Africa, we never gave the name of our school director because he was a refugee, a rebel, a well known troublemaker from the South Africans' point of view. We just put our box number down. They looked at my paper and said, "P.O. Box 101. That's Swaneng Hill School. How's my friend Patrick." I knew I was in trouble. They asked me lots of questions about what I had been doing in Zambia and so forth. As a result, I never got a visa for South Africa again. I did try again to go to South Africa, but I was not allowed. In fact, I've never been to South Africa since it's been free. Even later when I had a job with the Peace Corps, I didn't even try to get a visa.

Q: When you were doing these trips, did you ever run across the U.S. embassy in Pretoria or Capetown?

LEADER: I ran across the U.S. embassies in Zambia and in Lusaka. When I told some officials there that I had passed the Foreign Service exam but not done the oral and I had come out to Africa, they said, "But you should have gone ahead and done the oral

because you could have done it here in Lusaka and we would have passed you for sure." So, there I was, afraid of the oral which I never wanted to do. I passed up a chance to get into the Foreign Service early on because I didn't know about negotiating to postpone it while I was being a volunteer and the whole thing just sort of lapsed.

Q: You were in Botswana from '65 to '67. What happened in '67?

LEADER: I applied to graduate schools and selected Chicago – wrong again – over Tufts and over Columbia. So I went out to Chicago and did a year there. I had a wonderful friend who was willing to listen to all of my stories of Africa, so that was good therapy.

Q: During the '60s, Africa was very high on the list for young people. Countries were becoming independent and it was quite exciting. This was the new world and the winds of change were blowing. Had you caught this African fever?

LEADER: I did indeed. Having spent two years there, I was very much involved with Africa and the change that was going on. My area of emphasis in my international relations degree that I did in Chicago was Africa. But I was again very impatient to get on with life and not stay in the academic arena. I recall vividly talking to my colleagues. I was in a special interdisciplinary international relations program. I said, "What are you going to do next year?" A number of them were applying for scholarships for the second year. I said, "Why are you going to stay a second year?" We only had nine hours of classwork and a couple of things. They said they were going to stay and do that. I remember asking people whom I met at the University of Chicago, "How long have you been here" and they would say, "I've only been here six years." Somebody else would say, "I've only been here four years" and this got me really nervous because I didn't want to hang around for any eight years.

Again, just a fortuitous incident: I came to Washington during the spring break to visit a friend. While I was here, I walked into Africa Report magazine. I guess I knew the magazine from my studies and I knew that they had their office in Dupont Circle. So I walked in and asked, "Do you have any jobs?" They said, "Well, fill out this form." It turned out that the person who was at that time maybe the deputy assistant editor – Helen Kitchen was the editor – had got his international relations degree from the University of Chicago. He hired me. So I left Chicago before I had even finished with my degree because I had this job offer with Africa Report magazine. What could be more fun? I was doing what they called the "chronologies." These were little paragraphs in the magazine giving political, economic, and social information about various countries. My focus was the Anglophone countries of Africa. My immediate supervisor who did the Francophone countries was Chet Crocker. So, we worked with our desks close together for about a year.

Q: Was the bloom still on the rose as far as Africa was concerned? Later, things got…

LEADER: At the end of the year with this magazine, its parent, the African-American

Institute, had financial difficulties and so they had to eliminate our portion of the magazine and they moved the whole magazine up to New York. So we were out of a job. The people were very kind to us. They gave us enough time to unwind and look for other things. I took the time that they gave us to finish my masters degree from Chicago. I did my thesis at that time using the resources in Washington. I had wanted to do it on Botswana, but they wouldn't let me because there was nothing written on Botswana. I later found out that somebody I met made his name on doing a thesis on the brigades at our school. But they wouldn't let me do anything on education in Botswana, so I did something on education in Tanzania, which was much more in vogue at the time with Nyerere and so forth.

While I was out of a job and unemployed there was also a lot of momentum to do something in the United States, and not to go overseas.

Q: We're talking about 1968?

LEADER: Yes. The day I left Chicago was the day of the Chicago riots. We had already seen what could happen because Martin Luther King had been killed. We had had some marches there. I had been in a march where we got tear-gassed because we were protesting police brutality.

Q: Where were you in the political spectrum?

LEADER: In Chicago, one of my roommates was with the Students for Democratic Society, the SDS. I was not there.

Q: This was the radical student group.

LEADER: It was the radical spectrum at the time. The Weathermen had not yet been formed. So, the SDS was really on the radical end of the spectrum. After we had this march where we were tear-gassed and the people who were leading it were all these SDSers, I said, "No, I don't think they're people I want to follow." But I was still very much on the critical side of the spectrum.

Q: Were you involved in Vietnam protests?

LEADER: Yes, I was. Some people now may wonder… I decided at that time that I didn't want to go into the Foreign Service because of Vietnam, so I turned my sights elsewhere, partly because of Vietnam.

Q: Then what happened?

LEADER: I went into education.

Q: Which you said you didn't want to get into.

LEADER: Right. Which I had said earlier that I didn't want to get into. I went into the DC public schools in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. I started part-time with them and they asked me three times to work full-time and finally the third time, I said, "I'd better do this because I don't have anything else working. I'd better get this job under my belt." So, I did go there and work there and spent a total of five years at two different stretches working in the DC public school system.

But before I actually went into that part of the school system, I started doing substitute teaching and taking some courses in teaching around here. There was a bit of a tragedy. A girl who was in my class with whom I was doing a lot of studying, was accidentally shot by her father, a retired policeman. So that really had a big impact on my wanting to move forward with these courses. My substitute teaching career was rather short-lived because I wasn't very good at keeping discipline in the classroom. I had a classroom with two doors, which now would never happen. One of them would be locked. But there were two doors. People could slip into your classroom and you wouldn't even know it. It was not a pretty scene. I remember to this day, one of the children said, "Miss Leader, the reason that the children don't behave for you is because you don't beat them." I said, "If I've got to beat the kids to get them to behave, I'm in the wrong place." So, that was rather short-lived. But I went to the public school headquarters and was rather intrigued by the whole business of evaluation. We evaluated a number of different projects that were in the school system from drug programs to environmental education.

Q: Talk about the school system at that time. This would have been about when to when?

LEADER: I started there in 1970. I worked for three and a half years and then I said, "This is a dead end job. I'm white in a black school system." I had wonderful colleagues. I had no problem with that. But I just didn't see myself going anywhere. So, I applied to law schools and to journalism schools and I got into Columbia University School of Journalism, to which I went. Very challenging.

Q: Let's go to the school system first. The Washington DC school system at one time was considered quite good. This was unfortunately when it was essentially a white school system. You're now dealing with a transition. It was becoming more and more black.

LEADER: It was 90% black already.

Q: I've talked to people who have served there and from what you read in the paper, it seems to be a system that got a lot of money and didn't deliver.

LEADER: I think there were a lot of problems of leadership. This was one of the things that I noticed. They were always looking everywhere outside of Washington to bring in educators to be the superintendent, to be the head of the school system. Washington, especially the black part of Washington, which so many people in the white part of Washington really don't know since they don't have that much contact with the black part

of the system, it was a very tight-knit community. It had its mores and its leaders and everything and here they were continually bringing people in from the outside and they didn't last a bit. They didn't get respect. They just never got accepted. I think this continual turnover in superintendents had a very detrimental effect. I was in a lot of classrooms and I saw a lot of people who were very dedicated and working very hard but their own education hadn't been the greatest. There wasn't that much teacher training going on. The leadership at the individual schools wasn't as good as it should have been. So, there were a lot of problems with the school system even at that time. And it was huge at that time. If I recall correctly, there were 140,000 kids in the school system. Now it's way down to about half that. But we felt like we were doing something. Back to my Botswana roots, education is the foundation for people to make a difference. We felt like we were having a bit of a role in this kind of a system.

Q: My wife was taking teachers training, getting an education degree, at the University of Maryland and did her practice teaching at Shah Junior High. She was very impressed by the teacher she worked with, a black woman who had a degree from Harvard.

LEADER: 85% of the teachers were black by that time.

Q: Had the drug epidemic hit the black family by this time? This seems to be one of the causes of the disintegration of the family support system?

LEADER: I can't place in my mind the extent of the drug problem by that time, but I know that one of the programs that we evaluated was a pilot project to introduce drug education into the school system. It was a program to try to familiarize people with the problem and to encourage young people to just stay away from drugs. It was already a problem.

Q: Of course, the real problem was the families. The fathers weren't there and the mothers… There was a lot of addiction at the adult level.

LEADER: I really couldn't speak to that.

Q: You were at Columbia from when to when?

LEADER: I went there in 1973 in the fall and I finished up in the spring of 1974.

Q: This was the preeminent school in journalism.

LEADER: Right.

Q: Had you by this time determined… You had been flitting around with various things.

LEADER: I kept flitting. This time, I had an image of being the foreign correspondent. I had no idea that to be a foreign correspondent you had to cover war. It was only later that

I grasped that most of them sat in hotels in deepest, darkest Africa and did their reporting from there. But I had this idea that I wanted to be a foreign correspondent. When I graduated, you have to pay your dues by taking the city beat and the police beat and all these things and I just wasn't quite ready for that. I guess I just wasn't quite ready to pay my dues the way I should have to that profession.

Q: It's like being a Foreign Service officer. You've got to do your visa work and general services and all.

LEADER: Yes.

Q: Then what did you do?

LEADER: I was unemployed again, the second time I collected unemployment compensation. But I was also involved with the African-American Institute in New York and was helping with a program involving African students who had been brought to this country to study. I was trying to identify jobs that would take them back to their own countries to use their skills.

Then my old boss at the DC public school system called and said, "I need you to come back." So, again, not having much else on my plate, I did. I accepted her offer to come back.

Q: How about this idea of getting African students in the U.S. to return home to work?

LEADER: I was involved with the Southern Africa Student Program, which was trying to get people to go back to Zimbabwe, South Africa, still Southern Rhodesia, Zambia, and we weren't having a great deal of success. People who came from Botswana always went back. But the other countries not so much.

Q: The other countries were run under one man rule. Unless you had the right connections, you weren't going anywhere.

LEADER: Right. And Nigerians were staying as well. A lot of African students were making their lives here as opposed to going back.

Q: You came back to the DC schools. This would have been when?

LEADER: This was the end of 1974.

Q: What did you do and how long were you doing it?

LEADER: This time, I was mostly on the planning side of things. But I wasn't doing a lot. I finally decided that I had to get very serious about getting out. I had applied previously for a job with the McGraw Hill newsletters. I had a friend working there and

she told me there was another opening and I should come and look into it, which I did. I got the job. So, I left the DC Public Schools to work on a newsletter having to do with chemical pollution in the workplace. It was a newsletter in search of a subject and eventually evolved into a newsletter on fertilizers, but I left by that time. I also interviewed with the Peace Corps at that time and I was offered a job as the associate Peace Corps director for education in Zaire. So, in late 1976, I left for Zaire.

Q: And you were there from when to when?

LEADER: I was there for all of 1977, 1978, and almost to the end of 1979.

Q: Today is November 3, 2003. What was Zaire like in '76?

LEADER: Zaire was under Mobutu Sese Sekou. It had been several years in decline and people were getting to the point where they thought that it couldn't go any lower but during the time I was there it just kept lower and lower and lower. People didn't have jobs. If they did have jobs, they had to work two jobs. Oftentimes, some member of the family had some sort of business selling something on the road that would make them some money. It was very difficult for people to make ends meet. Because of this, it spawned a lot of corruption.

I was working with the education volunteers. In the schools, there was a lot of deception and a lot of people used their positions as teachers or head of the food program at the school to enrich themselves. For example, the teacher in charge of food would get a certain amount of money from the students and then he or she was responsible for buying the food for that term for two or three months. What was happening was that the food would run out about a month before the end of the term, so they had to close school early and the students had to all go home. The evidence indicated the teacher had just taken the money and was using it for his own purposes. The same was going on in the examinations. Students would buy answers from the teachers so that they would be able to move on to the next level. The volunteers were seeing this and were very upset by it. It made a lot of them feel that we should not be there at all. My argument was, if they weren't there, who was going to provide any model at all of some sort of integrity for the students? They just weren't seeing it in quite a number of the teachers. This was even in cases where the schools were very closely affiliated with the churches. The school system was very run down and wasn't able to manage very well. It was a very big country, so they really depended a lot on the schools that were run by the various missionary groups, some of which still had their missionaries in the schools. Some were becoming more and more aligned with the government. They were also still very important in education and healthcare. So, it was just a very difficult place for people to survive. Inflation was incredible at that time and was quite out of control. As U.S. government officials we were not allowed to deal on the black market, so all of our money was exchanged at the official rate. I would sometimes pay $70 for a lunch if I went out to a restaurant, which would probably cost about $10 if I could use black market money. It was rampant. I do recall sometimes when we had to pay vendors of some sort, we had to take suitcases of money.

They didn't have large denomination bills. So it was not unusual at all to see people carrying around briefcases full of cash. The banking system wasn't working very well and you couldn't bank like we do here. You couldn't go into a bank and write a check. Most of the transactions were done by cash. So, it was a tough life for a lot of people and for the volunteers. People had so little money that they were rarely eating meat. Volunteers would report to me that they felt embarrassed if they cooked meat because their counterparts were unable to do so. Volunteers are expected to live at the same level of the people that they're working among, so a lot of them were going without just because their counterparts were unable to afford it. People just weren't getting paid. If they were government workers, they were not getting paid regularly. Teachers were also suffering from this situation. They never knew when they would get a paycheck. I remember seeing one paycheck. It was duly made out to the teacher's name and then where you're supposed to write the amount, it said, "000000." It was a check for nothing. It was a very hard life and people didn't really think that it could go much lower, but it did.

Q: I'm sure you were getting reports from our volunteers who were out there trying to teach. Were they feeling they were making a difference?

LEADER: They were teaching and they were usually very popular teachers. They oftentimes had activities in addition to their teaching to make a difference in the community like raising rabbits that would be a source of meat for the village. There were volunteers, not under my jurisdiction, who were doing fish farming and they were introducing a source of protein into the diets, which were very heavily dependent on manioc, which is cassava. I have always retained one little fact in my head about it which is that it takes seven pounds of it to make the amount of protein that you need in a meal. Your stomach would burst. It's pretty tasteless stuff. But some of the teachers got very depressed because they didn't feel like they could make a difference, that they were just swimming against the tide and the tide was so overwhelming that they couldn't make a difference. But others felt that they had something to contribute and that they could plug along and try to contribute to the kids and their communities.

Q: Those that were having problems, could you move them to another country?

LEADER: The tour was only two years. If they were so down about it, they could just terminate. Not many did. If they were having some serious problems at their school, there was a possibility of my moving them to another school in Zaire, but normally it had to be pretty serious for me to move them to another school.

Q: Zaire is huge. Were volunteers working in villages close to cities? Or were they out practically up against the easternmost borders?

LEADER: The volunteers in Zaire were spread fairly evenly throughout the country. Zaire is made up of regions and each of the regions had a capital and in each of the capitals we had a Peace Corps volunteer who was the regional representative. That person had a house and a radio and a vehicle in the capital city and we did radio checks daily

from Kinshasa with those people. So they were the first line of recourse for the volunteers in that region. Some of the volunteers were quite some distance from those regional capitals. My job entailed visiting the volunteers at their sites and so for every maybe three weeks out of every five or six, I was on the road. That entailed flying with a local airline to a regional capital and then going with the regional representative in a Land Rover to visit the various volunteers. We would usually try to visit all of them in a given region, spend the night with them, meet the people who were in charge of the school, meet the other teachers, observe them in their classrooms, and things like this. It was a fairly strenuous job.

We were able to provide the volunteers with some support so they felt the capital was involved and that the Peace Corps staff was involved and concerned about them. I think that one of my biggest critics was one gal who felt that we weren't doing enough for her. Frankly, I think she was mistaken. She was getting a lot of support from the teachers and the leadership of the school where she was, which was a religious school. The volunteers would get their support from their environment and most of them were doing pretty well. They had learned French to start off with and then they'd get into their areas and find out they'd have to speak some local language like Swahili or Lingala or some of the other languages. So I organized a language training program for the summer between their first and second year. I did this in four different regions for four different local languages. It worked out great. We got some of the Zairians who were language trainers in the summer programs to help out. We had people from a university. We identified the language speakers. The kids really liked that. They felt in the second year they were much better equipped to speak the local language and to communicate with those who couldn't speak French. So that worked really well.

It was an interesting time in Zaire because it was during Shaba I and Shaba II. Twice while I was there, Shaba was invaded by people coming from Angola. They were generally people who had fled when Mobutu had taken over, somehow felt that they had to flee for their lives. They reconstituted themselves as rebel groups and had recourse to arms and came into Zaire. The first year, it affected my volunteers in Kamina. Kamina was an important location because there was a big airport there and the Americans, probably prompted by Shaba I, turned that into a very big base in Central Africa. I had been there just before the war started and then I went down to Lubumbashi and we called our volunteers into Lubumbashi. I went down there and talked with all of them. They felt that they wanted to stay in Zaire but they wanted to go to a different place. I reassigned most of them. One of them is in the State Department right now doing quite well. The Zairian husband of another one is also doing quite well in the State Department. He has become an American citizen. The turmoil didn't necessarily deter these people from further service overseas.

The second Shaba was the one that Americans are probably more familiar with because it was an invasion that reached Kolwezi, the area where the Gécamines has its copper mines. There were a lot of foreign people working there, mostly Belgians, some French. That was about an hour to two hours north of Lubumbashi. We had no volunteers in

Kolwezi, so we were pretty fortunate. The people there were held hostage for some time and many of them were killed and it was a very ugly affair. I found out later that the only reason why there were no volunteers in Kolwezi when the invasion began was because they had all been invited to a big party there but they had no way to get there because the regional representative had gone to the U.S. and had intentionally taken the key to the Land Rover with him so they couldn't use it. Otherwise, I fear we would have had some volunteers who might have been in some real difficult situations. We were fortunate. It worked out. None of the volunteers were in harm's way or at least we got them out of harm's way. We came through it pretty well.

Q: Did you have any medical problems with the volunteers – dietary or diseases or what have you?

LEADER: I'm not really able to speak to that because the doctor that we had followed strict rules of confidentiality. Even though I was in charge of 150 education volunteers I did not know much about their medical problems. I kept insisting that I should know because they were my volunteers and I should be giving them support, but I did not.

Q: This was before AIDS became a problem.

LEADER: Yes. We were first becoming aware of it in the early 1980s.

Q: Were there any clashes between Peace Corps volunteers and local officials over the volunteers finding signs of corruption and challenging the people who were siphoning off the money?

LEADER: Yes, and this caused a lot of friction sometimes in the schools which led to me having to transfer some volunteers to another location. They weren't dealing with local officials as much as they were with their school officials, at least the ones that I oversaw. But they were very good about trying to work with people and trying to model integrity by their behavior, and I think that it was very important.

Q: Did you have much dealing with the Zairian government?

LEADER: My involvement was really with the education ministry and its officials. Obviously when I went to the various communities, I would sometimes see local officials but not that often. I was mostly dealing with school officials.

Q: How did you find them at that level?

LEADER: Some of them seemed to be very interested in their students and very concerned about education. Others were using their positions in ways that would not be called totally honest. I remember a story that a teacher at a teacher training college in Kinshasa told me. He said that if he were to show up at work one day driving a Mercedes, the students would applaud him rather than ask him where he got the money to buy it.

They would applaud him for having the ingenuity to tap those kinds of resources. Everything was turned on its head. It seemed to me that it would be very difficult to get things straightened out again so that people would not feel that they had to milk the system for all they could get because they had no other resources. But I'm afraid that it's probably still happening.

Q: Zaire was well known as being a country where in our overall mission, the CIA had a major hand. Did you ever run across problems with the CIA or was this out of sight, out of mind?

LEADER: The Peace Corps tries to keep its distance from the diplomatic American community. We did that pretty well. Our director would go to staff meetings and report back to us but we were not really privy to what was going on in the embassy. I wasn't aware of the size or the activities of the CIA at all. I was aware that it was there, but I wasn't aware of what they were doing.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

LEADER: Lannon Walker was the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) and Ambassador Walter Cutler served most of the time that I was there.

Q: Did he show much interest in the Peace Corps?

LEADER: He was always very friendly to the Peace Corps. They didn't travel out like we did, and the volunteers were not in Kinshasa. There were some in the region called Bandundu which weren't very far from Kinshasa, but I don't think they visited the volunteers very much.

Q: Volunteers are not supposed to work with the embassy or be reporting, but at the same time in a country as huge as Zaire, here were Americans getting a much better feel for the entire country because we didn't have any real apparatus to get out there.

LEADER: While I was there, there was a consulate in Bukavu in the east. They closed the United States information service (USIS) operation in Kano in the north at that time. And there was a very active consulate in Lubumbashi. Parker Borg was the Consul General. So they did have some resources. Parker traveled and was very involved with the volunteers in Lubumbashi. There were volunteers right in Lubumbashi and in some towns not too far from Lubumbashi. During the war, he traveled up to Kamina and was picked up because he didn't have the proper papers. The volunteers had to verify his story, who he was. They laughed about it a lot after. They could have got him in real trouble if they had denied who he was. He moved around a lot. Otherwise, we weren't rigid and rigorous. We didn't have to be because the volunteers didn't have that much access to the embassy nor vice versa. I'm sure that when the director met with people from the embassy he was sharing information as was necessary and appropriate. But there was a line there. When I went down to Lubumbashi to talk with the volunteers, I came back and

made my report to my superiors and my other associate Peace Corps directors. Then we, as the staff, made the decision that we would pull the volunteers out of Kamina. So we passed this message on the radio back to them that this decision had been made and we would be working on reassigning them in the country. If there was anybody who felt he or she needed to go home, or if they had only a few months left, then we would go through the termination procedures. Parker Borg happened to be at the volunteers' house when this message was passed. He was very upset by that. So he went back through his channels to the embassy and the next thing I knew, I was summoned to the ambassador's office along with the acting Peace Corps director, our admin officer, and the two of us were sitting there and trying to defend our action. They were saying, "We shouldn't be pulling them out" and we were saying, "We should be pulling them out because they're watching people at checkpoints get forced onto the ground at gunpoint, forced to grovel in mud, and being harassed and so forth." The volunteers themselves in Kamina had had a group of drunken soldiers come into their house with bayonet sticks on their guns and their house was searched. There were other things like this that had happened that was making it very uncomfortable for them to stay there. The embassy proposed, "Well, what if we talk to the people and we get more protection for the volunteers? What if we can get some kind of promises from the authorities that they will keep things calm?" It just seemed unlikely to me, and I said, "Are you saying that you want to use our volunteers as guinea pigs to calm the situation down in Kamina?" The thoughtful answer was, "Yes." I said, "No, our volunteers… We have to answer to their parents. We have to answer to Congress. We just can't afford to keep them in a situation that is as volatile as it is. If things calm down, if things get better, then we can put them back. But we can't leave them there when things are as bad as they are." They accepted it but it was a very difficult encounter on my part with the embassy.

Q: Embassies hate to evacuate anybody because it upsets the local authorities, who always maintain to you it's fine, you can take care of things. So you're going counter to the local authorities. But that's not our business. Our business is to protect Americans.

LEADER: Well, we hadn't discussed it thoroughly with the embassy first. We felt that it was our decision to make, not theirs, so it hadn't really occurred to us that we needed to vet our decision with the embassy before we announced it. But perhaps in retrospect, that would have been a good idea. But neither the other staff members nor myself were aware of the sensitivities around evacuation. We just knew that we had to do what we had to do to protect them. But the local authority angle is of course a serious one. It's there. One of the schools that we did evacuate people from was in a town closer to Lubumbashi. I thought it was a wonderful little town, Likasi. The principal there said, "We can't count on you if you're going to evacuate people like that, so we don't want any more Peace Corps volunteers." It was a wonderful little town and a wonderful little school. I had great respect for the school principal. And it was his decision that he couldn't count on the Americans and he wasn't going to have them. I regretted that, but we had done what we had to do.

Q: By 1979, where did you go?

LEADER: By 1979, I was really burned out. The Peace Corps contract for APCDs (Associate Peace Corps Directors) is usually two and a half years, but they couldn't find anybody to replace me, so I just sort of kept staying and staying and staying. Finally, on my second to last trip, I was going between Kananga and Bujimai and the vehicle we were in lost its steering. We just sort of rolled into the sandbank. Fortunately, we were very close to where we were going to spend the night with the missionaries. They had planes that flew between there and Kananga, so the regional representative went back and got some parts and came back. He himself had to repair the car and we went on. But that was a little bit hairy. On the last trip I took a different car lost its breaks. Fortunately, the driver quickly pulled the emergency break and we didn't have any serious consequences from that one either. But my feeling was that unless we were going to get funding from Washington to repair these cars up to the standard that they needed to be, I wasn't going out anymore. They finally did get somebody to replace me and I left and came back to Peace Corps headquarters, where I spent the next two years as the desk officer for Southern Africa, to 1981.

Q: What were you doing with Southern Africa?

LEADER: I was the backstop in Washington doing the Washington management of the programs in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. I knew the area because I had traveled in all those places as a volunteer myself, so it was great to get back to that area and become involved with it. We were taking care of things like recruitment, working on budgets and numbers of volunteers and that kind of thing. During this time Zimbabwe became independent. I was asked to do a study to determine whether we should try to start a program there. It was one of the most interesting things I did. I had the opportunity to talk to a lot of people around town who were involved with Zimbabwe, including Johnny Carson, who was at that time on the Hill with the Foreign Relations Committee in the House. So I did a report on that and subsequently did one on Zambia as well. Neither country got volunteers at that time. Zimbabwe has never had volunteers. I think some did go eventually to Zambia. It was at that time that I learned about the whole land problems in Zimbabwe and predicted that there would be problems down the line over land. That was a long time ago. It just took a little time to materialize, but it was clear that that was going to be a problem.

Q: From the Washington viewpoint, was there a change in the Peace Corps volunteer?

LEADER: I think that there have been some new directions in volunteer programs, particularly those focused on Eastern Europe, which were involved much more in small business. Even in Africa, there was a lot of emphasis on small business after the Reagan administration came in. But the main program seems not to have really changed. I was looking just the other day at a pie chart which shows that more than half of the volunteers are still involved one way or another in education. There is still English as a second language and teaching math and science. Those have always been the core of the Peace Corps program. It's what the volunteers are most capable of doing because of their

background – they are usually university graduates and can be trained to do those things without too much difficulty. They've gone more into teacher training, training teachers for secondary school, training teachers to teach English, training teachers to teach math and science, training teachers to work in elementary schools. There is a lot more focus on teacher training in the education sphere. When I was there, it was when basic human needs was just coming in as the philosophy of aid and this percolated over to Peace Corps. In the aid philosophy, education was not considered a basic human need. There was some pressure within Peace Corps to look at alternatives to teaching in the formal education system. I raised the issue with Peace Corps Washington and said, "If you want us to do something other than formal education, then maybe we need some kind of direction from Washington and maybe a conference would be a good idea to bring all of the education people together and look at this." They said, "Great idea. You plan it." So, I did. We had a big conference that year in Nairobi where we looked at alternatives to the regular education. We looked at literacy and literacy training and teacher training and some of these other things. But that initiative didn't really go that far at that time.

But back to your original question. There was a lot more emphasis on small business, business development. But some of the very basic core activities of Peace Corps haven't really changed, haven't gone away. They've just sort of added new things, branched out into new areas.

Q: We're getting up to 1981. Then what?

LEADER: The Peace Corps has a five year rule. There are exceptions. You can go beyond that now. But at that time it was a five year rule: five years in and then you're out. So, there I was, unemployed again. At that time, however, there was an effort by the State Department to bring in midlevel women and minorities. So, I applied and was accepted and I moved into the State Department about six months after I left the Peace Corps.

Q: You had to take some form of an oral exam.

LEADER: We certainly did.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

LEADER: I can't recall.

Q: You came in in 1982?

LEADER: Yes.

Q: At what rank did you come in?

LEADER: 03.

Q: What did they do with you?

LEADER: The idea was to send people right out into the field, but our training finished in June. I had passed the French language requirement so I didn't need a world language. All the positions had been assigned already, so the other officers were taking their consular courses and doing their GSO (General Services Officer), their admin-type courses, none of which I did at that time. I interviewed with several people around the building and some were very negative about the program and wanted nothing to do with me.

Q: The fact that you'd worked in Zaire, this was not an easy place. It's a lot more credit than if you had come out of Topeka or someplace like that.

LEADER: Right. So eventually, I did find a home in AF/W (African Bureau) as the desk officer for the Sahelian countries – Upper Volta, Mali, and Niger. I don't know whether my former officemate, Chet Crocker, who was at this time Assistant Secretary for the Bureau, had anything to do with it or not, but I did go in as a desk officer for the first year. Then I went through the assignment process for the next summer. The EX (Executive Director) of Africa wanted desperately to send me back to Zaire but the ambassador, who already had two midlevel women in his political section, said, "No." So, I had another option and that was to go to Ouagadougou.

Q: When you were dealing with West Africa, what was the situation with those countries? Was the desert advancing? Was it drought time there?

LEADER: Those countries were definitely experiencing drought during that time. The desert was advancing then and has been advancing since. At that time, Mali was still very much in a Soviet orbit. Niger hadn't found any of its mineral wealth. Upper Volta, which became Burkina Faso, was very poor. I remember working on the IMET, the military training program, trying to get that kind of assistance going for them, trying to keep the aid flowing. Basically, aid was the core of our activities with those countries.

Q: You went to Ouagadougou, the capital of Upper Volta. You were there from when to when?

LEADER: From 1983 to 1985.

Q: What was Upper Volta like in those days?

LEADER: The capital, Ouagadougou, was like an overgrown village. It did not have any kind of high buildings or anything. It didn't even have a big marketplace. It just sort of sprawled and it was little communities sort of all tacked together. That was partly a function of the fact that the French had actually had their capital in a town quite a bit to the southwest called Bobo-Dioulasso. That was a proper town in my view, but the capital, Ouagadougou, was very much of an overgrown village. When I visited it 10 years later, there had been some growth and it looked a little bit more like a town by that time. There

were some paved roads, but not all that many. They had a nice train that went from Ouagadougou all the way down to Abidjan and Cote d'Ivoire on the coast. The French had done that much. There was another road that went through Togo down to Lome and those were the access points from the coast into Burkina Faso. At that time, the road between Ouagadougou and the capital of neighboring Niger was not paved and it was a good day's drive. I think now it's down to three to four hours between those two capitals. When I was there, it was quite a bit longer than that.

Q: What was your job?

LEADER: I was political/economic officer. I did some reporting. I called it the "etc. officer." Pol/econ, etc. I did all of the IMET programs. In that capacity, I was the embassy's link to the defense ministry. The ambassador, Julius Walker, seemed to be quite content to let me maintain the relationship with the defense minister, so I saw him pretty regularly. I maintained this liaison with the military in between visits of the defense attaché, who would come up from time to time from Abidjan and then I'd be his control officer and we'd go around and see all the contacts. Of course, the military was very important. I forgot to say that I got there a few weeks after the coup that brought Thomas San Cara to power. He was a very populist leader who got rid of all the big Mercedes for the government officials and made them drive little black Renault 5s. They set up these Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. The person who was at the head of that was one of my good contacts. I also had to do all the contacts with the foreign ministry and developed very good friends in that area. Burkina Faso rotated onto the UN Security Council while I was there and that was a lot of fun because we worked with them a lot on the issues that were of concern to us at the Security Council.

Q: What was the role of the French there?

LEADER: The French were everywhere. They were very involved in Ouagadougou. They had people in the defense ministry. They were advisors to the military. They had a very big role to play.

Q: Did you find yourself often at odds with the French?

LEADER: Throughout West Africa, particularly at that time, there was a bit of suspicion on their part that we were trying to somehow take over their role. But I think that we were small enough there that we could fairly well convince them that we weren't trying to displace them either economically or politically or militarily for that matter. We had a modest IMET program which gave us our entrée to the military but we didn't have any big military stakes at that time in that country.

Q: What about a military program? The French could have done the whole thing. Why leave us a bit of the action?

LEADER: That's kind of a mute question regarding the period that I was there because

San Cara having just taken over wasn't sending anybody out. So, it was more of a program.

Q: Usually IMET means bringing people to the United States for training.

LEADER: That's correct. My job was to keep talking to them about it and to keep planning and finding out when they were going to restart and so forth. But they did not restart while I was there. But it was an interesting time. There were four people who had made this coup who were all in positions of leadership. The person who was the current president was very rarely in Ouagadougou. He was much more of a military man and tended to stay at a base in the southern part of the country where he was the commander. He wasn't very evident.

My job was a little bit of everything. We only had the ambassador, the DCM, myself, and a consular officer. That was it. I had two FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) working for me. One handled the self help program. We had one of the biggest self help programs in Africa, $200,000 a year, and he ran the program beautifully.

Q: This is where you give $500 or $1,000 to somebody to set up a little store or something like that.

LEADER: It was usually more than that. We built three classroom blocks. We would help out with digging wells. We would provide funding and they would provide the manpower. The way the program was managed, we never gave cash. We paid the vendors. People would buy their supplies for whatever project they were doing in Ouagadougou and then the bills would be sent to us and we'd pay the vendors. That was basically the place where people got their supplies, so it worked out well. Our FSN knew all of the suppliers and was on very good terms. He could always tell if the bill that came in was too much because he had worked with the projects for such a long time. That was very good. Interestingly enough, that person retired and then they brought him back out of retirement. Last May, he and his wife came to visit. They stayed at my house for two weeks while they were going around seeing other people and other places. Twenty years later, we were reconnected. The other FSN was doing economic reports for me because I wasn't much of an economist. He later left and went to UNICEF. I lost track of him.

Q: How about Burkina Faso? Was it split into tribal groups? What was the predominant religion?

LEADER: It did have tribal groups. It also had some traditional rulers who still had some standing in the community, the Mossi. There wasn't a lot of cross-fertilization between the ethnic groups. Our Foreign Service national who worked with our self help program came from the south from outside of Ouagadougou and he could not speak the language. To this day, he does not speak the language of Ouagadougou. When we would go out to the self help projects, which was one of the great activities that I just loved doing, he was as dependent on a translator as I was. He did not know the other local languages. They

needed the French as their lingua franca. Of course, a lot of people didn't speak French because the educational system was so poor and the number of illiterate people was so great. So there were these tribal differences. But I never got the sense that they were really in competition. Burkina Faso has virtually no resources. But I didn't get the sense that they were really competing, cutthroat for what few resources there were. So there wasn't an intense ethnic competition from my perspective. Maybe it was there, but I didn't see it at the time. As far as religion is concerned, of course, Islam was the major religion. There was some Christianity, but it was predominantly Islam. But again, it wasn't an Islam that was trying to dominate the political, economic, religious scene. It coexisted quite easily with the Christianity that was there and with the local religions that also existed.

Q: How did you find working in this area as a woman?

LEADER: I never found it a problem in Burkina Faso. I never had problems with the people that I worked with or the contacts that I made.

Q: Were we watching for the hand of Qadhafi from Libya in the area?

LEADER: Yes, we were watching for it. I have always maintained that the person with the strongest links of the four leaders was this military man who stayed in the south and now has become the president. I think there was some training going on. I could never verify it. But we know that later the space that he had was possibly used to train dissidents from other countries in the area and we know that he had a role in supporting Charles Taylor of Liberia eventually, who had his Qadhafi connections. So, I think that there has always been a Qadhafi connection. We may have closed our eyes to it more than we should have in some instances. I wasn't following the policy closely.

Q: The two years you were there, the same government was in power and there weren't many changes, is that right?

LEADER: That's correct.

Speaking of Libya, Qadhafi came to Burkina Faso during my stay there. He always travels with an entourage of female security guards. They all surrounded the plane and do their little dances and he comes down. It was quite an event.

Q: What did we do, stay out of the way?

LEADER: Yes. We were observers. We didn't have a lot we could do.

Q: We didn't have relations with the country, so you didn't go to the receptions.

LEADER: No. But we would see the Libyans around. The Libyans were evident in Ouagadougou.

Q: How about a Soviet presence?

LEADER: There was a Soviet presence. We had fairly good contacts at the Soviet embassy. I don't know what they were doing.

Q: The Chinese?

LEADER: They were there.

Q: You left there in 1985. Where did you go?

LEADER: I went to the post that I had put on my bid list as an afterthought: Lagos, Nigeria. I was initially very upset about having to go from one hardship post in West Africa to another hardship post in West Africa when I was trying to get out of Africa. I was trying to broaden my base and thought that by putting Dhaka number one on my list that I would surely be able to go. I thought that trying to get into South Asia would be a good entry point because there wasn't much demand. It turned out that as soon as they saw my name on the list for Lagos -- the only name on the list for Lagos -- I was assigned in the second week of the assignment process without any prior consultation.

It turned out to be one of my best assignments. I learned a lot about Foreign Service reporting and I had a very good boss, Peter Chaveas, who is currently the ambassador to Sierra Leone. It was a larger embassy, a bigger political section. I had to learn not to do everything like I was doing in Burkina Faso but to carve out a little niche for myself. I just had a great time there.

Q: You were there from '85 to when?

LEADER: I was there from 1985 to 1988. I actually left there in 1988 on a direct transfer. I extended, but I left on a direct transfer in the middle of spring.

Q: In 1985 you arrive in Lagos. What was Nigeria like then?

LEADER: In some ways, it was already somewhat dangerous. I recall that there were some incidents that people at the embassy faced. One fellow had his car hijacked at gunpoint. There were other incidents involving guns and foreigners and Americans. It was an extremely lively place. The Nigerians loved talking to foreigners. As a political officer it was so easy to get information because everybody wanted to tell you their side of the story. If you didn't come to them, they would come to you, because you had to know their point of view. But while it was very easy to get information, the harder part was to assess it. Everybody was telling you their particular side of the story. This was not long after a coup. The president, Babangida, had come to power about six months before I got there. He was promising a return to democratic rule and political stability. The people who had been in charge of political parties were already starting to maneuver. I had the

good fortune of being sent up to Kaduna one summer when there was a gap between the consul generals who were the principal officers there. I was able to go around and talk to all of these would-be political leaders and send in reports of their aspirations and what they were envisioning. This was very welcome and very much appreciated throughout the U.S. government. Those reports put Kaduna on the map at that time. It was a very exciting time. The Nigerians in the south were very vivacious and fun loving. They liked to have foreigners at their events, and when I say "events," I mean their weddings, their chief inductions, even deaths. They wanted you always to come to their events and so we got involved in a lot of these kinds of things. You really got into the culture.

I worked with the Democracy Fund. By that time, we had the Democracy and Human Rights Fund. I worked with people who were human rights activists. There was a woman who was very involved… She was the Nigerian representative to the African-American Institute and she was very involved in trying to reach out to women on democracy. We funded a project that she had and funded some human rights projects. We were very busy and very involved, very engaged.

Q: The president was whom?

LEADER: Ibrahim Babangida.

Q: How did we view him and how was he running the country?

LEADER: It was after I left that everybody began to turn sour on him. While I was there, we had hopes that he would do the right thing. He was delicately balancing all of the various groups in Nigeria. You asked me about groups in Ouagadougou where they existed but they were not combative. In Nigeria, the groups were very competitive in trying to get access to the resources of Nigeria, basically oil. Oil had already become the black gold of that country and had pretty much drowned out agriculture. The country was now beginning to import food. It was under the IMF (International Monetary Fund) program and it was having a great deal of difficulty conforming to the expectations of that program. We talked a lot at staff meetings about having the exchange rate be a floating exchange rate.

Q: You were in the political section. What piece of the action did you have?

LEADER: My particular portfolio was external affairs. I did the foreign ministry, its UN involvement and so on. The part of my portfolio on which I spent a lot of time and which was most interesting was religion. I was covering Christianity versus Islam. That was just absolutely fascinating and so important even now to the relationships of people in the country.

Q: Was Islam spreading? Was there almost an agreed upon line between the two religions?

LEADER: Convention had it – and I think that in general we could say – that the northern half of Nigeria was Islamic and that the southwest was both Islamic and Christian in the Yoruba area and that the north was the Hausa area and that in the Ibo area it was overwhelmingly Christian. You did have that kind of rubric to start out with. But certainly in the north there were a lot of pockets where Christianity predominated, so as we saw more recently when they tried to impose Sharia, there were a lot of people opposed because there were a lot of people who are not Muslims. The thing that we found when we looked at it – and this was confirmed in a few articles in the newspaper very recently – Evangelical Christianity was making inroads in the north-

Q: That is odd because normally you don't make inroads against Islam.

LEADER: Well, the Muslims were very upset by it. Christianity was attracting the youth and it was offering people some answers to things that they weren't getting in their own religion. They were trying to keep them out, but they couldn't do it. Islam was kind of under attack from the other side because the type of Islam that was practiced was the Sunni Islam and not fundamentalist or radical in any way. There were some people coming in from more fundamentalist groups. The Lebanese community was very big in the north and there were some members of those families who were sending their youth over to Nigeria to work in businesses that were owned by their extended families. They were bringing with them some Shiite and fundamentalist ideas. Some influences came from Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. And there were some riots – the Christian-Muslim riots. Sometimes you weren't sure who was in charge of them, who was running them from the Muslim side, whether they were going to turn on the Americans or anything like that. The traditional leaders were not interested in attacking the Americans at that point in time, but there was always that concern.

Q: Was Qadhafi involved?

LEADER: I don't think Qadhafi had a great deal of influence and I don't think we saw his hand in there. But the Muslims felt that the Christians were trying to get rid of them and they felt the Christian ways of looking at things – the calendar, the work week, all of these things that were associated with the Judeo-Christian world – were being imposed on Nigeria. But the southerners felt that the Muslims of the north were trying to take over the whole country. There was an oft quoted phrase that the Muslims in the north had said that they were going to dip the Koran in the sea, which was interpreted to mean that they wanted to take over the entire country and make it an Islamic state. That friction is going to continue for some time in Nigeria.

Q: How about corruption?

LEADER: There was a lot of corruption, but I wasn't personally able to identify or see a lot of it. I wasn't following that particular line.

Q: How about democratic institutions and the courts? How were things going?

LEADER: I think there was always a question about whether there could be a fair trial or whether it would be colored by the desired political outcome. The group that I was observing that was most often involved in courts were the journalists, who were frequently having their newspapers closed down or being arrested and held. Unfortunately, sometimes they would also be killed. There was a lot of subterranean subterfuge going on. I had to do the human rights reports as well. I just tried to report the way things were functioning, but I have to confess that I don't know in great depth how the courts were managing.

Q: By the time you left there in 1988, how did you feel things were developing in Nigeria?

LEADER: When I left, I thought that there was still some hope that the country would in fact go back to some multiparty democracy. A constitution was being written. The political parties were being allowed to form again. The leaders were staking out their positions. Some of them had a broader view than others. But it seemed that there was some sense that the country needed to continue as one and so on. It was not long after I left that it tended to turn and it looked as if Babangida was not going to follow through on his commitments and just let them be pushed off and pushed off and pushed off until they were just forgotten.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

LEADER: The first ambassador was Thomas Smith. He was very ill. His DCM was our chargé. Don Gelber was the DCM who became the chargé for a considerable period of time. Then Princeton Lyman came as our ambassador. He was the ambassador for the rest of the time that I was there.

Q: In 1988, you got a direct transfer to where?

LEADER: I received a direct transfer to Geneva. It was part of a personnel deal because my boss, Peter Chaveas, the head of the political section, was called upon to be the consul general in Johannesburg and he moved to Johannesburg in January. Then they identified the person in Geneva to come to take his place as the political counselor and I was identified to go to Geneva to take his place. We sort of did this little round robin. I was debating over my options for my next post, but Geneva was my number one choice, so I was very fortunate.

Q: Today is November 5, 2003. You were in Geneva from 1988 to when?

LEADER: March 1988 until the end of June 1991.

Q: What was the exact title of what you were up to?

LEADER: The first two years that I was there, I was the number three person as a refugee and migration officer. There was a section in the U.S. Mission in Geneva that was called the Refugee and Migration Assistance Section (RMA). I had gone to Geneva thinking that I would have the same portfolio as the person I replaced, which was Asia, but it was decided when I got there that since I had so much Africa experience, it was bad management if I wasn't assigned to Africa. So I ended up doing all of Africa and most of Asia as well. Our main interlocutors were the people who worked on those issues in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. There were also a few other international organizations that had some representation there. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Of course, the International Labor organization (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO) were also involved to the extent that they were relevant. There were some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a couple of consortiums of NGOs with which we related. So, it was very exciting work and the people who were working on these humanitarian issues, because that's basically what we were doing was the humanitarian issues, were just wonderful people from all over the world who were attracted to UNHCR. ICRC at that time was wholly Swiss. Now that's not the case. It was a wonderful group of people to work with and we had a great time.

Q: You were a part of the U.S. Mission to…

LEADER: It was the U.S. Mission to the UN organizations.

Q: All UN organizations?

LEADER: Just those based in Geneva.

Q: To whom did your organization answer to back in Washington?

LEADER: We answered to what at that time was called the Refugee Office.

Q: You were not part of the Bureau of International Organizations (IO)?

LEADER: No, we were not. But of course, the people that we reported to in Geneva above our office were IO people. Our office related directly to the Refugee Bureau. It had a director of refugee affairs at that time.

Q: Who was the head of your organization in Geneva?

LEADER: The head of the Mission?

Q: First the Mission and then your office.

LEADER: I can't remember the first guy, but the second ambassador was Morris Abrams,

who was there most of the time that I was there. There was another political appointee before that. My initial supervisor was Mike Carpenter. I worked with Dick Mann, who unfortunately died not too long after we finished up in Geneva. After two years, I became the number two person in the office as the deputy. At that time, my direct supervisor was Allen Drury.

Q: As you arrived and they looked you over and said, "You've got the African area and other things," what was on your plate?

LEADER: One of the biggest programs that we worked with was in Asia. It became the Comprehensive Plan of Action to resolve the longstanding Vietnamese boatpeople issue. This was a plan that was worked out among UNHCR, the donor countries, and the countries of asylum where refugees were temporarily settled. Under the plan, the refugees would resettle in other countries or to go back to Vietnam. It was called Comprehensive because it was intended to resolve the situation in Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. There were people in all of these areas that needed to have resettlement options. The plan was worked out through a number of conferences. There were always groups of delegations coming from Washington to Geneva to work on these issues. Robert Funseth was the principal DAS of the refugee office at that time. He led a number of these delegations and was very instrumental in getting the whole plan put together.

Q: Who would accept Vietnamese refugees? This was the crux of the matter. The whole idea was to clean out the camps and get them set up with a new life.

LEADER: Right.

Q: What were our instructions? Were we reluctant to take more in?

LEADER: We wanted to see a burden sharing situation where other countries would also respond. We would not be the only ones shouldering the burden. Burden sharing was definitely the principle on which the whole process was grounded.

Q: How were the other countries responding to it?

LEADER: There was a very good response throughout the world in the resettlement countries. There are only about 15 countries worldwide that do resettle refugees – principally in Europe of course, but Australia as well. It was a fairly robust response from throughout the resettlement community.

Q: Were there any particular problems that you had to face, such as those that were not overly eager to take more in?

LEADER: I don't remember being particularly involved in looking at that aspect of it. There were a lot of issues and concerns around what would happen to those who were not

taken, who did not qualify for resettlement in another country. Just because UNHCR declares somebody a refugee according to its criteria doesn't necessarily mean that the person will qualify for resettlement in the United States. There is always the problem of what happens to the residual caseload? That was more a sticking point than getting other countries to step up to the plate.

Q: There must have been quite a bit of pressure from the countries who initially accepted: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia…

LEADER: Yes. They were always threatening to close the camps and send people back against their will, trying to clean them out. This was particularly true in Hong Kong, but Malaysia was very much in that mode. Of course, there were a lot of very difficult situations in some of the camps. The camps on the Thailand border were very much involved in trafficking in timber and things like this. There were a lot of difficult situations in the camps and it was time that they be closed but it had to be done in an orderly way. At the same time, we were starting up the Orderly Departure Program from Vietnam for persons who had not escaped through the boat route and who may have been in reeducation camps, but who also may have been connected with the Americans at some point. So, this was a program where, on an exceptional basis, refugees were being taken directly from wherever they were located to the United States. Interestingly enough, a similar kind of program is about to start up again. There are some in our government who believe that there are still Vietnamese who did not make it into that program before it closed.

Q: Was the Vietnamese government a participant in these negotiations?

LEADER: Yes, they were a very integral player in all of this. That was one of the things Bob Funseth worked on so very hard to bring them along and to get their cooperation in this Comprehensive Plan so that they didn't feel that things were being done to their people against the wishes of the Vietnamese government itself. It was during that time that Bob Funseth would come to Geneva and meet with delegations from Vietnam on the issue of the missing in action, the MIAs, and he made a big breakthrough in that area as well. I was always the notetaker at the luncheons he hosted. Everybody else got to eat except me and Bob Funseth. That was really my role in many of these meetings: to be the notetaker whenever more senior officials were in Geneva and to report on what transpired. My reporting would then lead policy decisions in Washington about follow-on actions.

Q: How did you see the role of the French in this?

LEADER: I don't honestly recall anything too exceptional. I can't remember the substance of it, but at one point we had the interesting experience of having dinner with Bernard Kuchner, the French Minister for their Humanitarian Affairs. He was the founder of Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors Without Borders. He had a falling-out with them at some point and then he founded a second organization called Doctors of the World or

something, Médecins du Monde. As the leader of Médecins Sans Frontières Kuchner had done some rather flamboyant, spectacular things with the Vietnamese – sending boats out to rescue people at sea and all kinds of things like this. I can't remember exactly the conversation, but there were a lot of very strong statements on both sides. Our refugee director at the time and Kuchner were going at it. But there was a willingness to try to come to an agreement that would be acceptable to both sides.

So that was basically the Asia portfolio.

Q: Did East Timor come into this at all?

LEADER: It wasn't very big on my radar screen. There were groups of Timorese, liberation groups, but what was going on in Indonesia wasn't really on my radar screen at that point. A lot of things should have been but you just couldn't do everything.

Africa was also a big issue. There were lots of different issues in Africa. At that time, we were spending a lot of time on what was going on in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia was in a civil war with Eritreans who wanted independence. In Sudan the SPLA (Sudan People's Liberation Army) of John Garang was fighting government troops in the southern part to try to keep these troops out of the south. At that time, there was a big push on the part of officers in our emergency section of AID, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), to launch a humanitarian operation in the southern part of the country. This was very controversial because of course the central government didn't want aid going o people in the south. So, aid workers began flying in from Kenya and going from Lokichokio into various places in the southern part of Sudan. We worked on getting UNHCR to support this work and to harmonize with ICRC. I always was impressed with ICRC because it had such innovative approaches to problems. Instead of just bringing in food, it had a veterinary program to help keep the cattle healthy. People's lives were so intertwined with cattle. There was drought and war. So they had mobile veterinary stations that would go around and keep the cattle healthy, which would then keep the people healthy.

Q: Were they mostly for milk?

LEADER: The way the people kept their wealth was in cattle, so they were not eating them so much as just having them for the milk and for other things that they could get from the cattle. But eventually the UN operation, Operation Lifeline Sudan, was launched. A lot of food was going in and helping the people. There were UNHCR officers stationed in various areas southern Sudan. Their presence had to be with the concurrence of the central government. It became very dangerous. The government would hold some of the towns. Outside the towns there was war and drought and it was very hard to get access to the rural areas where there were so many millions of people who needed assistance. People were trekking long distances from drought areas of the Sudan into Ethiopia. Refugee camps in Ethiopia were working with UNHCR to ensure that these camps were being run properly and that they had adequate resources to take care of the

people.

And then there was Somalia, which had a number of large camps – this time refugees from Ethiopia. So you had refugees from Sudan in Ethiopia, refugees from Ethiopia in Somalia. The refugees from Ethiopia were also in Sudan. This was a very big area full of refugee problems.

Q: What was your role in this?

LEADER: My number one role was to keep on top of what was happening, what the UNHCR was doing in these areas, what their policies were, and what their financial needs were, and then to report this back to Washington. I recommended funding options and where we should put our emphasis in using our resources. I also made recommendations about how we might discuss with UNHCR our thoughts on what would be a good way for them to go. We had some additional ideas about their programs and so forth. I had long discussions with the head of their Africa office about what they were doing and how they were doing it and whether they were putting enough resources in – into northern Somalia in particular, where there were a lot of difficulties. In Ethiopia, there were some rebels from northern Somalia whom Ethiopian officials said had to leave the country. So, they left the country. Where did they go? They went into the hills in northern Somalia and started waging their rebel war there against Hargeisa and other towns in northern Somalia, creating more displaced people. I recall that this was before the government of Somalia totally collapsed. It seemed to me that a lot of the food we were providing there became a resource that government authorities were using to keep people on their side. They were using the food to buy loyalty. There was considerable debate about whether or not UNHCR was going to cut off its food assistance to people in various parts of Somalia, particularly in the north. We didn't want them to cut it off just point blank, but eventually they did. That coincided with the beginning of the collapse of the government. When they didn't have the food anymore, it was a problem. They didn't have any commodity to buy loyalty with and it disintegrated, the whole network.

Q: Did you find that much of the refugee effort was driven by where TV camera people were?

LEADER: I'm sure that may have prompted some of the urgency we felt, but at that time there were no other areas competing for our attention where the problems were as large as they were in the Horn of Africa. Of course, the people from Somalia were going into Kenya. I went to see some refugees in Kenya who were Somalis as fighting picked up inside Somalia. But West Africa was fairly calm. It hadn't really exploded yet. My respect for ICRC was reinforced when I talked to them about what they were doing in West Africa. They said they had identified West Africa at that time as being the next real trouble spot in Africa and they were very worried about political stability. Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast was getting old. What sort of succession was there in that area? They were very worried about it. It was 1989 while I was there that Charles Taylor started his rebel war to oust the government in Liberia and that became a very big focus of ours.

There was a lot of attention in the humanitarian community as people started to be displaced in Liberia and across borders. I remember trying to figure out if we could put food on the railway line and send it up into those areas. Was the railway still functioning? It was run by a mining company. Had the mining company left? I kept trying to figure out how we could get resources into the country. I also recall having a discussion with ICRC about what it was doing and its representative in Geneva said that he was in frequent contact with his people who were actually already inside northern Liberia. They were coming in from Cote d'Ivoire to the east and he was using some sort of a satellite radio. I asked, "Aren't you worried about having other people pick up information about what your plans are and what your strategies are?" He said, "Oh, no, I have no problem at all. We talk in Swiss German and nobody in the world understands it." They were in very close contact. They had a lot of people working out of northern Cote d'Ivoire. ICRC was also very good at building contacts with key people. Taylor's brother was in Cote d'Ivoire. There were rumors that he actually had a vehicle painted white like an ambulance with a red cross on it. So ICRC sent out the word that they had to find this vehicle. Apparently they did find it and they had a little chat with Taylor's brother and told him he'd better stop using this ambulance-like vehicle with the red cross. ICRC would try to maintain its neutrality and talk with people on both sides of any conflict. They always had to cross lines to get to the people in need of their assistance. So that was another big focus and it became a much larger issue as time went on. Charles Taylor spread the word to Sierra Leone to try to get access to the diamonds in that country. Guinea got drawn in and took a lot of the refugees. It became a much bigger regional problem. When I was there 13 years ago we were focused on Taylor and Liberia. We were aware that he was getting assistance from Burkina Faso and at that time Cote d'Ivoire, which had to be complicit and knowledgeable about him.

Q: Were we constrained about whom we helped? From the American side, did it make any difference where the refugees were or whom they were fleeing from?

LEADER: The short answer is, of course, no. U.S. funding goes not to governments but to the international organizations and the NGOs that are helping in humanitarian crisis situations. So, basically, our money went where UNHCR went and UNHCR goes anywhere. Of course, it is helping in countries of asylum and if it's an internal conflict, the Red Cross will actually be inside the country helping the victims of the conflict. So we were not constrained by looking at who was right or wrong or trying to make any judgment about the conflict. We were looking at the victims of the conflict. It wasn't really the role of the Refugee Bureau to get involved in conflict resolution or conflict prevention. In fact, that has been an issue for some time that UNHCR has wrestled with, and that is, to what extent should they be involved in the countries of origin? They usually are working in the countries of asylum. What should they be doing in terms of conflict prevention to keep people from crossing borders? What involvement should they have in human rights, with people who are displaced who haven't crossed borders? That became a big issue when we got into another situation that happened when I was there: the Gulf War. There were so many people who fled to northern Iraq and when fighting followed, they tried to cross borders and fled into Iran by the hundreds of thousands.

Turkey stopped them at the border so they were blocked inside Iraq, displaced people in desperate need of help. What was UNHCR's role? That was one of the first times that UNHCR got involved in a big way with people who are called "internally displaced." They did go in and helped in that situation. Of course, the U.S. military was there first.

Q: This was Operation Provide Comfort.

LEADER: One of the women in our office was working very closely in liaison between Provide Comfort and UNHCR and ICRC and so forth.

Q: How did your operation and other agencies of various governments work with the NGOs, including Doctors Without Borders? These all have their own dynamics. Was this like trying to herd kittens?

LEADER: In the humanitarian arena, the NGOs need to get their funding from somewhere. Some have independent sources. Oxfam tries to avoid using government funding to the extent that it can. CARE often tries to, depending on the situation. It sometimes makes judgments about the government's role in a specific situation and then decides whether to take government money or not. They often work in concert with UNHCR so that they're implementers. UNHCR has staff in the field but not enough to do all of the things that need to be done. The NGOs become the implementing agencies for UNHCR, working with the World Food Programme (WFP). They become implementing agencies in many of these situations. U.S. funding goes to UNHCR which then subcontracts with the NGOs. As money became tighter and tighter, UNHCR often had gaps in what it could provide. More recently, we've been providing a lot of funding directly to NGOs to operate in parallel with what UNHCR is doing in the refugee areas. For example, an NGO might be funded to set up a health clinic or school in a particular refugee camp. It would do so in conjunction with UNHCR because UNHCR said it needed to be done but UNHCR itself didn't have the resources to do it. There's still debate as to whether the resources should go through UNHCR so it can supervise and manage all of the NGO activities or whether the NGOs should be funded separately. If so, this raises the coordination question because they shouldn't be out there operating as independent entities.

Q: Did Rwanda-Burundi cause any problems while you were there?

LEADER: You asked before, were there other concerns that we should have had on our radar screen? Quite honestly, it was a surprise to me on October 1, 1990, when the Tutsi rebels, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), came across the border militarily into Rwanda. At that time I was virtually ignorant of the situation and the fact that there were refugees in southern Uganda, in Burundi, and some in Zaire, who had been there for 30 years. This is not to say that I was totally ignorant of the situation in these countries. I had followed Africa and I did know that there were the Hutus and the Tutsis and that this was a problem. There had been some massacres in Burundi which sent refugees into Rwanda. That was in 1989. I was sent from Geneva to help our embassies there to improve their

reporting and assessing of the situation. I worked with one of the junior officers on the refugee portfolio. We went out to look at the situation on the Rwandan side of the border and then I went to Burundi and looked from the Burundi side of the border. Then I made a report to Washington with recommendations about how to deal with gaps and what kinds of things UNHCR was or wasn't doing, what ICRC was or wasn't doing, what the WFP was or wasn't doing. I tried to build some capacity in both the embassies to continue reporting on the ground.

I also knew in 1988 there had been a conference in Washington with Rwandan refugees and at that conference the refugees had declared they wanted to come back to Rwanda. The response of the president was, "You can't come back. There's not enough land." I was partly aware of this because one of my colleagues in UNHCR was a Ugandan born Rwandan descendent. He had come from the refugee community in Uganda and was keeping me informed about these things. But it was still a surprise to me to discover the extent to which the Rwandan refugees had organized militarily with weapons and military prowess. They had military expertise, and they were motivated to take this very momentous and risky step of crossing over into another country and trying to wage a military fight. That was one that did get away from us.

Very quickly, UNHCR got involved in trying to build on the experience that they had in Asia with the Comprehensive Plan of Action and sought to bring all of the countries together where there were refugees. There was a conference about four months after the invasion in January/February 1991 that was held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. UNHCR brought representatives from all of the countries in conflict together as well as the donor countries. One of the people they sent down there was Sergio Vera de Melo, whose name is now linked with Iraq and the fact that he was killed in August in a bomb attack. At the time of the conference I was encouraging him to try a Comprehensive Plan of Action approach.

Q: He was one of the top UN diplomats. He was involved in many things.

LEADER: He got his start in UNHCR. When I started in the Mission in Geneva, he was the head of the Asia Bureau in UNHCR, so we dealt with him on the Comprehensive Plan of Action. He was the key UNHCR diplomat who put that thing together tirelessly dealing with all of the various governments. He didn't have much Africa experience as far as I know, but they pulled him in when there was this need to bring all of the people together. He was so good at that.

Q: Was there a concern during this time of how much are you supporting refugees and how much are you supporting rebel forces? Food is a weapon.

LEADER: There was always some effort to provide accountability and be sure that the food was reaching the intended beneficiaries. There were controls through WFP, through UNHCR. Most of the time, we were fairly satisfied that it was reaching the intended beneficiaries. Southern Sudan was a problem since the rebels were the authorities and so

they were in a position to exploit the people. I think there was a big effort to keep the exploitation to an absolute minimum and try to wipe it out altogether. But in certain situations, this did become a problem – where the rebels would have access to the food resources that the victims of the conflict were supposed to receive.

Q: At one point some time later, you had these MREs [meals ready to eat].

LEADER: Or as they said in Ethiopia, "Meals refused by Ethiopians." I was responsible for getting a million MREs after the Gulf War into Ethiopia for people who were trekking back from the war against Eritrea after the cease-fire there had been declared. The Ethiopians were trekking back from the north down to Addis Ababa and we gave a million MREs to the ICRC to put at some feeding stations along the way and they were then called "meals refused by Ethiopians." They ate them, but that was just sort of a nomenclature that we came up with.

Q: I'm told in some places that the experience was, you've got to be a bit careful with this type of food in that it's a military commodity, where it's better to have large feeding stations which keep people somewhat static so it won't be used by guerilla forces.

LEADER: I don't recall any discussions along those lines. Having MREs is fairly unusual. They were stockpiled and ready to be used in Iraq before we went into Iraq because they were portable. If there were big displacements of people the military would be in a position to distribute them without getting involved in food preparation and all of that kind of thing. But oftentimes, they're not the food of first choice.

Q: How did you find that your work in humanitarian affairs fit in with all the other UN and American agencies? Were there any problems?

LEADER: I think that the humanitarian approach of the Refugee Bureau has always been accepted by the other parts of the government as being something that we do. The challenge has been to make it more of an integrated approach where the fact of refugees in a country becomes a critical policy issue for the rest of our government. Sometimes this is not a foregone conclusion. It's not necessarily a number one priority on the list of bilateral issues. That's been one of the things that the Refugee Bureau does try to do, to move this issue higher on the bilateral agenda so that we're looking more at conflict resolution and conflict prevention so that there won't be the need for the humanitarian response. But as far as the humanitarian response, once there is a need, it's been pretty free of politics.

Q: In 1991, whither?

LEADER: Just about the time that the Rwandan rebels crossed from Uganda into Rwanda, I was asked by the ambassador designate to be his DCM in Rwanda. I accepted that and it went through. So, there I was, a year later, off to this country where there was a war going on.

Q: You were there from 1991 to when?

LEADER: To 1994.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

LEADER: The first ambassador with whom I worked was Ambassador Robert Flaten. Much of his experience was with South Asia. He also had experience in Israel. He often talked about how he saw a lot of parallels between the Rwandan situation and Israel. The second ambassador I had was David Rawson. He was very much an Africa hand. In fact, he grew up as a missionary kid in Burundi, spoke Kirundi, which is practically synonymous with Kinyarwanda, and was able to use his Kinyarwanda in Rwanda. He had already been stationed there once as a junior officer, so he was returning to Rwanda and to a region that he knew pretty well.

Q: Where is he now?

LEADER: He retired. He served his three years in Rwanda, including going back after the genocide, and was oftentimes under a great deal of suspicion by the Tutsi who took power. I think they never liked the fact that he could understand Kinyarwanda. Then he went as ambassador to Mali for three years. Then he retired and is now in Michigan teaching.

Q: What was the situation in Rwanda when you got there in 1991?

LEADER: Rwanda was at a very exciting point in its history. The president had been in absolute control of the country since 1973 when he made a coup against the first president. This would be nearly 20 years later. He had declared that the political process would be open, parties could form, there would be a new constitution, a prime minister would be appointed, and there would be power sharing in the government. It was a very exciting time. It was all in the context of the French President Mitterrand's declaration at Baulay, where they had a Francophone summit and he had urged the Francophone governments in Africa to turn toward democracy. This was a kind of response to that more than it was to any of our interests in democratization, but we certainly were supportive of this move. Shortly after I arrived in Rwanda, the ambassador asked me to join him at lunch with two of the leaders of one of the political parties. He was very involved in this whole political process, advising the parties, responding to them when they had questions, trying to keep everybody moving forward when they felt they were getting blocked or bad things were happening between them and the government or there were disagreements. He kept trying to push them to resolve differences and to keep moving forward in this process toward elections to create an elected government. But in the meantime there was to be a multiparty government formed, bringing the opposition into the government. This opening was happening in the political front. Human rights organizations were being formed which we supported. On the journalism front, we were

involved through then USIS in supporting journalists to be responsible in their opposition or in their criticism, not just to simply throw around critique but to have a basis to report what was really happening. U.S. policy supported all of these different openings in the society and as an embassy we were very supportive.

Q: How stood Hutu-Tutsi relations?

LEADER: About 15% of the population was Tutsi. But the government, what military, what police there were, the security services were all monopolized by the Hutu. There were quota systems for access to education. If you were a Tutsi, only 15% of the Tutsi were going to get to go to university, or have access to primary school. So the main avenues open to Tutsi were either business – and there were some very successful Tutsi businessmen – or the church. The church had a larger percentage of Tutsi than was reflected by the size of the population. They were about 40% of the church, the priests and so forth. People got along. Rwanda doesn't have a lot of towns or villages. It's called the Land of a Thousand Hills. People live on hills. Your community is your hill. But on these hills, there were both Hutu and Tutsi living together. In the towns there were Hutu and Tutsi living together. There weren't visible animosities but there were under the surface suspicions. The Hutus in positions of power would say to me, "The Tutsi are smarter than we are. We can't trust them. They will take over." They didn't feel comfortable. People told me that their parents told them they should never take food from a stranger or from even their neighbors because it might be poisoned. There was a lot of suspicion. Even the language had a lot of this… I never learned to speak Kinyarwanda. It's a very difficult language. But the translation of the phrase to express "Have a good night" or "Sleep well" was something like "Sleep well and make sure that your enemies don't attack you." It's built into the society that there are enemies. Then the government did use the radio to build up the idea that the Tutsis who were attacking the country were evil people and that the Tutsis who lived inside the country were obviously supportive of them. This was not necessarily the case. The Tutsis inside the country didn't necessarily support a war against the government, and especially now that there was this opening of the political process, they had a sense that they could achieve some of their goals in the political transformation of the country by peaceful means and they weren't necessarily supportive of the RPF. But they were all lumped together. In the year before I got there, 8,000 Tutsis had been simply rounded up and arrested and held in prison for up to six months because they were considered to be accomplices of the rebels. It was just assumed that if they were Tutsi then they were part of the rebel network. This wasn't the case. Part of that is evident now in Rwanda where there is a kind of a split between the Tutsis who have returned from exile after they took control of the government and those who stayed throughout and never were in exile. They don't see eye to eye and they don't trust each other. There is a lot of mistrust.

Q: Where stood the military side? Were the rebels inside Rwanda?

LEADER: Most of the fighting was at the border. It didn't have a big impact on life in Kigali at all. Most of the cities and the towns of the country were not particularly affected

by the war. It was taking place in rural areas along the northern border between Uganda and Rwanda. The military pushed back the initial thrust and the rebels had to cross back into Uganda. Then they sent mortars across the border and troops into the country and they would attack some of the social services like hospitals, schools, things like this. They were reputedly taking some people captive and pressing them into service. It was somewhat reminiscent of what was going on in Mozambique and RENAMO (Mozambican National resistance). That was another big refugee situation when I was in Geneva, the Mozambican one. So there was fighting going on and there were wounded soldiers being brought back from the front. We knew this because helicopters would bring them back at night and you would hear stories about that. There was real fighting going on. And there was a considerable number of displaced people. The government cleared out everybody within five miles of the border, just took them out of that area. There were others who were subject to attacks. There were camps set up in a certain part of the north. ICRC was helping to provide food and shelter and water for these people. I was able to visit some of these camps. It was mostly ICRC. UNHCR was not particularly in there at that time. UNHCR was in the country and had been working out a solution to return the refugees which the government accepted. All of this plays into what was the timing of this rebel effort. It seemed that the democratization process was going to give the Tutsis a role but not necessarily the role that they wanted. If you're a minority, then you're not going to necessarily be in control. So there was some speculation that because the refugees were now allowed to come back and the democratization was going to give them a bigger role in the government, they had to make their move because otherwise they would not have the kind of bargaining position they wanted.

Q: What were we doing? How were you being used?

LEADER: Well, in addition to being the DCM and seconding the ambassador in what he was doing and managing the embassy and trying to liaison with USIS and with AID and so forth, I was particularly following the human rights situation and the other civil society development that was going on.

Q: Were you able to get out and around?

LEADER: I didn't get out much, but I had a good friend who was with CARE who would periodically invite me to come along with her. I did go out with her to a number of places to see the problems that the war was posing – the refugee camps, the impact that they had on the environment. They just stripped forests bare to build their huts. I got around the country mostly to see refugee situations.

Q: Was there much interest in Washington?

LEADER: The interest went as far as the Assistant Secretary for Africa. Ambassador Cohen had come to Burundi when I was still in Geneva in the spring. He came out and had a conference with ambassadors from those countries to talk about what a solution might look like. I had been called down from Geneva to attend that conference as well

and provide the refugee perspective. So he was interested in it from the start. His thrust was conflict resolution in a number of places on the continent. Washington was a bit more involved in some of the conflict resolution aspects of it where it was actually dealing with the rebels. We in the embassy at this time didn't have contact with the RPF. The RPF was up in Uganda and so people would go from Washington to Uganda and talk to them or they would meet in some secret meetings in Zimbabwe or something. Oftentimes, I wasn't even aware that some of these meetings were going on. We didn't see highly classified intelligence in Rwanda because we had no Marines. We didn't see highly classified communications of the Department. In some ways, we weren't holding all the cards in the embassy.

Q: Were the Libyans messing around there?

LEADER: Not in Rwanda. There was a small Muslim community in Rwanda and they did have pretensions of an Islamic political party but their connections were predominantly with Saudi Arabia, not with Libya. There was some Libyan activity in Uganda at the time but the RPF was predominantly Christian. Christianity was very strong in Rwanda. It was strong among the refugees as well. Islam was not a big force.

Q: How about missionaries? Did you get involved with them?

LEADER: The American missionaries were definitely part of our constituency. I myself didn't have that much contact with them. Their contact with the embassy was more through either the ambassador or a consular officer who was keeping track. He initially – she later – ran the network of American citizens. We had a radio network inside the embassy community and then we had one for Americans who were outside the official community. We had to keep the same information flowing in both networks. But we did have contact with the missionaries quite considerably. We kept in touch with some of the particularly sensitive places.

Q: I was wondering if they were a good source to let you know what was happening.

LEADER: Maybe they were in that kind of contact with the ambassador. Once the genocide started, I was definitely talking with some of the ones who were calling in and telling us what was going on around the country. They did from time to time let us know what was happening. They were a good source.

Q: Did you sense when you got there there was concern that you all might go through another Hutu-Tutsi genocide?

LEADER: Throughout the three years that I was there, mini massacres were happening. No massacre should be minimalized by the word "mini," but I say that because in comparison to what happened in 1994, these were killings that went on that were geographically isolated or restricted. They didn't spread. Maybe 300 people would be killed. It was always 300 people. Then it would stop. Nobody would ever know quite why

it started, who started it, what was the impetus, and so on. These things would flare up in different places. Then they would go away. The government would blame it on the RPF, who would blame it on the government. There was a lot of insecurity at the time, too, because bombs were exploding in marketplaces and on busses. Land mines were run over by trucks on roads. So, who was doing all of this was never quite clear. There was never any accountability. Nobody was ever found responsible for this insecurity and for these massacres. In some of the massacres, I have to say that it didn't seem all that unclear to us that the government or people close to the government were serving as agents provocateurs. The first massacre that happened when I was there was south of the capital in an area where there were a good number of Tutsis who had been resettled from other parts of the country some years back. There were indications that people were going around and saying that the Tutsis were going to kill them, so they had to defend themselves and act before the Tutsis did that. That was usually the line that was taken, that if you don't kill the Tutsis, they're going to kill you. It was this kind of fear that prompted people to pick up their machetes and execute their neighbors.

But did we think that this was going to escalate into something worse? I guess we were maybe naive but I don't think my mind could imagine such a thing. It just couldn't fathom that that would take place. We did at the embassy keep our focus on the positive developments, what we thought were positive developments, in terms of the peace process and democratization, strengthening the political parties, helping to facilitate the negotiations between the rebels and the government when that got started. I was actually sent as one of the U.S. observers to Arusha. I was expecting to go and be there for a short time and sort of oversee the negotiations on the refugee situation. As it happened, I got there when they were still discussing the military integration of the army, integration of the gendarmerie, and that went on and on and on. So I was there from April through June. The refugee matter was taken up in the middle of that and took about five days.

Q: How did the explosion happen?

LEADER: The peace negotiations had come up with agreements that did not satisfy the hardliners in the president's entourage. Some of the hardliners broke away and formed a hardline party. But that party was not necessarily the only center of right-wing hardline opposition to the president's position. There was some of this opposition around him. They blamed the negotiated settlements of political power sharing for reducing the Hutu who had been in power to a minority position. In the settlement, the Hutu in power were getting the same amount of representation as the rebel Tutsis. Between those two blocks, there were the opposition parties who were getting positions in the government. So, the assumption was that all of the opposition parties would join with the rebel Tutsis and make a bloc which would be able to outvote, outmaneuver, outdo anything that the majority would want to implement. They would not be able to influence the decision-making. The positions were assigned by political parties and most of the political parties were opposition political parties. So, the strategy of the government was to split those political parties so that they wouldn't all go toward the Tutsi side and eliminate the opposition and try to woo them back to the government's Hutu majority side. They were

being quite successful at that. As the peace process concluded and the agreement was finally signed by the president, the political parties were in shambles. They could not identify people to take seats in the new legislative assembly, to take positions in the government, because they were split and this faction would want these people and that faction would want other people. So implementation of the peace accord was delayed and delayed and delayed because of this.

Meantime, plans were underway for a more radical solution that was totally outside this process. The more the obstacles to implementation were overcome, the more the violence increased in the society. The peace accord was signed in August. The UN peacekeepers arrived in October/November. There was considerable violence around that time.

I should just back up a little bit. There was something else that happened not even in Rwanda. It happened in Burundi. Burundi was always run by the Tutsi minority. What happened in June when the peace negotiations were still going on was that Burundi had an election and the first Hutu president was elected. So a Hutu president takes over in Burundi. This scares the Tutsis a little bit because they see this kind of an alliance between these two countries as being detrimental to their cause. But then in October, six months later, after the peace accord was signed-

Q: This was when?

LEADER: 1993. The Hutu president of Burundi is assassinated by the Tutsi military. So the Rwandans who have been seeing this chaos in the political parties in Rwanda have more ammunition. They say, "Look what happens when… The Tutsis can't be trusted to participate in power sharing. They have killed the president." And massacres were also occurring. Bodies were floating down the river into Rwanda. It was most gruesome. So this provided more ammunition to try to woo Rwandan Hutus who had been in the opposition to Habyarimana and his government back into the fold and the fold was getting stronger and more radical and more "Hutu power" they called it. They called it the "power wings of the parties." Hutu power was getting stronger and stronger and stronger. The moderates who had been in these opposition political parties were being forced to choose. Were you going over to the RPF side or were you going to be with the Hutu power? The polarization of the society was increasing. Violence was increasing. Weapons were getting distributed to communities on the grounds that they needed to be able to defend themselves. Even though there was a political solution, a negotiated peace settlement, the radio was still talking about the enemy, who were the Tutsis, and they weren't just the ones coming back from outside, they were still linking those who were inside to those who had come in from the outside. They were getting close to feeling that they were going to be able to name this new multiparty integrated government and there were even 600 rebel troops that came into Kigali and the Counsel for National Development, the legislature, became their barracks. They had a hotel attached to the counsel room. This hotel, which was empty, was given over to them. It was on one of the highest hills in Kigali and everybody felt very nervous about this, all the Hutus. So, instead of leading to better relations between the ethnic groups, it seems as if the peace

settlement was exacerbating the conflict and polarizing the society. The moderates that the embassy had been counting on to be able to bring sanity and reason to this kind of mistrust and so forth was disintegrating. They had never had a strong leader and they were just disintegrating. So, then some group or another made the decision to shoot down the president's plane when he was returning from a conference in Tanzania where the Tanzanians were putting a lot of pressure on the president to resolve the last remaining hurdle and get on with implementing this new government and the peace accord. He had agreed at the conference to do that. I think the people who did not want that to ever happen made sure that he wasn't going to be able to lead that implementation.

Q: Who shot him down?

LEADER: That's never been determined.

Q: What were we doing at the time? Were we watching this build up?

LEADER: The ambassador was involved on a 24-hour seven-day basis in trying to get all sides to the point where they could implement the peace process. We were supporting implementation with all our effort and all of our resources. That was our major goal at the time. I was continuing to keep contact with the civil society folks and the human rights folks and journalists and other people in the society and participants in the political parties and so forth.

At this time also, an independent radio station started up. It was called RTLM, or the Radio Television Libre Mille Collines, Free Thousand Hills. It was started up by Hutu hardliners. It was broadcasting a lot of propaganda against the journalists, against the human rights advocates, against the people who had negotiated the settlement, and against the enemy (the Tutsis). We were talking to the government about trying to rein this group in, which we now called hate radio. They simply said, "Well, it's a free country and it's a free radio and the government has nothing to do with it and we have no control over it." It was a very, very difficult situation. A few weeks before the president's plane was shot down, a political party leader was assassinated outside of his home. For the first time, one of these "mini massacres" happened in Kigali. The people who brought the fear and the terror to the people of the capital for the second time (a year earlier the Tutsis had broken the cease-fire and almost captured the capital), at this point, they were very scared about massacres spreading.

Q: Was the embassy at this point or for some time on the alert that all hell might break loose and we'd better make plans?

LEADER: We had gone to evacuation a year earlier when the rebels had almost captured Kigali but for the intervention of the French. People had come back three months later. We continued our weekly security briefings of the community. We were keeping people very well informed about what was going on and what the risks were. But at that particular point in time, we weren't anticipating having to flee or there being a big

eruption. Between the time that this political party leader was assassinated in February and April when the plane of the president was shot down, we had several high level visitors from Washington again putting pressure on the government to resolve the obstacles to implementing the peace process. So we were still looking to the positive, looking to the solution, looking to the resolution, believing that once this framework for a new government was put in place, that this violence could be controlled, the dissidents would be brought in, they would see this was the only game in town and so they would come into the process. It just didn't work like that. We were totally mistaken. Of course, we knew very quickly after the plane was shot down. The next morning, I awoke to gunfire. I think others did as well. I was getting calls from 7:00 AM telling me that the political moderates who were in the opposition to President Juvenal Habyarimana and who favored the peace accord were being systematically killed. I knew there were forces going house to house in some of the Kigali neighborhoods killing Tutsis. Right off the bat we had the killing of the Hutu moderates, not just Tutsis, and also ordinary Tutsi citizens were being slaughtered. That was evident before 10:00 AM. By that afternoon, we were hearing that the RPF might start to move its forces down from the north. There were rumors that forces already in the area were breaking out of the compound they were in, but I don't know to this day if that was true. But forces did start moving down from the north. By the next day, it was clear that Kigali could become the venue not only for killing Tutsis and killing Hutu moderates, but also renewed civil war, which had not happened in Kigali up to that time. So, we decided, and Washington decided, that it would be best if we evacuated.

Q: How about the French? They had come in before. Were we hoping for them to appear again?

LEADER: The French had from the very beginning…

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Q: Today is November 10, 2003. Why don't we just mention Geneva and Namibia and Mozambique?

LEADER: When we were talking about Geneva, you asked me what the primary issues were that we were dealing with at that time. There were two that I neglected to mention that were fairly important. One was the fact that Namibia had become independent and there were a number of refugees who had fled into Angola and some into Zambia but primarily into Angola. They were now poised to return. The State Department was working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to try to figure out a strategy for getting them back. This was all happening within the framework of a UN plan for the independence of Namibia that included some very innovative kinds of arrangements that are still cited today by our current Assistant Secretary for Refugee Affairs as a model for how to organize a post-conflict independence situation. The UN was clearly in charge. There was a small force that it had at its disposal for security but my focus was primarily on the refugee return itself. I was working with the special office and its office director

within the UNHCR. He was working very closely with people both in Angola and in Namibia in order to organize the transport back which was going to be overland and then to organize the reception when the refugees arrived at their points of origin, their villages and their localities. Quite honestly, it turned out to be a very smooth operation. I think that the reception and the reintegration went very well. So, I give high marks to UNHCR. The role of the U.S. was funding and then to try to make sure that UNHCR was covering all the bases and that everything stayed on track. We were very pleased with that operation.

As far as Mozambique is concerned, I can't remember the magnitude of the numbers in that case, but I think it was maybe a little less than even 100,000. But in the case of Mozambique, there were a couple million Mozambicans who had fled their country primarily into Tanzania. There were camps set up. They had experienced very traumatic things with the rebels, who were very vicious. Their tactics were precursors of some of the things that went on later in Rwanda and some of the things that have gone on more recently in Liberia and Sierra Leone. They were very vicious in their treatment of the people in the villages that they took over. So, people fled en masse to get away from them and there was a very big refugee operation going on in southern Tanzania. The question was, would they voluntarily return? Return always has to be voluntary under the international agreements that give UNHCR the mandate for managing such returns. Are you voluntarily going to return to where you've been brutally assaulted?

Q: What was the situation by this time in Mozambique?

LEADER: While I was in Geneva, there was an ongoing peace process that was primarily being managed by St. Egidio, a religious group in Italy associated with the Vatican. It was St. Egidio that was sort of mediating this conflict. I guess part of it was fairly confidential. It wasn't getting a lot of media play. They were trying to keep that element of influence out of it and get the parties to work together. They were coming to an agreement. I'm not all that familiar with the agreement that they did reach. But it was one that gave the rebels a stake in the government so they did agree to lay down their arms, to cease and desist. This commitment was kept. Unlike Angola, which went back to civil war after a peace agreement was reached, the leaders of the rebel group in Mozambique kept their commitment and ceded the authority to the central government and then began to work within that framework. But it was a mass return. I think the U.S. was very instrumental, although I left before a lot of the people had returned. We were simply working on getting it set up. I think the U.S. and AID and its Office of Transition Initiatives were very instrumental in making the return sustainable so that the people would not leave again as soon as they got back to their villages because of lack of opportunities for employment or ability to work the lands and so forth. Most of them were farmers in the farming area. So, that was again a very big success story where the people have become an important part of the reconstruction of the country.

Q: Who was taking care of the three million Mozambicans in Tanzania?

LEADER: It was primarily a UNHCR operation, although it's always organized in conjunction with the government and the government has to agree to allow access for the international agencies. In this case, Tanzania did so. The people got food from the international community and probably also did some subsistence farming around where they were stationed. Some of those details I don't remember.

Q: Now we're back to Rwanda. The president's plane was shot down when?

LEADER: April 6, about 8:30 PM, 1994.

Q: So we've reached that point before. You mentioned that there was some hope that the French might intervene. They had done so before.

LEADER: I don't think we thought there was hope that the French would intervene. It was not our policy to support French intervention in Rwanda. There were agreements between the Rwandan government and the French and we more or less stayed clear of pronouncing one way or the other. It's true that the French had come to the rescue of the government throughout this crisis with the Tutsi RPF invaders from Uganda. This started right away after the invasion in October 1990. Both the French and the Belgians sent troops. The Belgians withdrew their troops after 30 days. It was very controversial in Belgium about coming to the aid of that government. But the French never left. Of course, they were there ostensibly to protect their citizens. There were about 600 French citizens in Rwanda, some engaged in business, others engaged with the government, and many with the military. The French had a great deal of military assistance going into Rwanda. One of the provisions of the peace accord reached between the rebels and the government that was signed in Rwanda in Arusha in August 1993 was that the French troops would withdraw. But in fact about six months prior to the agreement the French augmented their troops because the RPF broke the cease-fire and launched an assault toward Kigali that came within 20 miles of the capital. So, they augmented their forces and were manning roadblocks on the access routes into Kigali. Yet, part of the peace agreement was that they would leave. They did this finally in December 1993. This was just weeks before the RPF brought a battalion into Kigali which was scheduled to provide protection for the Tutsi RPF members who were going to participate in the government when it got set up. But of course it never got set up, not at that point in time. So, at the time the president's plane was shot down the French had very few troops, if any, left in Rwanda. At that time, they had a base in the Central African Republic and they sent some troops down explicitly for evacuating their citizens. They provide armed escort for French people who were going from their assembly points to the airport to pick up planes that would take them to France. It was subsequent to this evacuation when the RPF had made considerable advances toward Kigali and the Hutu government that was committing the genocide was on the run that the French got permission from the UN Security Council to launch what was called Operation Turquoise. Operation Turquoise was a plan to rope off a portion of southern Rwanda which the RPF had not yet reached and use troops from Francophone African countries to provide protection for people in that zone. Of course, that made the zone a magnet for all what were subsequently called "genocidaires," the

people who were committing the genocide. The French essentially became protectors of the killers. This was a contribution aimed at protecting the people from the killing that was going on, both the genocide and the civil war.

Q: How did we view the French intervention both times? Were they playing a game that we weren't happy with?

LEADER: The French were very hardline with the government against the RPF and against the invasion. The question is always asked, why did the French take such an interest in this small African country? After all, it wasn't a French colony; it was a Belgian colony. And how did it happen that they more or less supplanted the Belgians in terms of support for the government in place. A lot of theories have been launched. The one that's simplest and the one that seems to be most accepted is that they did not like the prospect of Rwanda possibly falling into the Anglophone orbit. The Tutsis who grew up in Uganda spoke English and they grew up in an Anglophone setting. They saw the U.S. behind the RPF. Whether or not that was true didn't seem to matter. I don't think we were providing any support to the RPF for its activities at that time. We were talking to them, but we weren't providing them any support. But the French were very suspicious of U.S. motivations, of Anglophone motivations, so they kept a very strong hold there. They were very partisan to the Habyarimana government and to many of the people who were instrumental in not only keeping it going but also to some extent promoting the concept that the Tutsis were the enemy, people like that, the anti-human rights people. The people who didn't like the prospect of the democratic change that was coming found support from the French.

Q: Did our embassy there have many dealings with the French during this time?

LEADER: I'm sure that in Washington there were frequent meetings between the French officials for Africa and the American Assistant Secretary for Africa. There were established periodic meetings. So that contact was consistently used. I'm sure that Rwanda was on the agenda, although we didn't necessarily see the reports of these kinds of meetings. When we were in Rwanda, we didn't have Marines and so we were unable to receive anything that was highly classified – NODIS or something like that – we would never see. But in Rwanda itself, the ambassador had very good relations with the French ambassador. I had very good relations with the number two, the deputy. I met periodically, almost monthly, with the DCMs from both the French and the Belgian embassies. We had very cordial relations but we weren't always on the same wavelength.

Q: As this developed, were we looking toward the government and saying, "They are promoting a genocide?" What was this doing to us?

LEADER: We didn't see that they were promoting a genocide. We knew there was resistance to implementing the peace accord. In the six months before the genocide which came after the signing of the peace accord, our primary focus diplomatically was on removing the obstacles to implementing the peace accord. We were working very closely

with the entire diplomatic community and there was a substantial African diplomatic community there. The leadership fell to the representative of the Vatican. He was the head of the diplomatic community, the nuncio. He would call the meetings and get people together. We worked with not only the French and the Belgians - the English were not there - but also with the Africans and the Tanzanians. The Tanzanians played such an important role in facilitating the peace accord and had a very prominent role in the diplomatic community. They were working with the two sides to try and bring the peace accord to fruition. Through this group we did call the government on its distribution of weapons. I was in a meeting where this happened. The nuncio said to the president, "Mr. President, this is just not odd, this distribution of weapons." The president basically avoided the question by going back to the issue of security for people in villages. He recalled that initially when the RPF had invaded, they passed out weapons to villages in the border areas but those weapons had since been retrieved. He just totally sidestepped the issue of what was happening at the moment, which was substantial. So, we never saw a genocide coming. That was just beyond our comprehension.

Q: The genocide really blew up after the president's plane was shot down?

LEADER: The genocide was launched after that, yes. The shooting down of the plane was the trigger that started the actions of the groups who were trained in the capital to do a very rapid and brutal killing with what they called "les armes blanche," not even guns, but machetes. In fact, in one of the stories which I don't think is a story, people were actually paying to be killed by a bullet rather than to be killed by a machete. It was horrendous. Whether the violence would have been launched by some other trigger, my feeling is, yes, it could have been a different trigger. But it just so happened that the president's plane became the trigger for launching the genocide and killing the opposition and renewing the civil war.

Q: Were we calling for intervention? Did it happen so fast that it was really too late for intervention?

LEADER: No, it was not too late for intervention. Immediately after the killing started our policy was to call for the killing to stop. Once the civil war was renewed we urged renewal of the cease-fire and an end to the fighting. So, it was stop the killing, stop the fighting, let's get back to talking. But at the same time, there was the issue of the UN force that was already in the capital. There were approximately 2,500 troops under the aegis of the United Nations headed by a Canadian general, General Romeo Dallaire. His rules of engagement forbade him to initiate any kind of action against the people who were committing the killing. He could only respond if his troops were directly threatened like if somebody raised a gun and pointed it at them. Otherwise, they could be standing right beside a checkpoint and people would be committing crimes, killing people, but they couldn't do anything to stop it.

Q: Who set up the rules of engagement?

LEADER: The Security Council set up the rules of engagement. And at this time, the Security Council was under pressure from the Belgians, who had had 10 of their peacekeeping troops slaughtered the first morning after the plane went down. These were troops who were going to the prime minister's house to provide her protection. They never got there. They were instead kidnapped and taken to a military camp where they were brutally killed within hours. So the Belgian response was to withdraw all of its forces from the Rwandan peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMIR. They urged the other governments to do the same. So there was pressure on the U.S. not to enlarge the peacekeeping mission. This was the issue that was before the Security Council: to enlarge or not to enlarge the peacekeeping mission or to give it different rules of engagement. Madeleine Albright was our UN ambassador at that time. She was instructed by Washington to say that we were not in favor of enlarging; we were in favor of reducing. In fact, General Dallaire got left with 500 troops.

Q: Was your mission playing any role in this?

LEADER: Our mission was gone. The embassy was closed. The French were gone, the Belgians were gone, the U.S. was gone, the Africans, everybody was gone. All of the diplomats had evacuated. I believe that a couple of Tanzanians actually stayed at least for a while to try to get things back on track. But pretty much everybody left. So it was really Washington that was operating now. There was very little intelligence coming out of the country because nobody was there to provide it. We were in touch with people who were in the country and certainly our Deputy Assistant Secretary was talking by telephone regularly with the people who were running things.

Q: Who was that?

LEADER: There was this military guy, Bagosora, who had been the chief of the defense staff. He was one of the key people in terms of organizing and implementing the genocide. But there was also a new president named and a new prime minister. So from Washington the Assistant Secretary was talking to those people. I was initially talking to some of the humanitarian types. The International Committee for the Red Cross stayed. There were Swiss people who stayed to help with the aftermath of the killing. But the diplomatic action was at the UN and it was over this question of whether there would be more troops or not.

Q: It really does sound like a matter of washing our hands of the whole thing and saying, "Let the slaughter go on. It's not our business." I'm talking about the UN, too.

LEADER: It was a very emotional time and it was very divisive within the government. I personally do not believe based on some things that some people who were at the UN have told me that Madeleine Albright favored that solution, but she was instructed and that was what she had to do. There was also the issue of whether or not this constituted genocide and if we called it "genocide," whether we would be obligated to act under the Genocide Convention. Our legal people said that we had to say this was not genocide,

that there were acts of genocide that had been committed but whether or not it was genocide hadn't been determined. I think one of the first people in our government to use the term "genocide" was Geraldine Ferraro, who headed the U.S. delegation to a special session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. That was at the end of May and she used the word "genocide." She called it like it was. It was a little difficult to walk the cat back after that happened. She was representing the U.S. government. Then George Moose, the Assistant Secretary, went before Congress in June. The term at that point was "the acts of genocide" had been committed. That was as far as we would officially go even though Geraldine Ferraro had gone a little farther.

Q: Later, didn't President Clinton go there and apologize? It was felt it was a mistake.

LEADER: That was much later.

Q: How did you feel at the time? Where were you and what were you doing?

LEADER: For the six weeks after I got back, I was working in the Department in the Central Africa Office, mostly writing SITREPs, daily situation reports, for the office and bureau leadership. There was already a desk officer and a chain of command, so we were just adjuncts. Mind you, it's important to remember that the embassy consisted of a total of eight Americans: the ambassador, myself, and one substantive officer, who was an econ/consular officer. The other people were admin or communications. So we're not talking about a lot of people. The substantive officer and myself were in AF/C (Office of Central African Affairs). I was also focused on the humanitarian aspect. I was asked to head up an interagency meeting to look at what was happening in the humanitarian situation. We participated in several of the policy debate sessions that were headed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Pru Bushnell. I did that for six weeks. At that point, that was the end of my tour. I had another assignment. I took some vacation and then started in July in a new assignment in West Africa.

Q: When you got back to Washington, what was the mood/thought process? Was it, "This is a mess, but the Tutsis and the Hutus have been after each other and it's just not our business?"

LEADER: Rwanda had not really been on the radar screen of people unless they were involved with Africa. There was a DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) guy who said it sort of happened and he had to learn real fast where Rwanda was and what it was all about. Probably the CIA analysts, the INR analysts, and the State Department Africa Bureau were about the only ones interested. The killing did come a little bit out of the blue to other people. They didn't really have the history of what were the roots of this conflict. So it did look like it was just a bunch of Africans killing each other. It was very difficult for us. The government didn't know what to do. I would also recall that this was the time when Presidential Decision Directive (PPD) 25 went into effect. That was a White House decision, a policy decision directive, about peacekeeping. For some time now, the U.S. government has been very wary of becoming involved in peacekeeping

actions, particularly in Africa but elsewhere as well.

Q: Somalia comes very much to mind.

LEADER: Somalia pushed the antagonism toward peacekeeping operations further and I think precipitated this particular directive becoming institutionalized. It said that if you went in, you had to see an endpoint and it had to be for some very specific reasons. And so the whole atmosphere in the U.S. government was very antithetical toward getting involved and doing anything. Later, I read a conference report that indicated that a few thousand troops or less, a few hundred troops, might have been able to turn the tide because the killers were amateurs. They were motivated and they were organized, but they might have been stopped. It was the assessment of this conference that looked at the killing from the military perspective that it probably could have been stopped if there had been some intervention in the first 10 days or so after the onset of the killing. If the truth be known, there were 300 U.S. marines were moved from a ship off of Somalia up to Burundi poised to come in to help us evacuate if necessary. We did not need them to come into Rwanda as it turned out, but they were in Burundi poised to help if we asked. There were also French and Belgian troops who came to make it safe for their people to leave. So there was pretty much firepower around to draw on if there had been any instructions or will to do it.

Q: How did you get out?

LEADER: The Belgians and the French brought troops into the country and had airplanes landing at the airport, to evacuate their people. I actually spoke with the French. They said, "We can look at your situation after we take care of ours." So, those folks were focused on their own citizens. There were about 600 French and about double that number of Belgians. So they weren't going to get around to us anytime soon and we realized that we had to rely on ourselves. It seemed that without some kind of military assistance, we couldn't get to the airport because we would be crossing battle lines. If we went with the French, they were considered pro-Habyarimana government. If we went with the Belgians, they were considered pro-RPF. So we thought that maybe we had a better chance of being independent. We finally assessed that our best shot was to take the road south to Burundi. At that time, the killing had not spread south of Kigali. There were reports of killings north and east but not really south. We had already identified assembly points. Because we had been having security briefings regularly with our community, other Americans knew where those assembly points were. We couldn't discuss anything without involving everybody because we were using our two-way radios. Everybody could listen in if the ambassador and I were discussing something. If the embassy people were discussing, everybody was listening. So they all had a say from their perspective about what looked best to them. They all agreed that it was best to just go by road. We spent a lot of time trying to get some sort of authorization from the government side to give us safe passage and we succeeded. It just so happened that our defense attaché was there. He and our consular officer made it to the embassy on Friday, two days after the plane was shot down. They managed to get a commitment of safe passage and a couple of

gendarmes to accompany any convoys out of town. The decision was made on Friday morning that we would evacuate and we only had that day to organize. By that time, most of the people in the mission – AID, us, missionaries – had lost power. We could only have electricity if we put our generators on. That meant that to recharge the radios, we all had to have the generator on. Some Americans were caught in a crossfire on Thursday night, so they really did feel that it was time to get out. We think this particular crossfire, by the way, was internal fighting between branches of the military inside Kigali at that point. We sent two convoys on Saturday and two on Sunday and they all made it safely to Burundi. Some of them had some stories and it took them quite a long time past midnight to make it all the way there, but they did. On Monday the first convoy went. The ambassador's wife was in that convoy with their car and there was some concern that they wouldn't be able to get across the bridge out of town, that it might have been blown up or something. They went anyway because how could we get any intelligence unless we went? So, they went down there and they found that it had not been blown up and it was still passable, so they went across and then about 1:00 PM, our convoy, the last convoy, went. I closed the door of the embassy and we left. The ambassador and I were in the last car of the last convoy until we got to the bridge and they told us we had to be the first car. We had a 107 car convoy. I counted them when we got to the border. Of those 107 cars, there were only nine Americans. There were Omanis, there were all of the African diplomats, there were a number of Germans, some other European governments that weren't Belgian or French. It was slow going, but we made it with no serious incidents.

Q: Were there attempts by Hutus to get on board?

LEADER: Hutus?

Q: It was basically Tutsis killing Hutus, wasn't it?

LEADER: No, no, Hutus killing Tutsis.

Q: Okay. Then Tutsis trying to…

LEADER: No, we didn't really have that happen. When we got to the bridge in my convoy, there was one incident in which the military guards accused one woman of being Tutsi and said she would have to get out of the convoy. She happened to be the wife of a Tanzanian diplomat. I think she probably was a Tutsi. As you know, there were a lot of Tutsis who were in refugee camps in Tanzania. It was quite possible that they had met somehow in Tanzania. But anyway, it was our ambassador who kind of saved the day. He spoke Kirundi, very close to Kinyarwanda. When he saw that they weren't getting anywhere, he went over to see what was the problem because we wanted to get the convoy moving again. He told me later that the military said, "Well, she's a Tutsi. We know she's a Tutsi because she speaks Kinyarwanda." And the ambassador looked at them and said, "But I speak Kirundi and you're not going to say that I'm Rwandan, are you?" They sort of looked blank and had to agree that he had a point and that just because she spoke Kinyarwanda didn't necessarily mean that she was a Rwandan. We did get her

out of that scrape. We moved on. Most people who were threatened by that time were in hiding. As a matter of fact, I had been in contact with a friend who was a lawyer and a human rights advocate. We'd been in touch up until Saturday morning. By Saturday morning, all contact with him stopped. He went into hiding. I later heard his story because he did survive. But most people were in hiding by that time. Mille Collines was already beginning to be a rendezvous point. People were fleeing to that hotel or to churches to try to save themselves.

Q: I'm surprised that there weren't more people coming to the American embassy and saying, "Get us out of here."

LEADER: Well, we were in touch with some of our Foreign Service nationals who worked for us and told them what we were doing and what arrangements we were making for them to continue to be paid and that we would be coming back as soon as possible. But they were mostly in their homes or in hiding. We had no way of taking them with us. It was very distressing, but we didn't. It was something that we didn't like having to do, but we did have to do it. There were a number of Rwandans who were part of the government who went to the French embassy and were evacuated by the French to France. I heard that story from a Rwandan who was a human rights advocate. He was more than just a human rights advocate. He founded the first human rights organization. He lived very close to the French embassy, so he went there as soon as things started because he knew he would be marked. In fact, he was marked. The people who lived in the house that he had lived in before he had moved were killed. His house had been marked, but it wasn't his house anymore. They just killed the people who were in it – Hutus. He went to the French embassy and he was appalled because all of these pro-Habyarimana, pro-genocide perpetrators and so forth were in the French embassy. They didn't want him to get on the plane. They did not want him to be evacuated with them. As a matter of fact, the plane stopped in Bujumbura before it went on to France and he got off because he wasn't going to be evacuated to France with all those people and be associated with all them. So that was a big issue and it caused a lot of Americans anguish, because they had to leave behind people who worked for them in their homes, people that they worked with in their places of work whether they were in UN organizations or in the embassy or in AID or whatever. We all think about that a lot.

Q: You moved where? You went to another place.

LEADER: We went to Bujumbura, Burundi, which was usually a five hour drive but in fact took us 10 hours to get there. And from there, we were evacuated by one of the military planes that was in Burundi to Kenya. Then from Nairobi, we flew commercially home. People were then in evacuation status. Most were reassigned.

Q: You were reassigned after about six weeks?

LEADER: Yes. I started my work as a deputy director in AF/W (Office of West African Affairs) in July. But at the beginning of August our ambassador, David Rawson, went

back to do an assessment of whether we should be reopening our embassy. This was after the killing, the genocide had stopped, the RPF Tutsis had captured Kigali, they had won the war militarily, the Hutu government was defeated, and had actually run into exile and taken a million people with them into Zaire. In the refugee camps in Zaire, cholera broke out and so now we are ready to respond. Now we have a humanitarian situation and we respond by sending in the military to set up some kind of safe water to stop the cholera from spreading. The embassy flag was raised and the military set up its headquarters at the airport in Kigali. But the ambassador had to come home because he didn't expect to just start work out there, he was only on a reconnaissance mission. So they asked me to go back and I went from the middle until the end of August. I would say that has to be one of the hardest two weeks of my life, going back and finding a city that was totally emptied of most of the people I knew. They had all fled and hadn't come back yet for the most part. There were new people there, Tutsis coming up from Burundi, for example, and they were identifiable walking on the streets. Of course, all the cars had license plates from Burundi. So it was like the city had been turned inside out. But my marching orders were to try to convince the government - and this was now the Tutsi-led government but the prime minister was a Hutu who had been prominent in the political party's formation. He had led one of the political parties and we knew him very well. He was named in the peace accord to be the prime minister and now he was the prime minister in this RPF-led government. Both the president and the prime minister were Hutus. My job was to convince them to allow the French to continue Operation Turquoise until things stabilized. The French were supposed to leave. Of course, I failed in my mission because the RPF totally rejected the idea that the French continue to stay in part of the country and protect these genocidaires from their just desserts. But I did find some people that I knew, including a journalist. I was trying to find a way to contact the prime minister to have a meeting with him and of course the telephones didn't work. You had to drive around and try to find people. I had no secretary, so if I left the embassy there was nobody there to keep track of messages that were coming in for meetings with us and so forth. It was very complicated. We were playing with the radio and finding the government frequency because they were using radios, too. They didn't have telephones. Lo and behold, one of my friends comes on the radio and it turns out he had been named chief of staff for the prime minister. So, I was able to get a meeting with the prime minister. Everybody whom I knew had to tell their story and it was so difficult because of course you wanted to listen and you had to listen, but it was so depressing. It was just miraculous how some people had survived. Of course, I'm talking to both Hutus and Tutsis who had come back or who had stayed. It was a very difficult time.

Q: Were you able to establish a presence then? Were any Americans or others… Did any of our FSNs survive?

LEADER: A large number of our FSNs did and some were coming back to the embassy. Gradually the word was getting out that the embassy had started up again. Every day, more people were trickling in. I don't have numbers. Our GSO came back. He had been going around to all the houses and getting a team of FSNs to pack up what was left by those who evacuated. Most of the houses were totally ransacked. But he was able to

salvage some things and get things ready for shipment. Then we had also an acting admin officer who was there. She was a gem, too. She just got right in there and was working with the FSNs trying to get things organized again. Of course, we were eating MREs. A satellite phone was our only way to communicate out of the country. The military had set up a van in embassy backyard to give us some communications. We were trying to get cable traffic going again. And we had this satellite phone which I did not know how to work. The military advisor to the AF bureau had gone out with Ambassador Rawson and he stayed, fortunately for me, because he knew how to operate the satellite phone. We tried to set it up in my house and it wouldn't work except in the middle of my yard, so that didn't help at night. I couldn't keep it next to me. I had a big wall and so it wouldn't work unless it was sitting in the middle of my yard. I think satellite communications have improved since then. It was a challenging and interesting time. There were a few journalists roaming around trying to get the story. I spent a lot of time talking to them about the background of the situation. We got through it. In fact, the last day that I was there, a presidential delegation arrived about 12 people strong for a day of meetings with the various new leaders. This included people from the State Department. The Central Africa Bureau director was on the plane. There were people from non-governmental organizations. There were congressmen. There were congressional staffers. There was a whole array of people. Of course, part of my job was to set up all their meetings. The ambassador came back on that plane. A big problem was what was I was going to feed them for lunch? The military came to my rescue. They had large trays – not just individual MREs but large trays of MREs. The visitors all came to my house and I put out these MREs to feed them because I had nothing else. I had two people working in my house. All they had to do was heat up these things in the oven which was no problem. We used paper plates and so forth. Then I left on the military plane that they had come in on. Actually, I have to take that back. They came in on a C5, which is the biggest cargo plane that the American fleet has. And guess what? At the same time that they came in, the Russian equivalent of the C5 was also sitting there on the runway. So, I think that was probably the first time in history that the American and the Russian C5 equivalent were there. But we all did not go out in a C5. We went out in a C130 or a C141. I guess we went down to Burundi and the visitors did some stuff down there. Then we flew back to Frankfurt and then on to the States. I think I went all the way back to Andrews Air Force Base with them, taking as much of my own stuff as I could. I had my own stuff packed up. My stuff was not ransacked except by my gardener, who was selling it out the back door, I think – all my leather goods, my leather jacket, my leather briefcase, my leather backpack, all my tee shirts, all my socks, some of my shoes, and some of my clothes were missing. But my papers were all in order. Most of my clothes were still there. So I was one of the lucky ones.

Q: Then what did they do with you?

LEADER: I went on to AF/W, where I was the deputy director.

Q: This was when?

LEADER: 1994 in the summer.

Q: And you did this until when?

LEADER: 1997 in the summer. I was asked to stay for the third year because there was such a big turnover and I was the continuity.

Q: AF/W consisted of what?

LEADER: AF/W is concerned with 16 countries in West Africa, most of them Francophone, but the most important ones are Anglophone. During that period of time, our focus was primarily on Anglophone Nigeria, which was supposed to be moving toward multiparty government and elections but wasn't going in the right direction. We were looking always at the issue of sanctions, whether or not to impose sanctions to try and force it to democratize and to get out of military rule. The other big issue was Liberia. A civil war had started in 1989 and was continuing. We were always trying to get some sort of a peace process going there. While I was on the job, Sierra Leone was drawn into the Liberia conflict. The conflict spread to Sierra Leone. Those were our biggest headaches. My director, the AF/W director, was appointed as the President's special envoy for Liberia, which meant that he was on the road most of the time. When he was in Washington, he was focused pretty much exclusively on Liberia so I was left managing all of these issues across the board with these states and working very closely with the NSC, with our front office and our Deputy Assistant Secretary. It was a fascinating job. We had a wonderful staff, a very talented group of young people. We did a lot of good work.

Q: Let's talk about Nigeria. What was the situation in Nigeria? What were we doing?

LEADER: We were trying to talk to them about sanctions. Babangida was still in charge as the president. He had taken over in a coup in 1983 just before I went to Nigeria. He had left. There had been a transition to Shonekan, who had also taken over in a coup. The elections didn't go the way everybody wanted and so they arrested the person who ostensibly had won, Abiola. Then they had named a businessman as a transitional president but Sani Abacha had stepped in and taken over in a coup and was running a fairly brutal regime.

One of the things that focused world attention on Nigeria at that time was the hanging of an activist author, Ken Saro-Wiwa. He was from the southern delta part of the country, an area where the oil companies were big. There was a lot of grassroots opposition to the activities of the oil companies and to the government relationship with the oil companies because of two things. One, they were causing environmental damage which was affecting the livelihoods of the people there – fishing and farming. Two, money was a big problem. Of course, most of it was going to the oil companies, but they were paying taxes to the central government and the people didn't see those taxes coming back to their region for any kind of development. It was going to other parts of the country. Saro-Wiwa

was arrested for what many thought was a trumped up charge of killing some chiefs who were pro-government. He was tried and there was no appeal. He was immediately hanged. This caused a great outcry around the world. So we were launched on an effort to impose sanctions for this kind of human rights abuse and to try to push the government into some more humane way of acting and towards a return to the rule of law and a democratic process. This involved working with our French and British colleagues. I remember going with the Deputy Assistant Secretary and somebody from the NSC to London to meet with them about trying to coordinate our activities. But one of the biggest problems was that our own government was split on the issue of sanctions. The Congressional Black Caucus was very much in favor of sanctions. Businesspeople and particularly the Economics Bureau (EB) of the State Department were opposed to any kind of sanctions on the government. AID was trying unilaterally to close down its offices and the State Department fought to keep AID going because we thought that AID needed to continue. So it was very difficult for us to get any kind of agreement within the U.S. government. The desk officers would write a paper and it would be circulated for clearance. We had to practically compromise away whatever effort we were trying to make. There was always talk during this time of having some sort of a special envoy for Nigeria. For a time, we did have former Ambassador Donald McHenry. I just saw him a couple weeks ago. And Jesse Jackson also wanted this job. I had the opportunity to travel to Nigeria with him on a little tiny jet, me and one person from the NSC and Jesse Jackson. He had a number of motives for wanting to get involved, one of which was to strengthen the black constituency in the U.S. for Africa. Later, after I was out of the picture in West Africa, he did get appointed as our special envoy for democracy and got involved in some of the Liberia stuff. So that was basically the picture. We were working with the special envoy. We were trying to move this thing forward and working very hard and spinning lots of wheels on Nigeria.

Q: By this time, Susan Rice was the Assistant Secretary?

LEADER: No, she was at the NSC. She had moved over from the peacekeeping office to the Africa office and became the Africa director at the NSC.

Q: How did you work with the NSC? What wavelength were they on?

LEADER: NSC was pushing hard for sanctions and was not willing to really see that there was opposition to sanctions, they weren't going to work very well, and they might not be the best policy to pursue. But that was their policy and that's what they were pushing on us. Ambassador Moose, our Assistant Secretary, was going along with that.

Q: Sanctions have had a mixed reaction. Part of it is, sanctions seem to be, don't just stand there; do something – but not being very effective. Were we getting any support from our European side?

LEADER: We were working with the British trying to make a common cause. In fact, we had quadripartite meetings. I think it was us, the British, the French, and the Germans,

and we were trying to get common agreement among them that they could then take into the European Commission and try to get support. In fact, the European Commission was much more proactive towards sanctions. I think they imposed some kinds of sanctions while we had a great deal of difficulty coming to any kind of common agreement in our government.

Q: Obasanjo was the president. What was our reading on him?

LEADER: Obasanjo was the one military person who had been a ruler in Nigeria who turned over power to the civilians. He turned over the government to elected civilian leaders in 1979. The government didn't last long and it went back to military rule and coup d'etats. But he was an elder statesman. He was working at the time in a number of international organizations that were aimed at democratization and peace. He was playing a significant role. He had a very good reputation for his work in these areas. And so he was very well thought of pretty much worldwide but certainly among African leaders. I think there was at some time even talk about him running for Secretary General of the United Nations when Boutros Ghali got it. But he was very well respected.

Q: Was Ghana a problem at this time?

LEADER: Ghana was one of the success stories of this time. Jerry Rawlings was still in charge. He had taken over in a coup. But he was moving toward elections. He got elected. He was opening up his economy. Trade was flourishing. Representative government was getting underway. There was a very favorable impression of what was happening in Ghana. I have to say that Jerry Rawlings personally had not lost his flamboyance and I think that despite some of the advances that his country was making, he himself had not necessarily bought into all of the changes that were happening under his tutelage. He continued to justify his military coup. I say that because he came to the U.S. on a state visit and gave a number of speeches around town. This was a theme of almost all of them, his justification of his coup d'etats and coup d'etats in general. I can't remember exactly what his whole argument was but it was a little bit rooted in outdated ideas.

Q: Did you get much involved in Liberia?

LEADER: Liberia was in the hands of our special envoy, Dane Smith, who had been ambassador to Guinea and had served in Liberia, so he knew the country well. For the first two years that I was there, Dane was our envoy. The desk officer was still in our office, so I worked very closely with the desk officer in backstopping Dane's activities and moving papers through the government. One of our biggest accomplishments was trying to get support for the West African peacekeeping force. As I said regarding Rwanda, there wasn't much support in the U.S. government for getting Americans involved in peacekeeping. The strategy that was adopted was to build up African entities and capacity for providing peacekeeping in situations where conflict needed that kind of intervention. In the case of Liberia, the regional economic organization was one of the only Anglophone and Francophone organizations in the region, called ECOWAS

(Economic Community of West African States). It had been formed for economic reasons but now was turning to political and military action in Liberia. It stepped in. It brought in troops from various countries including Senegal, Guinea, Mali, maybe Togo. Nigeria was the major country that contributed troops. Most of the troops that ECOWAS had were Nigerian. So, we were trying to help support this peacekeeping operation under the auspices of ECOWAS. We were finally able to get money, about 30 million dollars. The big problem was that the White House announced that this money would be given. Of course the White House doesn't have any money to give, so then we had to work all the papers to try and back up that announcement. There was tremendous opposition within the State Department toward kowtowing to the White House and giving this kind of money to this little conflict in West Africa. So, it was very hard for us to overcome all the obstacles that were being thrown in our way in getting the papers through the White House.

Q: Were there any specific parts of the State Department that were particularly difficult on this?

LEADER: If I recall correctly, the Policy Office was one of them and it was influencing the lawyers who had to review the papers that our office was writing. The lawyers were finding one problem after another, slowly changing this word and that word and then changing them back again even aw we were up against a deadline.

Q: Sort of the classic opposition to a policy within a bureaucracy.

LEADER: Absolutely. It was a classic case of the bureaucracy just slowing down and almost preventing a policy from being implemented. We also dealt with the Hill on this issue, had to go there several times to brief on Liberia and what was going on. It was a very time consuming effort.

The last year I was there, the new special envoy took the desk officer out of the office. They became their own little office and worked independently of West Africa, which was in a way a problem and a shame especially since the war was spilling over to Sierra Leone, and there was a little bit of a disconnect between the West Africa regional approach to the problem and what was going on. A couple years later, it was brought back into the fold when he was named director of the office.

Q: What was the situation when you started there in 1994 in Liberia?

LEADER: There was still a war going on. A lot of the country was under the control of Charles Taylor who had launched his cross-border situation. There were lots and lots of displaced people. Agriculture had practically stopped. The schools weren't functioning. Hospitals weren't functioning. Food was in short supply. It was a country that was totally breaking down. It was becoming totally dysfunctional.

Q: Sierra Leone, while you were doing that, the same was happening?

LEADER: Charles Taylor supported a homegrown Sierra Leone group called the RUF, the Rebel United Front, something like that. They went in and were doing these horrible things to villagers where they took over. They went in and captured or were fighting for control of the diamond mines. So by the time I was involved, there was a lot of the country that was off limits because of fighting and insecurity. There were a number of NGOs trying to work there but from time to time they'd have their people kidnapped and held by the rebels. These kinds of things were going on. I visited the country during my tenure. While the war was going on, there was an election. It was a democratic election and I happened to be there just at the time that the election was having its round two and I went to some of the polling places and so forth and it was quite orderly. The capital was still functioning. Later, this also broke down and it also became a bit of a failed state. But unlike Liberia, there continued to be leadership. The government stayed intact in Sierra Leone. For a while, there was a coup of the person who was elected. He fled to Guinea and then he came back and continued on. So for a while, when I was there, the capital was in fairly good condition. But it was all surrounded. You couldn't go outside the capital. It was even somewhat dangerous to go to the airport because you had to go on a ferry and go across the water. We did that, but it didn't seem that dangerous at the time. But then about a year after my visit, the rebel forces pressed in on the capital and we went through an evacuation.

Q: I think we have to stop now. We'll pick this up when you were Deputy Director of West Africa. We'll talk about the evacuation of Freetown and Liberia.

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Today is December 2, 2003. Shall we do Freetown or Monrovia?

LEADER: I think the first would have been Liberia. The war had heated up. Efforts at peace talks and so forth weren't getting anywhere. Fighting was all around the embassy compound. They sent in one of those ARGs, amphibious response groups. There were about 2,000 Marines on the ship. Some of them came in to guard the compound. So while there was a drawdown, a lot of people stayed during that period of time. I recall that there was a logistics base in Sierra Leone in Freetown that was operated by a company called PAE.

Q: Engineers. They were big in Vietnam.

LEADER: Right. They were providing logistical support for the ECOWAS troops who were on the ground. I guess that was the way we were getting people in and out. Or they could be ferried to and from the ships. There were some helicopters that were going. I'm not sure we evacuated all the people at that time, but there was fighting at the compound and shots were fired. The Marines who were guarding the compound had to fire their guns on occasion. There were Liberians who had come into the compound for humanitarian assistance who had been pushed out of their homes. But we were focused

on trying to protect the people who were there and trying to work with both the government and with Taylor to try and calm things down.

Q: You were the deputy director there from when to when?

LEADER: It was July '94 to July '97. I can't remember at that period of time if we actually pulled everyone out. We may have.

Q: Did we ever feel, why not get the hell out of Liberia and not go back for a significant period of time?

LEADER: I don't think we really took as much responsibility for the situation as the Liberians would have liked. They always looked to us as their "colonial" power since it was people from America who had gone back and started modern day Liberia. I don't think that we wanted to cut and run. But our strategy was not to be the main providers of troops or security forces. It was to support the Africans in providing these services. So that was the strategy. PAE was paid by the U.S. government as a support service for the African troops who were there. I can't remember that we ever really discussed the possibility of pulling out altogether. We were driven by security concerns. The policy was not to cut and run.

Q: Was there any problem of concern about keeping people there in harm's way?

LEADER: I think the idea was that we would try to impress upon the warring factions the need for security if they wanted us to stay. They would have to not shell our compound, not fight in that area, try to keep things calm, allow the hospitals to continue functioning, and so forth.

Q: Was there just one incident about putting troops in?

LEADER: I think that was the main one at that time. The director of our office was the special envoy and he was trying to put together a coalition of support for the peace process involving the French and the British and other European powers who were interested. He was also trying to keep it in front of Congress by giving staffers periodic updates as to what was going on.

Q: What about in Sierra Leone? It got nasty while you were there.

LEADER: Sierra Leone got very nasty.

One final thing about Liberia. Just before I left that job Liberia did go through an election and Charles Taylor was elected. By now he has already been driven out of office. But he was elected in June 1997.

In Sierra Leone, a civil war was going on and it was pressing toward the capital. But the

democratization process was continuing at the same time. In 1996, there was an election. There was a lot of criticism about holding an election because a lot of the people in the conflict areas would not be able to participate, so it was a very small part of the population that was able to cast ballots. But the government did a pretty good job of getting ballots to cities, some of which were besieged, and getting people to vote. So, President Kabbah was elected. This was toward the end of my tenure there, in May 1997. All this time, Charles Taylor was supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone and they had gained control of the diamond mines and kept pressing towards the capital. At one point the fighting came to the capital and the situation deteriorated very quickly. Our ambassador was out of the country. The DCM was chargé.

Q: Who was that?

LEADER: Ann Wright.

Q: I've interviewed her.

LEADER: She was the person who was running the evacuation. It was a very harrowing evacuation and they were using an ARG, one of those amphibious ships off the coast. I remember which one it was. It was the Kearsarge. They gave me a tee shirt that says, "The Kearsarge." The big question was, how do we get our people from Freetown to the ship and how can we protect them in the process? There was firing around town. Some of the western installations were being attacked. The decision was made to get them to a hotel which was on the beach and then to bring in helicopters and take them out to the ship. They got to the hotel and then the hotel was under siege. It was on fire. Our people who were at the hotel left and were walking out on the beach. The Marines came in and made a successful evacuation of them. Apparently there was a little bit of a delay in getting the Marines there, which I later understood was because they were practicing some kind of rescue mission. They managed to do it very successfully and got everybody to the Kearsarge. The Kearsarge then went to Guinea. We had some people come down from our embassy in Senegal to help because the embassy in Guinea did not have a very big staff. They needed a little reinforcement to process all these people who were coming out. So we brought some people down from the embassy in Dakar. The skeleton staff of embassy people from Freetown stayed in Guinea. They used a hotel for their base of operations. The embassy in guinea is very small and was very stuffed with people. So, they used a hotel. The new ambassador came out and he was operating for a good six months out of Guinea up until at least December of1997 until they could get back into Freetown. The evacuation was a pretty big operation and it was a pretty harrowing one. Ann was a hero through the whole thing. She hardly got any sleep at all. How she managed to function, I'll never know. It was a very harrowing escape from a quickly deteriorating situation.

Q: You left in 1997. Where did you go?

LEADER: I got a little bit of a reprieve. I was assigned consul general in Marseilles. That

was very nice.

Q: How long were you there?

LEADER: I was there for two years, not the normal three year tour because I got an ambassadorship immediately after being promoted to OC. I did not stay the whole three years, unfortunately, because it was gorgeous.

Q: You were there from 1997 to 1999?

LEADER: Yes.

Q: What were the main things that you found yourself doing in Marseilles?

LEADER: Marseilles had a lot of representation activity. It is on the southern coast of France where the United States had had such an impact during World War II in terms of saving the people from the axis powers when we invaded and liberated the coast. There is just ceremony after ceremony after ceremony commemorating this. The mayors of Nice and Cannes were very strong in terms of having these kinds of ceremonies and inviting the U.S. consul general, making sure that you're there at this or that flag ceremony. On the Fourth of July, there were about 10 stops to make for little ceremonies. That was a big time, but there were other times that these ceremonies would take place. Frequently, they were in connection with ship visits. The Sixth Fleet had its headquarters in Naples, Italy, but the fleet would circulate in the Mediterranean and stop at the French ports. These were always big events. The town would usually host a big something or another. In Cannes, they did lovely luncheons for the officers and some of the crew. We would often hold receptions and invite not only the American community but also the French community onto the ship and so I'd have to be on hand for that. Then there would be return receptions. There was a lot of activity. This did dwindle a little bit because the ships were being called more frequently to go through the Suez Canal to support the Sixth Fleet in activities off Iraq. That did slow down our ship visits just a little bit. Thanksgiving was another busy time.

Also, there were American communities. There were a lot of Americans who stayed in France after the war, married French women, raised their families there, and were getting on in years. There were clubs of Americans who would get together. One big one drew from most of Nice, Cannes, some from Monaco (to which I was also accredited as the U.S. representative). So we would have events that they would host as well. On the Fourth of July, there was always the problem of how many of the dances could I get to, how many of these soirees. And at Thanksgiving time, it was how many Thanksgiving dinners could I get to. There were two clubs in Monaco. One time, I actually went to both dinners there. Then you'd move down to Nice and Cannes. Then in Marseilles there were two or three clubs that did dinners. It was incredible. Everybody at the consulate got involved in representing us at these various dinners. Let me tell you, there are more ways to serve pumpkin than I ever imagined. Nobody knew how to make a pumpkin pie, but

they knew how to make everything else out of pumpkin from pumpkin soup to some other kind of dessert that was pumpkin. They all tried to be very American and follow the ritual, but they all missed a little bit. But nevertheless, we had to eat, to do our duty. That took up a lot of time, especially traveling back and forth. There used to be a consulate in Nice as well as in Marseilles. It was Nice that handled Monaco. But that had been closed and all of those responsibilities shifted to Marseilles. When Bordeaux closed, we also got half of that territory. So, our territory extended from the Italian border and the principality of Monaco all the way to Toulouse. It was four hours from Marseilles to Toulouse and it was three hours from Marseilles to the principality of Monaco. So we were on the road quite a bit. We also went up to Grenoble. That was part of the territory as well. I only got there a couple of times. Then in addition, I dealt with American businesses in the area. We were always looking at what they were doing. But it was interesting that they didn't want a chamber of commerce. They had disbanded their chapter of the French-American Chamber of Commerce and did not want to restart it. They didn't see any value added. They all seemed to be getting along quite well without very much support from us, though they tolerated our visits and our imposition on them. A few times I traveled with the commercial officer from the embassy who came down to see what was going on. There were some high tech industries down there. There were some technological parks where there were a fair representation of American businesses. So, that was another aspect. Airbus was in our territory. So we had a lot to do with Airbus in Toulouse. Then there were some other airplane plants near Marseilles that we went to from time to time. We were trying to promote American business, but they didn't need too much promotion. There were frequently American delegations that came to look at business prospects. Sometimes we would hear about them and sometimes we wouldn't. I might hear after the fact, "Oh, we had a delegation of Americans in Marseilles." I would hear it from somebody at the mayor's office. Well, they hadn't bothered to tell us about it and we didn't really get involved. So it was kind of catch as catch can. That was another aspect. I also tried to promote the dissemination of information about American policy through collaboration with our local USIS officer. We would do this by organizing speeches at some of the universities in the area or with chambers of commerce or with other kinds of clubs in the area. One of the ones that I liked to work with quite a lot was the military. There was a military training school in the area. I organized a couple of speeches there. Usually I tried to bring down people from our Paris embassy who were more on top of the policies that we were promoting than we were in the consulate. I only had three Americans at the consulate and one person who did the navy criminal investigations. So that was another very important activity that we were doing in the area to promote dissemination of policy.

Q: Did you run across endemic anti-Americanism in some parts of the community?

LEADER: Quite honestly, they loved us. I don't know what's going to happen when these people who remember the war are all dead. I'm sure it will change and I'm sure that it has changed more recently. There was a little bit more ambivalence about the U.S. in Marseilles itself because we bombed Marseilles and they remembered that. We bombed it in the process of liberating it and they weren't very happy about that approach. So, we

weren't as warmly welcomed in Marseilles at all these commemorations as we were farther up the coast on the Riviera.

Q: What about the increasing number of North Africans into France, many Muslim? Was this changing the character?

LEADER: Some people often refer to Marseilles as one of the largest Muslim cities outside of Africa. In fact, in many parts of the world, they don't have as many North Africans and Muslims. It had an impact in Marseilles particularly because there was such a large North African community and there were a lot of people... There were several different groups that had connections with Algeria and there were the Pied Noir, the French who had lived and farmed and had their businesses in Algeria who left when that revolution took place around 1960. A lot of them settled in Aix-en-Provence, but also in other parts of southern France. Then there were the Arabs who had worked for them who had fled when they did. And there was just a lot of immigration from North Africa as well. There were parts of the city that were really just Arab. In fact, it was quite fun right near the consulate, right near the old port. There was a market that made you think you were in North Africa because they had all the dates and the fruits and vegetables that came from the orchards and the farms in that part of the world. You really felt like you were in another place rather than France. Certainly a lot of French people did not like coming to Marseilles. At the time I was there, it was considered off bounds. People didn't think it was safe. It still had the aura of being connected to the mafia and drug mafias. Then to have all of these Arabs there. It's kind of like here in the metropolitan Washington area, some people don't want to come into downtown Washington because they are not comfortable there. Fortunately, it's my understanding that this has changed a lot in Marseilles. It has really changed since I was there and become a much more open city. Part of it is because of some commercial developments for which I have to give the mayor and his people credit. They worked hard and they succeeded where I didn't think they were going to. They have cruise ships going into Marseilles regularly now. So part of it was their efforts to get the cruise ships there, but it was also the fact that the fast train from Paris, the TGV, now goes all the way to Marseilles. That has also made it easier for French people to get there. It's helped it to become a tourist destination and to open the city up more to everybody.

Q: Were you looking at drugs in Marseilles?

LEADER: We did meet on occasion with some of the French investigators, but as far as U.S. interest was concerned, we had closed our DEA offices in Provence and the Riviera. The explanation for it that I was given was that drugs were still coming into Marseilles but they were not going to the U.S. from there, they were destined for other parts of Europe. So, our drug investigators were not so consumed anymore with that trafficking.

Q: That was the old French Connection.

LEADER: Right. So our drug people were not so interested in that anymore.

Q: Did you ever run across or deal with Le Pen?

LEADER: We watched very closely what was going on with that political party, the Front National, the FN. But it was U.S. policy that we not deal with them. This became a big issue when a Front National party member was elected mayor of the town which was a big port for some of our ships, Toulon. This became a big issue when we would bring our ships into that port. It was a headquarters for the French navy and so we would sometimes want to do exercises with them and maybe bring in a ship. There was a Sixth Fleet liaison officer based in Toulon. He was superb and is now the military attaché in the embassy in Madrid. He knew all the people and all the players and all the characters. He was able to give us good advice. They managed one time to bring the admiral who was the head of the Sixth Fleet onto a ship there without having him make the traditional courtesy call on the mayor. Some of the lower down officers did that. But we had to treat it not as a party issue but as a protocol issue. So we did have lower officers from the military meet them. But it made it very awkward for us. The whole idea that we were supposed to report on these people without ever being able to talk to them or any of their followers made it a little difficult.

I would like to add one more thing that did become a very important issue for us and that was security. One of the walls of our consulate was right down on the street and so we weren't in a good situation. Security was becoming a big issue after the explosions in East Africa. We worked with the mayor to get some barriers put up behind our embassy so that people couldn't park there. It was a very narrow street but cars had a tendency to pull up on the sidewalk and sort of park temporarily. So we got that so they couldn't do that. We started to look at our evacuation plan and how we would get out of our building. Our evacuation plan was outdated because the building next to us which was supposed to be our evacuation route had changed its roof and you couldn't get from one building to the other anymore. We worked with police in Nice and Cannes and Toulouse about security. So that was a big, important issue for us. We were always told that we probably didn't need to worry about any links between the Islam in Marseilles and the Islam of the Middle East, that these were very separate... Or the Al-Qaeda. That these were very separate groups, very separate issues. The rationale we were given was that nothing would happen in Marseilles because there were some Algerian activists who used it as a planning base and they didn't want to foul their own nest or to be chased out, or to bring the police down on them. I always was a little skeptical of these assurances. As we've seen more recently, there have been threats to the consulate in Marseilles that were made public. That was another big issue that we were trying to deal with. There were often big demonstrations in Marseilles. One time a consulate was occupied by some demonstrators. This was always a concern, whether the demonstrations would remain peaceful.

Q: What were they demonstrating about?

LEADER: Well, there would be political demonstrations. I'm trying to remember what that particular one was about. Turkish Kurds often demonstrated. I think it was the

Turkish consulate that got occupied. Usually they were very calm and they were very peaceful in their marches. They were usually allowed to march. It was the Turkish Kurds who were protesting the treatment of a Turkish Kurd who had been arrested by the government of Turkey and imprisoned and was going on trial. That was one of the big ones.

Q: Then in 1999, you got a call to go be an ambassador?

LEADER: Yes. I started the process in the fall. Then my appointment was announced in April. I had to come back in June for the hearing.

Q: This was to where?

LEADER: To Guinea in Africa.

Q: You were there from when to when?

LEADER: I went in September 1999 and was just beginning to really get my feet on the ground when I had the unfortunate experience of fainting at a reception and that was pretty much all she wrote. The medical people got me out of there and never allowed me to go back except to pack out.

Q: Oh, boy.

LEADER: I actually finally left in July of 2000.

Q: That must have been a shocker for you.

LEADER: Yes, it was a very, very upsetting experience.

Q: How did the medical thing turn out? Was this a long-term problem?

LEADER: Well, they evacuated me because they suspected some problem with my heart. I evacuated to Paris and they gave me test after test after test and they didn't find anything. Then they brought me back to Washington and they did test after test after test and didn't find anything. Then one doctor did some test where he found out that I had a tendency to low blood pressure. The analysis then was that I probably fainted because I was dehydrated. I've not fainted since. It's been three and a half years now.

Q: A lot of people collapse from time to time.

LEADER: It was a day when I was sick. It was a holiday and I wasn't feeling well that day. But I decided to go to the Dutch national day reception at somebody's house. I was just drinking tonic. I wasn't drinking anything. But I probably hadn't had enough water that day and I was a little bit ill. That's what happened. Two doctors who were there, two

Dutch folks, claimed that I stopped breathing, which is what scared them a lot. But the doctors here don't believe that that happened. They believed that my blood pressure dropped so low that it seemed like I wasn't breathing. What am I to say? I don't know.

Q: When you came back, what did you do?

LEADER: Do you want to talk about Guinea?

Q: Yes, let's talk about Guinea. What was going on there?

LEADER: Our principal interest in Guinea at the time was regional security. We had had the war in Liberia and the war in Sierra Leone and we were trying to come out of both of those situations. The only way to get into Sierra Leone was to come to Guinea.

Q: What is the capital?

LEADER: Conakry. To get to Sierra Leone you come to Conakry, and then flew in a helicopter that was run by the UN for about a half an hour. I never got to do it myself. Most of our visitors came for that purpose. Our visitors included three weeks after I arrived Madeleine Albright, who was Secretary of State, and we had congressmen come. Tony Hall, who was from Ohio, and his Virginia congressman friend, Frank Wolf, came together. They were very interested in the humanitarian situation and we got them out to see refugee camps. Regional stability was the overlay of our concerns. We were particularly concerned about the refugee camps. It also meant that we were working to develop a military to military relationship with the Guinean military. This took the form primarily of training. There were lots of training exercises that we did even in the short time that I was there. The goal was to strengthen their capability to defend themselves and keep instability from being a domino effect that would spill over to Guinea. I'm not sure that we totally succeeded. I don't think that they're out of the woods yet. Those were important issues. The other thing we were doing was trying to promote democratization and political parties. There were several opposition political parties and they were all fairly weak. Through USIA and AID we were trying to support these political parties and help them strengthen their ability to play a role, to have an impact. In this regard, they had just had a presidential election but they were going to have some legislative elections. So we were trying to work with the government to have an independent electoral commission. In so many of these Francophone countries in particular it's the Ministry of the Interior that usually manages elections through the elected officials in the various parts of the country. So we were trying to do this. It was a good example of collaboration with our allies because the diplomatic community came together around this issue. We would try to coordinate our interventions with the government and our support for this initiative. It didn't get very far. The elections were held while I was out of the country. They were won overwhelmingly by the president's party. I think there is probably some evidence that a number of the elections may have been stolen. For example, there was one precinct in Conakry itself where a key opposition figure voted and the results showed no votes for his party in that precinct but he had voted for himself. So there were a lot of

little shenanigans going on there.

Q: How about AIDS? Was that a problem?

LEADER: AIDS was not high on the radar screen or the priorities of the government. The prevalence rate in Guinea was very low, in the three to five percent range, which was very low for Africa. In comparison, Rwanda was at one-third, 33%. In Guinea there was a very low incidence. I think we had some programs for information dissemination and condom distribution but at that time it hadn't become a huge issue. And the government was still a bit in denial. I think they still retain that position.

Q: How about the role of the French there?

LEADER: It was a very strange situation because the French had left so precipitously after Guinea opted out of the French empire. They always say they took everything. Certainly the French ambassador who came shortly after I got there, he was very young and very energetic and very aggressive, and was certainly not an apologist for the French position. He seemed to have a great deal of access to the government and to the officials in the government and possibly there were some military relationships there where they had maybe military trainers in the Guinean army. I'm not sure about that. The French were very visible and very present. They seemed to have a fair amount of clout with the government and with the people. There was a connection there that had never really been broken.

Q: How did you find you were received by the government?

LEADER: I found the government people there rather difficult to get through to. I felt that they would listen to what we had to say but there was nothing coming back. There was no real dialogue. I personally attributed this to a kind of hangover effect from the Sékou Touré era when everybody had to be very wary of what they said and to whom. I felt that there was still a cloud over the politics and the interactions among people that was still a residue from the very harsh and brutal regime of Sékou Touré even though he had died in 1984. So it was 15 years that Lansana Conté, the then president and still president, and about to run again president, has been in power. But he hasn't done a lot to open up politics, economics or trade. All of those things are still very closed.

I did want to mention something about human rights. That's what I had on my mind a few minutes ago. This was an issue that we were pushing, including the humane treatment of a high profile detainee who was a leader of an opposition political party. He had been detained and in jail for several years since the presidential election and then was going on trial just shortly before I had to leave the country. I had sat in on part of the trial. We were trying to ensure that he would receive a fair and humane trial. He did get acquitted finally about six months later. But it was probably a political decision as much as anything. They had to figure out how to get out from under this issue, so that was how they finally did it. Human rights were still not that good.

Q: When you came back in 2000, what did you do?

LEADER: It was the summer and most jobs had been assigned. So, I was a little bit at sea. There didn't seem to be anything in the Africa Bureau for me to do. I looked at several other jobs for which I was totally unqualified like economic jobs, one even in Political-Military, a couple of things. I was willing to do them and try my luck, but I didn't have much to bring to them. Fortunately, at the last minute, other people came forward with more qualifications. So, I was a bit at sea. I was talking with the people in the office that handles details about whether they had any details to the Pentagon, to Commerce Department, to anyplace else around town. Again, all these things had been filled already. In a kind of offhand way, one of the people there said, "Sometimes people find their own jobs outside." I said, "What are you talking about?" They said, "Well, if you can find yourself a position with an NGO, then we can ask to see whether you can be assigned there and have the State Department continue to pay you." So, I said, "All right." I went to three organizations. There was one that usually had a State Department fellow, the Atlantic Council. All three of them were quite anxious to have me. Of course, they'll take an extra body whose salary was being paid.

So, I opted to work with the Fund for Peace, which is a small NGO that has a number of projects aimed at trying to ameliorate war and reduce violence. They were going to give me an opportunity to write about Rwanda. They had an analytical tool that they were very happy to apply to Rwanda and were anxious to have me help use it. So that's what I did. I became a senior fellow at the Fund for Peace and was there from October 1, 2000 until August 2001. I wrote a book which they published.

Q: What was the title of the book?

LEADER: The book is called, Rwanda's Struggle for Democracy and Peace, 1991-1994. It basically tells the story of what was happening inside the country in the three years leading up to the genocide, which the people themselves were trying to avert. They were trying to democratize and effect the peace accord. That was the story I was trying to tell. I used the analytical tool to assess the Rwandan situation and show that there were points along the way where we might have put more emphasis on one thing or another or we might have tried to have interventions that we didn't because we didn't have our eyes so much on that aspect of the situation. So, it was an interesting exercise. I'm now trying to revise this book and see if we can interest a commercial publisher. We'll take what I've already written and do some rewriting, which it needs, and use that as a core. But we'll also look at conflict resolution and the business of whether genocide could happen again in Rwanda. My association with that non-governmental organization has been very fruitful. I'm still working closely with them. My Rwanda case study became the model they used to promote marketing this tool with other governments and with our own government.

Q: How did you find this analytical tool? So often, these things come out of the political

science department and they seem to be something out of the never, never land. They don't have much pertinence to the real world.

LEADER: The difference is that this particular analytical tool was created to be used by practitioners. It wasn't created to be used simply by analysts. It was created to try to direct the practitioners' attention to things that might otherwise be overlooked. So, that is the difference. It has 12 indicators that you look at and rate on a scale of one to ten at different points in time so you can plot charts and so forth of where things were getting worse or getting better. So, it was a fairly informative kind of analysis. I think it is something that we as Foreign Service officers need to become more familiar with. The word that we used a lot with Iraq was "stovepiped." We have our political section. We have an economic section. We have our military unit. We have our consular section. They all come to country team meetings and so forth, but there is not a lot of real cross-fertilization and interaction. The analytical tool asks you to look at social, economic, and political indicators and tries to bring them together a little bit. While it's something that you think of as being more an INR kind of exercise, using it there means that you don't have the practitioners. So it gives you a way of looking at things so that we could benefit. Others could in the future.

Q: After you finished this, what happened?

LEADER: Well, then I got assigned to be the director of the Office for Asia and the Near East in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, PRM. I went over to start this job on August 20th and had a few days under my belt before we had an orientation at FSI (Foreign Service Institute). No sooner had we finished the orientation, that 9/11 happened. I think I got back in the office on Monday and it happened on Tuesday. So, I did not have time to break myself into this job. We were immediately immersed. I was scheduled to travel and my bosses decided that I would still travel at the end of September. I went to the Middle East, to Jordan for a conference that had to do with UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which manages, over sees, and provides social services to the Palestinian refugees. I went to one of their annual meetings and did a little bit of traveling in Jordan, Syria, and Israel before coming back.

By the time I got back, my office was immersed in Afghanistan and the fact that there were two million refugees outside the country already and more coming out. The big issue was keeping the border open. We had our ambassador telling the Pakistani government to close the border, but at the same time we're telling Pakistan to keep it open so that those people who are vulnerable can get through. That was our major issue initially. But it was also the fact that winter was coming. Despite the fighting going on inside Afghanistan, NGOs and UN organizations were seized with the need to get as much food in as possible so that there would not be starvation during the long, cold winter when some parts of the country would be cut off and people might not have the food resources that they needed. There was a humongous effort that was led by the World Food Programme. Eventually, they managed to get up to 100,000 metric tons a week. It was a lot of food that they were getting in there. Of course, then our big issue was, what

to do about this bridge that was out of service between northern Afghanistan and Tajikistan. It was a big issue, trying to get that bridge open so that food could flow up to the north.

Q: What was the problem? Who was opposing it?

LEADER: Part of the problem was that even if we got trucks across the bridge, the infrastructure was not available to move this food on to other places, which had a lot to do with trying to get the railroad going and getting storage areas. It was just a real big problem. I don't think Tajikistan was objecting to it, but there were concerns because they did not want people fleeing across the bridge into Tajikistan. If you open it one way, then you can go back the other way. I can't remember all of the issues, but it went on for weeks.

Q: How did you find Pakistan? An awful lot of refugees ended up in Pakistan.

LEADER: Right. There were already two million in Pakistan and two million in Iran when we got involved in trying to end the Taliban regime and catch Al-Qaeda. We figured about 250,000 came across the closed border up until the end of the year after 9/11. Some of them would filter into old settlements. Then there was a group that got stuck at one of the borders and that became a long issue for us as well. Pakistan said, "You can't come in" and they didn't want to go back. They weren't getting fed. It was cold. There were some deaths among those people. That situation was difficult for over a year and finally the people who were stuck at the border, about 40,000, chose either to go into Pakistan to some new camps or to go back into Afghanistan to a displaced persons camp that was set up near Kandahar. It was about half and half that decided to go one way or another. Eventually, that situation ended.

Pakistan has been fairly cooperative. By March 2002, UNHCR started repatriation of those who wished to go back to Afghanistan. By that time, Hamid Karzai was already in place as interim president. There was a multinational force. The U.S. force was still there. While the UN was not saying that the situation was secure enough for refugee return, they were facilitating the return of those who chose to do so. From March 1 through the end of the year, two million people went back - 1.5 million from Pakistan and about .3 million from Iran. Then there were others who went spontaneously without going through the UN procedures. That provided some reintegration package, including some money for their transport, food, and some tools if they were going to a rural area, and some shelter materials if they were going to an urban area. Another big problem was that a lot of them were going to Kabul and Kabul's infrastructure wasn't really equipped to support that kind of an influx of people. UNHCR had made a deal that they would take care of people in the hinterlands. UN Habitat was supposed to take care of people in the city, but they had no experience with emergencies and they didn't know what to do with all these people. There was a bit of a problem there. But they got through the winter. They did real well at planning the next winter. The government set up a task force that drew from all different government agencies and they worked with non-governmental organizations to

stockpile food and winter supplies in some of the most remote areas so when the roads were cut off by the snows, the goods would already be in place. This saved a lot of lives last year.

Q: Was there a problem as we had in Somalia where warlords were seizing this for their own profit?

LEADER: It didn't become a big issue for us. I'm sure that in some instances, some of the food may have been diverted. But it wasn't a big issue that was at the top of our priority list. UNHCR was not complaining about this. It was going pretty well. Of course, they were trying to limit the amount of food after one year that was being given away and trying to get it into food for work programs or other things to try and build up the market again. There was a drought going on at the same time, which is why so many UN organizations and NGOs were there in the first place. The country was suffering a big drought and food was very scarce. As different areas of the country came on stream again with production of food, then they were trying to cut back on food donations.

Q: Once you've launched something like this, it's hard to stop it.

LEADER: The returns?

Q: The food and all that. Was food getting out to the right people?

LEADER: Well, all indications were that it was. I don't have information to suggest otherwise. When internally displaced people ended up at camps near Herat, the UN people started programs of food for work instead of just giving them the rations. They didn't become so dependent on just handouts.

Q: Were you gearing up for Iraq?

LEADER: I should say this in connection to that question. Yes, there were warlords in Afghanistan and yes, there were reports that they were having an impact on the returnees. The kind of impact that they were having was that they were recruiting them into their militias. Some of the people who would go to the areas where the warlords were strong were being harassed and told that they had to join militias. There were areas where certain ethnic groups were taking advantage of the confusion and the chaos to harass people of a different ethnic group to leave the area. They were forcing them out. This was particularly true around Mazar-e-Sharif, where Dostum and another warlord were fighting a lot but they were also mobilizing people against the Pashtun, the southerners, and they were driving the Pashtun out. Those were the people who were coming down through Afghanistan and then out from Kandahar into the Baluchistan area of Pakistan. Those were the ones who didn't want to go back because they didn't have any place to go back to because they were afraid of continual harassment. Assistant Secretary Dewey did get involved in that one. He went out there and tried to talk with these leaders about human rights violations. The UNHCR did initiate the formation of a commission to look into

these kinds of human rights violations and to try to ameliorate the situation. So, those were the kinds of difficulties that the warlords were creating for the returnees.

Jobs were a big problem. There weren't any.

Q: Was Iraq hovering? You were doing this until when?

LEADER: I had a team of about six people working on Afghanistan right after 9/11 through the summer of 2002. We had just gotten ourselves organized. We had named a team captain. My deputy and I would be a little more distanced from their day-to-day activities. They would be able to carry on with guidance and so forth. Instead of coming to us with their papers, they would go to the team leader. It was all set up by the end of August 2002. This functioned for about a month until we were drawn into contingency planning for Iraq. Our Afghan team leader was drawn into that activity. We had lost some of our other people. The Afghan team was down to only a couple people. We had about three people still working on Afghanistan all of last year while we were engaged with Iraq. But Iraq drew people from not only my office but also other offices and we started having several meetings weekly and eventually daily. I had a meeting every morning. Our Assistant Secretary had two or three meetings a week. We were just meetinged up the kazoo. We were working on the humanitarian implications of a war. It was in this context that we were dealing with United Nations organizations, particularly UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross. A lot of the information gathering about their preparations was being done in Geneva where we have a refugee unit at the U.S. mission and where they have the benefit of trusting relationships built up over a long period of time with all these organizations. We did not have the same kind of access in New York (NY) to the UN itself and to those organizations that are headquartered in NY. Of course, we have our mission to the UN, but there is only one person to handle the whole humanitarian situation and she got a little overwhelmed. We had identified food as being a major issue in Iraq not only for people who might become displaced but for the entire operation there. This was because of the Oil for Food Programme that was put in place in the mid-'90s. This program allowed Iraq to import food and other essential humanitarian supplies in exchange for the export of oil. Sixty percent of the 26 million people were totally dependent on the food coming in through this program which was distributed in the south by the government and in the north through a ration system run by the UN organizations, WFP in particular. But other UN organizations were also involved in the north. They were building hospitals and housing and factories that were converting food into products. So there was real concern on the part of those who were looking at the humanitarian side of things about this particular issue. We spent a lot of time trying to research it, work with other organizations, find out what was going on. Finally, we had to talk to the people at the UN. I led the initial delegation up there to try to talk to them, but they really didn't want to talk to us. They were very worried about appearances. While the UN Secretary General was involved in trying to get the parties to back off of war, the UN agencies did not want to would appear to be preparing for war. So, we had to deal with that. We finally had to say, "Look, you can't afford not to do contingency planning." We finally got them more or less focused on that. We began to work with the people even in

NY.

Security was another issue, what was called "humanitarian mapping." In the first Gulf War, a lot of infrastructure like bridges and warehouses were destroyed. In this war, that was not the case largely because we made it such an important issue early on. In order to keep the humanitarian situation from becoming a disaster, infrastructure should not be destroyed, which points to another big area that we were involved with, and that was coordinating with the military. Two people from my office were briefed at the highest levels about the military plan. The rest of us didn't know it. They were on a humanitarian planning team, an interagency group that had people from the State Department, including from my office, from the Economic Bureau, maybe from PM, and then they had people from the Pentagon, from AID. These people were working together to craft a response plan. That plan was under the auspices of a planning group that was being run out of the NSC. So the NSC group took this plan and they massaged it a little bit. Then it was briefed to the President. The plan involved humanitarian workers going in not far behind the military to do what they would have to do. So this becomes another big issue. Who provides security for the civilians? So we had to work on a memorandum of understanding with Defense, AID, and State, and that was a very long, tedious effort.

Q: I would think that particularly Defense was looking at it... The Defense plan was really to try to go in with as few troops as possible so you don't have a lot of war fighting capability. Defending civilians gets kind of in the way.

LEADER: We weren't expecting the military to be dealing with civilians except to the extent that there might be displaced people in need who would be cut off or who would have moved and would need some assistance that could not be provided by civilians. We kept asking: what are your people prepared to do in terms of providing assistance to displaced people? Basically the answer was, "We've got it covered." So we never did find out exactly what the plan was. But at the same time we knew they were stockpiling HDRs [humanitarian daily rations]. We got into the same issue that we did with Afghanistan and that was the color of the packages. The color was very similar to an ordinance. And then they had their civil affairs units who went in with them. Frankly, I never knew exactly what the civil affairs units were expected to do or were able to do or did do. But we also worked very hard with others in the State Department to ensure that the civilian humanitarian workers associated with NGOs who would be funded by us or maybe by others would have access as early as possible and as quickly as was necessary. That was another big issue. Because of all the sanctions on Iraq and Iran, there were a lot of limitations on what they could take in, who could go in, how they could go in, what they could take in with them. In actual fact, it's hard to know exactly what happened unless you were right out there. They weren't supposed to take cell phones. They weren't supposed to take computers. There were all kinds of restrictions on what products could be taken in and what had to be notified to the UN and so forth. We worked very hard with the Treasury, supporting EB basically to work with the Treasury and the Commerce Department and the UN to ensure these organizations would not be hamstrung by the regulations but would be able to offer some assistance.

Q: It must have been very frustrating. The whole sanction issue was a dead letter once we went in. This was a different ballgame.

LEADER: Right, and that's what the NGOs kept saying. "All of this jumping through hoops isn't going to mean a thing because once we're needed, we're going to be there regardless." I think that's how it was.

Q: So what happened to you? Were you there at the beginning of the war?

LEADER: Oh, yes. We were there at the beginning of the war. The fortuitous thing was that number one, people didn't move. They stayed in place. Number two, in anticipation of a conflict, the government had issued multiple rations, so people had rations in their home for several months. I'm not sure we ever determined exactly how long, but let's say up through the end of June. The people who didn't sell them to get other products had those rations available. So, the food catastrophe that we thought might be a possibility didn't happen but our efforts on this issue weren't in vain because we had convinced WFP and the Oil for Food Programme that they had to work together and be ready to stand up the ration system again. Even though our long-term goal was to have a market economy function, it was clear that you couldn't cut people off of these rations precipitously. You had to do it gradually over time and you had to build up the market and the financial resources of the people. Their salaries were very low partly because their food rations were included. So, if you just take away the food rations and not raise the salaries, then they're not going to have any money to buy other food. It became a big post-conflict issue to define the transition from the Oil for Food Programme to some interim activity that would be run by the coalition government to eventually a market economy. A big date just passed. November 21 was the day that the Oil for Food Programme transition which had been going on for six months was finished and the UN organizations were out of there. No more were they going to be dealing with food distribution, building houses, or any of the other things that they were dealing with under the Oil for Food Programme. That was fini. I'll have to go back and find out what's happened because I'm still very worried that not all of the materials that were supplied under the Oil for Food Programme have now been converted into market economy goods. But we'll see.

Q: When did you actually retire from this very hectic work?

LEADER: My term was up at the end of July.

Q: What was your feeling at that point about how things were going?

LEADER: Our bureau was very concerned that the U.S. was shutting out the UN organizations. As a bureau that deals with refugees and humanitarian assistance, we are by nature multilateralists because we have to work with and through these organizations. So we were very concerned that these organizations were not getting an audience, getting

a hearing, they weren't being trusted, they weren't able to function as they should. So, this was a major concern of ours. Another issue of ours was that refugees were starting to return home spontaneously, people in exile. There was a particular situation in Saudi Arabia where there were 5,000 Iraqis at a camp who had been languishing there ever since the earlier Gulf War and these people now wanted to go home. So, UNHCR was starting to set up repatriation procedures and suddenly the coalition government said, "No, they can't come back. It's not time. There's not enough security. There won't be jobs for them." That's when UNHCR sent a special representative out, Dennis McNamara, who had been very active in Cambodia, Bosnia, and East Timor. He was a very experienced person. He went out and tried to talk with them and they made some compromises where a certain number of people would be able to come back and it would all be very controlled. Part of the problem was, there were no border controls. They were worried that if people were starting to come back from Iran, that there might be Trojan horses, security risks involved. In June 2002, the Refugee Bureau had people attached to DART [disaster assistance response] teams that AID sets up. We had people attached to teams in the north operating out of Mosul, in the east operating out of Amman and in the south operating out of Kuwait. So we already had some of our people on the ground dealing with what might happen on the refugee side. Some of those people moved in to the country. Eventually, we had somebody come who was supposed to be in Tbilisi but she was covering UN activity in Cyprus and then she went in to be a liaison with the UN organizations for the coalition administration. Then in June we sent out our person who had started off the year as our Afghan coordinator. He was now our Baghdad person. He was there for three months. Now we have another person there who is trying to help the coalition authority deal with issues that concern particularly the refugee and displaced persons aspect of any situation. We were very lucky that it did not escalate, did not become a huge calamity or crisis. But there are still issues. People want to reclaim their property. We are concerned about getting property commissions set up and so forth. I think that the lack of multilateralism, the effort of the U.S. government to hold on to all aspects of the management of this huge situation, created a lot of dilemmas and a lot of misreading of some of the situations. They didn't want to hear some of the analyses of other agencies and so forth. The State Department was shut out more and more. We felt we had a good working relationship with the Pentagon during the lead-up to the war, but once the war started, that kind of deteriorated.

Q: You dealt with some very difficult times. This is a good place to stop.

LEADER: Certainly you've listened to a lot of people tell their stories. The image that the Congress has that Foreign Service officers are all out there at tea parties in marble halls and in receptions is not the experience of most Foreign Service officers. Given the circumstances of the world today, it's only going to get more difficult rather than less.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

End of interview