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

CAROLYN SEGA LOWENGART

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 24th of June 2010. This is an interview with Carolyn Sega Lowengart. "Lowengart" means lion something?

LOWENGART: Garden of lions. But it's my married name, although I am divorced.

Q: And you go by Carolyn?

LOWENGART: I go by Carolyn, yes.

Q: All right, Carolyn, let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

LOWENGART: I was born in Nuremberg, Germany, on August 24, 1948.

Q: Let's talk about how come you were born in Germany.

LOWENGART: Because my father was in the military. He met my mother in London during the Second World War. English, of course. They were married in Paris in 1947, and after the war he was a kreis (county) residence officer in southern Germany. I was born in Nuremberg. At the time, he was working with the war trials. Before Nuremberg, he was in Berlin, and the story goes that he and my mother were in the last car to get out of Berlin, driving across East Germany, with her eight months pregnant with me, before the blockade.

Q: This is the famous Berlin blockade by the Soviets?

LOWENGART: Right.

Q: Kreis resident officers were American military officers put in kreis, or counties, in Germany after World War II to sort of act as administrative officers to assist the Germans as they got back on their feet.

LOWENGART: Correct. It was under an organization called HICOG (High Commission for Germany), and they were essentially mayors and county governors, et cetera. So he was in several places in southern Germany. Nuremberg, Würzburg, Schwabach.

Q: And also, as proved to be true in your father's case, a significant number of Foreign Service officers came out of this experience.

LOWENGART: The story goes—I love these stories, and both my parents, sadly, are deceased, and being a Foreign Service brat, you don't have anybody around you can verify these stories with—but the story goes he was accepted to Harvard Law School and

accepted into the Foreign Service on the same day. He was a major in the Army. And he chose the Foreign Service.

Q: On your father's side, what do you know about your father's side of the family?

LOWENGART: My father was a first-generation American. His parents were from Calabria, Italy—that's the toe—and came to Rome, New York. My grandfather apparently came first and sent for my grandmother. She came over in 1905 through Ellis Island, and they settled in Rome, New York. He died, my father was born, and a sister of my father died, all in a ten-day period in 1918, during the flu epidemic.

Q: You mean the 1918 flu epidemic.

LOWENGART: Right. My grandmother had eight children. Her name was Theresa Palaia Sica Ferrari. She was first married to my grandfather, Antonio Edmondo Sica, Of the eight children she bore (two died at birth) only four lived to adulthood. Her husband—obviously, my dad's father—died when he was born. She remarried May 1921 to Francesco Aversa Ferrari, So my father grew up with Francesco Ferrari being his father. Originally his last name was Sica, but then it got changed to Sega in school, in Rome, New York.

He was the only one to ever go to college. He got a scholarship to Hamilton College in upstate New York. All of his family stayed in Rome, New York, and he's the only one who traveled.

Q: So what was your step-grandfather—what business or occupation did he have?

LOWENGART: Both sides of my family were the poorest of the poorest of the poor. He was a laborer of some kind, that's all I know about him. I did meet him several times at home leaves, but I never got to know him all that well, even though he lived to 1968.

Q: And your father, of the family, was the only one to go to college?

LOWENGART: Only one to go to college.

Q: Hamilton is a very good school.

LOWENGART: I know, and it's a beautiful campus, too. But the poorest of the poor, you know, they picked beans, shoveled coal. Very Italian. My grandmother speaka like-a dis (spoke like this). But he went to Hamilton, majored in political science, spoke German and Italian and French, as most Foreign Service officers end up speaking lots of languages, and then went into the war in '42, I believe. Not right after Pearl Harbor, but eventually. And never went back to Rome. Went to visit—Rome, New York, that is, as opposed to Rome, Italy. You'll see later that we lived in Rome, Italy. So we have to specify.

He had an older brother (Gregory) who ran a five-and-dime called Greg's Center. He had a sister (Mary) who married a saloon owner who was an alcoholic and wife beater. He had another sister (Teresa) who died of tuberculosis when she was fourteen and then my Uncle Salvatore Ferrari, who's still living, and whom I adore.

Q: On your mother's side, what do you know about that?

LOWENGART: Again, the poorest of the poor. East End of London. Born and raised in London. Her parents were also born in London, I believe so. Their ancestors were from Eastern Europe, as far as I know, but I'm not certain where.

Q: Jewish or not Jewish?

LOWENGART: She was Catholic. I don't know about the others. I'm hoping that funny things are appropriate in these interviews because the story goes—oh, these stories—that she was in some American officers' club in London during the war and dad came and stuck his finger in her coffee to see if it was hot enough.

Q: Well, I take it that whatever it is, the temperature was right.

LOWENGART: Certainly between the two of them. They were madly in love. So they met during the war when he was there doing some kind of studying. He was in the Army, in the infantry. I have letters that he wrote to my uncle throughout the war showing that he was with Patton's Third Army. But he was always on some special project; not intelligence. But went to training in England and then would go back to Germany, and then more training. After the war, they were married in Paris. February 15, 1947.

Q: I take it, from what you've said, that your mother had a little bit of education?

LOWENGART: She had a limited formal education. I heard a word recently that describes completely, educated without a formal education.

Q: Autodidact.

LOWENGART: That's it. I heard it yesterday. She was definitely an autodidact. She was articulate, she was very attractive, she was the kind of woman that would have everybody around her. The perfect Foreign Service wife. She'd walk into a room and they'd all go, "Oh, how are you, Edith?" Edith Sega. Edith Fihlebon Sega was her full name. And they were very happy.. They had fights but they loved each other.

Q: You moved around a bit.

LOWENGART: Oh, yes.

Q: I see your father moved to Schwabach, and then Würzburg from '50 to '52, and then you were at the American embassy in Athens. Your father was with the escapee program?

LOWENGART: Right. That's correct.

Q: Which was basically a resettlement program for people who have either been displaced during the war, but it was really designed more for people who escaped from the Soviet bloc?

LOWENGART: Interestingly, for historical purposes the escapee program became the Office of Refugee Migration and then turned into a bureau at State. So he was at the beginning of that process.

Q: Because actually, your father and I overlapped. We were both in Frankfurt. I was there from '55 to '58, and your father was there '54 to '56. But he was in the escapee program and I was just a regular consular officer doing visas, passports, stuff like that.

LOWENGART: I went to nursery school and kindergarten in Athens, and the story goes, another Foreign Service story, that I spoke fluent Greek—I now have five or six words—and used to translate for my parents. Greece was the first place that I can physically remember anything about where we lived.

Q: Where did you live, do you remember?

LOWENGART: I think it was near the beach, so it must have been Piraeus.

Q: There's another area on the other side, I mean on the same coast but not Piraeus*. I can't think of the name now.*

LOWENGART: But it was clear within walking distance to the beach. That I remember.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

LOWENGART: I am the eldest of three. I have a sister who is five years younger. My mother was pregnant with her while we were in Athens, but then flew to Frankfurt to have her.

[Ironic Side story – and VERY Foreign Service. Very shortly after this interview – on July 3, 2010 – I got a call out of the blue from a former Foreign Service wife, who had served in Athens way back in 1953 with my parents, and was my sister's godmother. I don't think our families had connected for at least thirty years. It was lovely to hear stories about my parents. As I said, they are both gone, and there are so few people around who remember them, and me as a child.]

Q: The 97th General?

LOWENGART: I assume so. I don't know which hospital it was.

Q: I have a daughter born there.

LOWENGART: We've all been in the hospital in Frankfurt. It's the Army hospital.

Q: The 97th General, which is now, by the way, I'm told, the building where the Consulate-General is located.

LOWENGART: Really? It's moved? The Consulate-General in Frankfurt has moved from that glass building?

Q: That beautiful glass building, but from terrorist attacks and all…

LOWENGART: Oh, boy. Because that was right near the IG Farben (Interessen-Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie*)* building. That's the building my father worked in in Frankfurt. The IG Farben building. I found that when I was looking through my papers preparing for this interview.

Back to siblings. My sister was born in Frankfurt, although we were living in Greece at the time. My brother is six years younger than I, also born in Frankfurt, but we were living in Frankfurt at the time.

Q: Just to get a little feel for the family, was this a religious family or not?

LOWENGART: Catholic. Very Catholic. I remember I had confirmation in Rome, Italy. First communion in Frankfurt. Mass every Sunday. Italian Catholic. Italian, my father was Italian (first generation born in the US).

Q: What did you speak at home?

LOWENGART: English. And, ironically, I ended up with an American accent, even though my mother was British and had a very British accent. Spoke to another Foreign Service brat just this week who had the same sort of background I did, and she has a very South American accent. Her mother was Chilean, her father was American. My mother always got angry that we didn't have a British accent. We spoke English.

Q: As a kid, your first memories are of Greece?

LOWENGART: Greece, but we had been in Germany before. My mother says my first language was German, since I was a child there. And my German, to this day, is still fairly good.

Q: Do you remember much of growing up, being a kid in Germany?

LOWENGART: I remember Frankfurt somewhat. I can describe our apartment in the Siedlung, as you and I spoke about. Which means "settlement," believe it or not. I remember vaguely first and second grade but not very clearly. I remember the nanny we

had, because my mother had two small children. Elsie, who actually came with us to our next assignment, which was Rome, after Frankfurt.

Q: When you went to Rome, you were in Rome…

LOWENGART: '56 to '60. And that's third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. I went to Marymount, very Catholic. All girls.

Q: Was it run by nuns?

LOWENGART: Oh, yes.

Q: One hears stories about Catholic nun teachers. How were your nun teachers?

LOWENGART: Very strict, and in the old habits with the wimples and no peripheral vision. And we all had to wear uniforms and I got slapped across the face, once, and I can remember my father coming in and screaming at the nun who did that. It was a beautiful campus, Marymount, at that time. Out in the country, they had orchards. We used to go and climb the trees, and eat pomegranates when we were on recess.

I did very well in school. Luckily—I'm getting ahead of the story just a little bit—because the education was so good there for the four years I was in Rome—Rome was fabulous, I'll talk about education in a moment. The embassy at the time had a beach resort at Ostia with a bus that went from the embassy out to the beach resort and you could spend all day there and take the bus back in. There was a drive-in theatre on the way back from Ostia, and you'd go to the movies. Rome, I just adored Rome.

Q: Let's talk about the education. Were you much of a reader?

LOWENGART: Yes. I'm very much of a reader, and still to this day. Although, after I got into a full-time job, I found that my reading was absolutely for pleasure. Nothing serious. Nothing heavy. I had to do so much reading for work that it didn't allow me—I just couldn't do it. For pleasure. But as a kid, yes, the story goes that my mother found me once with the bottom drawer of a bureau open, sitting in the clothes with a book in my hand. So yes, I was very much of a reader.

Q: Do you recall any books that you particularly enjoyed or were influential?

LOWENGART: No, I don't. I know you've asked that question of other people because I've read a lot of the interviews. But no, there isn't anything that strikes me. I would read everything. I would read the back of cereal boxes, just to read. I read incessantly.

Q: At Marymount, did you have favorite and less-favorite subjects?

LOWENGART: They all ran together. Third through sixth grade, in those days you didn't change classrooms. It was just all day in class. So there wasn't anything in

particular that I liked.

Q: Did you find yourself, with nuns, in Rome, ever questioning the Church or was this nada?

LOWENGART: No, in fact I was the opposite. I wanted to become a nun. We lived in three different apartments—again, a Foreign Service story—in Rome. The Via de Novella, that's our first one Via Armando Spadini, the second one, and Via Sassoferrato, the third one. In the second one, I remember, I had a prie-dieu in my room and I would kneel and pray all the time because it was the appropriate thing to do.

Q: Did you dress up in your idea of a nun's costume?

LOWENGART: No. I guess I must have admired the nuns. There was one nun in particular that I remember, Mother Lalamont, a lovely name, who I think was much, much younger than all the others. I can remember her playing at recess with us, with sports and energetic. She seemed like a really nice woman. But I never dealt with them again.

The point I was going to make about education—I may be going ahead of you—but because of the excellent education at Marymount, our next assignment was Salzburg, and I went to the military school in Berchtesgaden, Germany, which is across the border from Salzburg. We had a VW bus that would take children from the consulate across to Berchtesgaden every day. It was a two-room schoolhouse from kindergarten through eighth grade. There were five people in my seventh grade class and three people—this is including me—in my eighth grade class. The principal, who also taught the upper school, was an alcoholic, so she was drunk every afternoon, and so I ended up teaching fourth through eighth grade as an eighth grader. And I still went into ninth grade in Vienna two years later without missing a beat and did very well. So I think that's the basic education I got in Rome, that allowed me to carry all the way through to Vienna. Salzburg was great, though, going across the border.

Q: Well, one of the things is, I've talked to a good number of people who have been in multi-class, one or two room schoolhouses, and I went through that one year. You pick up a lot. The older usually do end up teaching the younger.

LOWENGART: I remember listening to Kennedy's election on the Armed Forces network radio in that classroom. So that must have been 1960?

Q: '61.

LOWENGART: Yes, it must have been 1961. I remember that very clearly. Gym was fantastic. In winter they would close the school two afternoons a week and we'd go up to Skytop and ski. That was our gym. So I learned to ski at Skytop in Berchtesgaden. It was funny watching Band of Brothers recently and the end part, when they are in Berchtesgaden and in Salzburg, bringing back such wonderful memories. And I spoke

German, so.

Q: Did you have any idea of what you wanted to do while you were in grade school at all? Outside of being a nun?

LOWENGART: Preparing for this interview made me go back and think about a lot of things. It never crossed my mind that I would do anything other than work for the government, and work in the State Department. That's what my father did. That's what I grew up with. That's what I intended to do, whether that would be as a Foreign Service officer—I didn't know the concept of Civil Service at the time. But political science, international studies, was what I was fascinated with. More international studies than political science.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

LOWENGART: Vienna, Austria, not Virginia. I was very lucky. I went through all four years of high school in Vienna, Austria, and the reason for that is my father, who, again, was still with the refugee program at the time in Vienna—I'll go back to Rome in a minute, just for a minute. When we were in Rome was during the Hungarian revolution, and there were all sorts of escapees then, and I remember him being so involved in the people who got out of Hungary. But my father very wonderfully switched from refugees to consular while we were in Vienna so that I could finish my senior year. And I'll always be grateful to him for that. So actually, very unusual, I went through all four years of high school in Vienna.

Q: Well, talk about the high school. Was it a military high school?

LOWENGART: No, American International School (AIS). There were 38 people in my graduating class, 25 different nationalities. People from all over the world. I remember the Israeli and the Saudi ambassadors' children sitting in my classroom staring daggers at each other. That was a very difficult thing, when I first lived in the United States, to not see the diversity. Very difficult, because I grew up with diversity from all over, and so I was used to seeing different religions, different colors, different languages, and to find all one—well, all white—disturbed me, a lot. Vienna was wonderful. Started out in an old school, built a brand-new school, dedicated by Edward R. Murrow. I enjoyed that enormously.

Q: Were you able to concentrate on any particular field at all in high school?

LOWENGART: I was the salutatorian in my class. I was very good in everything. Never got as good grades after that as I did in—well, in my freshman year of college I did, but not after that. I loved school, and I did well in school, in all subjects.

Q: Did you feel, while in Vienna—this would be, what? '50…

LOWENGART: From '62 to '67 was when my parents were in Vienna.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Austrian view of things, or a different world, or not?

LOWENGART: I don't think I paid much attention to the Austrian view of things. What I do see is a difference between now and then. Well, there's two significant differences between now and then. I was very lucky that in the period in which I was in high school, I never once heard about or was offered drugs. Never once saw drugs. I grew up in Europe so alcohol was never an issue. I drank alcohol as a baby, and my friends and I would go to the gasthaus (tavern) and have a beer and never got drunk. It just wasn't something we did. It was also incredibly safe, so different than it is right now for children. I could take the strassenbahn (tram) downtown to see my friend who lived at the Rathaus apartments. I'd take it back home at eleven o'clock at night and my parents, who were incredibly strict, didn't worry in the slightest. There was no danger, either for women alone or for Americans. So I really had an idyllic high school experience. Nothing like what people have to go through now. No drugs.

The third point I was going to make was that it was still so close after the war that it was very drab. I went back years later for a reunion and Vienna was entirely different than the one I grew up in. It was full of light and energy, and at the time it was very grey and subdued. Very Soviet-looking. It's changed a great deal.

Q: Did the Cold War intrude upon you at all?

LOWENGART: I remember the Cuban Missile Crisis very clearly.

Q: In '62.

LOWENGART: We were still in temporary quarters. Again, a Foreign Service story: we were six months in temporary quarters in Vienna, three months in a hotel, and three months in a temporary apartment. We were in the temporary apartment then in October of '62, and we were told to pack a bag. Vienna is so close to Eastern Europe, and we didn't know whether we would have to escape right then and there. My father was incredibly careful about what he said around us because he was petrified that we might repeat something inappropriate and he would kid that he was the second chief window washer at the embassy. I never knew what he did then. When he got promoted, he was promoted to the first chief window washer at the embassy.

But I was aware of things such as which floor you didn't talk about, where people worked. Kids said their father worked on X floor, you went, "Oh." And you shut up. I know that there was an old deserted house at the foot of the compound we lived in that, I think, had been occupied by Soviets at one time, and we used to climb in and we found all sorts of things in there left over from the war. But other than that, I don't think of the Cold War having impacted me.

Q: You graduated from high school in '60…

LOWENGART: In ’66.

Q: Did you know where you wanted to go, or what you wanted to do?

LOWENGART: I never thought I’d live past high school. I have no idea why, but I was sure I was going to die. But the only school I wanted to go to—although I applied to others—was Georgetown, for the School of Foreign Service. At the time they only accepted 25 women, and I was not one of them. I was accepted at George Washington University, but I’d never lived in the United States, and I was petrified about coming to live in Washington. I mean, I’d visited on home leaves, but I’d never lived here, and I was petrified of coming to live in Washington by myself. I don’t know what strings my parents pulled but I went to the University of Maryland in Munich for my freshman year of college and then transferred my sophomore year to Middlebury College in Vermont while my parents went off to the Philippines.

Q: How did you find the University of Maryland?

LOWENGART: Oh, for me it was perfectly normal. For the other kids who were there, they were mostly, vast majority, were dependents of military personnel. They’d never lived in Europe before; they all got drunk at the gasthauses. They were like kids let off a leash. For me, because of the education I’d had, it was incredibly easy. I made the dean’s list first semester, joined the international relations club, organized a seven-city, six-country tour over Easter vacation, visited every international organization we could find in Europe, so it was great. And then I applied to Middlebury at the same time, which is where I went after Munich.

Q: You mean to Middlebury.

LOWENGART: Middlebury College, yes.

Q: One of the things you mentioned about the military kids—I know there were lots of stories about the problems of Frankfurt High, where many military kids went to high school there. Lots of drinking and eventually drugs crept in.

LOWENGART: No drugs that I am aware of. The people who had grown up in Europe never got drunk. The people who had never experienced it did.

Q: Why Middlebury?

LOWENGART: My mother read something about it and liked it, and my French teacher in Munich had graduated from there and thought it would be good for me.

Q: When one thinks of Middlebury, one thinks of language.

LOWENGART: Political science. I was a political science major.

Q: You took political science in Middlebury from when to when?

LOWENGART: I was there sophomore through senior year, so that's '67 to '70, and graduated in 1970. May 4, 1970 if that rings a bell to anybody? Kent State.

Q: How stood the art of political science, because I grew up in the era where political science was basically comparative government, how governments work. When the computer came in, it immediately turned into a quantitative exercise, which I have my reservations about, but how stood it when you were here?

LOWENGART: I took mostly political theory, international political theory. Computers didn't exist in 1970. Well, it may have existed but it certainly was scientific use, not me.

Q: They could use the punch card system to sort out votes and that sort of thing.

LOWENGART: I was totally unaware of anything like a computer then. Although now I'm an expert, then, at the time, I wasn't. I remember a lot of seminars, how people interact, what prompts people, what drives people, that sort of discussion. I took other subjects, too. There was a science requirement so I took philosopher's physics and I remember writing a paper on Newton and diplomacy and actually getting a B in it. History. Middlebury was very hard for me—not in terms of academics; I passed—but because I'd never lived apart from my family. The first time I arrived, sophomore year, I took a bus up to Middlebury while my parents got in a plane and went to Manila, all the way around the world. And as a side note, the State Department paid for one round-trip in four years of college then. Not one-round trip every year. So I saw my parents only once in the three years I was at Middlebury.

I arrived and my student advisor was showing me my dorm room and pointing out the Green Mountains and the White Mountains and I'm saying, "Are they hidden by cloud cover?" "No, there they are." But all I see is hills. I had just come from Austria, Germany. I was used to the Alps, not these little humps. But it was difficult for me. It was difficult fitting in in the U.S., being so far away from home. Thank God my dad's brother that I mentioned earlier, Salvatore Ferrari, lived in Rome, New York. He was a father to me from 1967 on.

Q: There's always the problem of students who've grown up in the Foreign Service type atmosphere and all—our kids went through this—they can be put into Ulan Bator and go to school and they would be fine, but when they came to Bethesda it was awful.

LOWENGART: You're pointing out something that I just spoke with somebody else about. A Foreign Service kid will place time by location. They won't say seventh grade, they'll say Salzburg. They won't say tenth grade, they'll say Vienna. You do that in Bethesda or Middlebury, and they think you're being a snob and you have to stop and translate. When you're put into a group of people who are used to traveling all over the world, it's no problem. When you're put in with a group of people who have never lived anywhere else except Peoria, Illinois, it's difficult. It's very difficult, and I'm an

introvert—I'm into Myers-Briggs, we can talk about that—I'm an introvert at heart, even though it doesn't sound like that when I'm talking to you. So it was very hard for me. And my grades showed it. I passed, but I certainly wasn't dean's list, the way I was in Munich.

Q: This is the year, you're up in the middle of the Green and White Mountains, as isolated as you can get, practically, in an American school, but things were happening on campus during this time. We have both the Vietnam protest but also Civil Rights and the Free Speech movement, the whole jiggy. Your generation was revolting like mad, and also in France and Germany and all. What was happening in Middlebury?

LOWENGART: The telling part, for me, was '68, the watershed year. In the summer of '68 is the one time I visited my family in Manila. So summer of '68, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Chicago convention, sitting at the officer's club at Clark Air Force base as the B-52 bombers are taking off for Vietnam over my head. AFN (Armed Forces Network) broadcasting the Chicago convention at midnight. I felt overwhelmed. Martin Luther King's assassination. Robert Kennedy's assassination. Everything happened. I wasn't aware of the Civil Rights movement, but I certainly was aware of the Vietnam war and the protests. Middlebury was very civilized but we certainly had our share of sit-ins, and letter writing campaigns. We never had any strikes, but we had all night sitting in the gym and writing letters. Booths on Main Street, that sort of thing.

I was involved in that but, again, Foreign Service brat. My father never told me what he did, but he also said, "Never sign anything. It might affect what you do in the future in your life." So when I applied for a security clearance I was glad that I hadn't signed anything.

Q: Despite the fact that we were in the middle of the Cold War and all, Marxism was quite popular in some campuses. Was that at all a factor?

LOWENGART: No, not at all. I found the campus incredibly liberal but certainly not right in any way, shape or form.

Q: Were you still pointed toward the State Department?

LOWENGART: Yes.

Q: Were you taking the Foreign Service exam?

LOWENGART: I didn't. I think I was afraid to. I wanted to wait until my parents came back before I did anything. I wasn't even thinking graduate school, just completing Middlebury. I don't know what my mindset was then. I think making it day to day. I think I must have been very depressed, although I didn't recognize it as that at the time.

Q: This is 1970. Did you feel any constraints by the fact that you were about to get out in the world and so many executive positions seemed to be reserved for men? Did this seem

to be a problem? Did you see it at the time?

LOWENGART: I didn't see it at the time. I saw it much later. Again, I think it was a factor of being a Foreign Service child whose parents had not lived in the United States. My father had absolutely no concept of what it cost to live in the U.S. Even with essentially all of my expenses paid at Middlebury, he would send me a hundred dollars every three months, which was supposed to cover everything including books, which, you can imagine, cost more than a hundred dollars per semester. Toilet articles. An occasional soda. A hot dog. So I was always broke. I worked part-time jobs, babysitting, cut hair—the style was straight, long hair, so I could cut a straight line. Typed papers—we didn't have computers, we didn't even have very many electric typewriters. I had a little portable Royal and I would type papers at 25 cents a page, 10 cents a carbon, because in those days, one used carbon paper. I did everything I could just to stay afloat. I would get my hundred dollars and I'd be a hundred dollars in debt and I'd pay it all back and then I'd have to start out again.

So I think I was just surviving, just literally surviving, and my parents made the choice and this, still, to this day, fifty years later—well, I guess it's forty years later—upsets me. They came back from Manila the summer that I graduated from college and they took the ship back, in those days, one took a ship. I crossed the Atlantic ten times by ship. They took a ship back from Manila and they elected to drive six thousand miles across a three-thousand mile country up and down and didn't come to my graduation. My uncle and his family in Rome, New York couldn't come, so literally at graduation I stood there all by myself. And I have not forgotten that. One wonderful professor saw me and came and gave me a big hug. And then I did part-time jobs from May through September, when my parents finally made it to the East Coast, and my mother and sister came to pick me up. So I guess I figured my life couldn't start until I was back in my family.

Q: So then what happened?

LOWENGART: I immediately took the Civil Service exam—back in those days, that's what one did—and got a temporary job, GS-4, clerk, typist, , at the old Office of Economic Opportunity. I don't know what it's turned into but it was taking care of people thing. [Subsequent side note – I looked "googled" it. Fascinating what happened to it. And would you believe Donald Rumsfeld was its director at the time I worked there?] As a clerk-typist, while I was waiting for my security clearance at State. And that came through very quickly for today's day and age, in three months, and I started out, in January 1971, at the Passport Office. Your old field. Consular. It was SCA then, Security and Consular Affairs, and they and Frances Knight at the Passport Office did not speak to one another.

Q: Did you have much contact with Frances Knight?

LOWENGART: Oh, yes.

Q: I've interviewed her, but she was getting on in years at that time. I was wondering,

could you talk about her?

LOWENGART: My first couple of years I was just a passport examiner in what was called "domestic adjudication," and then I was in the official travel section, which issued passports to military personnel, basically, and lower-level government employees traveling overseas. Then I went into the diplomatic travel section, first as the deputy and then as the director, or chief, of the diplomatic and congressional travel section. And it was in that position that I had not contact with her so much directly but with her office. We were not permitted to talk to CA (Consular Affairs).

Q: That's the Bureau of Consular Affairs, which deals with passports.

LOWENGART: That's right. And remember, the office of which I was chief dealt with all of the passports for Foreign Service, high-ranking Civil Service, all members of Congress, all Cabinet members and their immediate deputies, all classified operations, with the executive directors of every bureau in the Department of State. And we got visas for all these people, too. So it wasn't exactly a hidden little corner of Passport. But if anybody from CA called us, we were supposed to say, "I'm not permitted to talk to you, please call Frances Knight's office on," and give the telephone number. So I ignored that and did what I had to do. When the White House called with the names of 27 people they needed visas for, I would talk to the White House. If you remember, the hoopla when the Clintons took office and they accused Billy Dale, the head of White House travel, of all sorts of misdemeanors? I worked with Billy Dale for 10 years. I doubt seriously he did anything, ever, wrong. I talked to him every day.

White House communications, we would deal with that. I issued Henry Kissinger a no-fee passport for his first secret trip to China. I got to meet Clinton's kids and grandkids when one of them peed all over my counter, when they came in for passports to go to Queen Elizabeth's jubilee. But Frances Knight, you would go out to lunch and come back and she'd have reorganized the whole place. I once got a memo, and I think I mentioned this to you on the phone—well, I didn't get the memo, my boss got the memo—because I'd misspelled her name on something, and spelled it Francis with an 'i' instead of Frances with an 'e.' So you were petrified of what might happen to you. You might be moved from where you were to another division, or stuck in the corner not doing anything else. But mostly, I had to write memoranda for her to send to Barbara Watson (then Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs) saying, "Please authorize the issuance of a diplomatic passport on an exceptional basis to Jane Doe, because she's doing blah-blah-blah." And I'd have to justify it. So I was doing action memoranda as a GS-11 that very few people did.

It was a fascinating time. In those days, diplomatic passports were valid forever. You remember. I even remember my first diplomatic passport number as a child. But she decided, no, she had to get them all back. And we had massive overtime, of writing to everybody and saying, "Give us your passport back." Extraordinary amount of money spent doing something I don't think was needed.

Q: Was fear her main weapon of operation?

LOWENGART: Yes, and power. She was good friends with Wilbur Mills, and she was good friends with congressmen Rooney, the chairman of the appropriations committee.

Q: Yes, from Brooklyn.

LOWENGART: And she was very good friends with Hoover before he died.

Q: J. Edgar Hoover?

LOWENGART: That's right. She could get things done. If she said, "You can't go somewhere," you wouldn't go there. I'm talking about to people applying for passports. She would put holds on them. It was definitely out of fear and power. I remember I went to lunch with one of my bosses once and I came back and all of his safes had been moved out of his office. She'd taken them all away and stuck them in a corner somewhere. We celebrated when, I think it was Carter, did not extend her Civil Service appointment. Those were the days when there was mandatory retirement for Civil Service. There is no longer. But I think 65 was mandatory and she was extended until she was 70 and then finally, I believe it was Jimmy Carter who didn't extend her the last time. And we were very grateful for that, because it was time.

Q: Do you recall any particular incidents over the issuance of diplomatic passports?

LOWENGART: No, mostly my judgment was accepted. I really had a good secret relationship with CA. I don't know if you knew Peter Murphy? I just heard from him this morning, actually. He was Barbara Watson's special assistant at the time, and we had a very good relationship. So if something needed to be done, we'd figure out how to do it and not step on anybody's toes.

You talk about women. I did have experiences in the Passport Office, the first time I was aware of the way women could not advance as opposed to men. I moved very quickly from my first job as a GS-5 seasonal passport examiner to a GS-11, but that was as high as I could go. I had an office of 35 people, supervising, dealing with every principal in the department and all over the U.S. government, and men in other positions had 12s and 13s and 14s, and my best friend, who was head of official travel, and I were stuck at 11s, and they wouldn't advance those jobs.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship between, say, the field—I'm talking about the consular officers out in the field—and the Passport Office?

LOWENGART: At one point, yes. In two ways: one, with what I was doing and two, when I got detailed out of diplomatic travel and stuck in the foreign operations division and had to deal with the field. In what I was doing, we were very responsive to people who wrote to us from the field. These were people who were doing the job for us. We tried to do everything we could to get them what they needed right away. Things have

changed so radically. You used to write operations memoranda, if you remember, and air-grams, as opposed to emails. You didn't telephone, it cost too much. Now you pick up the phone or send an email. But I think the foreign division tried to be as responsive as they could to the field. I don't know what your perception was, since you were there.

Q: I had no position in travel. I ran consular sections, and I remember sometime, somebody came up to the Passport Office, one of Frances Knight's men, I think, and said, "Oh, yes, we may book on you all out there, and you're on our good side," or something like that. Whatever it was worth. How did you find the atmosphere when you were working in the Passport Office? Irrespective of Frances Knight, was it…

LOWENGART: It was a sweatshop. I liked what I was doing, I liked the people I was working with. I liked the connection to the State Department I knew as a child, because these were the Foreign Service people that I was dealing with, this was the members of Congress and their staffs, this was the principals of other agencies. But remember, this was the days in which passport pictures were ironed on to passports. I remember when my boss's boss's boss was helping out in processing at one point and ironed his tie into the passport. And passports were issued on flexowriters, which was the earliest kind of automatic typewriter that you could have. It was a sweatshop, but people believed in what they were doing and they worked very hard at it. I did experience my first sexual harassment there, from a lawyer in the legal division and I managed to tell him to shove off but it freaked me out.

Q: What kind of sexual harassment was this?

LOWENGART: Trying to touch me in inappropriate ways.

Q: That's sexual harassment, all right.

LOWENGART: It wasn't perceptions, it was that.

Q: How was it treated?

LOWENGART: I never reported it. One didn't do that then. Besides, I did tell him no, and he backed off.

Q: How did you find dealing with Congress?

LOWENGART: It was very easy. I didn't work in the section that helped constituents, but we would send a passport examiner up to the hill for the member and the staffers would come into our office. We were so responsive that it wasn't a problem. We got all their visas. We did the CODELs (Congressional Delegations).

Q: Did visas cause a problem for you? Some of these countries like Saudi Arabia can be pretty nasty. Not nasty, but unresponsive.

LOWENGART: I had two brilliant visa couriers who knew the people at every embassy in town, knew them well, knew what the idiosyncrasies were, knew what the requirements were. They were way under graded, and we would just do the paperwork and they would go and do what needed to be done, and it never was a problem. They were incredible.

Q: Because this is one of the places within the government, almost always these people in offices get no credit, but really can perform extraordinarily.

LOWENGART: I gave them awards whenever I could. They were wonderful.

Q: You mentioned you moved over into management?

LOWENGART: I did. I worked in the Passport Office for nine years, and I finally realized that no matter what I did or how I did it, I was never going to be promoted, and I'd had enough as a GS-11. I wanted to move forward. I looked for all sorts of jobs I might be qualified for, again, in State. I never thought about going anywhere else. I applied for a whole bunch of them and finally got an interview in what was called the MODE (Managing Overseas Direct Employment) staff. It was staff for the under secretary for management. I ended up staying in the M (management) staff from 1980 until I retired in 2003. So I was in all of its different iterations for a considerable period of time. But at the time, R. Glynn Mays, Jr. was the director of the MODE staff, and I think his deputy was Sherman Fine.

I applied for a job there and I got an interview and the story goes that Sherman went in to Glynn after the interview and said, "This lady says she knows you." And he looks at my application and he says, "Lowengart? I don't know Lowengart." Sherman said, "Well, she says you knew her father." And he looks at it again. "Sega! She's Tony Sega's daughter?" I was married, but that's another story. It turned out later that we became extremely good friends, and he told the story that he slept in my bed when I was 13. He was the regional refugee migration officer in Geneva at the time we were in Salzburg, and so he came to do his inspection tour and he would say that my dad wouldn't let him out on his own, made him stay with us and kicked me out of my room. I ended up on the MODE staff and stayed in M as a management analyst, starting out as a GS-12 all the way up to a GS-15, step 10, through all that period.

Q: Now, MODE has direct employment. What does that mean?

LOWENGART: You may or may not know about it, it's been replaced since '82 by National Security Decision Directive 38, NSDD 38. Basically, it says, bottom line, MODE was different, but the current bottom line is that the ambassador has the say over how many positions from any agency are in his or her embassy. Only he or she can decide what the size, composition or mandate of his embassy is going to be. And what we did, and what is continuing to be done in the M area, is present the case to the ambassador to make a decision. INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service – now ICE – Immigration And Customs Enforcement) wants to increase by five positions. FBI

(Federal Bureau of Investigation) wants to increase by 20 positions, et cetera.

Q: Were there currents within the State Department at the time, 1980ish? When you got there, the Foreign Service was going through a Foreign Service Act revision and all that. Were they looking for changes and how to deal with the revisions?

LOWENGART: Right when I came in was just when Reagan was coming into office, and one of the major things that office was responsible for was the president's letter of authority and responsibility to ambassadors. I don't know if you are familiar with that, but it is the basic document which gives ambassadors, under the law [Section 207, Foreign Service Act]—the ambassador is the principal representative of the president overseas, and outranks everybody, including the secretary of state, when she visits. And the president's letter is what spells out that authority. So the very first thing I got involved in was writing Reagan's letter. Here I was, brand new in the office, and every issue that affects State's relationships with other agencies is supposed to be taken care of in that letter. And every issue that makes the ambassador—and, by extension, the State Department, because that's how I view it—the primary among equals is in that letter.

That's basically what I got involved in throughout my career. I became the expert. Even Jim Thessin, one of the legal advisors, would call me for an interpretation of an issue that dealt with chief of mission authority.

Q: Can you think of any particular issues that surfaced that were particularly major during your time doing this?

LOWENGART: How many hours do we have? Lots of issues. First of all, there were reorganizations. M got reorganized every which way from Sunday. You interviewed, I believe, (former Ambassador Willard A.) Bill De Pree, as one of the people you interviewed. Issues, oh, my God, so many issues. I have worked for and with every director of M/MO (then Management Operations) and whatever it's been called since Ambassador Bob Miller. I made a list. I mean, an incredible number. And every under secretary for Management since Ben Read. So that's including Dick Kennedy, et cetera.

- [Office of Management Operations (M/MO) – established by Kissinger, existed until 1988
- Office of Management Policy (M/MP) – 1988 – 1989 (position management moved to PER)
- Bureau of Finance and Management Policy, Office of Management Policy (FMP/MP) – 1989 – 1984 – combined with M/COMP (Comptroller)
- Office of Management Policy and Planning (M/P)] (moved back to M)]

We would have what we called "drive-by taskings," which meant if there was an issue that became very hot and they needed analysis of it, a management issue, immediately it would be sent to one of us and we would have to figure out what the story was and how to do it. In 1985, when Bill De Pree came into what was then M/MO, he had served as executive assistant to the under secretary. He'd served on the policy planning staff. He'd

served with Kissinger and he really understood the relationship of policy to resources, and really wanted to make a better connection between the budget and policy, and that was, at the time, that the government went from position management to full-time equivalent FTE (full time equivalent) management.

Q: Which means what?

LOWENGART: One's hours working were counted, rather than a body. So 2080 hours equals one FTE, that's the average work year of a person. So you would be authorized 22,000 FTE for the entire Department of State, including Foreign Service, Civil Service and FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals). How you have to manage by such a ridiculously—sorry, my personal opinion, here—system. And since the department wasn't paying much attention, when OMB (Office of Management and Budget) started setting FTE ceilings, we got significantly less than we needed, when we started to really count hours. Bill De Pree recognized that, and we worked on what came to be known as the Lowengart chart. Again, this is before computers, and it was a spreadsheet that showed how much we needed for every function. For consular, for political, for economic, for training, in transit, for Foreign Service nationals. And, as a result of months of work on this and arguing with OMB, we got 1500 more FTE for the Department, which is a pretty nice little hunk of change. And I worked on that.

Q: Consular Affairs had been sort of ahead of the game in most ways, by being able to come up with predictions of how many people it needed and they would have the statistics to prove it.

LOWENGART: Right, but they have widgets that can count. They have visas and passports and citizen services, whereas how do you count political work?

Q: Yes, it's very difficult.

LOWENGART: Very difficult. Another major issue we got involved in, which was really exciting for me, is that staffing overseas had grown enormously, at cost to State, because although it was other government agencies driving the staffing, we provided the administrative support for them. They never reimbursed sufficiently. No matter what allegedly fair reimbursement system we put into place. In 1986 we launched the overseas staffing review, which involved every embassy and every ambassador and every department in the United States, going over every position overseas and justifying it. It culminated in a significant reduction in overseas staffing. Not of State; that was the perception, we always took the biggest reductions. We didn't.

For me, even though I'm not a Republican, only one telegram I ever wrote says "Drafted by C.S. Lowengart, approved by the President." So that made me feel good.

Q: There has been the perception that the State Department, the ambassador, has the ability to control staffing and all, but seldom does, and that the military and the other agencies have been growing all the time at the expense of the Department of State.

During your time, how did you feel about that?

LOWENGART: During my time I believe there was more control than had been for a long time. I believe, subsequent to that, there is absolutely no control. I think it is absolutely true. There is no limitation on the size and composition of embassies overseas. Just look at what's been done in some of these countries. I mean, Baghdad. Thousands. Kabul, where your life is in danger, thousands. And these outposts in remote areas. I don't believe that any ambassador can keep saying "no" when the administration (regardless of political party) believes more is better.

The military, I'm not certain about its growth. This is not quite in order, but I'm going to discuss it right now: one of the issues, and you would know this because of your career, deals with chief of mission authority and security. One of the issues that I started out with when I first joined the MODE staff, and stuck with me my entire career, was the ambassador's responsibility for security for everyone under his authority. And I'm using his just because it's easier rather than changing it each time. It's his or her.. The question of how to define someone who's under his authority has always been a problem because of all these stovepiped organizations, particularly in Western Europe. By "stovepiping" I mean organizations that report directly to somebody in Washington, not through either a regional commander-in-chief (CINC) or through the ambassador. Particularly after the Second World War there were thousands of military personnel all over Western Europe, Germany, Italy, whose relationship to a chief of mission or a CINC was not clear.

It's an issue I tried to work with Defense my entire time at State. It wasn't until the bombings of the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Arabian national guard (OPM/SANG), which was a Defense security assistance operation in Riyadh, and Khobar Towers, which was an Air Force operation, that State and Defense all of a sudden woke up and said, "Oh, yeah, maybe this is an issue we ought to clarify." Because the SANG was under chief of mission authority. And the Khobar Towers was under CINC authority. Clear lines of definition hadn't been written, and the secretaries of State and Defense decided on a Friday morning that maybe they ought to resolve this, because General Downing was going up to testify on Monday on his results of reviewing Khobar Towers. Between Friday morning and Monday we wrote, negotiated and got signed a memorandum of understanding between defense and state on security for military personnel in the Arabian peninsula. It was signed September 16, 1996. [http://www.dod.gov/pubs/downing_rpt/annx_g.html]

Subsequent to that, I was the chair of the State negotiating team, which was only four people, with all of Defense, which was forty-five people, to extend that MOU (memorandum of understanding) worldwide, to every country in the world. It continues to exist—I even looked it up on the Net yesterday, just to be sure it's still valid—and it's still valid. 1997 State, DOD (Department of Defense) memorandum of understanding about security of military defense personnel overseas. And it specifies that every military person has to have on his or her orders whether he reports to a CINC or chief of mission. So it's clear who is responsible for security. I found out through other means that they're even teaching that in courses, now, in all of the military. And I'm proud of that. That

made a difference. That saved peoples' lives.

[There is an extraordinarily accurate article on this the depth and breath of this issue from the outset at http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/cc/Murrey.html, written by Major Thomas W. Murrey, Jr., and published 25 October 00 in the Air & Space Power Journal - Chronicles Online Journal. I highly recommend it! The problems continue to this day.]

One of the reasons I was involved in that is because I was also chair of the permanent coordinating committee—you'll love this one—permanent coordinating committee on accountability review boards. Which basically meant whenever there was an incident overseas that resulted in loss of life, serious injury or significant damage of or related to an U.S. mission—now, remember, I've been retired since 2003. The fact I can quote that quite so well is pretty good, I think. So we got involved, we convened a committee to decided whether there should be an accountability review board. So naturally, after Nairobi and Dar, we convened the committee. I'm the one who put together the Crowe accountability and review board (ARB).

Q: That's Admiral Crowe.

LOWENGART: Admiral Crowe. And after they issued their report, Bonnie Cohen, who was then M, decided that I had to coordinate Albright's response to the Congress and what she intended to do. I had two weeks to do it. That's an interagency response in two weeks. And I hit the roof. I said, "You know, you need somebody whose first name is ambassador, not a GS-15." "Oh, no, you have to do it." So I was the lead for State in putting together Albright's response to the Hill, in two weeks. That's negotiating with every agency, including Defense and intelligence and FBI. So I feel like I made a difference.

Q: How did you find the military response? Was this an adversarial thing?

LOWENGART: No. They were incredibly responsive. The problem with them is that there are so many players, and they had the hardest time coordinating among themselves. I had four people, and I literally had the authority, without checking, to speak for the secretary of state. Nobody questioned anything I said. I had a lawyer. I had a deputy from my office and I had somebody from Near-Eastern and South Asian affairs, because that's where most of the issue was going on. That's it. And I'd go over to meetings at the Pentagon with 50 purple suits, people from every branch of the military from the office of the secretary of defense, from low-intensity conflict, from Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), from Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), from the military services, and there was no one person who could pull it together. I would say, "I want this," and they'd go, "Yes, that makes sense, but you report higher up the food chain, so I guess we're going to have to go along with it," which was fine with me.

Funny side story, though: I warned you at the beginning of this interview, and I don't think it's on the tape, that I have a very warped sense of humor. At one point, the guy

from NEA (Near Eastern and South Asian affairs) was explaining that we needed a picture of this one building in Kuwait. 50 people in this conference room; Defense, all these different uniforms, generals, lieutenant-colonels, majors. I looked at the two generals who were my counterparts and I said, "Can't you just turn the satellite?" Silence. Dead silence. And they started to explain to me how the satellite takes a picture from above and we needed something from the side. I said, "I'm kidding!" They actually thought that I had the authority to task them to change the orbit of the satellite to take a picture. It was fun, but no sense of humor.

I found Defense very cooperative. What I found was that they couldn't deliver on what they promised, because they didn't have the data. One of the things, for example, that the memorandum of understanding requires is an annual report from their perspective on who they had under chief-of-mission authority. We could get it from ambassadors but they should do it, too, so you can compare it. They can't do that. They don't have the data. They don't have a single place where you can produce that information. They tried, but they couldn't do it. [This viewpoint is borne out in the article I provided the link to – e.g., Spain.]

Q: Couldn't the ambassador hand over his or her list of responsible people?

LOWENGART: Yes, and they did, but it's never complete, you know that. I mean, there's always something that doesn't jibe. We were supposed to be able to get the two sets of information. Whatever the ambassador says was the valid one. But it would be nice to have the two to match, to say, "Hey, wait a minute, you forgot about this guy, who's out in the field, who's under your authority, not the CINC. So make sure to protect him." It's still being worked, as far as I know.

Q: I guess you discovered—and it always comes as a shock to me, to realize—how many basically isolated units there are. You have a team of 10 men teaching Filipinos how to eat snakes. I'm kidding, of course, but…

LOWENGART: No, no, you're absolutely right on.

Q: These are performing very important jobs of training but they're kind of isolated out there.

LOWENGART: Now, we went sort of out of order, but I wanted to emphasize what I considered—it all really stems from chief of mission authority. That was the driver for all of the things I worked on. I worked with the inspectors, as well. At one point, before I was moved out, I briefed all new ambassadors who went out, political or career, and I said that I worked for them. They didn't work for me. My job was to help them do their job. They were the boss.

Q: As you were working on this job, was this a constant piece of discovery, of finding various units and people who were sort of floating out there in the limbo, and who had a base ship, to put them down, sit down with the board, and say, "We'll put them in this

hole or that hole?"

LOWENGART: Yes and no. Yes, that existed, but that required far more resources than we had available. That was the rubric under which this should have been done, and I had one person who tried to work that. But I was doing many other things at the same time. After Pan Am 103 (Pan American World Airways Flight 103), there was a massive effort to increase immigration and FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) staffing overseas, way beyond what was appropriate. Eagleburger was the secretary at the time, and realized that that wasn't justified. They couldn't do anything about it, and working that issue with the Congress, and with Justice and with Transportation had to be done.

We talked at one point about whether I noticed the lack of women in executive positions. Yes; I was often the only woman in the room, and the other discrimination, subtle, that I faced was Civil Service versus Foreign Service. Very subtle. I'm a Foreign Service brat. I have a perspective of the State Department from both sides. The highest compliment somebody could pay me was shock when they discovered I was Civil Service. We've been called "domestic FSNs." I could cross the divide. I was once, during one of the periods, you saw from my notes I was the acting director of M/MO, M/P [note to transcriber – described above], M/MP, whatever it was called, for nearly three years over the course of my career. At one point, the then under secretary said to me, "You're the best-qualified person for the job but I need a Foreign Service officer for credibility." There's no appeal to that.

Q: I've interviewed someone who's been involved in some of this from the Foreign Service perspective. He makes the point and said there is a major problem for the State Department in hiring its normal Civil Service staff, and that is it does not reach out beyond Washington, particularly. If the Foreign Service reaches out beyond Washington, quite frankly—you end up, if you're concentrated on Washington, particularly for the lower grades, where you would hope, from typists, people would rise up and get better—the District has got a terrible school system.

LOWENGART: Yes, I agree with you. I understand that. I think that's why I succeeded, because I had a perspective that was far beyond Washington, far beyond the United States, and commensurate education. Although I am the least educated in my family, with only a B.A. I certainly think I have all of the knowledge up to a Ph.D.

Q: There's education education, and there's…

LOWENGART: What was the word you used?

Q: Autodidact.

LOWENGART: Thank you.

Q: There is this problem, and it's the State Department. I think you'd have a very hard time politically to say, well, we're going to really go out… The State Department is a

prestigious organization and it could develop a very solid core of civil servants by having national recruitment. But to do that, it would come up against the…

LOWENGART: Yes, I agree with you. I think you're correct. I've never looked at it from that perspective but I think you're correct.

Q: There's a problem, I know. When I pick up the phone, if I get an accent that is not my type of accent, I think, "Oh, my God. Have I gotten somebody who's really going to give a damn or tell me who they are, or anything else?" I just want to get the right information. I've not been impressed at the lower ranks.

LOWENGART: No, and the people I worked with were all of higher ranks and they were all very well-qualified and widely educated and had traveled overseas as civil servants, so I didn't have that experience, but I do see what you're saying.

Q: I think there can be a better conjunction of using more and more civil servants overseas, on excursion tours, which is very good, because this gives a different …

LOWENGART: Perspective.

Q: A different perspective and a joint feeling, particularly in danger posts and all that.

LOWENGART: Again, my sense of humor, warped: one of the periods in which I was acting, and I'm sitting in the weekly M staff meeting—M being the under secretary for management. This is when Albright was secretary, and the assistant secretary for diplomatic security was complaining that he didn't have enough men to cover her. I said, "Why don't you use some of your women?" There was dead silence in the room. I think it was Pat Kennedy acting at the time, so he didn't mind. I've known Pat Kennedy since my passport days, when he was a special assistant in AF (Bureau of African Affairs), and we were doing things for diplomatic passports, traveling.

One of the things I wanted to mention about working in M during the Bush I era, when John Rogers was the under secretary for management; he had just come in and I was asked to brief him on chief of mission authority and overseas staffing issues and I gave a pretty comprehensive briefing, during which he called me his Joan of Arc. I couldn't understand whether that meant he was going to burn me at the stake or what it was, but again, each under secretary has his or her own way of following some of these issues, and unless they make it clear what their perspective is, you just operate under your previous instructions. Very shortly after that, when we sent some document up, dealing with overseas staffing, he told Jill Kent, who was the chief financial officer at the time, to get rid of that woman, meaning me.

This was when they had reorganized management policy and taken it out of staff of M and put it under the comptroller, and it became finance and management policy and it was FMP/MP. They reorganized the entire office in order to create an unnecessary office, with me as director and people underneath, so that I wouldn't have to deal with overseas

staffing issues and get John Rogers angry. Jill Kent, probably under John Rogers's instructions, tried to do State's first program plan. You know about program planning, but we didn't know anything about it at State at the time. My immediate staff, which had 27 different levels of acronyms, was tasked with coming up with the first program plan. Foreign policy program plan, in addition to management program plan. We did it, but it was incredibly difficult.

I had outstanding ratings every single year that I worked in the government with one exception, and that's a different story. But this year that we weren't doing what she wanted but she couldn't articulate what she wanted, my boss—who, at the time, was former Ambassador Roger Gamble, I don't know if you know him—called me into his office the month before the end of the rating period to tell me I was getting an unsatisfactory rating because I couldn't produce, out of thin air, whatever it was that Jill Kent wanted. I sort of explained that the regulations are such that you have to give a warning, and he had told me a month before I was getting an outstanding, and if my rating was decreasing from outstanding to unsatisfactory I needed a period in which to bring it up, and he changed his mind.

But that was the kind of atmosphere we worked under, depending on who was M and who was between them, this idiosyncratic, "You're wonderful, you're horrible" drive-by tasking. Another example of that is when Bonnie Cohen was under secretary for management, and she asked my staff—I was the acting director at the time, of M/P—to come up with great ideas for changes in management. And we brainstormed, and in the course of the day sent her up a two-page memo, and it came back with "Fantastic! Excellent! Wonderful! Go!" The next day, her executive assistant brought down a copy of the same memorandum stamped in the same time in M with "Ridiculous! Crazy! Nuttso! How could you think of this?" written all over it. Operating in M…

Q: Well, I think there is, I won't say "a problem," with dealing with the State Department. You're dealing with foreign affairs, and no amount of fast footwork and all is going to make the Arabs and the Jews love each other or… Most foreign affairs problems, a great number, are almost intractable. But you can always rearrange the management boxes. Sometimes, this allows people coming in to feel that they can be the shining light in foreign affairs by moving the management boxes around. I'm obviously exaggerating, but it's the one sandbox that people can play in in foreign affairs and show what they think is progress.

LOWENGART: One of the most fascinating things I was involved in, in M, was in—I'm trying to think exactly when it was. It was sometime between '94 and '96. Dick Moose was the under secretary for management and Warren Christopher was the Secretary. Strobe Talbott was the deputy secretary. Moose and Talbott agreed that the State Department had to fundamentally look at itself, how it was organized to carry out both policy and management, for the 21st century, even though this was in the '80s, and really examine what we were doing and how we were doing it, and how we should be organized and what kinds of people we should bring in. Fundamental review. Every single under secretary, every single assistant secretary, was involved in this. This was not just a little

room in the corner people. It culminated in a two-day offsite here at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) with every under secretary, every assistant secretary, present. I was in the back of the room taking notes; fascinating, some of the things I was allowed to see in my career. And one of the things that struck me was that they were doing the same thing that people in the tea party are doing now, that people in…

Q: The tea parties are the right-wing, libertarian movement.

LOWENGART: . What they were doing was complaining that "they" wouldn't let them do it. It took them a whole day to realize that they were "they!" These were the people that could do it.

Q: We have met the enemy, and they is us.

LOWENGART: That's exactly it. They had the same mindset that any group of people think that somebody's above them. But this was the management and the foreign policy and this was Holbrooke in the room, with his cell phone that was this big. This was Talbott in the room, who got a call from the guy who was trying to get out of Haiti, Duvalier, to help him escape at the same time. This group really did come up with some far-reaching, fundamental, really good ideas for how we might face the future. Really good ideas. And then Christopher came in to be briefed and it was astonishing. Again, I mentioned earlier how I'm very much into Myers-Briggs; I don't know if you know about that. He is clearly an S, meaning "Sensing" – looking at issues step-by-step. I guess as a lawyer, you need to be. And this was an N (Intuitive), far-reaching visionary thing. And he couldn't understand or accept any of it. None of it. He asked that we answer 10 or 14 fundamental questions—I don't even remember what they were—and that was it. Here was a chance to really make fundamental far reaching changes, not at the edges, not at the periphery—it was a shame. But it was exciting, for me, and fascinating.

One of the directors who came in to management policy—I don't know whether you know Peter Bodde?

Q: I'm not sure.

LOWENGART: It might have been his father that you interviewed.

Q: Bill Bodde. Yes, I've interviewed him.

LOWENGART: I used to baby-sit for Peter Bodde in Vienna, and he came in as my boss, so of course I showed his picture from fourth grade, in my yearbook, to everybody coming in. I was detailed, at one point, at the beginning of the Clinton administration, to Vice President Gore's Reinventing Government national performance review, for six months. That was very fascinating. Very, very hard work, but very fascinating. One of the things that I learned is how decisions can be put before a president with so little information. One of the areas that I was responsible for was the border patrol and immigration, and I wrote countless papers, and I discovered that several of my papers

ended up on the vice president and president's desk, with nobody reviewing them, nobody!. Not even for spelling or grammar, let alone for substance. Now, I'm good, but nobody has all the answers. No one person has all the answers. That was very terrifying, to recognize. Instead of being thrilled that the president saw something I wrote, I was petrified.

One good thing that I enjoyed was that we did, at the conclusion, brief the vice president, each of the teams did, on our area of expertise. We were allowed four sentences to describe our issue and I said my four sentences, and we ended up in a 25 minute conversation, which I really enjoyed.

At the end of my career, I was told in October 2001 by the then-executive assistant—and I'm not going to name names—to M, that there was going to be another reorganization. They were going to take X section of M/P out and put it in another bureau, and the remaining policy analysis and overseas staffing and chief of mission authority would stay in M, and they'd ask me to become the director, permanently, a DAS (deputy assistant secretary) equivalent. And I said yes, that I'd be thrilled. In March of the next year, I went from three levels below the secretary to six levels below the secretary. They moved me and my office over to personnel, from which I retired. And then they removed it right back up after I retired. It cost a million dollars, because of our computer-classified database, to move it into personnel. A minute after I retired, they moved it back to M.

Q: Was this the machinations of a person or was it a policy issue or what?

LOWENGART: It was back to the "get rid of that woman." Again, I think this is common in any organization. I understand what happened. It doesn't mean I like it, but I totally understand it. I was giving advice and following a policy that I understood to be what M wanted. M changed the policy but didn't tell me, so I was perceived as pushing for something that wasn't wanted. And so you have to move them out. So I was retired in place. I had a great office over at Columbia Plaza; beautiful view, paneled walls, leather sofa, great new computer. Nothing to do. But I was going through a divorce at the same time, so it was nice not to be overwhelmed with high pressure work. And as it turned out, because of the nature and reason for my divorce, it gave me time to decompress from very stressful work—because my job was extremely stressful throughout my whole career—to retirement. So when I actually did retire, that wasn't the decompression period that was necessary.

Add on:

Bragging a bit. During the course of my 33 year career with State, I received six awards, many of them as a result of the special efforts I've discussed. They included: a Joint Superior Honor, 10/1986, for the 1986 Overseas Staffing Review; a Superior Honor, 10/91, for being acting office director (one of many times, LOL); a Meritorious Honor, June 1996; a Superior Honor, 2/1997, for negotiating the MOU with Defense on Security; and a Superior Honor, 12/1999, for Secretary Albright's Report to the Congress on Dar and Nairobi ARBs .

The one I'm most proud of was The Secretary's Career Achievement Award, when I retired, in September 2003, with the citation below. It covers many of the things I've mentioned in this interview.

In recognition of more than 32 years of outstanding and dedicated service to the Department of State and the United States Government in the Management field, especially for your sustained commitment to upholding and promoting the authority of Chief s of Mission; your role in preparing the United States Government's response to the Accountability Review Board report on the bombing of our embassies in East Africa; your leadership in negotiating the Department of Defense and Department of State Memorandum of Understanding on Security for Department of Defense personnel overseas; and your contribution in establishing and maintaining a database of all United States Government Direct-Hire positions overseas.

Q: So what are you up to now?

LOWENGART: I am very involved in an organization called the Straight Spouse Network. I discovered after 31 and a half years of marriage that my now ex-husband was gay. An incredible realization. But the Straight Spouse Network, a 501(c)(3), helps people like me, internationally. We have contacts and face-to-face groups throughout the world. I do an enormous amount of volunteer work for them. I'm on the board of directors. I do all of the original handling of people who write in to our website, www.straightspouse.org. It keeps me busy.

Q: Those things, I think, are extremely important, because this is one of the things, the Internet thing is, that you can find support groups of people. There are issues of everything one can think about, and normally a person can feel very alone. When you can get together with people, it's damn therapeutic. I'm a great believer in this.

LOWENGART: It is. Yes.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview