

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

**AMBASSADOR MOLLY RAISER**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
*Initial interview date: November 2, 1998*  
*Copyright 2002 ADST*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Background

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York  
Smith College; University of Virginia  
Marriage  
Buffalo, New York  
Pat Moynihan  
Democratic Party

Washington, DC - Pat Moynihan Office

1979-1981

Campaign  
Fundraising  
Women's campaign Fund

Reagan Years

1981-1987

Sasha Bruce House  
Duke Ellington School for the Arts  
William Clinton  
Gennifer Flowers  
Al Gore  
Democratic National Committee

White House - Chief of Protocol

1993-1997

Loss of husband and son - 1992-1997  
APEC Seattle meeting  
Protocol staff  
Responsibilities  
Lead advance parties  
Security  
Sarajevo visit  
Russia visits  
Arafat visit  
Presidential (VIP) visitors

Arabs and Israelis  
Secret Service  
Protocol issues  
Italians  
White House state dinners  
Desk officers briefings  
Congress  
Diplomatic precedence  
Protocol manipulation  
Jesse Helms  
Diplomatic immunity  
Ambassador orientation  
National days  
Rabin funeral  
“Clinton time”  
Yeltsin  
Press  
Selma Roosevelt

Resignation

1997

## INTERVIEW

*Q: I'd like to start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?*

RAISER: I was born in Buffalo, New York, August 5, 1942. I was born Molly Millonzi. My father was an Italian from the west side of Buffalo who lived the American dream. He became a successful attorney and was a commissioner on the SEC. He became, you might say, the upstate Democratic Italian American. He was on the founding board of the Kennedy Center. His father had played in the Buffalo Philharmonic, which was started as a WPA project. He was a staunch believer in the Democratic Party and in the greatness of this country. My mother was Dutch of longer descent in America. Her family came in the 1700s to Michigan, the Dutch area around Holland and Grand Haven and Grand Rapids. She was a very strong Episcopalian, and faith was her rock. She had come to Buffalo to teach French. They got married and, together, they lived this wonderful dream of a life.

*Q: I'd like to ask, with an Italian background on your father's side, were they Catholic?*

RAISER: Yes.

*Q: I am thinking in those days it was not that usual. It was still pretty much the ethnic track system.*

RAISER: He broke through that. He never went to a Catholic church until he died, and he had insisted on a Catholic service. That says something about the Catholic church. You are born Catholic and, no matter what you do, you die Catholic also. Interestingly for social history, my mother's parents accepted him much more readily than my Italian Catholic father's parents accepted her. I can remember vacationing and Thanksgiving and Christmas at my mother's family's place, never at my father's. I think it says something about the insular Catholic Italian American family, and Italian immigrant communities. I believe there was a study done by a woman, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, on the Italian-Americans of Buffalo, New York which speaks to the issues of these communities.

*Q: Did you feel any of this pull either way?*

RAISER: No. It never occurred to me until later that I saw my mother's family much more than my father's family.

*Q: Did you find with an Italian last name that you were part of the Italian community in Buffalo?*

RAISER: No.

*Q: I would have thought that almost necessarily the case in school and everywhere else.*

RAISER: No. My father left the west side, and I went to a private girls' school. There was only one other Italian American in high school. That was the era in the 1940s and 1950s when the Italians really hadn't started to become integrated in the larger Buffalo society. They were in the economic mainstream though. I think my father was black balled from a couple of clubs in Buffalo until, of course, he became SEC commissioner. They decided they couldn't blackball that.

*Q: There still was the WASP ascendancy.*

RAISER: Oh, absolutely, in Buffalo.

*Q: It existed in so many places, but particularly on the West Coast, I think. Did you feel any of this?*

RAISER: Actually, I didn't, and I give my parents a lot of credit. Looking back upon it, people couldn't pronounce my name, although it is perfectly phonetic. Even at Smith College, I was one of the few Italian Americans. But the way they lived, it was inculcated in me that you can do anything, whether you are Italian or not. You have to commit to this life and be engaged in it. They lived that. My mother felt it just as strongly as my father. While I was aware that I was an Italian, and obviously, that I was a woman, I never felt that that was supposed to be a problem. I was empowered as a woman before empowerment was a cliché. As far as the Italian was concerned, I just lived with that. I

was president of my class and of the Student Council, so I never felt particularly held back by my Italianness.

*Q: How about just at home. What was home like.*

RAISER: I have a sister four years younger. I think that's too far apart, by the way, because when she started high school, I was already off in college. It's hard to remain close when that kind of thing happens. Home life was wonderful. As I say, my parents were engaged in the community. They served on every board, were leaders, and I picked up that that's what you have to do. There was a lot of laughter, encouragement and support. Notice, the word "encouragement," not "pushing."

*Q: I was wondering about dinner table conversation.*

RAISER: Oh, we discussed politics, history, and what was happening that day. We would all sit down to dinner at 6:45 every night and carry on.

*Q: In elementary school what were you reading?*

RAISER: First of all, I was a big reader. I was a fat little girl. I did not participate in sports, so I read constantly: *The Northwest Passage* by Kenneth Roberts, *Gone With the Wind*, the Nancy Drews.

*Q: Did you read Kerry Ames?*

RAISER: No, I don't recall that one.

*Q: She was a nurse.*

RAISER: From the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades, I was reading a lot. I still do. In my purse is a paperback mystery that I carry with me in case I have to stand in line somewhere.

*Q: Did you find yourself beginning to zero in on any particular types of books when you were moving on?*

RAISER: Basically, I read historical novels.

*Q: It was a great era for historical novels.*

RAISER: Oh, it was fabulous.

*Q: Anthony Adverse and all the... Oh, Hornblower.*

RAISER: *Hornblower*, yes.

*Q: Forever Amber, or was that...*

RAISER: No, not until later.

*Q: That was the scandalous novel of the early 1940s. It was about 1947 or 1948, or something like that.*

RAISER: I read a lot of Agatha Christies. I read all those mysteries when I was eleven, twelve, and thirteen.

*Q: In high school did you have any particular teachers or subjects that really grabbed you?*

RAISER: History and politics have always grabbed me, but we didn't have classes on politics in high school. There was a little maiden lady, Miss Abbott, who taught American history in high school.

*Q: What high school did you attend?*

RAISER: I attended the Buffalo Seminary, which is an all-girls school, but not Catholic. Miss Abbott would sit there in class absolutely straight with her hands folded in front of her, not moving a muscle, no parading around, no writing on the blackboard, and she made you think. From this elderly lady, I got this great love of American history. I can't explain why because these days, of course, teachers—including me—feel they have to entertain.

*Q: It's probably the TV that does it. It's a stranger generation now.*

RAISER: The computers are a factor, too. To compete with computers, you have to become an actor.

*Q: What areas of interest are your greatest.*

RAISER: My areas of interest ended up being American ethnic history and mostly early American political history. I got my master's in American Studies. I wrote a thesis on the reasons for the decline of Buffalo. When I was going to write a thesis for my Pd.D., originally it was going to be on the fact, for which I give the Catholic church much credit, that the Catholic church has remained in the inner cities. In Buffalo, for instance, these churches and their schools first educated the Germans, and then they educated the Poles, and now they're educating the Blacks.

*Q: It is an interesting fact that they have remained the constant in the [education] industry. Were you still a fat little girl when you were in high school? I say this for the reader; I'm looking across the table at a very slim lady here. I can say that without being pejorative.*

RAISER: No. I discovered boys at the age of 13 or 14, and that summer I lost 35 or 40 pounds. Those fat cells are still there so I don't eat very much. I have stayed the same weight that I was when I was 15 years old.

*Q: If you want to say what it takes to be a good Foreign Service Officer, many of the ones I have interviewed, shared two constants in high school: they were majoring in sports and girls. How about you as a girl?*

RAISER: Being a girls' school, it was not too competitive. I was on the hockey team and the basketball team. I was into being president of the student council, president of the class and that kind of thing. I don't know why. I think once people get in, it's just that you keep being elected and elected.

*Q: Before we move on to college, what were Buffalo politics like in those days?*

RAISER: Buffalo is, and certainly was then, a wonderful mix of ethnicity. The Blacks were not a major factor. The Poles were an enormous factor. The Italians and the Poles would switch in the leadership of the Democratic Party. We had a real machine. Peter Crotty and Joe Crangle were the chairmen of the Democratic Party. They were factors. Bobby Kennedy would come through Erie County. Jack Kennedy would come through Erie County. It wasn't quite up there with the Daley machine but it was known as one of the strong Democratic Party areas.

*Q: What was your impression of the machine? Some machines deliver; some machines are mainly designed to enrich those who belong to the machine. What was your opinion about it?*

RAISER: I don't know about the enrichment. The head of the Department of Transportation, as the story went, would go around with a bag opening up all the [parking] meters and just empty all the nickels into a bag. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. I don't think so. The machine did things like get people jobs. Congressman Novak, for instance, when he was growing up as a high schooler, had a job thanks to the Democratic Party machine. Jim Russert would have a summer job. I think he had at least one that I know of from the machine. We like to call it the Party. You might want to ask him, if and when you interview him. The machine took care of people. I think it's one of the reasons that my father was so bound to it. It took care of all the immigrants that would come in.

*Q: During this time, what type of job did your father have?*

RAISER: He was an attorney in Buffalo.

*Q: Did he have any particular types of clients?*

RAISER: He was in banking and corporate law. Buffalo is really a very small city and, of course, Washington is, too, in many respects. It is possible to know the heads of all the banks, the heads of the department stores, the heads of any corporations, and The mayor.

*Q: Does the name Wallen Kenidents ring a bell? He was the head of consular affairs. I thought he came from Buffalo a long time ago. Then, you graduated from high school in 1960. At that point I assume you were thinking about where to go to school and all that.*

RAISER: It was never an enormous question because, the first time I was asked, I said, "Smith College."

*Q: Why did you chose Smith?*

RAISER: I haven't the faintest idea. I cannot tell you why. I think my father was kind of hoping for Vassar because Vassar was the ultimate of the ultimate. It was kind of like going to Harvard if you were a guy back then. I was accepted at Vassar and Smith, and I said I was going to Smith.

*Q: I rather thought that Smith was a little more intellectual than Vassar.*

RAISER: How wonderful! We always heard it was the opposite.

*Q: Anyway, so you went to Smith in the fall of 1960. Did the Kennedy campaign grab you at all?*

RAISER: Did the Kennedy campaign grab an 18 year old young woman? Please. We were just enamored. We sat in front of the TV set during the debates, yes. But as far as getting involved, no.

*Q: Would you describe the Smith College students around you as being a future part of the liberal establishment, or did they come more from, say, the Republican side? Did you get any feel for it?*

RAISER: There was certainly much more diversity at Smith than there was in my high school. I can't say that they were that involved, at least not the people that I knew. Sally Quinn was in my house, and Meg Greenfield had been in it and they both went on to successful careers.

*Q: Meg Greenfield and Sally Quinn are both with The Washington Post.*

RAISER: That's right. I don't feel there was a great commitment to public life or to public service among the people that I knew.

*Q: My wife is in the same class as Gloria Steinem. At Smith, what were you up to?*

RAISER: I was up to majoring in American Government. I was up to going out with a young man who was my future husband. I went down to Princeton to visit him. I think the college years did not have an enormous impact on me. I went to Smith. I was a B student, and then left after my junior year to get married, which slew my parents. I finished up at the University of Virginia where my husband was at law school.

All the teachers at Smith were good, but there wasn't one that I just thought, this is someone whom I adore, except for the Shakespeare teacher. He was very, very handsome, and he walked with a cane because he had been in the War. He was a war hero. He would get up and recite from *Romeo and Juliet*, and we would just die. Then there was a European history teacher, who had been in the Italian underground. He would give a lesson or speech once a year on the War and Fascism and the importance of democracy and human rights. People would flock to come hear that one lesson that he would teach. He spoke more movingly than anyone I knew until I heard Pat Moynihan speak on the same theme about the importance of democracy, civil rights, and human rights. Aside from those two, I really have no favorites.

*Q: I think sometimes some places really hit you and you can say, "Ah, this is where I turned here or there." Often this sort of formation comes early on.*

RAISER: I think it was an accumulative thing. I did not suddenly think, I love politics. I grew up with it. I love American history. It was just there.

*Q: How did you meet your husband?*

RAISER: He lived in Buffalo, and I knew his brother who was my age. It was the era of "coming-out" parties where if you are going to a party you were assigned a date. Bob Raiser he had been president of the senior class at the boys school, Nichols, while I was president of the student council. That was it. We knew each other, so people would just say, 'Okay, put Molly and Bob together.' We'd have a great time.

On one occasion, we were giving Bob's brother, Vic, a ride. Bob was in an old VW, and Vic was crunched in the back; he was going to play tennis. I had never met him before but he started asking me very pointed questions, like what was I doing, was I going to be around all summer, etc. Then we dropped him, and Bob turned to me and said, "I have to apologize for my brother. He can be very aggressive sometimes." Vic was one of the big young men in Buffalo. He was at Princeton and had been president of his class also. So, when he called me up to invite me out, I almost started to hyperventilate. Here's this responsible Smith College young woman being asked out by this guy who had a real reputation. That's how I met him, in the back of the car, a VW.

*Q: Was he ahead of you?*

RAISER: He was two years ahead of me.



*Q: So he graduated after you were married?*

RAISER: No, he graduated and then went to the University of Virginia law school. He graduated in 1962 from Princeton and, then, in 1963 we got married after his first year of law school.

*Q: Where was he pointed? What was his goal or desire?*

RAISER: Well, it turned out to be pretty much what mine was. We had a shared goal of public service of some sort. We loved to travel. He'd read as much as I had. I think it was the concept of getting into public service.

*Q: Times change so much but public service in the Kennedy era was considered pretty good stuff. When one says one wants to go into public service, what are you talking about?*

RAISER: I'm talking about civic and public service. Civic service is something like sitting on boards in cities. Public service is probably larger, and it includes going into the government. I always like to think public service includes both. Today, we think public service is only in government. I think anytime you involve yourself with your community or your city or your state, that is public service. You are serving the public weal.

*Q: Did the Peace Corps tempt you because it was brand new at that time?*

RAISER: No, it didn't.

*Q: Did you go to the University of Virginia?*

RAISER: Yes, and I got a B.S. in education because women were not allowed in liberal arts then.

*Q: Really?*

RAISER: Yes, that's true.

*Q: Oh, my God, that's right.*

RAISER: Yes, it was just boys in the Liberal Arts College, so I could become a nurse or a teacher in one year. There's no way I could become a nurse in one year. I couldn't even pass the chemistry course! I took a lot of extra education courses, which are not too demanding and, therefore, in one year I became a teacher.

*Q: How did you find the education courses at Virginia? Virginia at that point was not terribly well known for its school system.*

RAISER: No. As far as I'm concerned, education courses are a waste of time. These courses in no way show one what it's really like to teach. I suppose one should take a course on the history of education, if that's necessary. Student teaching was of enormous benefit. I student taught in a high school that had just integrated under court ruling and had one Black in the school who was in my class. I thought what a horrible place he is now in, not as to the school but the situation. What is appalling today is that if you want to become certified, you have to take a National Education test. This test tests very little. I'm told that about half the teachers in DC have not passed it, even so. You can double check that. My daughter just walked in to take it. I got in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. She got in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, and she'd never had any education courses.

*Q: Here you are. You and your husband are interested in public service. How did Virginia strike a girl from Buffalo?*

RAISER: Coming from Smith College in the era of civil rights, it was quite an eye opener. Luckily, in the law school there were a lot of people from up north because the University of Virginia has a superb reputation as a law school.

*Q: Robert Kennedy went there.*

RAISER: That's right. Teddy Kennedy also went there. I was a senior and I was taking an American biography course, one of the few non-educational courses I had time to take, the day President Kennedy was shot. Some young man ran into the classroom and said, "The President has just been shot." The students clapped. I was stunned. I, of course, got up and walked out and drove back to the apartment and walked in just as Walter Cronkite was saying, "The President is dead." I still haven't gotten over that. The next year, when my husband was in his third year, I was a teller in a bank. Being a teller in a Charlottesville, Virginia, bank in 1964 and 1965 was unbelievable. They were talking about how Martin Luther King ought to be killed. This integration is unacceptable, etc. Again, it was a real eye opener for someone at least moderately liberal coming from a liberal arts college up in New England. I'm very glad I had that experience, however.

*Q: It gives one a feel for the times.*

RAISER: Absolutely.

*Q: I came from Chicago when I was a kid but we lived in Annapolis for a while with separate facilities and separate drinking fountains and all that.*

RAISER: I tried to explain to people what it was like.

*Q: Looking at it from the outside, it is not a matter of throwing bricks at the system but it is just observing it and feeling, this is pretty awful.*

RAISER: I'll tell you something good about the era. President Kennedy was very good. I think he brought a lot of people to the concept of giving back. John Glenn, fabulous. I remember at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of President Kennedy, I was sitting with my two children watching something about him, and, of course, my daughter couldn't get over how handsome he was. Then there were pictures of John Glenn going up into space. They had maybe three or four minutes on that. One of the children, I think my son, turned around and said, "My God, he's a real hero." I said, "Yes, he's a real hero." Of course, I think he's still a hero.

*Q: As we talk right now, John Glenn at age 77 is orbiting the earth.*

RAISER: There was a time when people could be big, larger than life. I'm not sure people can do that any more.

*Q: I think it is very difficult. There are obviously heroes out there but it's just not...*

RAISER: Well, if you raise your head up, you are going to be shot, which is one of the reasons I never raised my head when I was chief of protocol. Never a picture or anything.

*Q: What were you and your husband planning to do? You were getting a teacher's certificate from Virginia and your husband was getting a law degree. In the first place, does one specialize?*

RAISER: Vic specialized in corporate and banking law. He basically worked his way through college. We went back to Buffalo, and I taught school for a year until I became pregnant. He joined my father's law firm and then became interested - over several years - in the telecommunications business and set up a company with a friend of his who lives in Mississippi. That's how he made his money, not through law. He did a lot of hard work and had a lot of luck. He hit it in his mid-40s. He worked very hard but I have always thought a lot of life was luck, being there at a good time and he was there in the telecommunications revolution at the right time. All the time he was doing this, he was also on boards and tutoring. He was chairman of the Buffalo Philharmonic, and he ran the United Fund one year. After I finished teaching at P.S. 56, which was really one of the ethnic public schools, I began serving on boards and did some substitute teaching.

*Q: What was your husband's background?*

RAISER: His mother came from Minnesota; his father from Indianapolis. His father was German and his mother was Norwegian. His father was in transit advertising. They lived in a suburb of Buffalo called Orchard Park. It always amazes me that Vic turned out to have this great ambition because his father had absolutely no ambition and truly was involved in nothing. He is still alive and living in North Carolina. It must have been a rebellion, I assume. For someone to grow up with no example and be so successful is quite remarkable. But, then, he was remarkable.

*Q: What was it like teaching in the Buffalo P.S. 56?*

RAISER: I loved it. The school was a true melting pot - Italians, WASPs, Blacks, Poles. Teaching fifth through Junior high can be a great joy. Students are just beginning to expand. If you can channel all that energy, it's wonderful. I also think that socially it is so different from the way it is now. When a little boy with an Italian background was naughty, I would say, "You cannot come back to the classroom until you have brought your mother or a little note signed by your mother." The next day the mother would be dragging him in by the ear, and he'd have to apologize. There was a sense of children knowing that they were being naughty, knowing right from wrong, and the parents caring.

*Q: We are talking at a period in the late 1990s that is for many of us very distressful; that is in a way the break down of the public school system. I was just interviewing somebody the other day whose family lived in Maryland and they fought to get her into a school in the District because it was so much better.*

RAISER: In the District?

*Q: Yes. We are talking about in the 1940s. You say you had sort of a checkered career. I mean, you started to produce children.*

RAISER: Yes, I produced two children while doing my civic duty - and my political duty as well. I was a committeeman in the Democratic Party in my ward. I used to love going out and getting out the vote and driving older people to vote and going door to door. We always took our children into the voting booth right in behind the curtain. In that era, they used to have the voting booths that they would actually pull up and set up on a corner. You would go in, and there would be people with plates of cookies for the children. It became an experience to go and vote.

*Q: Things are moving on in Buffalo as elsewhere. Have you seen a change in the Democratic Party in how the city government worked and all that?*

RAISER: I can't answer that. I did see the difference in that we were losing businesses left and right. They were closing down, they were leaving, and the city fathers were doing nothing about it. When the St. Lawrence Seaway was put in in the 1950s, I think, the city fathers and the government people decided not to dredge the Buffalo harbor because they figured they didn't have to. Meanwhile, Cleveland dredged its harbor so all the major Great Lakes vessels just by-passed Buffalo. Buffalo used to be a transfer point for the Great Lakes to the Erie Canal and then down to New York. Now, since we didn't dredge our harbor, there are enormous ore carriers, for instance, or wheat carriers that can't come into the harbor. We lost our steel, we lost a lot of our car plants, we lost the granary business, and nothing was done about it. Whenever a major plant closed, there would be a boost Buffalo campaign by the Chamber of Commerce but not, okay, this is happening, we can see it's happening, what are we going to do about it? What are we going to do

instead? Here we are water power, next to Niagra Falls, next to Canada, what are we going to do with ourselves? How shall we diversify? There was none of that.

*Q: Both your father, your husband, and you were involved in boards and all this. Was there any thought about let's do something about this.*

RAISER: I haven't the faintest idea. Buffalo has the second largest university complex after City College of New York in New York. There was some talk about where to put it, and a lot of us thought it should be downtown to try and renovate the downtown. For various reasons, Governor Rockefeller decided because, I think, the powers that be wanted it out in the suburbs. They now have this enormous moonscape of a University out in the suburbs. The subway that they built, which is totally useless, did not go out that far. So you've got all these kids, all that power out there, and it never gets into downtown Buffalo. And Rich Stadium. Again, there was a great push to put it downtown. No, they put it out in the suburbs again. These were, I think, major mistakes that were made. Why the leading people of the city wanted to do that, I don't know. Maybe they were afraid of having people downtown. I just don't know.

*Q: Were there any tensions on the boards and politics, I mean, or was it pretty blah?*

RAISER: It was pretty blah. That is what appalled me. No one said, "Hey, we have to come to grips with this."

*Q: As this progressed, did you go back? I mean, what other things were you doing?*

RAISER: Basically, I was having my two children and doing all this civic and political stuff. How far do you want me to go? All right, the kids got in school. When Monty went into three-year old nursery school at the same private school Skye attended, I went back and taught there for three years. The upper grades were just girls, so I taught 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls for three years, and I loved it.

*Q: Was it a disciplined group?*

RAISER: Yes. It was a disciplined and open group. As a matter of fact, one of the things I did every year was take them on a tour of the city. We'd go to the old Polish Broadway market. This was in the mid- to late-1970s. There were still women who had babushkas and were carrying live chickens, and I would take them that same day to a courtroom because I knew one of the judges. I remember on one trip we started with the courtroom. There were some prostitutes that had been picked up the night before being brought in, and here were these little girls with their sweaters and their Papagallo shoes on. That same day, we went to the Italian market on the west side with all the wonderful smells. We also went to the sewage treatment plant. It was not primary sewage; it was secondary treatment. I am sure that when those young ladies, 12 to 14 years old, went home and Mom and Dad said, "What did you do today?" I'm sure they said, "Well, we saw some

prostitutes, and we saw some sewage. Mrs. Raiser took us on this wonderful tour of the city.” But that’s the way it was when I was there.

*Q: Did foreign affairs intrude on your scene at all?*

RAISER: No, except for reading and talking about it, not at all. Our concern was basically the civic need urban sector.

*Q: What about communism?* We were talking about the Cold War, and I was just wondering whether...

RAISER: I came down here for a year when my father was on the SEC in the early 1950s, and I went to the National Cathedral School for a year. I got the award for the most improved at the end of the year. I thought that was faint praise. My mother would go and sit at the McCarthy hearings and just be appalled.

*Q: Then, we’ll move into the 1980s.*

RAISER: Okay. In 1979 my husband was doing regulatory work with telecommunications, and he was in Washington three days a week and then come back here to Buffalo four days a week. The kids were then in the third and sixth grades, and I was working for Pat Moynihan at the time. I started working for him in 1977, and that was a fabulous job. I was Pat Moynihan in about 15 upstate counties.

*Q: He was a senator.*

RAISER: Yes, a senator. We helped on his campaign. Tim Russert had the job for a few months, then Pat wanted him to come down to Washington and I got the job. It could have been because I was a woman but that’s fine with me. I was working for him there, and my husband was going back and forth. I suddenly said, “Why don’t we go to Washington and you can come back to Buffalo? Living in Washington would be so wonderful for the children, etc.” So we talked about it and said, “Yes, we probably should do this,” but nothing really happened.

Then, there was a big snow storm one day. I think it was in 1977 that we had an enormous snow storm. The plowman hadn’t come, and it was my day to do the car pool. I was shoveling, trying to get two tire tracks down the driveway to get out. Suddenly, I said, “I’m not going to do this forever.” My husband was still getting dressed, and the kids were fussing with their boots and whining and carrying on. I took a shovel full of snow and went upstairs and dropped it at his feet and said, “The children and I are going to go to Washington next year. Do you want to come?” That was it. Then we got the kids into the Cathedral Schools and, in 1979, we moved down here, and I started working in Pat’s office.

*Q: I'd like you to talk about Pat Moynihan because he is a major figure. He is ambassador to India, and he has also written on society problems. Then he was ambassador to the U.N. and then a senator. I have been interviewing somebody who is involved with the U.N. who is not a fan of Pat Moynihan. He is an intellectual who brings very strong reactions plus and minus. Can we talk first about how you saw him from the upstate New York perspective?*

RAISER: He would come up to upstate New York maybe every two weeks for a long weekend. You arranged four, five, or six stops a day and then you kind of collapsed and then got up the next day and did four, five or six stops that day. He was adored in upstate New York. He would always wear that Irish walking hat and then always wonder why people recognized him. What I saw most was his enormous, incredible curiosity. I would never let him drive because he is a rather erratic driver. When I was driving, I would always try to find some historic place to stop and show him.

The first weekend we were together—the story is going to show you why I decided to do the job—we were driving between Rochester and Buffalo and were approaching Batavia. I had a big old Chevy station wagon. All of a sudden he said, “Pull over, stop the car, pull over.” I lurch over to the side of the road and say, “Put down the window,” because, of course, I think he is going to throw up. He looks at me and says, “What?” I said, “Well, aren't you going to throw up?” He said, “No, dear, I want to get off here and see the historic Holland Land Company,” which is the business that divided up all of western New York.

Joseph Ellicott ran the Holland Land Company, and they have a wonderful little museum in Batavia, and so I said, “Don't ever, ever scream at me to pull over in the car on the highway.” Anyway, we went there, and I had been there as a part of my territory. Of course, these two ladies, when he walked in, were just stunned. After that I learned, if we were in Seneca Falls, to go and see Elizabeth Katy Stanton's house; if we were in Rochester, to go and see where he thought Susan B. Anthony was buried.

*Q: Was he pumping you for information about the politics of the area?*

RAISER: Yes. Generally, they would brief him down in Washington. But then he'd come here, and this something that I've learned also through my latest job. He would have all these specifics of the policy, although basically he was just up there to do some labor and community events. But as we'd be approaching, he'd say, “Okay, Moll, what do I have to know?” Then I'd go into a description of people who were going to be there. As they would come up to someone, I'd say, “You remember So-and-So,” with the name. Then the logistics: we were going to go in this building and do that; then, we were going to go out the back way. All this stuff I found you have to do when you are with political people and even heads of state because they have all the policy and intellectual information but not much about the people they are going to meet and what they are going to have to do, kind of what to say. Sometimes I would say, “Do not mention this issue that is very hot

unless you are willing to take it on.” I would say, “This person is not one of our favorites.”

*Q: In other words, this was the absolute training to be chief of protocol.*

RAISER: It was one of the things, I think. Absolutely. Teaching and this sort of thing.

*Q: What happened when you came down to Washington?*

RAISER: I came down to Washington in 1977. Then in 1979 and 1980 I worked here. Then decided I wanted a life and left, but four years is long enough. I was his front person. Most of the people in his office like to think and to write his speeches and to think up his policy. They were not mad for going out and actually meeting folks. So, I was the one who would go out and do that, whatever it was, whether it was the anti-abortion or the anti-choice or pro-choice. If a group of mayors came down, Pat would generally go out to meet them but often I would have to go as he'd be late. Just any interest groups that would come down, I would be the one who would go out and meet them, listen to them.

*Q: When you say you go out and meet them, do you say, “The senator will be along?”*

RAISER: If he couldn't meet them, I'd say, “I'm his special assistant, and the senator is so sorry but he's on the floor or he's in a hearing and can't come but I will be happy to take back any message you have. Then I would report back to the senator. He was very interested in all of this, contrary to what some of his staff thought. He was keenly interested in the political aspect of it.

*Q: You were talking about the staff. Do you have any feel for some of the other staffs in the Senate?*

RAISER: No, I don't.

*Q: I was wondering because you say they are interested in issues and all, and I was wondering whether this was atypical or not.*

RAISER: I suppose he chose his staff for what he was interested in, and he was interested in policy. Attending committee meetings was not his favorite thing to do. He liked to write, and you could always tell when he was particularly frustrated. He'd go in and slam the door to his office and come out two hours later with some wonderful piece he'd written. He'd ask his secretary to send it to *The New Yorker* or send it to *Harper's* or *The Atlantic*, or if it was a short thing, to *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times*.

*Q: Did you have any feel for Pat Moynihan and the Carter administration? This was 1979-1980. The Carter administration was having a difficult time then. Carter lost the election, as a matter of fact, and seemed to have lost whatever he had to get himself*



*elected at this point. I was just wondering whether there was any reflection within the Senate about this.*

RAISER: I don't know about the Senate. I didn't talk to Pat about it.

*Q: I'm just wondering from the office point of view.*

RAISER: If there was, I can't remember.

*Q: Was your husband involved in politics at all?*

RAISER: Yes. He immediately started doing fund-raisers for the Democratic National Committee and was chairman of their big gala one year. Chuck Manatt and Peter Kelly got him involved in that. Then, when Paul Kirk became chairman, Vic became finance chair of the Democratic Party. We raised money legally and well and with honor. It can be done. I don't know whether that was 1980 or 1984.

*Q: Were you involved in the big gala business at all?*

RAISER: That was his. I felt very strongly and he felt strongly that, although we went to things together, we each had our independent interests. I would do the Women's Campaign Fund, or I would help women who were running for office.

*Q: You were talking about moving into the 1980s, or during the time of Ronald Reagan. Particularly early on, the Republicans and Ronald Reagan were not considered big on women. Did you find this the case? Was this a difficult period?*

RAISER: No. I'm sure it was but I personally came across no evidence of it. I must say Pamela Harriman deserves credit for what she did with the Democrats for the 1980s. The Women's Campaign Fund, of which I became a co-chair, raises money for and trains women running for office at all levels, not just senators and governors the way Emily's List does or at least did. We used to support county candidates and state legislature people because we felt strongly, and I still do, that women basically start at a lower level. They have a family and have to be able to go home at night; whereas, men can start at a little higher level.

*Q: When you got involved in the sponsoring and training of women, describe what you did.*

RAISER: We would have training courses. There was one at Harvard, and there was one out in Austin at the University of Texas. We would have one about every three years for two or three hundred women. There would be panels of experts in fund-raising, publicity, polling, etc. Ann Richards, of course, spoke when we were in Texas. A lot of these women had never been involved before. They were especially interested in fund-raising, with which they had enormous problems.

*Q: Why is that so?*

RAISER: I don't know. Perhaps because there was a perception that it isn't "lady-like". Times have changed, however.

*Q: It's traditional that the women outlive the men, and they usually end up with more money at their disposal.*

RAISER: Yes, you are right but they don't get it. I think it's because men still had a say over financial matters in the early 1980s. I think by the end of the 1990s, it has changed. First of all, I always said, "The first thing you should do is go to your friends. Go to your husband's law firm or business and get money." A lot of women didn't even want to do that. I would say, "Well, if you can't get your friends to give you money, then maybe you ought not run for office. Your friends should know the reason that you are running. They should know that you are competent, and that you'd be wonderful." They had a great problem with that. Now, of course, everyone does. What we produce now is just horrendous. Back then, women really felt it more than the men did.

*Q: Something that's always bothered me is where do you draw the line between a contribution and a bribe? Giving a few hundred or a thousand dollars to a candidate is one thing, but at a certain point, when you're talking about bigger money, unless you feel you are going to get a quid pro quo, it comes very close to being essentially a bribe. In this fund-raising at this time, was there any problem concerning this?*

RAISER: Well, I suppose with the PACs (Political Action Committees) it may be, obviously, a problem but it never bothered Pat Moynihan, I might add. He was never bought although he got a lot of PAC money. I think it depends on the person. We all know that these people have to raise a lot of money. Until we change the rules and tell them they don't have to raise all this money, they're going to have to take money. You know you can't say, "You can't raise the money but you have to spend it to get elected." Then, you get nothing but rich people doing it. I like to think that when I give money it's for the public good. I certainly didn't "want" anything for years and years and years. I gave money and then, out of the blue, I got a call from the White House, but I certainly didn't expect anything from it.

*Q: Did you find during the Reagan years (1981-1989) that this was a problem? Of course, the Democrats held both the House and the Senate. Was Ronald Reagan a good recruiter in a way for the Democrats?*

RAISER: I think they worked better together than what we have now. I don't know why. Maybe the kind of people we now have in the House and the Senate are different from what we had before. There was bipartisanship then. Other than that, I can't comment.

*Q: Was there anything else you were involved in during the 1981-1989 period?*

RAISER: Oh, I was involved with The Sasha Bruce House and some inner-city tutoring projects.

*Q: How did you find the inner-city in Washington,?*

RAISER: Well, when I left Pat's office, Liz Moynihan called me and said, "Molly, I think you ought to go on the board of Sasha Bruce House. You'd be wonderful." Sasha Bruce House was then a home for runaways. Now it does a lot of other things. It is a home for runaways, or for children the court has picked up. Officials take them to The Sasha Bruce House for safety until they can find the parents or, if the children have run away, until they can work something out with the parents or the mother or stepmother or whatever. Liz had known my love had always been urban studies. It was a wonderful experience. Sasha Bruce House has now expanded. It has a home for unwed mothers, as we used to call them. I don't know what they are called these days. The staff does a lot of tutoring, trying to keep kids in school. So that's how I found the inner-city in Washington.

I am now doing tutoring and serving on the Board of the Duke Ellington School for the Arts - I had to resign from that Board when I took my government job. Last year, I tutored juniors and seniors at the Duke Ellington School for the Arts, which has some very talented kids in it. Some of them couldn't write a complete sentence. It always appalled me, number one, that they kept moving on and, number two, that the parents didn't complain. Students went a whole year without chemistry books, and they had to have chemistry. The teacher would just have to talk at them and put it on the board. Where were the parents? Why weren't the parents screaming, "Get my son or daughter a chemistry book." Anyway, I think the schools here are basically non-functional, and the students keep being passed on. They have to have four years of English but what if you don't pass four years of English? You still have had four years of English. There is something wrong with the thinking there.

*Q: It is a very difficult period. Did the Bush administration cause any change or not?*

RAISER: I can't remember.

*Q: Did Bill Clinton, as governor of Arkansas, come across your horizon at all?*

RAISER: Yes. The DNC (Democratic National Committee) would have weekends for major donors of \$5,000 or \$10,000, and Bill Clinton was at them. That's when my husband was finance chair. That's the first time he and I came across the President but Vic knew him much better than I did. I have known Al Gore much longer. Of course, he thought then that Bill was very bright and very politically talented. He thought, "Maybe this is a guy we can actually run with."

*Q: It is obvious that for someone to go anywhere as Clinton did, he had to be very much in the scene and learning the people, certainly beyond the normal scope of a governor of*

*Arkansas. In talking to Ambassador Bagley, who makes the same point, Clinton was, for the governor of Arkansas, up in Washington a lot going to Pamela Harriman's seminars, which we were talking about.*

RAISER: Oh, there is no doubt that he was going to at least try to go somewhere. Actually, his is a real American success story. Here's a guy from Hope, Arkansas, living in a totally dysfunctional family with alcoholics, and he ends up at Georgetown and Oxford and is President of the United States. No matter what his flaws are, that's an incredible story.

*Q: I give him full credit. How did he strike you at the time, or did you really run across him?*

RAISER: Well, when I did, he was wonderful, and he always gave me a big hug. I always said, before he ran for office, that if everybody could meet him for two minutes, he'd win by a landslide. He looks you in the eye. He actually responds to you and talks to you instead of looking around the room for someone more important. And he still does that, by the way. He still takes people that he's talking to seriously.

*Q: Was your husband getting more and more involved in the political world, would you say?*

RAISER: Well, then he became a finance chair for Clinton's campaign, but still had his law practice and telecommunications business.

*Q: This was when?*

RAISER: This was in 1991. I think he gave the first fund-raiser outside of Arkansas for Bill Clinton. This was our candidate from the beginning. People would call up my husband and say, "Why?" and he would say why. Again, this was my husband's thing. I tried to stay a little bit in the background.

*Q: What happens when somebody is really running finances in a campaign? This must be all-consuming.*

RAISER: It can be all-consuming. Basically, he gave his time for a year to do this. It was all consuming but he loved it because he thought, "Finally, finally, we've got someone who can win." Even through the Gennifer Flowers thing, people...

*Q: You might explain the Gennifer Flowers thing.*

RAISER: Gennifer Flowers was a woman who said that she'd been having an affair for twelve years with Bill Clinton which, of course, turned out to be semi-true. When that came up, all the people across the country were calling up my husband and saying, "Blah, blah, blah," so Vic went to see Bill Clinton, and Bill Clinton looked at him in the face and

said, "It's not true. Not one word of it is true." So this newest stuff didn't surprise me in the least by the way.

*Q: Right now the President is under the cloud of impeachment over an affair with a woman called Monica Lewinsky, whose name is very familiar today, and I am sure will be in the future. As a woman, did you catch any vibes from Bill Clinton that here is a man who is being attracted to women and this might be a problem? I'm not talking about passes just vibes.*

RAISER: Yes, I did. He never involved me but you could sit and watch him. If a pretty girl came into the room, you could see him kind of perk up a little bit.

*Q: I hate to think that's the criteria. I think most of us do that.*

RAISER: That's true. I remember when this Monica Lewinsky story first broke, someone said to me, "You have a gorgeous blond 5'8" daughter, you know. Did he ever make a pass at her?" I said, "If he had, we would not be having this conversation because he'd be dead." The answer is, you were aware that he liked women but as far as the extent of it, there are a lot of guys that do.

*Q: Oh, absolutely. Were you at all involved in the Dukakis campaign of 1988 against Bush?*

RAISER: No, but my husband was because he was with the DNC (Democratic National Committee). Through 1988, I was for Al Gore. My husband, as an officer of the DNC, could not be involved with anyone. We had an event at "my" house and he came in and snuck up the back way.

*Q: What attracted you to Al Gore?*

RAISER: Al Gore I have known for a long time. His brightness, his humor, his judgment, and his stability attracted me. Then, I guess when you know someone well you are closer. 1988, obviously, was too soon for Gore, and I am ever hopeful for two years from now.

*Q: Yes, two years from now. He is Vice President now. In 1992 was Gore an early candidate?*

RAISER: No, I don't think he ever quit.

*Q: No, he didn't. His son had been hurt and, so, he was not a candidate. How did the Clinton campaign go for you?*

RAISER: It was fabulous for us. First of all, when Al was chosen as Vice President, people would call us up and say, "Boy, are you two in it, running with Gore and Clinton." As I say, I think they are a good team. They immediately seemed to be a good team. Al

Gore, I think, was absolutely right in the way he treated the President of the United States. There was a real partnership there. The President indeed takes his advice very seriously in domestic policy and in foreign affairs. I saw the foreign affairs, obviously, up close. It's a very good team.

*Q: While you were doing these things with the Democratic National Committee, were foreign affairs included at all?*

RAISER: No. This came out of the blue.

*Q: What was your impression of The Washington Post as opinion maker of Washington during this time?*

RAISER: I have no opinion. It is just the daily newspaper. Basically in many ways, it is the small town daily newspaper, the "small town" being the capital of the world.

*Q: Clinton was elected in 1992 and assumed office in 1993. What happened then?*

RAISER: My husband, if he'd been alive, would probably have been in the cabinet or sub-cabinet. I was doing my dissertation for my doctorate, which is what I began to do after my husband and son were killed. I remember it was April, and I got a phone call from Bruce Lindsey out of the blue.

*Q: Who is Bruce Lindsey?*

RAISER: Bruce Lindsey, who is what, counsel in the White House?

*Q: Yes, I think so.*

RAISER: He said "I am making this call. The President is not making this call because he knows that if he makes the call, it's difficult to say no. He doesn't want to push you but, if the time is right and you want to get back into doing something publicly, he'd like you to be Chief of Protocol." I said, "What is Chief of Protocol?" He laughed and said, "Look it up, Molly, and call us back." Then, he said, "At least a half dozen of your friends want this job desperately." So, I hung up the phone and I started calling some of my friends, not the people that I thought he meant, and said, "What is Chief of Protocol?" Everyone said, "It is the best job in Washington. You are made for it. It's fabulous. Take it." So, I made up a list of pros and cons on a piece of legal paper. I thought like my husband who was German and very organized. One day as I was doing this looking at it, my daughter came in. She was still living in Washington. She looked at this list and said, "Oh, Mom, for God's sake, of course you are going to take this job." So that was it. So I called Bruce Lindsey back and said, "Yes."

*Q: Again, for the historical record, your husband was killed in an airplane crash.*

RAISER: My husband and son were killed. It was a graduation trip. My son just graduated from Princeton, and he, my husband, one of my husband's best friends, and my son's roommate were fishing in Alaska. Apparently, they weren't quite far enough north, so they took a little plane to go farther out. They were flying and the fog was coming in. The pilot tried to turn around and there wasn't enough space, and they hit a mountain.

*Q: This was when?*

RAISER: This was July 30, 1992.

*Q: So this was right in the middle of the campaign.*

RAISER: That's right. The Clintons and the Gores both came to the funeral.

*Q: It must have been devastating.*

RAISER: It was beyond comprehension.

*Q: It shows the human side of Clinton, making the offer but not putting you on the spot.*

RAISER: Yes - and I was confirmed on July 30, 1993, and a lot of people pointed out that was exactly a year to the day that my husband and son were killed, which I thought was an interesting coincidence.

*Q: I'd like to just go back a tad. You started your dissertation, and you'd already gotten your Smith-University of Virginia degree. You wanted to get back into city planning and all.*

RAISER: After UVA (University of Virginia), I got my master's degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo in American Studies in the history of why Buffalo declined because the leadership was crummy. Then, I had started two years previously to do courses at George Washington University to get a doctorate. I wanted to be Dr. Raiser. I had done all the exams and all the courses, and was just about to start my dissertation when this Chief of Protocol job came along.

*Q: Before being ready for the offer of chief of protocol, did you talk to Selma Roosevelt?*

RAISER: I didn't know her then. I didn't talk to any of the former chiefs of protocol because I didn't know them. Of course, I called Pat Moynihan. He said immediately, "Moll, that is the ultimate political job. You are the ultimate politician." So he said, "Of course, you have to take it."

*Q: Well, how did your hearing go? Any problems with the hearings?*

RAISER: No. It took about eight minutes. They were desperately trying to think of something to ask me. Pat introduced me, and then my congressman from western New

York when I was living up there, John LaFalce, introduced me and, basically, what were they going to say? There was nothing they could say. They couldn't attack me in any way, shape, or form.

*Q: Prior to the hearings and all, were you going through any sets of briefings at the State Department?*

RAISER: Before I was confirmed, I would go into the Protocol office and stand in the background and watch what was going on. I went out to Andrews Air Force Base when King Hussein came in and all the ambassadors were lined up, I went to a couple of events at the White House just to see what happened and stayed in the background. I can't remember what the events were right now. (This is a job, by the way, that half of my friends could do.) There were no formal briefings, although there was a practice session for the hearings.

*Q: Actually, you had gotten a lot of training from the political side, the fund-raising and other things.*

RAISER: When people ask me why was I chosen, I generally say, "I don't know. You'll have to ask the President." But I am assuming it's because I had so much experience with people. There was one story showing you how teaching comes into it. Our first APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting was in Seattle. We had eleven or twelve heads of state. I had been sworn in in September and so it was our first big event. I had to line the leaders up. We had China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, Brunei and Thailand eleven heads of state. We asked everybody to leave the room except for them and then lined them up. I was told, by the way, the correct line-up by the staff. The President was right in the middle, and I said, "If you'll just stand there quietly for a minute, we'll quiet the crowd down." Then one of them said, "What does it look like upstairs?" I explained the set up and what they should do. Then they stood there quietly. Do you know how long two minutes is if you've got eleven heads of state standing there absolutely quietly, saying nothing? The President looks to the left and to the right and says, "Well, gentlemen, can you tell that Molly Raiser was once a teacher?" One leader said, "At least we don't have to have a rope to walk with." I had taught, worked for Pat Moynihan and done all kinds of civic and political work. All that helped with the job.

*Q: What was your impression of the protocol office both when you were getting briefed and then when you took over?*

RAISER: They are wonderful people, and they are true professionals. Many have spent all of their professional lives in Protocol. I enjoyed each of the civil and foreign service protocol officers. I said to them when I left after four years, I felt as if, a year after the death of my husband and son, God said, "Now Molly, I am going to give you a real gift, and He gave me you." I really felt that way. They were just extraordinary people, worthy of every respect.



*Q: Well, you had your professionals but you say there were ten political appointees.*

RAISER: There were eight or 10.

*Q: Because you are moving out of a Bush or Republican administration, how did that fit in?*

RAISER: The professional staff is used to these changes. We political appointees come and go; they stay and serve. I often thought those Service people must look askance at all of us the turn-overs. The chief and the deputy chief and the assistant chief for ceremonials, and the assistant chief for visits are political. Then, there are some lower level entry positions for younger people that are political also. That goes through the White House personnel office.

*Q: Do you think this was sort of a training ground for some people?*

RAISER: Of all the people that I came in with, I think outside of me, only one other person has left. No. It's not a training position because people love this work. They like to stay.

*Q: What are the duties of protocol, not just chief of protocol?*

RAISER: All protocol officers from the chief down represent this country at the highest levels—a great honor and responsibility. I consider protocol to be the framework by which international relations are conducted. It is a set of rules. Instead of making it more complicated and more difficult, it makes it easier. At the Congress of Vienna in 1815 a formal international “Protocol on Protocol” was signed. Previously there had been many occasions when people were actually killed over whose coach goes first in a parade.

*Q: Oh sure, the French and the Scots.*

RAISER: They were always fighting. Ambassadors were arrested and wars were threatened, so leaders realized they'd have to have an international treaty and they negotiated one. Then it came time for them to go into the room to sign it. This is an apocryphal, wonderful Pat Moynihan story. They couldn't decide who would go first because they hadn't signed the treaty yet, so they cut 25 doors into the room and they all came in at the same time. That story is an exaggerated example of the kind of ludicrous measures which people used to take. Now there are rules and a head of state is treated the same way whether it's the head of Ghana or the Queen of England when he or she comes to the United States. The President of the United States is treated the same way when he goes abroad. We don't have to worry about this, in other words. We know exactly what's going to happen along that line. It is very liberating.

*Q: Oh, it is. Were there other responsibilities, too?*

RAISER: Yes. We get all the visits. We plan the visit for every head of state or government who comes, and there is a protocol officer or two assigned to the visitor. We run Blair House, the President's guest house. We are the first offense or defense for the ambassadors. If they have any problems, they will call me up.

*Q: Whose ambassadors are you are talking about?*

RAISER: I am talking about foreign ambassadors to this country. We take care of their accreditation at presentations of credentials at the White House. We also have a ceremonial section. We do all the swearings in of our ambassadors going abroad.

We did many other ceremonial and political events. We managed state luncheons when the Vice President would hold them. We helped with all the major meetings like the Gore-Chernomyrdin and the Gore-Mloeki conferences, which were held basically in the State Department when in the country. We were all very involved with the Middle Eastern meetings, whether they were in Blair House or in the White House or in the State Department. We were key in the Miami Summit of Latin American heads of state and the Seattle APEC meeting.

As new people came into the Administration we had to let them know that protocol is very important. It got to be so that people would actually like to have us there. They would invite us to the planning meetings and say, "Okay, this is what we want to do, how can we do this?" Otherwise, you get to an event and no one would know what to do. They would be standing around. People in the State Department and the White House learned that it is really good to have protocol there, especially since leaders involved got to know us and trust us. King Hussein, Mubarak, Rabin, Peres, Yeltsin, Chirac and some of the other leaders got to know me and I them.

I also helped with the President's visits abroad. I, as "Ambassador Raiser," would lead the delegation of about ten or twelve on what we would call the site survey visit. I have to say these advance trips were one of the most interesting things for me as a quasi-historian. Further, the Protocol office has the lead in cases of diplomatic immunity; it also takes care of the accreditation of about 110,000 diplomats and/or consular corps men and women.

*Q: I've got a number of things I'd like to talk about. Let's just take the last thing, presidential visits abroad. Security people and presidential aides often pose a problem. They can be very disruptive. Not just work-wise but they often have a lack of understanding that they are dealing with a foreign power. The only word to describe it is arrogance. I've just been reading a memoir of an ambassador who died in the 1960s. He was ambassador to about seven or eight places, going way back. He mentions this problem in his book. Could you talk about it?*

RAISER: We, of course, tried to avoid that. I like to think that we set a different tone. I don't know how the previous Chiefs of Protocol or the advance people behaved, but we

were extremely careful about that. There was one advance meeting in Naples, Italy, and I thought that the lead advance had been just obnoxious. Basically, he said to the Italians, "Look, this is what we want to do." The Italians would say, "Well, you know, we have eight other heads of state." Our advance person tried to run rough shod. I took him aside afterwards, and I said, "I don't like this. I had to apologize to the Italians for your behavior. If you want to continue to be a lead advance, perhaps you should be less pushy." The fact that I am very rarely dead serious makes an impression on people. I made an impression upon him and also upon the Italians because I actually apologized to them for his behavior.

When we did the advance for Belgium, the Belgians said to us - and this was our first advance and the President's first trip abroad - that our behavior was so unlike the other advance teams that have come in under different presidents. I said, "Better or worse?" She said, "Much better!" I said, "Thank you." I feel very strongly, and I remember at one point Pamela Harriman gave a speech to the advance team, which I didn't think was necessary, but I'm glad she did. She backed me up. She said, "Never forget, you are in a foreign country. You are in their country." I was very aware of that. I think we did okay on that. I must say that, once you get there with the President, it's such an absolute hectic time that it may be that some people will run over their counterparts. But we always tried to act in a seemly fashion

The security people around the President were superb. The Secret Service, as far as I am concerned, was the best organization I came in contact with. Basically, what they say goes. When you are doing the planning in advance, if they would say, "No," that was it. There was no arguing. They would also say, on the other hand, "We could do this." When they were with the President, if they said, "Let's get him out of here," they would put him in the car. We were in Minsk, Belarus. We'd driven all the way in from the airport. He had gone in to visit the president or prime minister of Belarus. On his way out, there was a huge crowd, and they were clapping and cheering, and the President, of course, waded right into it. Then, the crowd started to move in, not in a menacing manner, but the Secret Service agents got nervous and almost lifted him up and put him in the car. He said, "Wait a minute." They said, "Sorry, we don't like you surrounded by crowds like that." What they say goes.

Another time we were in Seattle, and a president of a country which shall remain nameless was coming and the Secret Service came up to me and said, "Now, you know, his secret service is really not well known and has not traveled a lot, and they may be a bit rough." I looked at this new Secret Service agent, and I said, "Well, you are going to protect me, right?" He smiled and said, "We'll try, but it would be better if you could handle it yourself so that we don't have it in the paper that the Secret Service was fighting this country's secret service." So, the president of this country arrived with two or three guards, and we were up in the elevator. I was to walk the president in. He spoke some English, so I was talking with him. All of a sudden as we got off the elevator, the lead guard lifted me up and literally almost threw me against the wall. I could see our Secret Service begin to stiffen, and I calmly went up to this guy and slammed my elbow right

into his stomach. He grunted and stepped back, and I said, "Thank you," and walked on with the president. Of course, for the whole trip, I was Molly "The Elbow" Raiser, given my Italian background. That's the only time something like that happened. Interestingly enough, the president of the country did nothing. He didn't look at the guard and say, "That's unacceptable behavior." He has since come back, and the guards are more professional.

When planning the trips abroad, we had to go around and visit every site that might be included. We, of course, would see eighteen sites and the President would end up seeing two. I often said to him that he ought to come on the advance trips because he is so curious about things. The most interesting one - well, I can't say the best one because they were all good - was going to Sarajevo. I thought I had a concept of loss until I went to a war zone where they lose their husbands and sons but they have no civic community, no friends, no hot water, no food, no medicine, nothing. They have nothing. That was stunning.

Then there was the D-Day advance trip. We were taken around in helicopters by generals giving us the history of the different beaches and the battles. That was unbelievable. It was a beautiful spring day. As I say, for a quasi-historian, that was wonderful. Then, we went to England where the armada left from Portsmouth. The trip itself was also splendid.

*Q: Let's start by Sarajevo, this was certainly after the war in Bosnia ended but still a very tense time.*

RAISER: We were fired on, I think.

*Q: How did this work? This was not an ordinary type of thing to go into.*

RAISER: It was one of the few times we did not fly commercial. We were taken in an army C-something or other, one of those big transport planes. There were about eight of us in there. We arrived and were taken to the embassy. Basically, they were set up very poorly. Then we went to a Holiday Inn to spend the night. Half of the hotel had been bombed away. Quite an experience! Then, we drove around and saw the city. As I say, I was stunned. I had obviously never been in a war zone. Then, of course, the Secret Service said, "No, we can't do this right now." Then, they went back and did it later when I was no longer Chief of Protocol. No, I'm sorry, I was Chief of Protocol when he went back. He went on a trip but he did not go into Sarajevo. He went to an army camp, Tuzla.

I must say another thing that interests me about these trips is the communications system. They set up their own independent communications systems. So at the Hungarian Camp, which was muddy and horrible, and while he was being briefed by generals about what was going on, I went to the back of the tent and there was no one using the phones. You could literally pick up the phone, and an operator would say, "Yes ma'am?" I could say, please get me ----- . Within five seconds I could be talking to one of my best friends

in Buffalo, New York. They do that wherever they go. It's a miracle as far as I'm concerned.

*Q: Was there any problem with the cooperation of the military?*

RAISER: No. Again, I have much higher appreciation for the military than I did when I went in. The military, like the Secret Service, did do whatever it could as long as it didn't endanger the President's life. Of course, it allowed the President to be there. They wanted him to come and see what was going on, so they went out of their way to be as accommodating as they could. When asked to put up a base in Hungary within two weeks there were barracks, dining facilities, an intensive care hospital, communications center - all in what had originally been a muddy field. And no whining about it!

*Q: I would image that the President would almost have felt under a certain amount of pressure to do this because he had not been in the military service, which had been a political issue. To go to Bosnia, in a way, was winning his stripes. Did you feel, as you were going on this advance thing, that, just personally or from people in the White House, "He really has to go here," or something like that?*

RAISER: We felt from the beginning that he had to go there. I thought he had to go there simply because he was so involved and should see in person the situation. I think if we'd bombed earlier, this perhaps would not have gotten as bad as it has gotten. Yes. Everyone felt very strongly that he should go, except once we got to Sarajevo we realized that it was still too dangerous, especially after our plane was fired on. It had nothing to do with "earning his stripes."

*Q: Does anybody know who fired on it?*

RAISER: It was in *The New York Times* that we had been fired on. We were sitting there and all of a sudden three or four young soldiers who were in this enormous plane jumped up on the seats. We looked around. Some of us were sitting in the floor playing cards. We asked, "What happened," and they said, "We were just fired upon." I said, "How did you know?" One said, "Because we saw tracers." I guess when a missile starts to come up, the plane's radar can see it coming and puts out something hot so that the missile heads towards that instead of towards the airplane. I said, "That will be an interesting story to tell my grandchildren." We don't know exactly who fired the missile.

*Q: How about any other advance trips?*

RAISER: All the ones to Russia were great as well as the one to the Philippines. I loved the one to Japan. Advance trips are the best part of the job.

*Q: How about the ones to Russia during this time? Were there any difficulties with the Russian authorities.*

RAISER: No. We always stayed at the Radisson. We would go and meet with their chief of protocol, Mr. Shevchenko, who is still there. He is the President's Chief of Protocol. After the first one or two trips, it became actually rote. We knew what we were going to do, because we had been to the places before. I think he went to Russia four or five times minimally while I was Chief of Protocol. We would often have a reception at Spaso House, which is the ambassador's residence. We would try and have interesting people who are involved in culture or in politics, often including people from rival parties, dissident parties. Anyway, when we went to Russia, there were certain things that we would do every time. As a matter of fact on all trips there were things we always tried to include: a speech to the national legislature, a radio/T.V. address to the people, meeting political leaders, some sightseeing and a speech at a university.

*Q: I know you have to go now, so we'll end here. We arrived at the point where you are. You have become chief of protocol. We have talked about presidential visits abroad and about going to Sarajevo. We talked about the Russian visits. I would like to talk about arranging visits abroad, particularly France and Italy, which have their own protocol problems and all that. Then, we'll pick up other visits to Blair House, ambassadors needing help in accreditation and swearing ins, and helping with meetings in the Middle East. We had also not only the President but the Vice President and also the Asia-Pacific APEC and other things of this nature. There's quite a bit to talk about.*

\*\*\*

*Today is Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 1998. Molly, why don't we keep talking about the normal presidential of state type visits?*

RAISER: May I make a comment? I read in the paper today that Lew Merletti is leaving the Secret Service to be security with a football team. I think it is a great loss. I wanted to say how much I thought of Lew Merletti when he was the President's body man. I feel very strongly that the Secret Service is, was with me, the best organization. I may have said this already.

*Q: No, no. I think you are right.*

RAISER: He was absolutely right in fighting to keep things confidential. I hope the Congress passes the bill. The other thing I would like to talk about today a little bit is the September 23, 1993 story about the first peace signing and the things that went on behind the scenes because that would be interesting.

*Q: Okay, why don't we start with that and then we'll come back to some of the other things.*

RAISER: All right. That's been on my mind, too, because of the latest Prime Minister, Mr. Netanyahu.

*Q: We are talking about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Could you explain some of the background to the September 23, 1993, business?*

RAISER: Well, I had just come into office. It was my first or second day. I was thrown right into this. This was going to be *the* time that they signed a very general peace accord. It was going to be on the South Lawn. There were hundreds of people there. Just to give you some asides, the day before when we were setting up the microphone and chairs for it, the producer of the event, Josh King, was discussing what would happen. I happened to walk across the stage right past the microphone. All of a sudden Josh yelled from the lawn, "Molly, go back and stand in front of the microphone." I did. The microphone was above my head, and he said, "How tall are you?" I said, "5'4, how tall is Mr. Arafat?" "He's 5'2," so Josh immediately got the speaking dais with a pull out step. It reminded us that, if I hadn't been walking across there and we hadn't realized how short Mr. Arafat was and, of course, we forgot how tall President Clinton is, we would have had another Queen Elizabeth.

*Q: I was just going to say, there is the talking hat. You might explain what we are talking about.*

RAISER: All right. Queen Elizabeth came to the White House under George Bush or Ronald Reagan. She is also very short. She is 5'1" or 5'2," and they were both rather tall. She got up to give her speech, and you couldn't see her. All you could see was the top of her hat because the platform was so tall. What we did was get a dais with a step. From then on, almost every single time a foreign head of state would arrive and give a speech after the President, he would pull out the step with his toe. Almost to a man they would stand on them even though not many people are 5'3." Most of them are 5'7" or 5'8" or 5'9." No matter how far down you lower the microphone, you are still behind the platform. We carried that dais around with us. It was like the cars that went on the big transport planes whenever we traveled.

*Q: Did you put in your books how tall are heads of state and all that?*

RAISER: No, but we could tell by pictures. I mean, President Frei of Chile is maybe 5'5." It just became something that we did automatically. The president automatically pulled that step out. Even with the step out, very few were as tall as the President. Mr. Chirac and Mr. Kohl are quite tall, and they would just ignore the step. We decided that, generally, we would do that. It is one of those stupid little things that you think about later that you have to do.

*Q: We have been spoiled in that, certainly, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and William Clinton are all tall men. That's kind of set the standard, and it's easy to let things slip.*

RAISER: Yes, so we were particularly careful. One of the silly things the President was concerned about was the form of greeting. As you know in the Middle East, the form of greeting, not necessarily intimacy, was to be kissed. Men kissed men on both cheeks.

With us Italians, it's family and very close friends. There was a rather humorous fear that Mr. Arafat might want to try and kiss the President on his cheeks, so they were practicing. Tony Lake and somebody else were showing the President the straight arm greeting where you shake hands with a straight arm and place the left hand on Mr. Arafat's shoulder so that he cannot get close enough to give you a kiss. I always pictured them standing around the Oval Office practicing this.

Anyway, the day of the ceremony arrived. It was my first day of greeting, and we did it all correctly. We took them into the Blue Room. We had with us President Bush, President Carter, President Clinton and Mrs. Clinton, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Tony Lake, Vice President Gore and Tipper, and that's about it. There were the foreign ministers of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. No one was talking to anybody. There was still so little trust that Rabin would not speak with Arafat. We had to arrange it so that President Jimmy Carter would go and speak to Mr. Rabin while President Bush would go and speak to Chairman Arafat, and vice versa. I would go up and say, "Okay, change." It wasn't quite that obvious but it was like a square dance, trying to arrange it so that everybody was as relaxed as possible.

*Q: Did you greet the former presidents, or did you just sidle up to them?*

RAISER: Basically, I just sidled up and said, "Okay, let's move on here and go." They took it because they understood what we were trying to do.

*Q: Oh, absolutely. Did you have help as you did this? You don't burst full blown onto the protocol stage. There must have been somebody whispering in your ear, too.*

RAISER: Well, for the line up of the protocol, who goes first, who gets what in line, I had someone saying, "Okay, this is the way we do it." But basically, it's being at a board meeting where you might have different factions, or being in a business where you have different factions, or being at a dinner party. It is just making people comfortable and moving around and not putting up with this kind of standoffishness.

*Q: What is the theory when you get into an international scene? I might add for historical record, this is really the first time these people have been, Palestinians and Israelis, have been meeting secretly. But this is really the first time for a real public signing of something and showing an accord and a willingness to move ahead. They had their own people at home watching with an eagle eye, not necessarily with friendliness. What was the theory? Just sort of trying to get them to appear to be and in reality to sort of communicate with each other?*

RAISER: Yes. I think so. Mr. Rabin, as did King Hussein, really wanted his legacy to be peace in the Middle East. He did, I think, a great service. He deserved that Nobel Prize. That day, he didn't even want to shake hands with Mr. Arafat. It was close. We thought he might not do it even with the President standing there asking him to do it because he just felt so strongly. On the other hand, he did do it. I thought that took great courage and



showed grace. I think with Hussein, it's the same thing now that he is so very sick. He really wants peace to be his legacy and, of course, it was between Israel and Jordan. King Hussein and Mr. Rabin learned to trust each other. The same cannot be said of King Hussein and Mr. Netanyahu. I think King Hussein feels that Mr. Netanyahu doesn't particularly want peace. He'd just as soon take that army and march right to the Jordanian border, right over the West Bank. This is speaking from what I think he feels not of him. Anyway, on that day, it was a kind of trial by fire.

*Q: Had the President said he wanted it beforehand, or that he was trying to do this or that?*

RAISER: I had just come on board so I think that both needed him or wanted him to be involved as a security for the peace. If Rabin and Arafat have the backing of the United States, it would look better.

*Q: How did the Secret Service work in this thing because this was a pretty enclosed group, wasn't it?*

RAISER: Yes. Whenever the Israelis came, they would have their own guards and, of course, Arafat would have his own guard. We had an instance where Arafat wanted to carry his own gun in and we just said, "No." The Secret Service would work with their opposites. Mr. Mubarak was probably more heavily covered than the Israelis when they came in because of the threat of the extremists even in Washington. They worked it out with their counterparts so you would see standing along the side the Israeli people and the Palestinian people and our people. They worked that out together. I can't tell you how they did it.

*Q: Anyway, the security people on both sides are essentially working on the same side of the street in this sort of thing.*

RAISER: Sure. When you are in the White House, you go along with what the White House Secret Service says. They have very good rapport with their opposites. The only time we had a problem was when President Clinton went to Jordan. Hospitality is very important to the Arabs. It is one of the customs in the Arab countries that the king insist on coming to pick up the President in his Mercedes and drive him into town. The Secret Service said, "No." "He has to travel in his armored car." I remember I was somewhere at the time, maybe on Nantucket vacationing. I got a phone call from the chief of protocol of Jordan, saying, "Hey, we may have to call this trip off because they are insisting that the king cannot pick up the President in his own car." So there was a lot of brouhaha back and forth, and we arrived at a solution. I think it involved changing license plates so that the Jordanian license plate went on the President's car or some such thing so that everyone could save face. Then, the king could drive in some car that was okayed by the Secret Service. That's what we might call a silly little thing but it was an insult to the king if they didn't let him drive. Given the sensibilities of the players in the Middle East, insulting the King of Jordan would not have been in anyone's self-interest.

*Q: It sounds like the Secret Service has gotten much more refined than it used to be. Back quite a ways, I have heard a lot of stories of them barging in and having no regard for local sensitivities. In the long run, they created annoyance, particularly in official circles, and these were supposed to be friendly visits. Maybe the public didn't see it. It didn't help relations with officials. I take it that everybody has learned a lesson.*

RAISER: Yes. As I repeat, the Secret Service agents are real Boy Scouts. They go about their jobs, and if there is something they don't like, they will say it but they'll say it quietly. Basically, that's it. If we are in a foreign country, they will work it out with their foreign counterparts. A lot of times, the country to which we are going doesn't like it. That's just tough. The French may not like it, or the Italians may not like having all these security people around because they consider it an insult, as if an Italian would shoot the President. But that's just the way it is. I think people have learned that if you want the President to come to your country, this is one of the factors you have to put up with.

*Q: Now, let's talk about some state visits. How about with France? I would think the French are strong on protocol. For one thing, do you switch alphabets or do we always use the English alphabet?*

RAISER: We use English. Generally in country line-ups, it's done by the first letter of the country name in English. However, if necessary, accommodations can be made. For instance, if you have to line up Israel and Jordan, Israel would come first. However, if you do Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, then Jordan comes first. There are some things that you can play with if you want to do lining up different ways.

*Q: Did you find dealing with the French on visits difficult?*

RAISER: No. My French counterpart, is pretty savvy. He has been an ambassador in other countries. He knew what the rules were just as well as I did. We did have a state dinner when Mitterrand was president but I never dealt with him when we went to France after the D-Day. Jacques Chirac is wonderful. He lived and worked in the United States. He's very American with a great sense of humor. No, I never had any trouble with the French. We never had much trouble with anyone except the Japanese, because of their extreme caution with the Emperor. I think last time we may have talked about the Japanese emperor coming and how conscious the advance people were.

*Q: No. I don't recall this.*

RAISER: Okay. They started this trip a year ahead of time. It was our first state visit. They were concerned, for instance, with white tie and medals. I said, "Fine, but the President doesn't have any medals." Well, the emperor had a lot of medals. I said, "Fine, then the emperor should wear his medals." "Oh, no, that will not look good. The emperor would not want to be wearing medals if the President doesn't wear medals but the emperor always wears medals," they said. I said, "I have no solution for this. Either he

wears his medals and looks different from the President, or he doesn't wear his medals." He wore his medals, of course. This must have been an hour's discussion, and they kept coming back to it and back to it. The same with how far it was and how far the emperor had to walk and how many steps. They would actually walk the distances. I thought this emperor must be - I didn't know what to think. He arrived and couldn't have been more pleasant. He never thought about "how many steps am I taking?" His wife was gently amusing. It's often the people who are planning the visits who are more concerned than the people who finally get here.

*Q: The Japanese court is renowned for trying to make their emperor or anyone else a prisoner of their thing. I think the old Austro-Hungarian court of Franz Joseph was of the same accord. They seized power almost. I will say that I've talked to people who've dealt with Nixon. The Nixon White House wanted to know how steps and how many turns and, I mean, it was very carefully spelled out, which Nixon seemed to go along with, which seemed to indicate a certain amount of insecurity or something.*

RAISER: Well, on our advance trips, we took a photographer along. He took pictures of every single room, of what the scene was going to be like. A couple of times he'd walk through with a video camera if it was very complicated. Now, I am almost sure that President Clinton did not sit and look at all these pictures, or maybe he did at the last minute. There was always someone there to say, "All right, you are going to go right in, you are going to shake hands with so and so, and we all kind of rolled with it. But, we were prepared. If he said, "I want to see what the room's going to look like tonight, the hallway and the entrance," we were ready. There are all these advance people who lead you. They never have to do this by themselves.

*Q: Who in the White House or abroad, is at the President's ear saying, "Of course, you know Mr. or Mrs. So and So," to try to let the President know who he is talking to?*

RAISER: There are several people. There is his personal assistant who is Andrew Friendly. He moved on; then it was Steven Gooden, and he moved on. I don't know who it is now. I know but I can't think of the name right now. He is in the background. It's often the lead advance person for the site, or it's me. Depending on if I am doing other things, the lead advance can then come and say, "This is a foreign minister." But usually, I did that kind of thing.

*Q: Obviously, the President would know the main characters because he'd met them over a period of time. There must be all sorts of other people who at different times have come up. Somebody should know who this is, and...*

RAISER: They should, but often not. Often people would come up, and I would just step back, and he would know immediately that I hadn't the faintest idea who this was. He's very good. He would just put his hand out and say, "How are you?" Generally, they would introduce themselves, by the way. Even foreign ministers would do that. These are all sophisticated people. They know that the President can't remember every single name.

*Q: I think and I noticed within the Foreign Service context, “Oui, oui,” old friends and all, they often did, and I make a point of announcing my name.*

RAISER: I still do that to people.

*Q: It’s because you meet so many people, and you realize rather than play games or something like that, it’s better to announce your name. I get a little bit miffed when somebody doesn’t do this.*

RAISER: Well, there’s nothing worse than someone coming up and saying, “You don’t remember me, do you?” I always say, “No,” because I think it’s so rude.

*Q: What about with the Italians? The Italians go in for quite a bit of protocol.*

RAISER: The Italians are wonderful. They don’t have just one chief of protocol. They have five. I think it is so typical. They have one for the president, one for the prime minister, one for the foreign ministry, and every city has one, too. If you are in Rome, for instance, you are dealing with the presidential one, the foreign ministry’s one, and the Roman chief of protocol. They had so many at one point because they were all meeting together because the President was going to be in Naples and Rome, and one of them was walking towards me. I was standing with Will Itoh who was executive secretary of the National Security Council at the time. I said, “Which one is this?” He said, “I think it is Rome but let’s just play it by ear.” They are wonderful. They roll with the flow. There’s none of this Asian “we have to know how many steps” they are taking.

*Q: Were you involved in any trips to the Orient?*

RAISER: We went to Thailand. Will Ito was then the ambassador there who’d been with the National Security Council. He knew how to advance trips because he’d done that for three or four years when he was at the White House. Basically, we didn’t have to worry about that one. He knew what to do and who the players were and how we would want this done.

*Q: They have a rather formal court.*

RAISER: It’s a very formal court. We were only there for one day, and we didn’t spend the night. It was for a state dinner, which was magical. Absolutely, I felt like I was in the *King and I*, with the dancing afterwards. For a state dinner, you line people up in order. The king and the queen and President and Mrs. Clinton stand in line, and they go through and someone announces them. That’s it. Then, someone would announce the Thais as they came through. It’s all pretty rote. I don’t want to sound like, “Oh, God, another state dinner,” but after a while you know exactly what to expect, and you know exactly what to do, which I suppose is one of the nice things about protocol. Everyone knows what’s expected.

*Q: Talking about state dinners, The Washington Post usually publishes a guest list when there's a state dinner. I find myself sometimes reading the damned things.*

RAISER: I do all the time.

*Q: There are the usual characters who have to be there because of their ties to the country but there are obviously what we'd call "fat cats" or "glamor" types or something like that. Who decides this?*

RAISER: The Social Office runs the state dinners. The State Dining Room is really rather small. You can seat, at best, 120 people. If you take the people who have to be there, as you say, the President, the Vice President, the head of state - you have to double all these, of course, for spouses - the foreign ministers, the secretary of state, the assistant secretary for the area, the chief of protocol (me), the ambassador of both sides, then the head of the National Security Council, so you've got fifteen or sixteen people that have to come. Then you have the foreign delegation, which the Social Office purposely keeps down to 14 to 16 people, which infuriates a lot of foreign countries. When we go, of course, we get a lot of people in and reciprocity is supposed to be all, the difference being that other countries have enormous halls that can hold that number of people. Then you have to have, of course, five or six senators and congressmen. Double that and that's twenty. Then you try and get people who are doing business in the area. The lists come from the State Department, the Commerce Department, and maybe other departments. The State Department always presents a list of about 100 names. You have to have some academics and probably a Supreme Court justice. There are certain people that you have to have. Then you get up to 100 people that you have to have. Then you can play around with ten other couples. I think what people don't understand is that ten other couples from around the country is not very many people. It takes a lot of state dinners to cover all your supporters. Maybe one from Buffalo once a year, a couple from the California Silicon Valley, and I assume that the Social Office must have a list of very important people the President and Hillary would want included. I am not casting dispersions. You have to do that. You have to thank people who helped you. What people don't understand is how small these dinners are, very small.

*Q: Also I was noticing that there is usually a movie star or two.*

RAISER: You have to have a movie star or two.

*Q: You need a little glitz.*

RAISER: You have to have a little glitz, right.

*Q: Who makes up that list? Do you have a glitz list?*

RAISER: I don't know. I know the final list goes to Hillary. Maybe it's just someone they decide they'd like to have. For the Ireland dinner, obviously, we had Paul Newman and people with some kind of Irish background or interest. All the Irish American leaders and all the Irish American politicians are possibilities.

*Q: Speaking of Ireland, we'll move over to Britain. We are sort of jumping around but while you were there, Tony Blair came in. Did you see a difference between the Blair and the Major connection?*

RAISER: No. I got to know John Major very well and loved him. He had a lovely, quiet sense of humor. I have some wonderful pictures of us laughing about things. Tony Blair, I had met before he became prime minister. I had sat next to him at dinner the first time there was a dinner in London. I did so again when he came to the British embassy once. He was very cocky, very warm, and very normal. I think he probably still is. When he got to be prime minister, the first time I saw him, I immediately said to him, "Mr. Prime Minister." He said, "Molly, it's Tony." I didn't see any difference, certainly not in protocol. We never had the queen, so I don't know what royal protocol was like in England.

*Q: Were there any difficult areas in the state protocol functions?*

RAISER: I really can't think of any. It is all so rote. They are all the same no matter what country you go to. Some, obviously, are a little more special. In Thailand, sitting out with the stars and having the Thais dancing as after-dinner entertainment was special. In Ukraine, Mr. Kutchma had brought in very musically talented children. These kids played the piano and violin, and it was incredible. They were 12, 13, or 14 years old, and they entertained us for an hour. We do ask the head of state what he would like. When Havel came, there was a certain type of music he liked, which escapes me now. So we got someone who would do that.

*Q: As far as entertainment goes, does your office have anything to do with that?*

RAISER: We have nothing to do except to manage it when it's on. We always work closely with the Social Office, obviously. The ladies at the Social Office and protocol people work together on it. The protocol people basically came with the delegation. They manage the delegation and the heads of state and the government until they arrive at the White House. Once they arrive at the White House, then it was basically the White House function.

*Q: You have your state visits and they go through and, as you say, it is quite by rote. I mean the state banquets and all that. As part of this, sometime world leaders come for maybe a week or ten days, and they travel around. Of course, this is particularly important for new leaders on the scene who don't understand the United States. Did you get involved in these trips?*

RAISER: It used to be that the chief of protocol would travel around the country, but not any more. Number one, it is much too expensive. Number two, we have so many visits that if the chief of protocol went with every visitor around the country, he or she would miss the next visit. We often had two or three visits a week. After Washington the leaders would go on, if it was from the Scandinavian countries, to St. Paul, Minnesota, or to Wisconsin. We just couldn't go with them. Sometimes they would come first and stop in Houston or California. The state part wouldn't really start until they landed at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington. Even if they were coming on a non-state visit, we only took care of them in Washington.

*Q: I would think that say if the president of Ecuador arrives in Houston or something, the people in Houston would be calling up and saying, "What the hell do we do?"*

RAISER: They do, especially if there's to be a dinner or luncheon. Protocol is involved once you have to start to seat people or you are lining people up for a greeting. I'm not sure if the president of Ecuador arriving in Houston would really know, aside from the governors and the senators and the mayor, maybe. Oh, yes, we got calls all the time, saying, "Help." They would send the list and what these people were, and the people who did that in the protocol office would do it for them.

*Q: Did you have a long-term staff in the protocol office, you know, people who had been dealing with protocol matters for a long time?*

RAISER: Some of my staff had been there for 40 years.

*Q: Of course, that's an invaluable resource.*

RAISER: We come and go but they stay, sixty people. I think eight or nine or ten of which are political. None of the Foreign or Civil Service people leave because it is the best place to work. I just want to make a comment on that. I often felt that when we were going out to do greets that the DAS should be there or the desk officer should be there. Protocol are the people who got to know the visitors. The protocol officers, not just me, who would travel with them around Washington, get to know the leaders. They could sit and talk with the wives. I felt badly sometime that the desk officer who had worked so hard for these visits and had come up with all the policy and all the talking points for the Secretary of State or whomever, really didn't get to do all the wonderful things that we did. Now, I, as chief of protocol, had a very high security rating. Everyone in the protocol office, by the way, has to have a security rating, and he or she could read whatever the desk officer wrote for Madeleine or for Chris. In addition to that intellectual policy input, we also had the personal input. The desk officers never got that. I often wondered if there was a little jealousy on their part. There's nothing that you can do about it, and I felt badly about it but that's just the way it was.

*Q: Well, one of the things I've heard in talking to people who were desk officers at the time was there didn't seem to be any feedback from protocol to the desks. You have*

*somebody, say a president or prime minister or what have you of the Ukraine, and he goes on a visit around. What a person's reactions are is really important for people who are dealing with policy. It's not really for the president or the secretary of state but for a feedback so that the ambassador back in the country or the desk officer will know that so and so was kind of offended by this or was really terribly interested in that, or what have you. Now, was there much feedback here?*

RAISER: I can only speak personally. If I felt there was something that needed to be said, because of conversations I had, I would always call the ambassador or the assistant secretary and say it. There could be a debriefing—such a wonderful term—by protocol officers who really spent more time than I did with the delegation. We saw desk officers coming in and out so I'm sure there could have been feedback if they been asked. Don't forget, a lot of times when the leaders alone with their own delegation, they speak their own language, so a lot of it we wouldn't pick up anyway. Also they wouldn't talk about a lot of things because they would come and go.

*Q: Sometimes there are people asking, "What is this? I don't understand this. Please explain." A good solid leader would pump whoever is the escort officer. Would the escort officer usually be somebody from your office?*

RAISER: Always. With a large delegation we'd have three or four escort officers. We'd have one with the wife, sometimes a driver would be brought also, then Blair House people, and then one or two people who travel all the time in the lead car of the motorcade.

*Q: If they had a young daughter or young son, did you ever call on the families of the protocol people to maybe go along to match up the same age or something like that?*

RAISER: When Mandela came, he brought his daughter who was in her mid-twenties, I guess. We did put a young female officer with her. She did all the traveling with the Mandelas. She and Mandela's daughter, they loved each other. They used to write to each other after the Mandelas left. So occasionally, you can do a great match up. Don't forget, many of the political officers are in their twenties. Of course, some are a lot older because they never leave protocol.

*Q: I would imagine that there would tend to be a certain divide after a while in that the long timers would more or less stay in place in Washington. The traveling gets a little bit long after a while and so you'd have to call on the exuberance of younger people to go out and do this.*

RAISER: Yes. I just wanted to say that very few ever brought their little children. One did cause a brouhaha because the child was about 13 and they insisted that she go to the state dinner. We couldn't talk them out of it. As a matter of fact it was one of the Latin American countries because I brought my daughter who speaks Spanish. The White



House said, "Oh, thank God," because my daughter was then in her late 20s and so she kind of took his girl and talked with her.

*Q: Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter used to take Amy along, and I've heard horrible stories about this.*

RAISER: It's not right.

*Q: It sounded cute and all that but it really got a lot of backs up.*

RAISER: It's not cute. I think it's one thing to bring them and have one of your staff look after them. Chelsea never went to any state dinner abroad. One of Hillary's staff would take care of her. They'd go to the ballet, they'd go to the art galleries but she was not up front and center. I think that when heads of state did bring them, it was not a big deal except for this one issue.

*Q: Were there any problems of them traveling around and all of a sudden you get a frantic telephone call at 3:00 a.m. saying, "What am I going to do? We're here in El Paso and..."*

RAISER: We didn't travel with them. Oh, you mean from the local people?

*Q: I mean from your local people.*

RAISER: We may have but April Quice on our staff, who has been there for 15 years, takes care of all that. I never got any phone calls like that.

*Q: What did you find occupied most of your time?*

RAISER: Well, it's hard to say. The ambassadors and planning trips, because the visitors who came here were basically handled by the office. I would be there to do the greet and be there if they went to the White House to do the greet there. As far as traveling around is concerned or when they were at Blair House, I had very little to do with that unless it was felt I was needed.

*Q: How did things work with Congress? Congressman, both Senators and Representatives, are sort of little gods unto themselves sometimes. They have their own constituencies and sometimes want to, if possible, nail a foreign leader of some kind to make their points known. Was this a problem for you?*

RAISER: When Mr. Gingrich first came in, he was really treating heads of state very poorly to the point where we would have to warn the head of state. We'd say, "You know, you are going up to the Hill, you are going to meet the leadership, please be aware." A couple of times, Gingrich would just stand up and walk off. We would warn them about this, too. Eventually, Gingrich stopped doing that because someone told him,

“You can’t get up and walk out when you are talking with King Hussein of Jordan because it is such an insult, and it reflects poorly on the United States, it reflects poorly on you, etc.” That got better. That was when we first started dealing with him.

We did have a problem when the Republicans took over in getting enough seats for the State of the Union address. At one State of the Union address, we had major ambassadors, like the British ambassador, the Japanese ambassador, standing at the back because there were not enough seats. There wasn’t very much I could do about that. If they’d been Democrats, I could have called up and said, “Hey, you guys, we have to do something.” Can you imagine Pamela Harriman standing at the back of the legislature in France? No, it wouldn’t happen. Or, can you imagine Admiral Bill Crowe standing at the back of parliament? I said, “This is the way our ambassadors are treated abroad. We have to treat other ambassadors the same way.” Well, they came back, there is no room. We now have 170 some ambassadors. It used to be 60 or 70 in the past fifteen years. There are literally not enough seats. So what we decided was that they would give us 90 seats. That’s it. If other ambassadors wanted to come, they may have had to stand at the back. Of course, ambassadors learned to call up and say, “Am I above 90?” If they were above 90, some of them wouldn’t come. They’d watch it on TV. On the other hand, often they came anyway because they could write back in their telegrams, “I went to the State of the Union address.” They could talk with each other. When they came in, they could shake hands with the Congressmen and Senators.

*Q: As far as the 90 was concerned, was it done by date of arrival and presentation of credentials?*

RAISER: Yes.

*Q: That makes it pretty handy.*

RAISER: Oh, its fabulous. When John Kerr came in, he was like 167, and there’s nothing we can do about it. The British ambassador, he may be, but he’s still 167 in line. And Prince Bandar who is the dean of the Diplomatic Corps is from Saudi Arabia. He has been here for a long, long time, and he said to me one day that he didn’t like to do all the things that the dean had to do like greet new ambassadors, do some entertaining. He just really didn’t like to do it and, frankly, I think he was sick of the whole job. He tried to leave and they said, “No, we’ll make you a higher prince,” so he stayed. He was saying one day, “Well, this takes a lot of my time.” I said, “Well, I have a solution. You want to remain as ambassador?” “Yes, my country says I have to remain,” he said. I said, “Well, what you do is you resign. You resign for one hour your ambassadorship. Then, an hour later, they reappoint you. Then, you’ll be 174<sup>th</sup> in line, and you will not have to do anything.” He looked at me and started to laugh. He said, “No.” I said, “Okay, I just told you there is a solution if you don’t want to be dean anymore.” Really, for two minutes, if he resigned, the next person would step up.

*Q: I assume that there would be a certain amount of coordination just by office between the chief of protocol and the dean of the Diplomatic Corps.*

RAISER: A lot of times, he was traveling, and one of my favorite lines, when I would call him up for something is, "He's back in the kingdom." I always thought, it be wonderful for someone to be able to say, "Oh, she's back in the kingdom." Actually, I think if you say the kingdom around the world, Saudi Arabia comes to mind.

*Q: Yes, it really does.*

RAISER: Hassan in Morocco probably wouldn't like that or Hussein in Jordan. In *The New York Times*, they'll say in the kingdom today and, if you look at the by-line, it is Saudi Arabia. Yes, Bandar and I worked closely together. He would be the lead person to the States of the Union addresses.

*Q: Was there a different protocol for monarchs than for presidents?*

RAISER: No. They are both heads of state.

*Q: Heads of state are heads of state.*

RAISER: It matters not whether it is the president of Ghana or the queen of England.

*Q: In places like Germany and England, does that call for something different?*

RAISER: Germany has a resident who is head of state. The chancellor is head of government, one step down. Tony Blair is head of government; the Queen is head of state.

A head of state is the only one who can have a state visit. A chancellor, and Tony Blair or whomever, who are heads of government have something called official visits. That's a step down. They get a 19-gun salute instead of a 21-gun salute. That's basically all it is. They have an official dinner instead of a state dinner.

*Q: There are times, particularly with the British prime minister and some times with the German chancellor, where they are popping by America as an easy place to pop by to. Our President doesn't go abroad that much without taking the whole thing but Tony Blair can get on a plane and not bring a whole crew to come over and chat.*

RAISER: He doesn't have to travel with three 747s. Yes, that happens. It's not any kind of official visit. He's just coming on a private visit. King Hussein was always here on private visits because he has a house here and her family is here. Generally, with Hussein, with a king, we just go out and greet him even if it is a private visit although we don't have to. All the Middle East/North Africa ambassadors go out. Tony Blair can just come in, maybe to do a speech at Harvard, and can call the White House and say, "I'm coming

in and would like to see the President.” He’ll come down and, very often, I don’t even go to do the greet. He’ll just walk in. Whenever anyone comes to speak at Harvard or the University of Wisconsin or whatever, it’s a private visit and we generally do not get involved with private visits.

*Q: Let’s move to the other side away from the state visits to the care and feeding of our embassies and consulates and ambassadors.*

RAISER: We are their first line of offense or defense. If there was a problem, we were the ones that they would call. I obviously got to know most of them, especially the Europeans, the Latin Americans, and some from the former Soviet states. A lot of them do not speak English, which was always a problem. I never realized how big the French African empire was until I got this job because a lot of the African ambassadors speak only French. I have some school-girl French, so we could get by with that. One of the protocol staff would greet them when they first arrived. They would then come and pay a visit on me. I wish all the ambassadors didn’t have to come and pay a visit to me when they arrive in the United States, but it’s “protocolly necessary” - poor things! We would arrange for their credentialing with the President and then, whenever they had a problem, they would call up. Some of the problems we could help with and some we could not.

I remember being told that I had to call in the ambassador from Rwanda or Burundi, one African nation. There was a civil war going on, and the powers that be had decided that we no longer recognized this man’s government. I was to call him in and give him this sheet of paper that says we no longer regard you as the ambassador. I assumed that this was a matter that had been explained to him and this was just a ceremony that we had to go through. So, he comes in and sits down. He doesn’t speak English very well, so I said, “Ça va? [French: How are you?]” He, of course, has no idea why he is here. I suddenly realized that he had no idea why he was there. So, I read this pronouncement to him in French and looked at him. I read it again, and I looked at him. He said in English, “What are you talking about?” I said, “We no longer recognize you as the ambassador.” It was terrible. I thought he was going to cry. He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “A policy has been made and it is my solemn and horrible duty to have to tell you.” I said, “You have thirty days to leave the country.” If he had children in school, he would have to leave the children who could stay until the end of the school year. He said, “But, I can’t go back. I’ll be killed.” I said, “Maybe you should get an attorney and see if you can seek asylum.” He may have done that. I don’t know. I said to staff after that, “Don’t you ever put me in a position like that again.” These people should know why they are being brought in. I mean, it was just horrible.

*Q: Oh, God, yes.*

RAISER: It was just horrible to be told, “Guess what?” From then on, I said I want anybody that comes in and I have to say something bad to know exactly what I am going to say, so it’s a formality that we have to go through.

*Q: Our policy has gotten tougher over the years regarding parking tickets and drunken driving. Having been a diplomat for 30 years myself, I know you just don't mess around because the Department won't support you. You are supposed to be good citizens wherever you are. This was not always the case with the diplomats in the United States. Lately, in the last decade or so, we seem to have taken a stronger stand. Did you find yourself at the point of being school mistress and disciplining your charges?*

RAISER: Actually, what happened was Jesse Helms got very irritated some years ago.

*Q: He's the senator from North Carolina, who is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee.*

RAISER: He was then ranking, I guess. He thought that we were being too nice. Protocol is much too nice. He insisted on and has started another department, which takes care of all the bad stuff. They are the bad guys, and we are the good guys. It is called Office of Foreign Mission, and they would do things like tell people they had to pay their parking tickets. So whenever an ambassador would call up and say, "Why am I being harassed?" I just said, "This is not me anymore. You have to call Eric up in the Office of Foreign Mission." So, I became, luckily, a good guy. But we did continue to do the diplomatic immunity issues. Occasionally, we would have a young man who would get into trouble, someone's child, someone's teenager, and we in Protocol would finally say, "This is the tenth time he has been caught shoplifting. He has to leave the country." That's very rare. Generally, once a young man or woman or an older man or woman has been picked up for shoplifting that's the end of it. It doesn't happen again. Most of the crimes are little things like that.

*Q: Shoplifting seems to be a problem.*

RAISER: Can you imagine coming from a poverty stricken African country and walking into K-Mart and looking at all that stuff?

*Q: We used to have a problem, too, particularly from people in the Soviet Union and other places. The largess displayed out there is overwhelming.*

RAISER: It's a supermarket. I can't blame them.

*Q: I don't either.*

RAISER: Kids were particularly vulnerable. Generally, the parents got them in line fast because they'd say, "Hey, you are going to have to go back home." A lot of them don't have very much money, and they come here and see all this stuff. I'd like to make one comment about diplomatic immunity. I feel very strongly that we should enforce it. There was an incident two summers ago where a Georgian drunk driver killed a girl. The State Department brought enormous pressure to bear. I think Madeline was then Secretary of State, or was it Chris?

*Q: It was Christopher.*

RAISER: I wrote a letter and said it is very important that we maintain this concept of diplomatic immunity in foreign policy. The White House got involved and said, "No, there's a lot of brouhaha; you had another diplomat getting away with murder," as if it happens all the time." They put enormous pressure on Shevardnadze not to withdraw him. Generally what happens is they will withdraw him within 24 hours. The White House said, and I guess the State Department went along with it, "No, we want him to stand trial. Do not withdraw him. Do not withdraw him." They went along with it. He has since been tried for something but I have lost track now that I am no longer chief of protocol. There is a reason that we have immunity, which is reciprocity, so I felt very strongly that even though he was wretched and he was a drunk, etc., we should have let him go. I keep wondering, what if he had been a Frenchman or a Brit? Would we have brought pressure to bear on those powers that be? I'm not sure we would have.

*Q: This, of course, is often the case. When we get tough, it is usually on the weaker countries.*

RAISER: Of course, absolutely.

*Q: Did your office keep book a on embassies and staffs to see how they were doing. It seems like we have been having a lot of trouble with these people.*

RAISER: Yes, because if there's a problem, the police would always call us up. That's one of the things we did. We gave out the visas in the first place, and then when they would come up for renewal we'd check and see if anyone was in a lot of trouble.

*Q: Well, did you find yourselves in the position of calling somebody in from an embassy and saying, "Look, So and So has done this and that and we just can't renew the visa?"*

RAISER: Yes, but they would have been warned ahead of time. Larry Dunnam basically kept track of all the ambassadors. If something happened that was serious enough, in other words, he'd spoken to the embassy three or four times and there was no response, then I would call the ambassador and make an appointment. Basically, the ambassadors had to come and see me. But, you know, the difficult times aside, the interesting thing about the ambassadors is that they are the brightest and best. Sitting and having conversations with three or four ambassadors at a luncheon or at a dinner, say one from Austria, one from Morocco, one from Thailand, is absolutely fascinating. Number one, how our culture is taking over the world and, and number two, how they perceive it possible to maintain their culture in face of this advance. How do you maintain the Islamic culture and still become modern? How do you maintain the Thai culture and still be able to cope economically in the world? These are very interesting conversations.

*Q: Did you run the equivalent of a training school for new ambassadors?*

RAISER: "Charm school," for ours going abroad, not of any abroad coming here.

*Q: How about your charm school?*

RAISER: I did not run a charm school. The larger State Department did. We were a part of the orientation. I have never seen it done. Someone else in protocol would go and do it, but I would often have American ambassadors come up and say, "Oh, I just went through your charm school." Of course, it is not charm school. It is basically what you can expect, how you can expect to be treated abroad, what your rights are, that kind of thing.

*Q: There must be a certain amount of hand holding of new states or just plain new ambassadors who, as our ambassadors, are plain political appointees and they really don't have a clue. But usually we have a big outfit, and we have a professional staff at the embassy to take him in hand. But not every country has the luxury of doing this. You must have some people a little bit lost, don't you?*

RAISER: Yes, especially if they don't speak English. Many of them do not have large embassies. Many of them have no embassies at all. They just rent down on K Street someplace. That was especially true of the former Soviet states. They are doing better. A lot of them have had the same ambassadors for four or five years, and they have learned the ropes and have also learned to speak English a little bit. They have learned how to get around. The fact of the matter is that the Uzbekistan ambassador is not viewed the way the British or the French ambassador is. There's nothing we can do about it. Protocol-wise, yes. But in the view of policy makers, unless they want oil—now, of course, oil is becoming the big thing—that's a fact of life. And all the ambassadors realize it. They've realized that there's nothing that they can do about it. If Tony Blair goes to the British embassy, you get some cabinet people there. If the president of Uzbekistan comes, you won't get any cabinet people at this dinner, which is too bad, and it is not right.

*Q: I have talked to people who have talked about the desk officers for the Central African Republic. They say they have a hell of a time getting people to come when there's a special concert put on. Did you find yourself arm twisting and trying to get people to attend embassy functions?*

RAISER: Embassies do have a problem getting high ranking officials to functions. I tried to go to as much as possible. Basically, I got so that I didn't do everything. I did not do national days. I did not go over there because that's 175 events a year. After the first year of doing it, I said, "I am not doing any. I'm not doing the British, and I'm not doing Ghana." If you say you are not doing any, you are safe. I also gave up going to all the different dinners except when a cabinet minister would come into town. If a cabinet minister of a country came and a dinner was given, I'd would try and go because it meant something. I was perceived as being high ranking. Actually, I am highly ranked in the State Department, and often would have to give the return toast at a dinner. Before every

dinner I would call the desk of the person of the country to get information about history, perhaps a folk tale - something interesting about the country.

*Q: We were talking about bringing foreign ambassadors from smaller countries, the less sophisticated ambassadors, up to speed. Did you find yourself involved in this?*

RAISER: No. That was done collegially. We did not have charm school for ambassadors coming here. I got the most wonderful call one day. I won't tell you from what country except it was a small European country. This ambassador said, "Molly, I have a problem. I am supposed to go to the opera ball tonight and it's white tie. Where do I go to rent a white tie?" I came up with several places in the Yellow Pages. I said, "Where do you live?" He told me, and I said, "This one is the closest." It was so cute the way he said, "Don't tell anybody I'm making this phone call." We get that, too, when heads of state come. The ambassadors really get up tight, and we are dealing with ambassadors who are on the line here.

*Q: They are really nervous.*

RAISER: I remember one time when Hussein was arriving. There was a terrible ice storm, and we were out at Dulles. It was suggested that he not come in but he was flying his own plane and he landed at Dulles on a piece of glass called a runway. It was all right but we could not get out to greet him. The only way we could get out to greet him was in one of those people movers, those cattle cars. The ambassador saw this because usually there are flags and limousines. He said, "I can't go to greet the king in this." I said, "Then you are not going to greet the king. He is going to be sitting on that airplane." The ambassador was frantic. We get out there and the thing goes up to level, and I step out, and I said, "This is only way we could get you back," and he and Noor came and got on the people mover, and we were struggling to get back across the ice. He said, "You know, I have never been on one of these things." I said, "Well, we always like to have new experiences." I thought, he has probably never been on a bus, never been on a metro, never been in a cab. The ambassador thanked me later for this whole thing. I find that humor kind of settles everybody down.

*Q: You can also act as an in between, you can do the initial thing, and that takes the sting out of it.*

RAISER: Exactly. Once you have hit it with some humor, there's nothing anybody can say. Humor is very important.

*Q: How about keeping the lists of embassies, who's accredited and all that?*

RAISER: We do all that. We are the keepers of any lists for ambassadors, protocol lists, etc.

*Q: I'm an old consular hand. How about the consulates?*



RAISER: I don't do consulates.

*Q: Who does them?*

RAISER: There is an Office of Consular Affairs in the State Department.

*Q: But that's strictly American consular affairs. I mean somebody who's a foreign consul.*

RAISER: The protocol office does, but I wasn't heavily involved. Larry Dunham heads that section.

*Q: There's the problem of honorary consuls and other folks.*

RAISER: We didn't get involved in those problems. May I make a comment? After reading the paper this morning I realize that the most depressing thing of all these years has been the fall of the Middle East peace talks. I can remember the high hopes the last time all four leaders were together in the Roosevelt Room doing the map signing. I can't remember if I told this story.

*Q: No, I don't recall it.*

RAISER: There were Mubarak, Rabin, Hussein, and Arafat in the Roosevelt Room and me. It was one of these times that I thought, "My God, here we are. This is a historic moment. Here are all these people, and I am standing here talking to them because I have seen them all so much." I made the comment, "I can't believe I am standing here, this little girl from Buffalo." Hussein looked at me and said, "Well, you have met us all before individually." I said, "Yes, many times." He said, "What you are saying, Molly, is that meeting us all individually was no big deal for you. Only when there are four of us are you impressed." Then he said, "Wouldn't it be nice if next year you had five of us here, Molly, and then the next year there would be six of us here." Of course, Rabin was killed and now there are three who can get together. That's a real shame, I think. There was such hope when Rabin was alive and Hussein wanted so badly to make peace. Mubarak, of course, had already made his peace with Israel. I think there was a vague thought of getting Syria in. I think they were thinking about trying to get Lebanon in the next time. It is very sad.

*Q: It really is. Were there ever any times when you were called by the White House or, probably more, by the State Department, saying, "Look, we are having a problem with 'X' country or something like that, let's really go all out for so and so."*

RAISER: Yes. They did to the point where a couple of times, they wanted us to do something that we just shouldn't do. Officials would put pressure on Protocol. I would just finally have to call up the Secretary of State or Sandy Berger in the NSC. Luckily, I

knew them both, whether it was Madeline or Chris, and say, "This is the problem. It is not correct protocol-wise. You are doing something that everyone else would then expect for him or her self. However, if you order me to do it, I will have to do it." It was about half and half. Half the time they would say, "Molly, we have to do this." The other half, they would say, "Okay." Basically, if it was something I felt strong about, I would take it to the Secretary of State." I forget what the issue was with Win Lord. He was adamant about it, and I took it up, and they said, "No, we have to do this," and so we did.

*Q: How about when you were at Seattle? How did that work?*

RAISER: That was my first APEC meeting.

*Q: That was Asian Pacific Economic something.*

RAISER: That was our first big event and the first time that protocol really got involved. We had someone with each delegation. There were like eleven delegations with their telephones, and basically, the advance people of the Secret Service worked through the protocol people. We were the stream that kept everybody together. It worked very well because protocol was trusted by all the delegations. If there had been someone from the State Department, there would have been, "Well, what's he up to?" But since protocol is perceived of and tries to be neutral, I mean to the point where some of these young staffers who were appointed, say, to the Chinese delegation, would say, "All right, Mr. President, we have to leave now or you are going to miss your time in line," or whatever. There was never any arguing about it, so I think State and the White House realized that there is, in fact, a place for protocol. This is proven again and again.

There was a Sunday meeting in February of 1995, a Sunday morning at Blair House, and we hadn't been told about it until the night before. It was foreign ministers and ambassadors in the Mideast peace process and Christopher, and then the President and the Vice President and Tony Lake were going to arrive and it would be a round table, so I just showed up. It was my house after all, Blair House, and Mel French, who was a deputy, came and one of my assistants also. There were all Christopher's people standing around, and I came up and I said, "Okay, here comes Shimon Peres," whom I knew. "What are you going to do with him, where are you going to put him?" Silence. I said, "And here comes the ambassador, where are we going to put him?" Silence. No one had thought there has to be some organization here. So, I said, "Okay, we'll put the foreign ministers in this room, the ambassadors in this room, and then the strap hangers we'll put here, and I'll take care of the foreign ministers, and Mel will take care of the ambassadors. Then, if they want to get together and talk, they can but at least let's put them in these rooms and provide coffee, etc."

Then, Christopher was having some private conversations, and I said, "The President is coming. We have to break it up now," and no one dared go in. I finally knocked on the door and stuck my head in and said, "Mr. Secretary, the President is on his way, and you may want to go upstairs to greet him." So, in that case, unless we'd been there, I feel very

strongly it would have been just a maelstrom of no organization whatsoever. I think it became accepted that protocol should be there at any and all meetings because I could say to the foreign ministers, "Okay, we are going to line up and this is what we are going to do, and you could explain it all. This is the way the seating is going to be, this is what the table looks like, the President is going to speak first, and then you are all expected to say something." No one ever told them that, and I think you have to tell people what's going on. It never occurs, I think, to people who think and make policy that you have to provide a certain comfort and a certain sense of ease and security. Even with foreign ministers, you have to provide a certain sense of security so that they know what's going on.

Protocol got so that the foreign ministers and heads of state appreciated it, whether it was APEC in Seattle or the Latin American heads of state. We had 33 heads of state in Miami, Florida. I forgot what the date of that was. It was the same thing. We had a protocol person with each delegation. They worked through us to get everybody organized. In that instance, we decided, since there were three or four meetings and three or four luncheons and a couple of dinners, not to do protocol seating because they would be next to the same people every time. We did a drawing. We had Eddie Edmunds, who was Vice Dean of the diplomatic corps and the ambassador from St. Lucia, come to witness that we were doing it honestly, so that they sat next to someone different every time. They all agreed to this, so the president of Venezuela wouldn't have to sit next to the president of whatever every single time. That was a break in protocol but everyone went along with it. Generally, they would, if you want to say, "Let's do something a little different." It's a new world as long as you get their agreement to it.

*Q: I was just thinking about this, if you are talking about the scene at the Blair House. Knowing some of the figures are just almost the type, I am thinking of a 28 year old hot shot, male or female, trying to prove himself or herself for the first time. It might be someone like a State Department sub-desk office or, even worse, a personal assistant to somebody or something. I would think that there would have to be a certain amount of taming of this breed of young person who sort of wants to take over.*

RAISER: Well, first of all, you treat people nicely, the way we all expect to be treated. I was lucky because I had a high enough rank. I was also lucky in that if push came to shove, I could call the Secretary of State. I only did it once, just once, over an issue that the DAS and I were having. I decided, "I'm not going to waste my time with this any more." I think the perception was there that I could call the Secretary of State or I could call the President of the United States. Now, the fact is, I could but I never would over something small but that perception was very helpful. The only time I really came across it was at Rabin's funeral. Again, I may have told this story.

*Q: No, go ahead. Rabin was assassinated by an orthodox Israeli in Israel. His funeral took place in Israel.*

RAISER: That's right. I was happy because I was chosen to attend, not as a worker, but as a member of the official delegation. They decided that, after the President and the Vice

President and the secretary of state, I probably knew Rabin better than anybody else. Anyway, after the service, there was a reception at the King David Hotel for members of the congressional delegation, the official delegation, and members of Knesset. We had all been given day rooms because it was one of these fly-over-spend-the-day and fly-back trips. We didn't spend the night. I walked in, and it was absolute pandemonium because there weren't enough tables. There was plenty of room for tables but there weren't enough tables. This is the kind of stupid thing that I ended up doing, although it is more important than it would seem.

There were senators standing around, there were Knesset members standing around, and I finally went up to clearly a head guy at the American Embassy and said, "Who is in charge of this?" "Well, this young man over here from the embassy." I said, "Fine," so I went over and introduced myself and I said, "I think we need some more tables." "Oh, no, no, no. We can't have any more tables here. I was told only so many tables." I said, "Well, you know, perhaps we could have some more tables because you can see there's Senator Lieberman standing up and there are all these other people." "Nope, can't do it, can't do it." I looked at him and said, "Don't waste my time." I walked up to the maitre d' and said, "Would you please put up six or seven more tables." They were happy to do it, and everyone had a seat. I just decided that I was not going to fuss around with this anymore. I just did it. Very rarely did I ever pull rank like that and do it, because, basically, people would give some space and we could discuss the matter. This was not possible to discuss, for heaven's sake.

*Q: No.*

RAISER: He was young, maybe 26 or 27 years old, and he'd been told, we are going to have this many tables and that's all. So, maybe he was happy that I finally said, "No, we are going to put up more tables." Otherwise, that would have been a fiasco.

*Q: Did you get involved at all with Congressional delegations going overseas?*

RAISER: No.

*Q: Sometimes these can be tricky situations. They always want to talk to the head man. Some of them are disciplined and, frankly, some aren't. In 1994 when the Republicans came in, it wouldn't cause the problem as I would see it but you had an awful lot of rather rambunctious people who were boasting that they'd never had a passport in their life. They had their program, which was essentially isolationist.*

RAISER: We dealt with foreigners. We did not, as we would say, do domestics. That was done by the White House Office of Congressional Affairs. Occasionally, if there was a Congressional delegation at the same event as the President was going to, like the D-Day memorial, we might have to get involved in some organization with the White House people on how to do the receiving and all that. Basically, no, we did not do Congressional delegations.

*Q: How was Helmut Kohl as a guest? I am getting this smile.*

RAISER: I will just tell you a wonderful story. I do not think it reflects poorly on him when I see it in writing, or maybe you can tell me. The first time he arrived, he does not speak English. When people say that, we always have to be careful because he probably understands English. But he and Boris Yeltsin, I think, are really the two that literally do not speak or understand English. He is very big, he must be 6'5". He is bigger than Clinton, and he arrived and I was chatting with him through an interpreter. We thought the President was late and the President was always 15 minutes late. All of a sudden, I noticed that the chancellor was getting very red in the face. I thought, "He is having a heart attack." I was standing in front of him, and I did not want him to fall on me, if he was going to have a heart attack. So I stepped to the side and kept talking, and he was still getting redder and redder. I kept waiting for him to fall because I figured I would have to mop him up and do resuscitation on him. I was trying to remember how to do it but he never fell.

Suddenly, I realized that, looking over my shoulder, he had seen the grandfather clock in the Roosevelt Room. He had seen that it was 10 or 15 minutes late, and I realized that he was furious. He was simply furious that he was being treated that way, so I stepped back in front of him and said, "You know, we have something in the United States called Clinton time, and I know that we are a few minutes late but most people don't take this as a personal insult. If the President has a meeting and he is 15 minutes late starting in the morning, he is late the entire day. I could just see him deflate. Basically, I didn't deal very much with him because he only came a couple of times. A couple were private visits, so I didn't see him.

*Q: How about Boris Yeltsin?*

RAISER: Oh, I love Boris Yeltsin. He, I think, is the ultimate of what you think of as Russian, the big bear, very out going. I mean there are some Blair House and personal stories about him that I can't tell. Now, we know that he is sick, may be dying, and people are casting dispersions upon him. But if you look at what he did with that country, he is a great leader. He changed the face of the country.

I remember in 1991 when my son was there, there was an attempted coup. My son was behind the barricades when they started putting up the barricades around the White House. I have a picture of my son taking a picture of Yeltsin. My son is standing on a Russian tank when Yeltsin came out of the White House and gave his speech and led people on. I give him enormous credit. I think later on he was observed to be, on occasion, somewhat of a buffoon. I never thought that. He is a very smart man. I think he is very, very ill.

*Q: This seems to be the case. It is very sad for Russia right now.*

RAISER: The last time when he was at the conference at Hyde Park after the 50<sup>th</sup>...

*Q: As we were talking about Hyde Park of the Roosevelts.*

RAISER: Yes. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.N. and, while he was here, we went up to Hyde Park. I took him in, and I was to take him back to the helicopter so he could hop on the back of it. He was walking very slowly, and I had the feeling he should really have had a cane. He watched every step walking across the grass, which was uneven, and I thought, "This is not a well person." While he was sitting, his mind was still there. And when he was sitting and when he was standing with the President at the time, they had a wonderful repartee back and forth. I forget what it was when they were having the press conference. Even then I noticed that he was physically weak. Was it before or after he had had his heart surgery or whatever it was? It was probably after the surgery. I give him enormous credit for what he did.

*Q: Did you have any problems with the press?*

RAISER: I didn't deal with them at all. Obviously, when we were traveling together, I'd say hello. I knew Diane Walker, personally, and Wolf Blitzer. You get to know them but they knew they shouldn't ask me any questions because, "What does this woman know?," although I knew quite a bit. The only time I said anything to them was at that last meeting that was called spur of the moment, when the tunnel was supposed to open in Israel and there was a big brouhaha.

*Q: This was the tunnel under the temple that was considered a real affront to the Palestinians?*

RAISER: Yes, and without notifying anybody, the Israelis opened it, I think. There was a spur of the moment meeting with Arafat and King Hussein and Netanyahu. The king came first. Then Mr. Arafat came in to speak to the President, and then came into the Roosevelt Room. Then Mr. Netanyahu came in and said hello to the king and walked over to Mr. Arafat and shook his hand. The king and I were kind of looking at each other as if, you know, this is the worst when Mr. Netanyahu acted this way in Israel. So what I did with Wolf Blitzer, walking out, I said, "For your information - because he was about to go on the news - the handshake took place in the Roosevelt Room with King Hussein looking on," and he put that in his story. But other than that, no, I didn't have any dealings with them at all. The press makes me very nervous.

*Q: It makes a lot of us nervous because it is a very inexact tool.*

RAISER: In Washington as everyone knows, you raise your head and your shot. I purposely never gave an interview, tried never to appear in the paper, or anything like that.

*Q: Can I just ask one more question and then ask about leaving? Did you notice either problems or changes or anything else about women in foreign affairs from your perspective at all? We have been going through earth change for the last 20 years. I think maybe we've almost reached the point where it is no longer even an issue.*

RAISER: But it is not even. There are still many fewer women. I don't know about the Foreign Service, but it is certainly the case politically. I think Clinton did better than some in appointing women but I think it is still an issue. I think the problem is that women have the children. Women do not start by running for the Senate. They start by running for the city council so they can go home at night and bring up the children. I think that's been a problem in the Foreign Service as well because it's hard to have a family and have a husband and blah, blah, blah. I think there's a reason why there have been fewer women. Now, at least politically, more women are being chosen. It is becoming a necessity, or else there'll be an article in the paper about it. This time around, I know we had Pamela Harriman, and we had Swanee Hunt as ambassadors. I don't know the others. There aren't very many others.

*Q: In the last few years the chief of protocol has been a woman but men before. Is this beginning to be considered a woman's job or not?*

RAISER: Well, the two before me were men. Then, Lucky Roosevelt had it for eight years in the Reagan years. She led the effort to totally restore Blair House. That was her enormous contribution to the country. She still heads the Blair House restoration fund. I don't think it has become a woman's job. I have to say that I think women have an enormous advantage in diplomacy and in politics because we can look at a group of 175 men and say something that they may not want to hear and smile, and what are they going to do? Whereas if a man had said that, it would have been this male-male thing. Even when I'm one on six or one on 175, it's an enormous advantage as long as you are not a ditz because people see through ditzes all the time.

*Q: I know we are coming against time now but you left and when did you leave, and what have you been doing since?*

RAISER: I left in 1997, four years almost to the day that I was appointed because I'd had it. I had tried to resign a year before, and I was told, "No, you can't resign. It's an election year. We can't have someone new coming in and doing it." Six months later, I said, "Okay, I am going to resign, and they said, "Okay, get through Denver." So I handed in my letter before Denver.

*Q: What was Denver?*

RAISER: It was the G7 conference. I handed in my letter and then got through the conference. A week later, it was announced that I had resigned. It's a very tough job.

*Q: Oh, I'm sure it is.*

RAISER: It's very time consuming. I don't think someone with a family and a husband could do it unless the husband is very understanding and the children are grown. It reached the point where I didn't want to travel with the President anymore abroad. I thought, "If I have reached the point where I no longer want to travel with the President of the United States on a trip abroad, you'd better leave now." I didn't want to go out to Andrews Air Force Base and greet kings and queens anymore. Then, it's time to move on.

Now I am back to my old life. I am doing some private traveling. I have just bought a house on Nantucket, and I am back on board and doing some tutoring. I am on the board of the Duke Ellington School, I am on the board of the Washington Cathedral, I am on the board of an international group called Earth Watch Institute and the National Democratic Institute. I was very lucky because I live in Washington. I could just slide right back into it. People kept saying, "Let us know when you are going to leave because we want you to be back on the board." It was much easier for me, I think, than for someone who had been abroad, trying to readjust to moving back here. Or, if you lose a race for the Senate and all of a sudden you are nothing and you have been a senator for 16 years, what do you do? It was seamless. I consider myself lucky.

*Q: Great. I want to thank you very much. This has been a pleasure.*

RAISER: Thank you. I have enjoyed it.

*End of interview*