

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

**JAMES P. THURBER, JR.**

*Interviewed by: Emily Thurber*  
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## INTERVIEW

## Bio-sketch Including Pre-USIA Employment

*Q: This is Emily Thurber. I am going to interview my husband, James Thurber, for the USIA Oral History Project.*

*Jim, I thought you could begin by telling a bit about your education, your background, your early life, and then how you got interested in the Foreign Service.*

THURBER: I joined the Foreign Service in 1967. It was the third career, the first being a reporter/editor with The Wall Street Journal from 1952 to 1956, followed by 11 years at Stanford University in a variety of jobs, from a writer in the fund raising office to Assistant to the Provost, the position I held when I left Stanford in 1967, but I'm getting ahead of the story.

To back up right to the beginning, I was raised in Milton, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, educated most of my earlier education at Milton Academy and, from there, I went for a year to the Thatcher School in Ojai, California, and then on up the coast to Stanford where I graduated in 1950.

Needless to say, probably the most important thing about my education was the fact that I met Emy while at Stanford, and we were married during my last quarter at the university, she having completed two years. As a footnote, she went back and, in 1964, received her Bachelor's Degree in History.

Immediately, or almost immediately, after leaving Stanford, I was drafted and spent two years at Camp Gordon, Georgia, where I was in the cadre for the Basic Training group there, a Signal Corps outfit that gave the incoming trainees six weeks of basic infantry training before going on to any specialization.

On discharge from the Army, I went to work for The Wall Street Journal. I had originally started with them when I got out of Stanford, but only had six weeks before being drafted. As a writer/reporter for The Journal, I worked in New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and then was sent down to Houston as Bureau Manager of the Houston office, covering the petrochemical industry. I was there a year before The Journal closed the Houston office and I decided I didn't want any more moves with The Journal. They wanted to send me to Dallas.

So, we packed up and returned to the Bay Area in, this being 1956. At that point, I was lucky enough to find employment with Stanford and stayed there, as I mentioned earlier, for 11 years, working in many of the different academic administration jobs and also, on the outside, dabbling heavily in local and partisan politics.

During that time, I was elected to the Los Altos City Council (a city of 25,000), a position I held for seven years, four of which I was Mayor and, during that time, took an active role in the development of the Association of Bay Area Governments, a regional, voluntary government agency made up of 96 cities and eight counties in the San Francisco Bay area.

I also was appointed by the Governor to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, a body organized to protect San Francisco Bay and to begin the massive clean up process which, at the time of this dictating, has pretty well been completed and has returned San Francisco Bay, to a great extent, to its original status.

Not to be passed over was my attempt in 1962 for a seat in the United States Congress from the 10th California District, a run that was not successful but was a great experience and actually quite a bit of fun.

But, to get back to the main purpose of this tape, one of my jobs at Stanford was working on the foreign campuses, first on the undergraduate level and secondly, or later, at the graduate level.

#### Events Leading up to USIA Employment

During a trip to France to seek out a site for a campus in that country, a Stanford campus there, we were met on the railroad platform in Tours, France, by Bob Miller. This is Robert Ellsworth Miller, just to keep him straight from all the other Robert Millers in the Agency.

Bob was the Branch PAO in Tours and had gotten wind of our desire for a foreign campus and was there to help us, which he did so successfully that a few months later, Stanford announced and began work on a foreign campus in Tours, but it was also the start of a friendship with Bob that continues to this day, and a series of changes for both of us.

Shortly after setting up the Stanford campus, Bob came back to Stanford and worked there in the Public Affairs Office for several years. He left to return to USIA somewhere around 1965 and, a year later, asked me if I would like to join the Agency as a mid-career transfer.

The offer from Bob came at a very opportune point. I had reached a dead end at Stanford; I was bored and ready for a change. When Bob suggested I apply to USIA, I did, and, on July 5, 1967, arrived in Washington to start a training program prior to being sent out to the field.

*Q: I thought I might add something about the effect on the family of this big move. We were very happily ensconced in California. I especially loved this place and was just*

*getting to be active politically myself, having gotten the children over the hump, so to speak, so Jim's decision and my concurrence was not an easy one for either of us.*

*We had four children at the time. They were a son, Jim, 15; a daughter, Harriette, 13; a son, Alex, 7; and, a small daughter, Mary, who was just 2. The effect of the move on the children was a big consideration. Our son, Jim, who was going to be a sophomore in high school, absolutely did not want to go and kind of dug in his heels.*

*We only really got him to agree somewhat cheerfully by promising him that the next year, he could come back, return to Los Altos, live with his aunt and uncle, and finish at Los Altos High School. In the end, of course, that didn't happen.*

*While Jim was in Washington, I had the problems of closing up the house, getting all the shots for the kids, and trying to learn something about where we were going. He was assigned to Tanzania. I went to the local library and asked for books on Africa. The only book they had was about bandits in Ethiopia, which I brought home and read with interest but it didn't really help prepare me much for the beauties and glories of East Africa.*

THURBER: For the purpose of this history, let me go back just a bit here and give some of the political background to our departure from Stanford and taking up a position with USIA.

Both of us came out of the Kennedy era of politics. I ran for Congress in 1962 as a direct result of John Kennedy's election to the Presidency and both of us wanted to become more involved in public affairs, particularly after Kennedy's death, which left many Americans, myself included, with a feeling that there was a lot of unfinished business and somebody had to pick up the torch and carry on.

It was very much in this spirit that we not only joined USIA but that we asked for a posting in a developing country in Africa. As you'll remember, Kennedy opened up Africa to USIA, closing down some of our smaller posts in Europe to provide money and personnel for the African operation.

#### USIA Pre-Assignment Orientation of Small Use

I was in Washington about three months that summer while Emy packed up the house and children. It was sort of a mid-career training program, or a training program for five of us who joined USIA as mid-career officers, and it was supposed to, in a period of a month or two, bring us quickly up to speed with how the Agency operated and what we were supposed to do as officers overseas.

I must admit that that training program failed to prepare me in any way for the job. It was pretty much a waste of time, outside of a two-week course I took at the Department of

State on Africa and African problems, the standard geographic area course most officers take before going overseas.

### 1967: Initial Overseas Assignment: Tanzania

I literally went out to Tanzania not knowing what went into a telegram, how to write a telegram, who to send it to, why you send a telegram, what the cultural programs were about, anything along those lines.

About the only training I had was in the information side, which was helpful since I was to be Information Officer, and a couple of weeks on the Tanzania desk with Bob Rockweiler, Bob being so busy with the other problems of running the desk, he had little time to really indoctrinate me into the mysteries of USIA and overseas life.

*Q: Now we'll begin the questioning period. I thought you might describe a little bit about Tanzania and what was going on at the time, what the post was like.*

THURBER: We arrived in Tanzania at probably one of the best times we could have possibly gotten there. Most of the African countries were newly independent, as was Tanzania. It had a magnificent president, Julius Nyerere, who had just declared the Arusha Declaration, setting forth Nyerere's unique form of African socialism.

We went with stars in our eyes, believing that the future of Africa was on the way up and it would soon become a full-fledged partner in the western world. As we'll mention later, the stars were out of our eyes when we left six years later.

Nyerere had done, up to that point, a great job in Tanzania. The stores were full of goods. There was foreign exchange. We could buy what we wanted. To the best of our knowledge, very few Tanzanians were hungry and they were allowed to lead their lives pretty much as they had all along.

Nyerere was extremely skillful in playing major countries off against each other for his benefit. As an example, when they needed a highway of some type to Zambia to bring the Zambian copper out and take in oil to run the copper mines, Nyerere managed to get both the United States to build a road and the Chinese to bring a railroad, with very little expenditure on his part. This gave duplicate facilities and a lot of jobs to Tanzanians.

USIA in Dar es Salaam in 1967 was a three-American post and, if my memory is correct, about 12 to 15 local employees. We had an absolutely superb PAO. In fact, if it hadn't been for Pat Belcher and his wife, Louise, I'm not sure how long we would have stayed in USIA.

He was absolutely magnificent. Here he thought he was getting an experienced, mid-career person and he got somebody who didn't even know what our job was. He spent most of our two years in Tanzania teaching me how to be a USIA officer and a Foreign Service Officer.

I replaced Phil Cohan and, at the same time, Jack Eny came in to replace Dick Schoonover, so Pat actually had two new officers there at the same time.

The embassy was equally fortunate in having one of the best ambassadors Africa has been blessed in having, John Burns, who had been there about a year when we arrived, and stayed through our tour.

John's deputy, the DCM, was young Tom Pickering who today is doing such an outstanding job as the American Ambassador to the United Nations.

Dar, in spite of many of its advantages, was a somewhat difficult post. The weather was lousy. There was very little cultural activity there, at least as we know it. Schooling was difficult and so forth, and for these reasons, the American community was a very closely knit group. We did get to know the other members of the embassy extremely well.

As we proceeded in our career into other types of posts, we looked back fondly at Tanzania as the one place where all the Americans seemed to be really pulling together for a common goal and providing mutual support for everybody else.

I think it is important here, also, to note that USIA has undergone a tremendous change since we were in Tanzania. While there, we probably witnessed the end of the "old" USIS and the beginning or the birth of the new USIS, which today is marked by Worldnet, elite audiences and this type of thing.

In Tanzania, we took carryalls out into the bush, set up large screens, turned on the generator, and ran movies for the villagers. Heaven help you if something went wrong. One night, the generator broke down right in the middle of the movie and I thought I and the movie operator were going to be literally strung up by the local villagers if we didn't get that thing going. Thank goodness, we had a spare and within a few minutes, we had the natives quieted down so that we could proceed.

It was also the time, as my wife just mentioned, of the classic movies. We had such films as "Singing in the Rain," which we would play to standing room audiences over and over and over again, with the lines outside the USIS center almost tearing the grill work down trying to get in for each show, and all of us sitting there watching this movie until we never wanted to see it again. I think I saw "Singing in the Rain" 26 consecutive times.

*Q: We also had people in at home, too.*

THURBER: We also had people in at home. We showed the movie to ambassadors, DCMs and so forth, but they were great films.

Our library was open to the public and, sure, it was used by people who wanted to get in out of the rain or out of the heat but, at the same time, it introduced to a whole generation

of Tanzanians, high school students, even grammar school students, the wonders of an American library, what a free and democratic library was, and how they could use it.

Unfortunately, this is very much the exception today and, again, we don't serve these people and I think we are the worse because of it.

#### Experiences in Dar Es Salaam of Family New to Foreign Service

*Q: I thought I would talk a little bit about our life there. I remember in the beginning, we were just struck by how much socializing there was. Jim found this very difficult at first. I'm a social creature and I thought it was great to go to dances, and to be invited out almost every night, but he found it very, very difficult and, at one point, was almost ready to give it up and go home but, luckily, he stuck it out.*

*One thing that was kind of interesting, we both started out studying Swahili and I think we had lessons, I don't know, maybe every day or three times a week. I can't remember, but Jim found that it was too difficult to take a language and learn how to be an officer and do his work, so he eventually gave it up but I carried it on and became modestly conversant in Swahili.*

*It was very useful for women because, very often, at parties, I would be speaking to people's wives and they were much less apt to speak English than their husbands.*

*Housing was interesting because we first stayed in a hotel for -- what was it, nearly six weeks?*

THURBER: Either a hotel or another officer's house.

*Q: Or in someone's house. That was pretty hard with the children. Now at this stage in our life, it wouldn't be so difficult, but we finally were given a house right on the beach. It wasn't considered to be a desirable beach, and people were all saying, "Oh, that's too bad about your having to live near Selander Bridge," but in fact, it was a neat beach and we liked it.*

*Schooling was actually fine for the two little children. Mary was too young to go to school. It was perfect for Alex. Our 13-year-old was just delighted and thrown into a very, very active international school social life, on which she thrived. The oldest son, Jim, we were told there was no school for him; that the African schools were too full; and, the international school stopped at grade nine and he was in grade ten, so he started out doing correspondence course work, but he found that very lonely.*

*At a dance at the PAO's house, I met a man named Peter Palangyo, the first African headmaster of the H.H. Aga Khan Secondary School for Boys, a large school with about a thousand students. There were 500 Africans, about 500 Asians and ten so-called Europeans, no Americans.*

*Poor Jimmy, he finally agreed to go to that school and he just hated it in the beginning. He had to wear short pants and a white shirt, something he'd not done. He was so conscious of his white skin with these short shorts contrasted with all the other boys having these handsome, beautiful black or brown legs.*

*I remember that bothered him tremendously, but, after a few days, he adjusted. I think he taught them a lot of bad tricks like sailing paper airplanes in class and so forth and really got a lot out of his year in the school, in a cultural sense.*

*Eventually, we decided he wasn't working very hard and his aunt in Los Altos decided to also leave, so we sent him off to boarding school in Switzerland, to a wonderful British school -- I think his schooling was good, and he really benefited from it a lot.*

*Another difficulty was to have to deal with servants. Most Americans don't have to do that at home. We had a cook in the beginning and a nanny and a gardener. I had no trouble. I just slid right in to having people do my work for me, but I know a number of other Americans found that very difficult, to have to have other people in the house.*

*I kept myself busy with teaching English two or three times a week at the local YWCA. I had never taught before but had aspired to become a teacher and found that to be very interesting.*

*The only other thing I might mention is medical care, which is always a worry. We'd come from wonderful doctors here in California, and we were uncertain about the doctors there.*

*We had some problem with our daughter, Harriette. The local pediatrician put her on the birth control pill to clear up acne, which actually helped the acne, but she gained about 30 pounds. We were all very frightened about that. Eventually, she and I were evacuated to Frankfurt and the Army medical facility there where they gave her every test under the sun and found, of course, nothing wrong. So, there was always the concern of being far away from good hospitals and doctors in whom you had inherent faith.*

THURBER: My job at USIS Dar es Salaam was pretty much the standard Information Officer job, again, as performed by USIS officers 23 years ago. I learned some of the realities of life as an Information Officer, that I probably could repeat for any post that I served in after that.

Vietnam War: Insufficient (Occasionally Inaccurate) Policy Guidance from Washington

One of them was the lack of current guidance from Washington on how to handle various issues facing the United States. This was particularly true in 1967, '68, '69, with the Vietnam War.

Tanzania and Tanzanians were very much opposed to the United States' role in Vietnam, and we were constantly being challenged, in my case, by the press and the radio -- there was no television in Tanzania at that point -- and I just didn't have the background information, many times, to answer their questions.

Having been head of Policy Guidance and head of fast Policy Guidance since then, I know the difficulties USIS has in providing quick, rapid guidance to the field, but they've got to solve this problem. They have yet to do so. It's a multi-problem, involving the White House and the State Department, but some Director has got to tackle it at some point and set up a decent guidance program.

The other thing that I sadly learned was that I couldn't trust my own people back in Washington all the time, and that I should use good judgment more than I did the first few years in the Agency.

For example, when the Pueblo was captured in North Korea, there was a great amount of debate in the local press as to whether or not they really were spying on North Korea and, if so, were they within the so-called 12 mile, I think it was, 12-mile or three-league limit.

Our Agency said they were outside the limit. Finally, one day, a pouch arrived and in it were some maps showing exactly where the Pueblo was at the time it was captured, well outside the limit. I took these maps to the local press, where they were received with a great deal of skepticism, but they were received.

When questioned as to their accuracy, I swore up one side and down the other that they were completely accurate and they had come from excellent sources, the USIA in Washington and so forth and so forth.

It turns out the maps were inaccurate. They just bluntly showed The Pueblo in the wrong position when it was captured and, eventually, the United States government admitted it. My credibility with the newspaper went down sharply over that incident.

Over the years in USIA, I have learned not to take at face value much of that type of material that comes from the government until I can back it up with further proof, or that my own experiences justifies that material. It always seems to have been the case, when involving military or similar type episodes, such as our activities in Central America, the Gulf War and so forth.

#### USIS and the 1968 U.S. Election Coverage

At the same time, we really had some wild events in Tanzania that should be mentioned because they are the history of USIS. The election party in those days was quite different than today with television and much rapid transmission of information.

We held an election party, let's see, in 1968. It was the '68 Presidential election, the Humphrey-Nixon election, when Humphrey just barely lost it. We decided to set up an Election Central at the library, which is not unusual for USIS, but this one, because of the time differential, meant that we opened our doors about 6:00 a.m. in the morning, which was just when the polls were closing in the West Coast of the United States.

The wives got together and made donuts and served coffee, and probably every street walker in Tanzania or in Dar es Salaam was in sampling our coffee and donuts, but it was appreciated. Utilizing all of the election know-how I had built up over the years, we decorated the center with posters, buttons, balloons and general election paraphernalia.

### 1969: The Moon Landing Party

The party went on for almost 24 hours, it seems to me, before a winner was declared in that election. We did somewhat the same thing in July of 1969, just before I left Tanzania, when the moon landing took place.

Our library had a balcony around the top and we first got into the main library, moved all the bookcases to the side to give us an open space for a one-third scale model of the lunar landing craft, a smaller scale model of the Apollo rocket and a full-scale model of the spacesuit.

These were downstairs along with a booth for people to sign up for the first commercial trip to the moon, manned by our older daughter dressed in a Pan American uniform -- you can be sure this was going to be a Pan American flight, and they contributed other sorts of paraphernalia to that -- and other similar booths around the bottom.

Upstairs, on the balcony overlooking the bottom floor, we pulled together every piece of electronic equipment we could find to make it look like an impressive electronic center. Actually, what we had was the public address system and the Voice of America radio, which I was listening to with earphones, because the signal was usually so weak in Tanzania you couldn't possibly rebroadcast it, and then announcing over the public address system what was going on. To my side was the information assistant who would then give the same material in Swahili.

Around the edge of the balcony, we had a series of pictures which were back-lighted showing the various stages of the moon landing and, as each one took place, these came on. This show went on from the circling of the moon and the landing for, if I remember correctly, 72 hours straight.

It was jammed the entire time. It was interesting sociologically and psychologically in that many Tanzanians did not believe we had set foot on the moon or, if we had, we were invading consecrated ground. Their idea was that the human spirit went to the moon as a final resting place.

Others felt the moon was too small for us to stand on and, to prove it, they would point up to the sky and show us, "How can two men and a landing craft land on that little thing?" Some, in fact many, believed it was all a Disneyland stunt and that there was no truth behind it at all.

But, there were the believers, and they stuck around the entire time, until the Apollo capsule landed safely, I think it was, in the Atlantic Ocean. This whole event, however, probably did more for America than anything else that went on in that town for years.

It was remembered fondly whenever anybody talked about USIS in Tanzania and our center there for years afterwards and I heard about it when I was in my following African posts. People still referred back to it as one of the great events in USIS operations.

#### 1968-1969: USIS Exhibits at Tanzanian Annual Saba-Saba Fairs

Once a year, the Tanzanians held their annual Saba-Saba Fair. "Saba" in Swahili is seventh and it took place on the seventh day of the seventh month, Saba-Saba. We had a pavilion there and it was USIS' responsibility to handle the pavilion completely.

The first year, Pat Belcher put on a wonderful agricultural exhibit with a great deal of help from the exhibit section in Washington. The second year, that was 1969, we put on a space show, utilizing the same units, the spacecraft and so forth, that were then used in the actual landing demonstration I just talked about.

The Saba Fair for the space landing involving a small building of around 2,000 square feet which was completely blacked out. There was no light getting in at all. As you entered and walked around a marked pathway, you encountered the various exhibits, in front of each was a Tanzanian, a college student whom we had hired, and briefed completely on the entire spaceflight, so that they could be there and describe their exhibit -- the landing craft, the spacesuit, the food the men ate en route to and from the moon and so forth.

The high point of the entire exhibit was when President Nyerere visited it, went through and came out, shaking his head in wonderment as to how much his own citizens -- i.e., the guides -- knew about the landing and what the United States wanted to do on the moon. He was impressed, it was obvious, and it made the Saba-Saba a real success that year.

#### Holiday Travel Within Tanzania and Elsewhere

*Q: Why don't you talk a little bit about R&R and holiday travel or whatever we were able to do there?*

THURBER: We did get around to see most of Tanzania. On business, I went down to the southwest part of the country, where the new road was being built, the so-called Tanzam

Highway. On leave, we went up to the game parks and saw Lake Manyara, Ngorongoro Crater, Serengeti and, at one point, we went on up into Kenya and visited some of those game parks. We also visited Nairobi several times.

Then, on R&R, we went to Greece in December and found it so cold and unappealing that, after a week, we took a plane flight over to Israel and drove around Israel, our first experience there, and a wonderful vacation for a week visiting some of the ancient sites there.

*Q: Do you think that the travel we did in the country was helpful in your job?*

THURBER: It has been my feeling that the more I knew about the country of my assignment, the better job I could do in explaining the United States to the people of Malawi or Tanzania or wherever we were living.

Therefore, I did make a concerted effort to visit as much of each country I was assigned to as humanly possible within the time period I was there. It got progressively greater as I got further up the ladder until I was Public Affairs Officer and could pretty much write my own ticket.

I think it is very important, and I would like to see USIS promote this type of travel among all of our officers.

*Q: One visit that was very important, I think, in your career, was when John Reinhardt, the Area Director, came. I remember meeting him and being so impressed to meet someone so high up in USIS. Maybe you should mention what effect that had on your career.*

THURBER: It was our first meeting with John Reinhardt when he was Area Director. We, as you will see, came across him several times when he served as our Ambassador to Nigeria and then as head of the Agency when I was back in Washington.

John was doing a great job as Area Director, and I was particularly pleased that he came out, saw what I was doing, liked what I was doing, and when I told him that I wanted to stay in Africa, he arranged for my next assignment to be PAO in Malawi.

John's visit was towards the end of our tour in Tanzania. Those, again, were the good old days when we could travel on American ships and there were American ships going back and forth across the Atlantic. We all departed Tanzania in August, early August of 1969, for Paris, where we had to wait five days for our boat and then it was the boat train to Le Havre and then first class on the SS United States to New York.

It was a marvelous experience. I'm not sure the children enjoyed it as much as we did. It's really a shame that this type of trip and perks are no longer available to our officers.

They might seem unnecessary to the average citizen, but when you've lived for two years in a country like Tanzania or any developing country away from the United States, it is nice and it does a tremendous amount for your morale, to be able to travel in relative luxury and to enjoy your trip back and forth to the post, arriving rested and ready to go to work.

1969: Home Leave, Followed by --

*Q: Our home leave was like everybody else's in the Foreign Service. We visited relatives. It's always hard to find a place to stay. You feel a bit like you're imposing. I do remember arriving home with the children, staying with Jim's mother, and the first thing we wanted to do was have some grapes.*

*We hadn't had any fruit except for bananas and pineapples and oranges for two years, and our daughter said, "I'm going to the supermarket to buy some grapes," and Jim's mother said, "Oh, no, you can't do that because we're having a boycott on grapes," so then we had a terrible moral dilemma as to whether to support the farm workers' boycott or go eat the grapes. I must confess that we sneaked out later and bought some grapes.*

*One of the things that really struck us coming back from Tanzania with its one little supermarket, Dewhurst, was the incredible amount of choice that an American has. We were just dumfounded as we went to the supermarket, the children and I and I'm sure Jim, too.*

*How do you choose what kind of cereal, when you'd only had one choice before, and then your prayer was it didn't have bugs in it and here, you had 30 different options. It was quite incredible.*

*We did find that we were almost local celebrities since we'd been previously active in our hometown. We found our Christmas letters home had been published in the local papers. We hadn't known that. We were interviewed for the Palo Alto Times and our picture, all dressed up in African garb, appeared on the front page of the Palo Alto Times, so that was quite exciting.*

*The thing that was rather sad is that we learned that most people were really not interested in our adventures. We gave this wonderful slide show for our old neighbors and I was alerted to the fact that it was too long and our excitement was not getting through when I noticed one of our dear friends sound asleep in the corner.*

THURBER: My home leave consisted of some time with the family, visiting neighbors and relatives, and the rest in Washington while I stalled a bit until my next job opened up and my to-be predecessor was ready to leave post. I did attend the management training course that the Agency put on at that time.

Questionably Useful Management Training and --

Somebody had sold them a bill of goods about sensitivity training, and we trooped off to the Eastern Shore for a week, where we were broken into small groups and we were supposed to basically rate our companions on how well they were doing as managers.

Unfortunately, the groups were composed of, say, a librarian, a secretary, a top-level Foreign Service Officer, mid-career Foreign Service Officer, and maybe another civil servant, with no relationship on job responsibilities or duties or previous administrative training.

The net result was that since we were all good friends, we all got together and figured out how to beat the system. Everybody came out smelling like a rose, and the outside group that was doing the training got high marks for teaching all these management techniques when, really, they hadn't taught anything except taught us how to look the other way when we had a poor manager.

#### October 1969: Public Affairs Officer (PAO) Malawi

By October of 1969, we were on our way again, this time by plane, ship traveling being a thing of the past, to Malawi. It was just at a time that the Fly America Act was being pushed, one of those cycles, and to comply with that and also to see our son, who was at school in Switzerland, we took five extra days to get to Malawi that we could have cut down to one day by using a non-U.S. carrier.

The government, of course, paid some of the per diem for five extra days and the travel on the non-U.S. carriers to get across Europe and down to Athens where we could pick up TWA.

Malawi, where I was Public Affairs Officer, was fun. It was my first PAOship. I had the place to myself. I did have an assistant for part of the time I was there, but it was a very, very small post in a country that meant almost nothing to the United States. It did have a little role to play in the north/south relationship, which I'll get into in a minute.

In those days, USIS Malawi was located in Blantyre about a mile away from the embassy in three adjoining converted storefronts. As with other posts, our job was to tell America's story abroad and to make friends of the Malawians.

The latter was not a problem. Malawians loved the United States. They loved Americans. They were more conservative and anti-Communist than most Americans are. They often took us to task for not being fierce enough in our programs, such as in Vietnam and against the Soviet Union.

We spent as much time as we could traveling. I hooked up with the Peace Corps, which was quite active in Malawi, visiting with them and using them as conduits to local government officials up country.

There was a small aid program, a \$50,000 ambassador's contingency fund, which the ambassador assigned to me and one other embassy officer. We did a great deal in the self-help program with this \$50,000 and then going back for openings, dedications, and so forth, met people that way.

#### Very Little Value in Having USIS Program in Malawi

One interesting point about Malawi, which I alluded to earlier, was its proximity to South Africa and Rhodesia, and the role that it played as a go-between among the black and the white nations of Africa.

About five miles away from the embassy was the Blantyre Airport and there was a restaurant on the second floor, if you want to call it a restaurant, with a nice balcony which also served as a waving bay. Frequently, several of us from the embassy would go down to the airport for lunch and sit up on the balcony eating a variety of steak sandwiches, watching the airplanes' arrival and departure.

There were a long row of VIP lounges to the right of the tarmac and, as we sat there, we would watch a plane from South Africa come in and perhaps Vorster get out of it, and then a plane from Tanzania come in and Nyerere get out of it. The two would disappear into these lounges, converse for an hour or so, and then come out, get in their planes and fly off.

We were allowed to be there because, publicly, we kept our mouths shut and said nothing about what we had seen. Of course, all of this was reported back to Washington, but it was interesting to see in the days when, publicly, these leaders were haranguing each other, that they actually were meeting and talking with representatives from the other side, and Malawi was the location for this.

If there was any cause for us to be in Malawi, it was for that operation and I wasn't doing USIA work when I was down there watching what was going on. Outside of that, there was no reason for USIA to be in Malawi and they shouldn't be there today. I say that with no rancor, because I really enjoyed our time there but, realistically, I think it is a waste of funds.

We had an excellent embassy staff there, a former administrative officer, Marshall P. Jones, as our ambassador, who was laid back and ran the embassy exactly as one should be run in a very, very small, insignificant developing country; a deputy, who has now left the Foreign Service, but was excellent in his field; and an assistant who did the econ and political reporting, L. Paul Bremer, III, known as Jerry, who rose quickly through the ranks and last served in an ambassadorial position in Europe.

In any case, we, as an embassy group, seemed to get along very well together. There were, if I remember, eight other embassies in Malawi, all there in Blantyre, although Zomba was the capital, about 50 miles away.

There was a great deal of entertaining among ourselves. At every cocktail party, every national day and at other events, we would see all our friends at the cocktail party and then everybody would descend on the one decent restaurant in town, a Chinese restaurant, for dinner, so these affairs often lasted well into the night. We got to know the French, British and so forth extremely well.

There were a lot of Brits around. Malawi had not thrown out the ex-pats and instead were using them to good advantage, to try and get the country off on solid footing. I think Malawi was probably one of the last countries in Africa to send their ex-pats packing.

#### 1971: Visit of USIS Director Leads to Transfer as Deputy PAO in Nigeria

After about 16 months in Malawi, we were visited by the Area Director who I think was Bill Hutchinson. It could have been John Reinhardt, but I think Bill Hutchinson, who asked me if I had had enough of a small post and wanted to move on.

I must have screamed a "yes" at him, because he departed for Washington and, the next thing I knew, I was sent orders to move within two weeks to take over as Assistant PAO in Lagos, Nigeria, and that's about what we did, a direct transfer, on the spur of the moment.

We actually ended up going on the July 4th weekend 1971, by way of South Africa where, if I hadn't mentioned before, my brother was living with his family. We did make several trips to Johannesburg to see him and travel throughout the northern part of South Africa, expanding our knowledge about the country and learning a bit about the problems they were facing.

In July, it was on to Nigeria and what is probably one of the most difficult or unpleasant posts that the Foreign Service can come up with. Our housing wasn't very good. We had a block concrete duplex that you would think twice about before renting in the United States.

Traffic was absolutely unbelievable. The airport, on an open road, was about 20 minutes away but the trip could take up to three hours and did, many times. It had a big embassy with very little support for USIS even though John Reinhardt was our ambassador at that time or was, shortly after we arrived, and the country was just coming out of a civil war.

Nigerians are, on the whole, very friendly, outgoing people, who love to party, and the parties go on until all hours of the night, but they can also be very difficult. They are opinionated. They want to have their own way and they don't want to have anybody telling them what to do.

Agency Directed Changes in USIS Field Modus Operandi  
Do Not Necessarily Work in Every Country: Witness Nigeria

It was at this time, also, that we, in the field, started to see a real shift in Agency emphasis from meeting a large variety of people in a country and trying to tell our story as broadly as possible, to where we were supposed to start working only with target audiences, a small number of people who we could become very close friends with, and go into all sorts of discussions and really get to know them.

The system had two flaws in it. One is that people in Africa, it's been our experience, particularly in Nigeria but I think the same would be true anywhere in developing countries, really weren't prepared psychologically and otherwise to become very close friends with Americans. We came out of a completely different culture and society and really didn't understand their needs and aspirations and what they wanted to do.

So, we got to be friends with a lot of Nigerians and, later, with Pakistanis and so forth, but the friendships were very shallow and didn't go nearly as deep as some dreamer in Washington thought they would be.

Secondly, on this whole thing, it was assumed that if we developed a good friendship, say, with an economist, after reading a few briefing papers from Washington, we could talk economics and bring him up to date on what was going on in the United States, the money flow, the latest changes at the Federal Reserve Bank and so forth.

This was utter nonsense and USIA should have realized this a long time ago. One doesn't become an expert on these subjects and be able to talk in great depth on science or economics or any field in which one hasn't specialized, yet, even to this day, the Agency is still running somewhat that type of approach.

I solved it during my career in USIA by finding experts, whether they were visitors or embassy people and bringing them to do the talking and I would be the catalyst, but that isn't what was planned and that isn't what they wanted us to do.

#### Difficulties, Both Personal and Professional, of Operating in Lagos

Another problem with Lagos was the size of the embassy. It was a very busy place. The Biafra War had just ended. The oil boon had restarted. The United States had some financial interests in Nigeria and Nigeria was important. A quarter of all Africans are Nigerians and it's overwhelming in its size.

We didn't get much support out of the embassy. Possibly the PAO, Jack Shellenberger, did, because of his close relationship with the ambassador, but certainly not the rest of us.

Lagos itself was a depressing city to live in. It was very poorly managed. It was filthy dirty. It was terribly overcrowded and, as I mentioned, had travel problems. For myself, it wasn't bad. I had a good job to go to every day.

I had a driver and I worked inside. Jack made me the inside person, running the administration of the post, and also, though, I did cover the branches and administer them, basically, in Lagos, I was inside. I didn't have to face all these problems and I had air conditioning when it got impossible.

But, for my family, they were caught up in the daily life of Lagos and they are the ones that really found it the roughest. The saving grace for Lagos was a little boat called The Yankee Doodle and a beach house. On Sundays, often on Saturday afternoons -- we worked Saturday morning, but always on Sunday -- a small group of us from the embassy would traipse down to the dock, board The Yankee Doodle, and half an hour later, end up at a beach near the mouth of the Lagos Harbor, where we spent the day in relative comfort, lovely sunshine, and the children playing in the water and on the beach and so forth. If it wasn't for that, the city would probably have been impossible.

Also in Lagos, I experienced my first real inspection. We had had one in Malawi which turned out to be two very senior officers coming out there and I was by myself. They spent a week there in Malawi telling me and instructing me on how to run the post and to do some of the things I knew nothing about. It was marvelous. I couldn't have appreciated it more.

In Nigeria, we ran into the first full-fledged inspection and it was a disaster. It started by planes being late or arriving early and inspectors not being met -- and remember, these were the days that the inspectors wrote an OER on you. I had an OER written on me by one of the inspectors who had asked no questions, knew very little of what I was doing and it was devastating. In fact, it was so bad, it was thrown out.

While we were in Lagos, we moved to the office. We were thrown out of the building we were in, which was a very comfortable, efficient building about three stories high with a nice library on the ground floor, to another building where we went in with AID, occupied two floors of a multi-floor office building, which worked out fairly well, but it put our library upstairs.

Today, security would love it. In those days, it was a pain in the neck because people didn't know where it was and to come up the elevator discouraged a lot of the type of drop-ins that we wanted to get at that library.

The interesting thing is that shortly after we moved to these quarters, and spent a considerable amount of money redesigning them to meet our needs, they canceled our lease on that building, and AID and USIS had to move out to other quarters at quite great expense.

#### On the Road with a Program Developed in Lagos Explaining U.S. Election Process

Another high point of the Nigerian experience, outside of continuing our program to get to know as much about the country as possible and traveling to most sections of Nigeria,

was a multi-media election program which I developed with Jack Shellenberger's help, as an attempt to explain how the U.S. electoral process worked for our foreign audiences.

The program was so well received in Lagos, the Agency sent me on the road with it. Emy and I traveled to Ethiopia and then up and down the entire west coast of Africa, from Zaire all the way up to Sierra Leone, including Ghana, Liberia, Ivory Coast and so forth.

It not only was a fun type of program to give, I think it did help a little bit to explain the 1972 elections, and it also gave me a good knowledge, a wide knowledge of Africa and the wide diversity within the continent and some of the many problems that were going on in that continent.

Emy is now back and we're going to let her fill in a bit about the wife's point of view, both in Malawi and particularly in Nigeria, which I have briefly mentioned.

#### Family Perspectives and Comments on Diplomatic Life in Malawi and Nigeria

*Q: Malawi was a heavenly post for families. We had a wonderful house. There was a very good school for the younger children. There was a close knit community. We made good friends immediately in the embassy and there were only eight other embassies, I think. We made good friends in each of them.*

*The Malawians were very receptive and open, and we made some good Malawian friends although, unfortunately, we haven't kept up with them. Our two younger children went to a small school in Limbe, where we lived. It was a very traditional, very British type school, and I think it was excellent for them.*

*The one thing I do remember while we were there is that President Banda put on some very tight strictures on how women should dress, and this also applied to the children. So, our little daughter, Mary, who started in infant school, I think it was called -- there was no kindergarten -- so she started first grade at five years old -- had to wear a uniform and, in the middle of the year, we had to lengthen it so it went below her knees.*

*What I did was just tack a piece of blue cloth onto her now already faded uniform and she did look awfully funny, but she was left alone. Some of the Malawian school children were not so lucky because the police would come and go to their schools, and if their skirts were above their knees, they'd rip the hem or rip the dress in an attempt to make the girl's dress more proper.*

*I think our children were very happy there. They made some good friends. Their best friends were two little Rhodesian boys who lived down the street and it was kind of an idyllic place. We lived in a nice house right on the side of the mountain and we used to hear the drums from the African villages at night. Sometimes, we'd hike up the mountain, through the villages, and the African people were very kind to us. It was a marvelous experience for the kids.*

*The only bad part was that there was no school for our daughter, Harriette, who was then going into her tenth grade year, so we sent her to boarding school in the United States. I chose what I thought was a great boarding school in Colorado. It did not turn out to be a perfect place for her, and she had a lot of problems there.*

*Being so far away was terribly difficult. Communication was slow. Letters would take two weeks to go by pouch and then two weeks to come back. By the time the letter had gone and come back, the situation had changed. We couldn't really telephone easily.*

*In fact, at one point, I had this letter saying that she was very depressed and I tried to call her and I couldn't get through. The phone lines were down for a week and that, I found very, very difficult for me, and I'm sure it was difficult for Jim, too.*

*Our other son, Jim, was still in boarding school in Switzerland the first year and that worked out very well. When the two older children did come out for the summer, they had an absolutely wonderful time. Again, a small community of expatriots. There, I think they had almost no contact with the local people, but they had a fabulous time.*

*One of the neat things that happened to us in Malawi is that we had a monkey. Somebody had a small baby monkey and they didn't know what to do with it. We took him and we had him for about three or four months.*

*It was really a charming and great experience. I remember when he came into the house and sat down in Jim's eggs and also broke our favorite ashtray and yet, he also would cuddle up just like a human baby. We all found this quite delightful.*

*One of the very nice perquisites in Malawi was they had, at one time, purchased a beautiful cottage down on Lake Malawi that was for the use of the embassy. You had to sign up to get it and you couldn't get it more than once every several months, but it was a great change of pace.*

*There was a boat and a dock from which you could swim. I remember we could hear the hippopotamus in the lake at night and that was romantic. Occasionally, we took friends down with us and that gave us a lot of pleasure.*

*They also had an embassy cottage in the mountains in Zomba, which was then the capital, and that also was available to embassy personnel to use and we used that occasionally. I remember once we gave a cocktail party for government personnel up there. This was a very convenient and pleasant facility.*

*One of our greatest pleasures in Malawi was playing tennis. We belonged to the local country club. Its name escapes me at the moment. We played very actively there and, in addition, we played with some Malawians at the local public courts twice a week, with*

*another embassy family -- two other embassy families, Chips Chester and Jerry Bremer and their wives.*

*The embassy closed earlier than USIS, so I remember Jim changed the hours of USIS so that we could get out there and play. They were still working the same amount of time. They just started earlier in the morning and we felt this was worthwhile, because we made some excellent contacts playing tennis with the Malawians.*

*Also, for me, one of the things I did at Malawi, I worked at Save the Children. We had been involved over the years in supporting children through this good foundation, so I was able to be a volunteer. At one point, I served as the volunteer executive director while the director was on home leave. It gave me a really interesting insight into Malawian society and we made some very good African friends.*

*In addition, we both started out studying Chichewa but, again, Jim found it difficult to keep it up and do all his work, so I continued and became not really fluent, but able to use it in the market and at cocktail parties and so forth.*

*Jim has mentioned that we were transferred directly from Malawi to Lagos, Nigeria, and we were very excited to go to west Africa with all the dynamism, the dancing, the music, the art and so forth, but it did prove to be a difficult post. Our housing was not very good. We had no closets, I remember, and I had to line foot lockers up in the hallway and cover them with cloth and put all the linens and sweaters and things in them.*

*Traffic was horrible. It was very hard to get around. A few times, I used the embassy driver to take the children and me places, knowing that it probably wasn't wholly legitimate and yet, I was afraid to drive and I figured if they were going to send us over there, that the government would have to help the family adjust.*

*The school was not bad for the children. It was an American-type school, run out of Tacoma, Washington. Jim got involved and was on the school board. I think he became president of the school board. It wasn't a terribly demanding school, but it was adequate.*

*Socially, Lagos was a little more difficult for us. Jim's job as DPAO was a good job, but he had no specific target audience so we never knew whom to invite, to parties. The press were covered by the Information Officer and the people in the universities by the Cultural Affairs Officer.*

*The PAO had the top dogs and we always had difficulty in finding our social niche with Nigerians, even though we did make some friends and did a fair amount of entertaining.*

*We had some funny times with servants. We had a man named Charles who worked for us who was quite an interesting chap, but it turned out he was really mentally deranged. I think we were surprised when he told us one day that he had written to the President of Nigeria, telling him that the Thurbers' cook was trying to poison us, and he had alerted*

*the president so that he could take action. At that point we made sure that Charles left the house quite quickly.*

*One really funny incident that we had which really gave us momentary connection with some of the government officials, the president's sister came down to assist in a cultural program and the CAO, Pete Peters, who was a bachelor, didn't think it would be appropriate for her to stay with him, so she stayed with us.*

*Our two children, especially Alex, who was then, I think, about 11 or 12, really cozied up to her and told her how he really admired her brother, the president, General Gowon, and she very happily said, "Well, I'd like to have you and your sister come to tea with the president." Alex was excited, and I said he ought to ignore that. Nothing was going to happen.*

*Lo and behold, two days later, Mrs. Audu, the sister, drove up in a state house car with two beautifully dressed guards and said, "Are the children ready to go to tea?" Well, they did indeed drive off, leaving Mama sitting at home looking rather forlorn, and they had a marvelous time.*

*They spent 30 minutes with the president and his wife and their youngest child. Alex said that he engaged General Gowon in conversation for at least 20 minutes. They discussed the affairs of the world and what Alex was going to be when he grew up, et cetera.*

*Then we received an invitation to State House for the next day for the celebration of National Day, (to which we had never been invited before) and we, indeed, met the president, using our son's name. He remembered Alex all too well, stating that Alex told him he was going to be President of the United States someday. That story made the embassy rounds for weeks with much laughter and amusement.*

*Lagos was reputed to be a post that really depressed people. Before we came, the DPAO's wife had some kind of a breakdown. In fact, that's why we came as we did. I think while we were there, someone else had to be evacuated for mental reasons. It just was a difficult post.*

*I even found myself getting slightly depressed. Jim came to my aid by establishing a part-time job for me, where I put together a DRS file. It was one of the early ones. We used a key sort method, where you pulled out your target people by putting a needle through holes in cards, so I spent, oh, maybe ten hours a week putting together the most important people in Nigeria, who was who in the music world and in the arts and so forth, which we hoped would give people some historical sense when they came to the post.*

*When we had arrived, there was nothing. We didn't know whom to contact and nobody seemed to know who we should, so I hope that was of some use. It certainly helped my morale.*

*The two children and I left early from Lagos with Jim, and came back for our oldest son's wedding in New Mexico. Then Jim returned to Lagos and we had the pleasure of going to Washington, buying a car, and buying a house without him, which is something that didn't happen often in those days. It was surprising to have such a great responsibility. This probably occurs quite regularly in the Foreign Service, but not necessarily in other walks of life.*

### 1973: Back to Washington: The National War College

THURBER: Our first tour in Washington started off quite pleasantly with a year at the National War College. The College has a wonderful reputation. I had heard something about it while I was still overseas and was delighted to be a member of the class of 1974.

But, as I look back on it, I think the college should be reserved for those Foreign Service Officers who are really interested in pursuing global problems of war and peace. I hate to use the word "intellectual," but maybe that would best describe the type of student who would get the most out of the college.

Otherwise, a student who isn't particularly interested and doesn't want to do much can really goof off for a year and still get a nice OER from the friendly USIA types around, since nobody really knew what the students were doing, how much they were absorbing, how much they were benefiting from the year there. In 1973-74, there were no definite standards, nor was there any way of testing the students on what they got from the year at the college.

The high point of the year, and I'm very sorry that it has been basically discontinued, were the overseas trips. Personally, I got more out of the three-week trip to the Far East than I got out of the other nine or ten months of lectures and so-called discussion groups.

The three-week trip took 15 of us to Australia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan and Tokyo, where we were hosted and dined by senior military and government officials in each country, and given a taste of real VIP travel. Since the National War College is a DOD operation, we always visited places where either we had a DOD presence, such as Thailand, or we had a friendly local situation, such as Taiwan or Tokyo.

Our luggage was handled. We never put a hand on it from when we left San Francisco until we returned. Our rooms were always ready for us. Believe it or not, when I got promoted during the trip to what was then an FSO-2, I was switched to a better room, in fact, a suite, because my grade had gone up from the equivalency of a full Colonel to somewhere between a one and two star General. So, I was moved into flag rank quarters.

The other side of the National War College is that, in 1973, students had the option of pursuing a master's degree at George Washington University, an option which I accepted

and undertook getting my degree, utilizing some of the course work and papers at the National War College to fulfill some of the requirements for the master's degree.

It was a good program. It made sure that this wasn't a year of rest and recuperation, as the master's degree not only required classes in the late afternoons, when most of the students had gone home from the National War College. It also required an extensive dissertation, which involved all weekends, Christmas, spring vacation, whatever free time I had went into preparing this paper.

At the end of the War College or after the War College ended in June of 1974, we stayed on for another six weeks to complete the course work. I think it was worth it. I think a year at the War College without that type of intellectual discipline would have been basically a year off, fun but without any real sense of accomplishment.

#### August 1974: Media Reaction Section of "P" (Policy) Area

Then, on the first of August of 1974, with my Master's Degree in hand, a year at the National War College behind me, I returned to the real world with a job in the Media Reaction Section of the P Bureau in the Agency. However, scholars of history will remember that that first week in August 1974 was the end of the Nixon Administration.

#### Excitement and Trauma of Nixon Resignation

I must admit, with USIA being about two blocks from the White House, most of us that first week spent the time when we could get away from our jobs standing in the crowds in front of the White House watching the growing tension, the growing drama that led, on August 8th, to President Nixon's departure from Washington.

It was quite an experience. We lived part of history. The sights of the somber crowd in front of the White House will be a long time in my memory.

#### Delays in Getting Media Reaction through Bureaucratic Maze Detracted from Its Usefulness

I started off in the Media Reaction Section as a writer with the intention that I would become the director of that section. After a few months as a writer, the paperwork went through and I took over the Media Reaction Section of approximately five officers, a few secretaries and myself.

We basically, at my start there, put out a report two or three times a week as to how a certain issue was being treated in the foreign media around the world. This report was circulated to a large number of readers, many of whom, it was my feeling and reinforced by going out to talking to them, threw the thing in the wastepaper basket or put it in an out box for somebody else further down the line to read.

There were some serious scholars of this media reaction and the paper did serve a function. I'm not so sure it served a function that required the work of about eight people to produce.

What bothered me was that the slowness in getting this paper out and distributing it and the fact that, in my feeling, media reaction or foreign media reporting had to be answered immediately, especially by outfits such as the Voice of America, and couldn't sit around for a week or two to get out a reaction.

If the Germans are screaming about some action by the State Department in the local press and the German editorials are very much anti-U.S., you want a reaction today. You don't want one a week from Sunday.

#### Delay Alleviated by Institution of a One-Page, Early Morning Reaction Summary

So, to try to counter this, I initiated an early morning one-page media reaction summary, out by 8:00 o'clock in the morning and on the desks of all of the leading officers in USIA and as many people in the State Department and the National Security Council as we could service at that time in the morning.

This document is still being produced today, and I think it serves a real purpose in notifying our policy makers in State, NSC and USIA as to what the foreign press is saying. It was really nothing but a summary. The paragraphs, in those days, would say, "The media overseas feels the United States is making a bad mistake in doing such-and-such," and there would be a few quotes from some of the leading papers and then on to the next subject.

I fiercely defended the policy that this be no longer than one page, so that even the Secretary of State would have time to read it, which I understand he did, occasionally.

This started two trends in USIA, one of which was that the head of the Media Reaction or whoever did the early morning summary, had to be in at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. With the development of the Operations Center, we were able to get our immediate cables from overseas in by 6:00 a.m., and with the time changes from Europe, we got their summaries at that point.

It also meant that the Media Reaction Section was the first in the agency to start using computerized word processors. This was the old IBM Mag Card word processor. My poor secretary, after going through months of training, and hours and hours of desperation, finally made the thing work, and we were able to put out the product using the word processor and the copying machines by 8:00 o'clock each morning.

Of course, today, it's quite different. I had to read hundreds and hundreds of paragraphs of incoming cable material as fast as I could and pick out the salient points. Today, the material all flows directly into the Media Reaction computers, pulled up by paragraphs, edited and sent to the printer -- a far cry from what we were doing.

## 1976: Put in Charge of P Area's Fast Policy Guidance Section

I enjoyed the work in Media Reaction, but it did get fairly boring and after almost two years, the head of P asked me if I would take over the Fast Policy Guidance Function. I moved across the hall with great speed and into what I considered one of the best jobs, at that time, that I could have gotten in Washington.

Our job in the Fast Policy Guidance was to digest piles of incoming cables every morning, report these at a P staff meeting at 9:00 o'clock as to what major problems were going on around the world, suggest how USIA would handle it, and hopefully get guidance out to the field to our officers in a timely fashion so that it would be some use to them.

### Fast Guidance Also Suffered (and Still Does) From Bureaucratic Delays

Unfortunately, the third condition, getting the material out to the field, has never properly been solved in the Agency. We do have a Fast Policy Guidance Office now. It works very effectively, as I think it did when I was there, and it effectively tells members of the staffs what the problems are.

But, when it comes to producing guidance, it is so locked into the bureaucratic clearance process and need to touch all bases, that it is usually too late when it gets out to the field to be of much value to the officers.

I was on the delivery end of it. I've been on the receiving end of it. I think this is one area where the Agency lets down its field officers in that they do not give them the material they need to go to their contacts, the press and so forth, and have the background to argue one way or another on major issues.

Of course, in the job, too, I continued the "ongoing discussions" with Voice of America on its role in telling America's story and giving U.S. policy. Eventually, over the years, this came to be settled or was settled with the development of the VOA editorial and the clear announcement that this was U.S. policy, but in the earlier years, it was a battle to see how we could get policy across and, at the same time, maintain the VOA charter and its right to be free and uncensored in the way it presented the news and opinion.

### Handling Press Side of Presidential Visits Falls into Fast Policy Guidance Section

Continuing now on the Fast Policy Guidance job, two things of interest developed out of that job. One was the involvement in presidential trips. There was no office in USIA set up to handle these trips and, as the Carter White House - this didn't apply so much to Ford, but did particularly under Carter -- started talking about his travels, they saw the need for USIA assistance, at least at the beginning of the administration.

I don't exactly remember how, but somehow it fell into my office. We put together, gathered together, a great deal of material on USIA's role in presidential visits and produced a manual which was cleared with the White House, and was basically devoted to working with the Presidential Press Corps overseas.

As part of putting this manual together, I went to Canada with Vice President Mondale on one of his trips and again later went as a member of the advance team to Panama to arrange for the president's trip to Panama to sign the Panama Canal Treaty.

This book is still in existence today, edited many times over. Since writing it, I've been involved in numerous presidential visits or VIP visits, particularly the Secretary of State coming to Pakistan and the President to Canada.

It is a curious relationship, USIA and the White House, during these visits. The White House is so 100 percent cocksure they know exactly what they want to do and how to do it that they do not want advice or suggestions. They want workers, at least they think they do.

As the trip is first developed, they have all sorts of special jobs they put USIA officers into, such as managing the press center, taking care of the press pools, and working directly with the president's press secretary, a job that usually goes to the PAO.

But, when the actual trip takes place and the pre-advance and the advance teams are replaced by the crews of operators out of Washington, USIA gets pushed very much into the background. You end up with a group of very frustrated USIA officers who are supposed to be doing certain things and suddenly find that there's really not very much to do but stand around, hold hands, and maybe deliver coffee and newspapers.

This is particularly true once an administration gets going, but it is also true in some of the initial trips. I've been involved in this enough that I've tried to change it, tried to get a definite role for USIA on these trips, trying to give a reason for our existence and work with it, but nothing seems to happen.

#### Self-Satisfied Convictions of White House Young Travel Officers Complicates USIS Task in Field

The White House is such an in-bred group and their young travel officers, advance people, are so damn sure that everything they do is absolutely right, that we really have to just go along with the flow, do what they want and not really question it.

The one thing we can do and we have done successfully is to make sure the foreign press is included. After all, the White House group coming out with the President is interested only in the White House press corps and how everything will play back to the United States.

Hours and hours and hours are spent setting up photo opportunities to how they will show in the U.S. press. The White House press office really doesn't give a damn what is said in the foreign press. Here is a role for USIA. We can keep working with the White House press group nagging, pushing, to make sure the foreign press gets an equal break, both in the pools and in attending press conferences and read-outs by the White House press secretary.

It is a thankless job. It is a job that you go into full of expectations and what fun this is going to be. It ends up -- you end up being frustrated, pushed around, and made to feel like a very junior JOT, even though you might be the PAO in a major country.

Thurber and McKinney Russell Actually Inaugurated Forerunner of TV Worldnet in 1976

One other anecdote: In spite of what's been said over the years, the 1980s in particular, the first Worldnet did not take place under Charlie Wick or Al Snyder. It took place under McKinney Russell and me on January 19, 1976 when McKinney and I went to Blair House where President-elect Carter was staying the night before he was inaugurated and with IMV equipment, recorded a short -- I think about three or four-minute message to the citizens of the world, peoples of the world outside the United States from Jimmy Carter to be released at the time of his inauguration the following day.

This message was then sent by commercial satellite around the world. I wish I had the figures now, but it seems to me 23 countries picked it up and rebroadcast it the next day, giving a very clear indication to the world of Jimmy Carter's interests in international affairs and with other people. This was a clear case of USIA's television capabilities being used for what it was best used as, not with just trying to fill time in cable systems into foreign hotels.

#### 1978: Country PAO in Pakistan

The tour in the Policy Guidance Office came to an end in mid-1978 when I received an assignment as Public Affairs Officer in Pakistan. This started off badly and maybe it was a harbinger of what was to come in this assignment, probably one of the most challenging and interesting assignments of my life, but certainly not what I joined the agency for and certainly not one I would recommend to other officers.

As I say, it started off badly. I was told by Personnel in the spring of 1978 that I would not be going overseas that year, that I would have another year in Washington, which was unusual, I'd been there five years already, and to settle down and not plan on moving.

At that point, my daughter, with glee, went out and made the final arrangements to purchase a horse that she had wanted to buy for some time. The family in general, including me, expressed delight that they would be able to make plans for the coming year, knowing that they wouldn't be subject to moving.

That all came to a roaring halt about two weeks later when, believe it or not, I was in the men's room and a member of the Personnel Office turned to me and said, "Congratulations on your assignment," to which I expressed a bit of surprise. He said, "Didn't you know you were going to Pakistan as PAO?"

To the best of my ability, I tried to find out what had happened. This was part of the John Reinhardt personnel policy. You go where you're told to go and you don't question it. No wimps in USIA. You join the agency to serve anywhere in the world and don't give me any back talk or get out.

In fact, two officers were assigned to Pakistan before me. Both, for one reason or another, and I know the reasons were very legitimate, said they couldn't go, wouldn't go, or similar words, and the director got their resignations.

We didn't want to resign and we felt it was a good assignment. It certainly was a compliment to be asked to go out there. It was a big post, 16 Americans, 155 local employees, and a challenge, so we picked it up and, in early September, were on our way.

Actually, the director wanted me to go out ahead of the family, in two weeks, in fact, because my predecessor had serious hearing problems and was being medically removed from the country. I did manage to get that two weeks extended until the end of the summer, so that I could go out in some semblance of order.

#### Chaotic Situation at USIS Headquarters in Islamabad Upon Thurber Arrival

The situation in Pakistan when I got there, and I think a great deal of this was due to the illness of my predecessor, as his hearing got worse -- this is all hearsay from other members of the staff -- he withdrew more and more into himself, and did not get out into the field and see what was going on.

The basic problem I came up against was the lack of central authority out of USIS, particularly our branch in Rawalpindi out 12 miles away from the embassy. It was somewhat of a weird situation. In the embassy, you had the PAO and his immediate staff, including all the administration.

In Rawalpindi, only 12 miles away, you had a branch PAO who was really an assistant CAO and a fairly good sized staff, occupying a very large center which once had been the main USIS office.

The officer in Rawalpindi was, to put it mildly, out of control. He was running his office as he felt the USIS shop should be run, and he was not a young man to take advice from headquarters. That was my first problem.

Luckily, in two of the other branches, I had superb officers, in Lahore and Karachi. They were running by themselves very well, in the tradition of USIA, traditional programs, working very closely with the CAO and IO in Islamabad.

Peshawar, the fourth branch post, had no American officer and none had been assigned at the point when I got out there. It was a quiet little town on the Afghan border, not to last that way for long, but at that point, it wasn't really much of a problem and I was able to ignore it while I tried to settle Rawalpindi and some of the conditions there.

There were two things going on, or three, actually, that I didn't particularly like and wanted to change. One of them was the lack of travel by the main USIS officers, the PAO, the IO and the CAO and Admin Officer to the branches. Apparently, there had been little or no travel over the past couple of the years and the branches were run as mini-USIS country centers by themselves.

Secondly, while we were in the embassy, with all of the main embassy officers, there was very little contact between USIS and the embassy and I was determined to change that, which I think I did over the next year, year and a half, while we were in that building.

In fact, we were greatly aided by the Ambassador, Arthur Hummel, who was a USIA officer himself at one point, and prided himself on knowing the value USIS could be to any embassy operation.

At the same time, he exhibited complete faith in me and my operation and never, ever looked over my shoulder unless I went to him for advice. He let me run my own program, but he cooperated every time.

Thirdly was the situation within USIS regarding the families. USIS, for some reason, probably the Islamic influence on our main participants, was a stag operation. All entertaining was stag. Visits were stag. The women and the wives and the families just didn't play any role whatsoever.

After about three days at post, I found out what was going on and outlawed stag parties. Working luncheons, working dinners, were permitted, which generally then ended up pretty much all male, but any social event to be paid for out of representation could not be stag.

Needless to say, I ran into quite a bit of flack on this one, as much from the Pakistanis as from the Americans or vice-versa, but it did sit and eventually, it got to where the wives, the families, were playing a major role in USIS operations and, I hope, feeling they had some responsibility in the country and they were there to do more than just wash dishes and serve hors d'oeuvres.

Agency's Personnel Policies Ignore Stated Post Needs -- Give Field Fits

The problems of finding a new branch PAO in Peshawar were so typical of the USIS personnel program, which leaves personnel decisions completely centralized in Washington with no input from the post.

Peshawar was a one-American, five-Pakistanis post, located in a very rugged, very "he-man" operation, very Islamic, and very much a post for a creative self-starter, go-getter type of officer.

I sent numerous cables, memoranda to Washington, saying this is the type of officer we must have in that post. There's just no room for somebody on a retirement program, somebody who is not a self-starter, somebody who might have medical problems, something like that.

Believe it or not, that's exactly what I got, a man with an alcohol problem, a non self-starter, a man on his retirement posting, and it was a disaster. Luckily, we were able to transfer him back to the United States, but not without tremendous difficulty, a very unfortunate situation as far as the officer himself was concerned, who was fully aware of what was going on and had no capacity to defeat it or change it, and considerable loss of face among the Pakistanis who, within minutes, knew what was going on.

In a country that prohibits liquor, in a country that looks on the male as being the strong individual, et cetera, to have this situation was not good. It didn't make any difference. The next time, I got a woman for the position. While she was very good and worked out very well and worked extremely hard, she was at a tremendous disadvantage.

She realized it as much as I did. I think she worked even harder because of it, but the Pakistanis weren't about to accept her as a full-fledged member of the business and international community the way she needed to be accepted.

Unfortunately, the USIA personnel section hadn't changed when I left in the summer of 1990. It was still making the decisions by itself. It was still causing me the same type of problems and ignoring the recommendations from the PAO.

#### Washington Equally Unhelpful in Problems Incident to Construction of a New USIS Cultural Center Building

The biggest problem I had, however, was not the personnel there in Islamabad. At this point, it was the new building. I arrived in Pakistan just as construction began on a new USIS center for Islamabad which was to replace the center in Rawalpindi and become a showcase for USIS operations in the country.

I left three years later. The building was not complete. It would have been about a five or six-month construction job if done in the United States. In fact, I went back two years after that -- six years after the start of construction, I went back to the dedication.

Construction of the new USIS center in Islamabad was chaos. It was awarded to the lowest bidder who was, in pure, simple English, a crook, and a very poor contractor who did not understand construction methods unless they were done according to Pakistani style. Of course, we weren't doing that. We were building quite a nice elaborate building with some fairly tricky construction methods in it. That was just the first of the problems.

The second of the problems was that I immediately found out when I got there that I was supposed to supervise construction of the building. I mean completely supervise it. I notified Washington immediately that I couldn't do this.

I wasn't a construction supervisor. I could build a bookcase and maybe hang a door, but that was the extent of my knowledge and, if they wanted a building properly built out here, they would have to send a construction supervisor out to do it. I then went back later and reinforced this after my first few meetings with the contractor and then going out and seeing the work on the site. Washington eventually responded, but not with what we wanted.

Instead of sending out a construction supervisor, they sent out the architect to supervise the construction, a man who was very good at designing redecoration jobs for large and wealthy homes in the Washington area, but who had very little experience and the lack of personality to handle a Pakistani contractor who himself didn't know what he was doing.

The net result was we spent I don't know how many thousands of dollars more than we had to spend on that building. The whole thing, just in one word, was stupid. Materials were brought in from the United States. They weren't complete.

We were held up for four or five weeks at one point because the description on the incoming windows said, "Use such and such screws," and these were unavailable in Pakistan. They had to come out from Washington and it took four or five weeks to go through the ordering process to buy several boxes of screws which here, could have been purchased from the local hardware store and sent out by air pouch in a matter of days.

All sorts of things went wrong with that building. We'd go over and check it, as I did, every single day, especially during the first year and a half and almost as frequently during the second half of my tour there. You'd go over one day and find that they'd put in a reinforcing bar right through where a window or a doorway was going to be.

You would find that no window had been put in where one was supposed to be or that the contractor had used up all of his advance money and didn't have any money to pay his workers, so had let them go and it was sitting there in a very unfinished state and nobody on the job. It went from bad to worse.

There were bankruptcies involving the contractor. There was an attempt to bring in another contractor who discovered serious problems with the first contractor. It was just absolute chaos. It taught us that we should never, never build a building overseas without

a U.S. supervisor or I should say a building using U.S. standards overseas without a U.S. supervisor; that it was stupid to build a building overseas using such things as American windows and window glass.

We got window glass shipped out of the United States in crates and we'd open them up and there wasn't a single piece of glass in one piece, just little powdered dust at the bottom of the crate. We'd reorder. Half of them would arrive unbroken and on and on like that. Eventually, we did start to use local glass, just to seal up the building, because we couldn't seem to get some decent glass out in one piece from the United States.

I was involved in this up to my neck, far more than I wanted to be. It took far more time away from programming than I wanted to spend. It developed a great deal of animosity on the part of Washington staff. Part of this was due, I'm sure, to the numbers of frantic cables I kept sending back, saying, "We need this and this, and why don't we get proper help, and who is doing this in Washington," and so forth.

When I finally did get back to Washington, I found out the Area Director was getting blamed for the slow progress and many problems with the Center. He was obviously trying to shift the blame to me. He mentioned it negatively in my OER and later said, "If I were you, I'd get myself a lawyer."

I didn't get a lawyer. The problems at that time, cracks in the roof, proved to be inconsequential, and the building eventually was sealed.

It was not a happy story. It could have been easily solved by the appointment of a proper building contractor at the beginning, but the building is finished. I went to the dedication, as I said. I've been back several times. It is a glorious building and, unless you'd been deeply involved in the construction and know where to look to see where the problems were, the casual observer would never notice them.

#### Problems Involving American International School in Islamabad

Also during my tour in Islamabad, I continued my interest in overseas schools and I served on the school board of the American International School in Islamabad and in the fall of 1979, became president of the school board.

Leading up to other problems was the incident on November 4th. Our superintendent, Bill Keogh, had formerly served in Tehran and, on the weekend of November 4th, went up to Tehran to see about closing out the school there because of the problems with the Iranian government and the fact there were no more American dependents there.

That was the time of the take over of the embassy and Bill was inside when it happened, and was one of the hostages who then were kept 444 days in captivity in Iran. It left us without a superintendent, a series of unfortunate debates or discussions with Bill Keogh's wife, who claimed her husband had notified her that she should take over the running of the school. The board did not wish that to happen, eventually, or at the same time,

requiring a tremendous amount of time on my part, in the evenings and on weekends, to try and fill in the tremendous gap left by Bill's being incarcerated.

#### U.S. Discontinuance of AID Program Because of Pakistan Sub Rosa Efforts to Gain Nuclear Weapons Capability Eventually Sparks Sack of U.S. Embassy and USIA Centers

Following the takeover of the embassy in Tehran, things began to fall apart in Pakistan. We'd gone through a long, lengthy and very disagreeable session over the past seven, eight, nine months, with the Pakistanis over their development of a nuclear weapon.

We were pretty sure we had excellent evidence that they were doing so and, because of that, the automatic AID law, so to speak, kicked in, which meant we had to discontinue our AID programs. This caused a great deal of resentment on the part of the Pakistanis and we began to see and hear of small groups of Pakistanis demonstrating against the United States.

As the middle of November came, these demonstrations took on an uglier turn. There were marches on the consulates in both Karachi and Lahore stopped by the police, and we began to hear on the radio and on television that the United States was not welcomed in Pakistan.

This all reached a head on November 21, 1979, when a mob of students and people from Rawalpindi and Islamabad stormed the American embassy, burned everything burnable within the compound which, in effect, burned out the entire place, killed two Americans, two Pakistanis on our staff, and I don't know how many Pakistanis among the demonstrators, and caused not only a complete change for a lot of people but, certainly, my role as Public Affairs Officer.

This took place on Wednesday afternoon, the day before Thanksgiving. Early on Friday morning, about 3:00 a.m., we evacuated almost the entire embassy staff except for 20 or so -- I stayed -- and all of the dependents, the wives and children, from not only Islamabad, but Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar.

It should be noted, also, that the demonstrators also burned down the USIA centers in Rawalpindi and Lahore. They tried to in Peshawar and Karachi and were turned back by police.

Following the evacuation on Friday morning and a day trying to get some semblance of order into my life after my family was on its way to the States, I sat down at a dictating machine and dictated a report of the raid on the embassy and my emotions and feelings.

I'm enclosing that with this tape. I see no point in recounting all of that, because what I remember now could be quite different than what actually happened. Times change; feelings change; remembrances change. So, the one thing I can say about the attached, it's not very perfect grammar or it does not flow very well, but it is accurate.

The raid on the embassy occurred in the middle of my tour in Pakistan. The first 18 months were devoted to programming the normal USIA operations, trying to get the staff built up, and building the new building.

#### Slow Re-establishment of USIS Program

The second half, the next 18 months, were entirely devoted to rebuilding. There was very little programming. Speakers didn't particularly want to come to Pakistan at that point. We did not rebuild our center in Rawalpindi, by the way. We just continued with the center in Islamabad with the plans to move there completely, but rebuilt our center in Lahore and rebuilt our staff.

We did not bring back many of the original officers who were there at the time of the fire. They went on to other assignments, and we had to get new people in, train them, and get the programs going again. It took about 18 months to do this job.

In Islamabad, we moved our operations into the house of one of our evacuated officers -- remember, we had nothing out of our offices, both in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, everything was completely destroyed, including the library in Rawalpindi, a 10,000 volume library.

My office, as a description, which I went into the next day, had about four inches of ash on the floor, a metal wastebasket in one corner, a glob of glass in the middle of the floor where the desk had been. It was the glass cover of the desk, the runners of the desk drawers, another glob of metal which was the telephone, and that was about it.

I had a whole row of books. There wasn't a single one left. Even the structure of the brick and so forth was destroyed, which gives you an idea of the heat of the fire.

So, we started from scratch. We had nothing to begin with. We went out, literally, to a stationery store and bought pencils, pens, and pads of paper. The embassy was in the same state. They moved into the AID building, so they were able to draw on AID supplies and we did, to a certain extent, but basically it was a start from scratch.

Washington started and built up our supply of books, our manuals, everything you need to operate in today's bureaucracy and, within a couple of weeks, we had packed up the furniture and personal belongings of the officer who had lived in the house. We had begged, borrowed and purchased furniture. We had telephones installed. We even had a copying machine and we were pretty much back to business on a very reduced scale.

We had nowhere near the space for the staff of 155, well, actually, in Islamabad, it was about 59 or 60 Pakistanis, so we put them on a rotating administrative leave basis that went on for six or seven months, until we were able to get jobs and space back to bring them all back to work.

The officer's house we were living in was much too small to do what we wanted to do. It was located in a residential district. There was no parking, et cetera, so after a few months, we found a much larger house closer to the embassy, in fact, right next door to the Ambassador's residence and we took that over and set that up as a USIS center.

We had a small library, or eventually did, as we received new books to replace the old ones, and a large front hall where we could show films or television and VCRs. It was a small, but adequate, center, and enabled us eventually to get all our staff back to work again and working productively for the Information Agency.

In Lahore, much the same thing; after a week or two of looking, the Branch PAO found a reasonably-sized house which he moved into and set up operations. He was better off, as far as the fire was concerned. The students in Lahore did not do as good a job destroying that center as they did in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, and much of the library was salvaged.

Many of the books were repaired by sanding, literally sand papering off the ash that had accumulated on the outside, washing down the covers and putting them back on the shelves. The staff spent the next two or three months recovering the library and setting it up, and by the summer, six months later, they were back pretty much in operation.

It should be mentioned, however, that while it sounds like we went back to work pretty quickly, the situation in the country was not that good for a few weeks or months. We were not out advertising our presence. We did such things as removing the diplomatic plates from our cars that identified us as Americans. The Canadians came forth, in great esprit de corps and gave us plates identifying us as Canadian diplomats, which we were delighted to have. We took name plates off our houses.

We increased our guards around the houses. The first few nights, there were isolated groups, small groups, of Pakistanis who came around and wanted to know where the American was living in this house or that house and yelling and threatening. My guard was very good. I was one of the few Americans still in town, and he gave them to believe that I had left and the house was deserted. They went their way, I think luckily for me.

#### U.S. Gradually Got Back in Business and General Atmosphere Improved

But, gradually, the atmosphere improved. The Pakistanis realized that they had made quite a mistake and that we had not been involved, as my statement said, in the attack at the mosque at Mecca and that we weren't really that bad, and we could be accepted back without having to pay any great penalty, although the students still showed no remorse, months after the incident, and I think would have done it again if there had been the leadership to do it.

Certainly, we went through some tense times as other world incidents boiled up and we felt there might be a repercussion in Pakistan. I would say by May or June, things were

completely back to normal. By August, our families were allowed to return and, by September, the situation in the country was pretty much the same as it was before.

There were far fewer Americans in the embassy group, far fewer American children at the International School, and my work was basically still on rebuilding and getting an operation back in usable shape. It continued that way for the final year.

#### Agency Initially Very Helpful, But as Months Passed, Assistance Tapered Off - Area Director and High Agency Officers Failed to Visit Pakistan in All of Those Months

After some of the comments I've made about our relations with Washington, I should note, however, that most of the elements of the USIA in Washington were terribly helpful those first few days and weeks after the raid on the embassy. Obviously, we were in need of a tremendous amount of assistance, and we got it.

This helpfulness and assistance tapered off as time went by and people forgot what had happened. This was particularly true of the Area Director who couldn't figure out why we were having so much trouble doing certain things six or eight months later. Since he hadn't been there and seen what had gone on, he really didn't understand the situation we were facing. In fact, no high officers from the Agency came to visit; it was as if we didn't exist.

#### Russian Invasion of Neighboring Afghanistan in December 1979 Eventually Caused Great Buildup of USIS Peshawar Center

While all of this was going on, we have to go back to December 27, 1979, a little over a month after the raid on the embassy, when we woke up in the morning and found that the Russians were invading Afghanistan, our next-door neighbor.

As the result of this, our center in Peshawar assumed a vastly different proportion. It started slowly. There wasn't much role for USIS in Peshawar or Afghanistan at the beginning of the invasion. The military was the important thing in getting arms to the Mujahideen but, over the year and until I left, this center gradually grew in importance.

We finally got the officer that we needed there, the one I wanted three years earlier, and the role of the USIA there in training Afghans to tell their story to the world, how to do it, how to write a news story, how to write a television program, all was done in cooperation with USIA at Peshawar. It grew to two American officers and a much larger local staff than we had at that time.

This problem in Afghanistan was what eventually changed much of the attitude of the Pakistanis towards the Americans. We were, so to speak, in bed together against the Russians, and the Pakistanis looked to us for supplies and monies in their support of their brethren in Afghanistan against the Soviet army.

The net result of that immediately, however, was the large number of Codels and high level American bureaucrats coming out to see the situation at first hand, and our role in exposing them to Pakistan, to the Khyber Pass, to the various points of interest and making sure they were thoroughly briefed on the dangers that were building up across the border.

We got to meet many dignitaries from Washington including people like Walter Cronkite, who turned out to be a great trouper. He was sick as a dog with some stomach ailment when he was out there and he never let it slow him down or never admitted that he wasn't feeling well.

#### October 1981: Departure from Pakistan: Reassignment to Washington

I left Islamabad for reassignment to Washington in early October 1981 and, by that time, our program in Pakistan was pretty much back to normal, a standard USIS program in the Subcontinent being conducted under the new rules and programs of the Reagan Administration.

Our staff was back to work, although in reduced numbers, due to the budget cuts that had started throughout USIA, although I still feel that India and Pakistan took a disproportionately large share of these cuts, and all of the American positions had been filled. Basically, we were treated from Washington like any other USIS post, with no particular difficulties.

#### *Mrs. Thurber's Remembrances of Pakistan and the Evacuation from Pakistan*

*Q: This is Emy Thurber coming in on Islamabad. It was a very interesting post for me. First, when we went out, we left three children at home, two married and now a son as a freshman in college, and that was a little difficult. We took with us Mary, who was then in eighth grade and 13.*

*The housing was excellent. We had a beautiful, big house. One of the spectacular things is it had a window that was so large that it had a motor to pull the draperies across, and it was known as the house with the motorized curtains.*

*We were close to the Margala Hills. We had mongooses in the back yard taking care of the cobras! There was a very good school, the Islamabad International School. There were a lot of American children, but there were also students from all around the world and quite a number of Pakistani children.*

*Mary was in eighth grade. I think that was about the best year of her life. She was very active socially. They had a wonderful sports program. Three times a year, the Islamabad school met with Karachi, New Delhi, Lahore, the Murree Christian School and, originally, the school from Kabul, in tournaments, sports tournaments, and they also had*

*a cultural tournament. They would meet at different capitals or different cities, and that was just a very exciting time for the kids.*

*This all came to a halt, of course, in November 1979 when we were evacuated. A few things before that happened that I might talk about, one thing is people got sick all the time in Pakistan. Dysentery-type illnesses were really endemic, and everybody seemed to suffer from them. Jim and I got our share. I remember the Ambassador got sick.*

*You always could tell when anyone was having problems because, if you went to a cocktail party, they would order an orange juice with no vodka in it because with the medicine for these maladies, Flagyl, you couldn't drink. Anyway, that was a difficult part of being there and something I have not missed.*

*It was hard to get good domestic help, which is important in a place like that, where you have to prepare all your food very carefully, because the best cooks had all gone to the Middle East, where they were earning much better salaries, and there was a lot of competition for the few remaining people.*

*We made out all right, but we never had a really satisfactory household help situation. We did a lot of entertaining. Jim, when he came in, decreed that there were no more stag parties, which was great for me, because I was ready to go home if I was just going to be in the kitchen.*

*We met some awfully interesting people. In general, the Pakistanis wouldn't bring their -- well, some would bring their wives and some wouldn't, but we would have some very interesting women there.*

*It was fun at dinners, because I would arrange the table so I always got the two most interesting male guests and Jim often got their wives, who sometimes weren't even particularly fluent in English, and that was a little tougher for him. Still, we did a lot of entertaining and we thoroughly enjoyed it.*

*We had a perfectly marvelous ambassador, Arthur Hummel, and his great wife, Betty Lou. They worked hard to make sure that morale was good in the community. I would say they were the embodiment of the best in the American Foreign Service tradition and we felt very lucky about that.*

*I was missing my older children so much that one of the ways I compensated was I traveled a lot. Mary was now old enough, so I really went all over Pakistan. I went with other women. Whenever there was a chance to take a trip, I was on it.*

*Jim and I traveled a lot, too. One of our most memorable trips was driving from Islamabad to Karachi. It took about ten days. We stayed at guest houses along the way, and Jim was so enthused about this, that he tried to encourage all other USIA Officers to make a similar trip, because you understood the country so much better.*

*In addition, the embassy facility played a strong part in our lives. There was a beautiful, big pool. There was a small club with a restaurant. They showed movies once or twice a week, and some tennis courts with two very nice pros. The kids were all involved in the pool activities and tennis, and Jim and I were very active, also, in the tennis program. That was a very neat part of being there.*

*We had a wonderful driver, by the way, a man named Tufail, who really made my life very much easier and introduced us to a lot about Pakistani life, and took us on some of these excellent trips.*

*In addition, we had a wonderful trip to China. Pakistan International Airways had pioneered trips, tourist trips, to China. We went with about 20 other people in the days when not very many people had a chance to go to China, and it was very exciting.*

*We also had a great weekend going out with Dino and Fran Caterini -- he was the Cultural Affairs Officer -- to visit a feudal farm. I don't know whether it was in the Punjab...*

THURBER: On the Indus River.

*Q: On the Indus River. The women were living in purdah, and we just had a -- it was a marvelous time. They put on a pole -- was it a tent poling contest for us?*

THURBER: Tent pegging.

*Q: Tent pegging contest. They also had a bear and dog fight, which was very exciting.*

THURBER: It was right after breakfast.

*Q: After breakfast. It was terrible. They also had dancing girls come in, in the evening. These were women of somewhat ill repute, and that was a very interesting sight.*

*We also were able to see all the wonderful wedding finery, all the gold that the women had brought as their bride price or their dowry. We dressed poor Mary, who was about 14, up in all this wedding finery and all this gold, and took her picture. I think she was terribly mortified, but it was an experience that none of us will ever forget.*

*I might just add a little bit about what happened during the evacuation. That was, of course, a very frightening time because we didn't know what had happened to Jim. We were well cared for in Karachi, where we were taken, since we'd been on a train going to visit Mohenjo-Daro and were not in Islamabad at the time of the attack. Karachi BPAO, Paul Rappaport and Evelyn Rappaport were marvelous to all of us, which included the Caterinis, also, of USIA, and some children from the embassy. We all*

*flew back together in a Pan Am 747, and it was one of the most emotional times, I suppose, in my life and also, I know, in Mary's life.*

*We got a lot of support back in Washington. I think the State Department really did an excellent job. They put all the evacuees together in the Sheraton Hotel in Arlington and helped us make future plans. One amusing incident happened when all the children were summoned to see the State Department psychiatrist. The psychiatrist quizzed them relentlessly on all their problems, their depressions, their fears, and Mary returned and said, "Well, I didn't know I was supposed to be so afraid, but now I'm rather worried after meeting with the doctor!"*

*In fact, our experiences with State Department social workers and doctors were similar, and not really very helpful.*

*We were able to rent a small house in Bethesda. Mary went back to her original school. Still, she suffered some depression from the trauma, of the evacuation, and it was not an easy time.*

*The women and children formed a very close support group. We did lots of things together, went to the theater, went skiing and so forth. Betty Lou Hummel and also Carolyn Reagan, who was another embassy wife, were very effective in keeping people together. They published a newsletter for all of us, and we often met together at the Family Liaison Office.*

*Most of the evacuees did not return, but Mary and I did return to Pakistan about nine months later, in August, and that was difficult because we didn't know what to expect. We were timid and rather fearful, but, in effect, it helped us lay to rest all the fears and the anger that we had felt for the events that had taken place.*

*Mary had a marvelous opportunity -- the year that she returned would have been her tenth grade year -- to take a real leadership role in the school, because she was one of the few old girls, or old students who had come back. She became head of the student body, captain of two of the sporting teams, and generally came into her own that year.*

*One thing I haven't mentioned is a perfectly wonderful group called the Asia Study Group, which was run almost entirely by expatriates. It was very popular in the expatriate community, and we had weekly meetings trying to study different aspects of the South Asian culture, and also had numerous field trips, at least one a month, sometimes two, sometimes three.*

*I became the program director the year we came back and, in that way, met a lot of interesting Pakistanis and I think helped Jim in his attempt to meet influential and important people, plus it increased our understanding and sense of the richness of that culture.*

1981: Back in Washington: Director Policy Guidance Staff  
(In Days of Ronald Reagan and Charles Wick)

THURBER: So, it was back to Washington. We arrived there in the late summer 1981 to a completely different set-up than when we had left three years earlier. Ronald Reagan was in the White House; Charlie Wick was the Director of USIA; and, the upper regions of the Agency were being increasingly filled with members of the conservative side of the political spectrum in the United States, many of whom, such as Scottie Thompson and I think Charlie Wick, too, had their own agendas which may or may not have agreed either with Ronald Reagan's or with the mission of USIA.

For some reason -- I still don't know why -- I was picked as Director of the Policy Guidance Staff, P/G, a rather unlikely selection when you figure there was probably nothing the administration was doing that I agreed with.

But, be that as it may, I took over, in the fall of 1981, a P/G that had a greatly expanded program than when I left it in 1978. The Agency was not a happy or pleasant place in which to work.

Charlie Wick ruled the agency by fear and humiliation. He literally would fly into a tantrum and dress down, in the most childish and basic terms, some of the senior members of the organization, senior officers and political appointees alike, who were doing the job they were supposed to be doing, but something that Charlie Wick didn't agree with.

This would take place in public or in private. It's amazing that he was allowed to get away with it, but for some reason, nobody really called or blew the whistle with the administration, and he was the President's -- as we were told-- best friend. I think this was probably true.

Charlie Wick spent Christmas Eve with the president and his family, and the President and his family had Christmas dinner with the Wicks every year. It's hard to deny that relationship; however, it was not USIA's finest hour. The problems continued during the entire Reagan and Wick administrations.

New Programs Initiated as Director of PG Staff

My job developed from several angles, one of which was to update the staff and bring in new, fresh faces, people who were interested in the policy guidance function and could bring a new breath of understanding to the job. Up until then, it was being used basically as a place for retirement posts for older officers, and we were not getting the production out of them that we wanted.

I was also expected to manage USIA's relationship with other government organizations. This particularly was true with our relationship with the Department of Defense. With

this in mind, I watched the personnel notices carefully and asked good officers, or officers I thought were pretty good, who were looking for jobs in Washington, to bid on the openings in P/G. We also got several more openings added to our staff to pick up some of the new functions.

The happiest assignment we got was Mike Schneider, who I moved into the position as my deputy, and got him promoted to the Senior Civil Service. Mike has stayed on in that position and then went on to become Deputy to the Associate Director for Policy and, during much of his present tenure in that job, has been Acting Associate Director for Policy.

#### A: New Working Arrangements Between USIA and DOD

Mike and I set out to undertake several major programs during our tenure there. First of all, we went to work establishing a new relationship with the Department of Defense and, after about a year of meetings and countless drafts, we did put together a working arrangement, an agreement to provide a working arrangement for DOD and USIA, both in peacetime and during possible hostilities. This was not the first such agreement between the two departments, but I think one of the best.

#### B: Development of More Realistic Global and Regional Themes

We tried and, I would say successfully, developed a new set of USIA global and regional themes, which more realistically outlined those areas where USIA could make a difference, of course, broken down by different areas of the world and different crises.

This was part, I'd say, but a major part, of another attempt to overhaul the country plan process, to simplify it, to cut down on the tremendous duplication, to make it a multi-year program to avoid having to rewrite it every year, and to computerize it so that we could rapidly get post requirements to the various agency elements in a form that would make sense and allow them to do their planning for the year. This change in the country plan appeared to work, and has been used by the agency ever since.

#### C: Speeding Up Policy Guidance to Field

We also, using the new officers, tried to speed up the policy guidance function, to stay ahead of the curve, to give our overseas posts some idea of what they might expect, and what they had to work with on major policy changes or major international developments around the world.

To do this, we established a rapid response unit and then asked that they do a fair amount of prediction of looking at trouble spots, troubled areas, and coming up with guidance for what might happen in these areas.

Naturally, we ran into a tremendous amount of resistance from the National Security Council and from the State Department on such an approach, and much of it we did on our own and sent to the field, without clearing it with these agencies.

We did run into some trouble, nothing we couldn't handle, and I think the end result was our PAOs were better informed, and we did get more cooperation from State and NSC once they realized we were serious about sending out guidance to our posts, guidance that the posts could use in a timely manner.

#### D: System for Countering Soviet Disinformation

We took on the cause of Soviet disinformation at that time, this being a growing threat and one that was being recognized by high level government officials, setting up a-- or assigning to one person, I should say; later, an area was set up for this, but assigning to one person the responsibility for watching out what the Soviets were saying and to counter it through the rapid response unit.

This has now grown to a much greater function and then I imagine with the change in Soviet/U.S. relations, has decreased rapidly. But, while it was in action, it did provide our posts with the necessary material to respond to some of the more outrageous Soviet claims.

By rapidly notifying other posts what was picked up by one or two posts, maybe in another part of the world, our PAOs were able to get to the media and government officials in their countries, and show them how this Soviet disinformation was moving across the world and had no basis in fact.

#### E: Improving Relationship with White House, However, Move from Pennsylvania Avenue to C Street, SW, Was a Folly

As I had done in my previous tour in P/G, we continued to hone and improve the Agency's relationship with the White House when it came to VIP travel.

Not to be forgotten was the move of USIA to its new quarters at 4th and C Street in the Southwest section of Washington.

This was another folly of the administration. We had good quarters on Pennsylvania Avenue. We were well located near the White House and the State Department, where our primary contacts were. To put us down in the 4th and C Street Building, the Donahue Building there, was a major blunder. I'm glad to see that now, eight years later, nine years later, the Agency is planning to move back to a more central location, though heaven knows at what expense.

The new building did provide, for awhile, increased space, although not nearly enough, as we were originally told, and, of course, the Agency continued to be split into various

buildings around Washington. The building also was extremely poorly built and caused a great number of problems, which still exist at the time of this dictating and, really, there was no reason for the move.

We were offered additional space there on Pennsylvania Avenue and, while it wasn't as glamorous as a new building, it would have made much more sense to do it and to stay there. This advice was given frequently to top management by members of the USIA staff, junior and senior alike, and was completely ignored.

1983: Director, Office of Near East, North Africa, and South Asia

The job in P/G lasted until the summer of 1983, when I moved over to the Near East, North Africa, South Asia Area as Area Director. This, again, was a job that I was amazed to get. I bid on it, never expecting I'd be selected for the position.

My experience in NEA was restricted to Pakistan, although I had traveled in India, and a little bit in Israel. I had no experience in the Middle East or the Gulf States. However, I was selected and moved in, as I said, in the summer of '83.

The Situation Chaotic, No Agency Direction, No Area Priorities Established

The first thing I noticed in this job was the complete lack of direction and coordination by anybody in the upper levels of the Agency as far as the areas were concerned. Jock Shirley, who was Councilor of the Agency at that time, tried, but had many other demands on his time and he really wasn't interested in getting into the nitty-gritty operating problems that existed in the area.

So nobody told us what we should be doing, told us how we should be doing, what it was. Nobody was there to judge the relative importance of Africa versus NEA or Europe. We would get budget cuts that would be applied across the board and there was nobody in the Agency to say, "Well, Europe is more important than Africa; therefore, we're going to have to take a higher budget cut, a higher amount out of Africa."

Nobody was there to say, "This program would be more useful in Europe than in Africa; therefore, we'll send it there." It was dog eat dog, and everything we could get for our area, and nobody cared less. I've never been in a more unstructured job in my life.

I've never had more authority, over 750 employees and a budget of over \$30 million, with less direction and supervision as to how I was spending the money and what was going on. Needless to say, I had a ball. This was my kind of program and I enjoyed it tremendously, but that is not the way the Agency should be run.

Again, it showed a lack of leadership from the top. The one exception was personnel and this went so far overboard the other way that it was embarrassing. We had absolutely no

say as to who was appointed to our area, whether it was a junior officer on a training mission, a mid-career officer or a PAO.

I fought this with Personnel and with the Agency Councilor and got absolutely nowhere. We took what we were given and we were supposed to be happy to have people to fill the jobs. Particularly in an area like NEA, where a knowledge of the country and the language is essential, we got some real losers.

We also got some excellent officers because, once you learn Arabic, a two-year process, you don't easily give it up and transfer to another area, but, again, unlike State, which allows input from the posts and from the Assistant Secretaries, ours gave complete autonomy to the Director of Foreign Service Personnel and this was often misused.

#### Frequent Travel of Washington Area Personnel to Posts Inaugurated

My first job, as mentioned before, on taking over with NEA, was to acquaint myself with the area. I was told that -- in July, early July, when I took over the post, I was told that in September, the Director, Mr. Wick, was going out to visit Israel, Egypt and New Delhi.

Knowing nothing about these places at all, I made a quick trip myself in August, the exact same itinerary the Director was going to follow, and started there the first travels which kept me busy about 60 percent of the time during the three years I was Area Director.

I wish to stress this travel business. I don't think there is enough of it going on in the Agency and I don't think other Area Directors utilized enough of their funds for travel by the Area Director and by the desk officers.

It is essential that people in Washington have a close relationship with the people in the field and know what their needs and problems are, and the only way you can do this is to get out there to the field and see it. My theory was that I should visit, as Area Director, at least half the posts in my area every year. This includes the branches. This was about 34 posts.

What I did was split this with my Deputy. I would go to half and he would go to half and then, the following year, we would probably change it around a bit, so that we didn't always go the same way, but since the personnel changed in each post, usually every year or every other year, it was back to the same place to see what people were doing and how well they were doing it.

One fast rule that I had was that an Area Director or an Associate Director would never write an OER on an officer who he had not visited in the field during the rating year, and this applied to the PAOs, as well.

This, as a travel schedule, meant that I was on the road about 60 percent of the time from September to June, the summers being a bad time to travel because of the turnover of post

personnel. My Associate Director was doing just about the same, as were our desk officers, who were supposed to spend at least one month a year on the road in the area visiting their posts.

We ran into some financial problems towards the end of my tour, but that was the basic principle we were operating under, and it seemed to work very well. Our desk officers knew the people they were working with in the field, and they knew their problems and what they needed, and the whole area functioned better because of that.

#### Frequent Area Mini-PAO Conferences

On the other side, to try and get the PAOs to know what was going on in adjoining countries and with adjoining colleagues, we established a series of mini-PAO conferences, three of them, three conferences, each year, within the area, one for South Asia, one for the Middle East and Gulf States, and one for North Africa.

These were timed to coincide with the trips of either myself or my associate, and these provided a good chance to share experiences, to share ideas, and to bring people up to date on what was going on in Washington.

During my travels, also, I tried to visit with not only embassy people, but also officials of the local governments of the countries I was in, to increase my own knowledge of the country. This I supplemented by taking a day out here and then, hopefully on weekends, to visit some of the more spectacular spots around the Middle East and South Asia, such as the Taj Mahal in India, Petra in Jordan, some of the highlights of Israel and so forth.

#### The Travel Methodology of Charles Wick

Mentioning travel, I should mention that during this interval, I traveled three times into the area with the Director. Traveling with Mr. Wick was an experience one will not easily forget, but one would like to.

Again following the comments I made about him earlier, he was a very demanding Director when it came to travel. His briefing books had to be prepared just so, each one like the last one.

He was more interested in style rather than substance and, for instance, he would spend a great deal of time, once he got his briefing book, checking out the agenda to make sure the airline times, flight times, were correct, and the time of arrival and departure matched the hours lost by time zone changes, rather than looking into the areas of why he should go to one country or another and the purpose of his visit.

I will say that he was an extremely hard worker. I almost never saw him sleep on an airplane. He seemed to be always reading his briefing books or other papers. Whether or not he wanted to sleep, I have no idea.

He always traveled first class and along with him in the first class compartment, he took the Area Director, his personal secretary, his wife if she was along, and one of his three security agents who always accompanied him overseas. The other two security agents sat back in business class and the fourth -- there were four in the group -- the fourth was moving one step ahead to get everything ready for his arrival.

Setting up for a Wick visit overseas involved almost as much work, in many senses, as it did for a presidential visit. We had to go to the best hotel in town and get the best suite. There was no problem on paying for it. Mr. Wick would always pay the extra cost himself, but it had better be a good suite or we would have the equivalency of another temper tantrum, and one of our people would be roundly chastised.

I will admit that, since I had to stay in the same hotel as the Director, I lived pretty well during these visits when I accompanied him. We went on that first visit I mentioned to Israel, Egypt, and New Delhi. Another trip took us to Morocco. Another trip took us to Sri Lanka and India and Saudi Arabia.

Getting away from the travel for a bit here, I should mention, also, that we did have problems in NEA by the conflicts appearing in the United States over the role of Israel and its position in the Arab world. We tried to walk a narrow tightrope on this because we weren't there to make policy, but to describe USIS policy and positions.

But, occasionally, we did get caught in the middle from something that was said on the Voice of America or one of the guidance that were given us, in spite of our attempt to be careful.

One of my staff, the Branch PAO in East Jerusalem, whose only function was to work with the Arabs on the West Bank, was soundly bawled out by a member of the USIA Advisory Commission for working with the Arabs, and he was threatened with all sorts of dire consequences if he didn't stop doing it.

I told him to ignore the discussion, but I had a very shaken up Branch PAO who I doubt will ever forget the dressing down he got for doing the job he was being paid to do.

Talking about staff, as I said, we did have some excellent PAOs overseas, really dedicated officers who knew the Arab world and what went on in it, and we had some equally good desk officers in Washington, who really had tremendous responsibility covering large areas, far bigger than would make normal sense and far bigger than anything State would consider.

State might have five or six officers handling Israel alone, if not more, and a similar number for Egypt. We had one officer handling both countries. The same with India, one officer handling India, while a whole team of officers were over on the State desk, but our people managed and did an excellent job.

## The Work of the Indo-U.S. Subcommittee on Education and Culture

At this point, I should mention the Indo-U.S. Subcommittee on Education and Culture because it reflects the quality of work that was being done by the desk officer in Washington and by the post itself.

The Subcommittee was set up to promote education and cultural exchange between the two countries. Due to the work of the Executive Director of the Subcommittee and cooperation from the Indian government, they did develop, for 1985-86, a Year of India in the United States and a Year of the U.S. in India, sort of a mammoth festival held in each country with hundreds of programs throughout the United States, a smaller number in India, but still enough to be recognized as a major cultural event, and resulting in a much better understanding of India in the United States than existed before.

The interest by Americans in India was quite amazing, the number of people who turned out for this and the events that took place, sometimes in very small towns and very remote parts of the United States.

We also, working with the Subcommittee, had to solve the problem of the diminishing amount of rupees in our surplus fund in India. These rupees had been used to finance cultural exchange programs between the two countries and they were rapidly disappearing.

Over a period of years, it was an ongoing project when I got into it and it was an ongoing project when I left, an endowment was set up using these rupees, so rather than spend them up on ongoing programs, a large number were put into endowment and then the income was spent, which allowed these programs to continue for a set number of years.

It was an interesting way to handle this problem and led to a program that I later set up in Canada, or started in Canada, and I'll cover later when I get to that section.

## Terrorist Activities Kept Mid-East in Series of Crises

Outside of that and similar experiences, working in NEA was really a series of constant crises. I would go to the agency directors meetings every morning, and it would seem to me that it was I who kept bringing up raids on embassies, the bombing attacks on our mission in Beirut and Kuwait and similar events.

These occupied a tremendous amount of my time, and took me away from the active direction of cultural information and education programs. This is not unusual. It's the way of the Middle East and any Area Director must be prepared to handle these problems and operate in that function.

As a result of these attacks and similar terrorist action, we spent, also, a great deal of time in security enhancement of our USIA operations. The State Department was doing embassies.

We were getting left out, but with a great deal of work on my part, I was able to have the funds diverted to USIA so that our people could receive the same level of protection as the embassy was getting and, at the same time, keep our offices as open as possible to the public and those scholars that wanted to use our libraries and resource materials.

#### Post in Mauritania Closed

Continuing on the Area Director's position, I should mention, also, that during the time I was Area Director, we reduced the number of countries where we had posts by one, in that we closed the post in Nouakchott, Mauritania. I visited there in 1985 and found an extremely hard working PAO in an almost impossible situation with actually little programming of any consequence to handle, and no reason for much programming.

Mauritania is and was then, still is, a country being wiped out by the spread of the Sahara Desert, a very poor country, over 90 percent of the population being fed by incoming food stocks from donor countries.

It is also a very difficult country to live in. Nouakchott is on the coast and within the prevailing winds off the Sahara Desert, and there is a constant, fine grit that moves with the winds, too small for the eye to see, until you find it has penetrated to the inner recesses of your suitcase, inside computers, inside typewriters and so forth.

In fact, the PAO spent a great deal of her time keeping this equipment clean so she could do such things as receive the wireless file. When she got it, there wasn't much she could do with it.

We were putting a lot of money into this post and, as I said, we were getting very little out of it. Therefore, I recommended to the Agency that it be closed and the PAO not be replaced. This was finally agreed to and our numbers went down by one.

#### Eight Years of Ronald Reagan: Tall in the Saddle, No Leadership

Probably, one of the most fascinating experiences I had as Area Director was to attend several meetings with Director Wick, with President Reagan. One heard a lot in Washington about the president and how much command and leadership he was providing to his staff.

Attending the meetings gave me a first-hand glimpse of this and just how the White House and the NSC functioned. There is an expression that Ronald Reagan was always sitting tall in the saddle or standing tall, and this is true. He gives that impression when he walks into the room.

He's a tall man. He walks extremely upright, with a little cowboy sway to his gait, and you have a picture of a person very much in command. When he sat down in his position at the end of the table or, at the one meeting we had in the White House, in the cabinet room in the center of the table, he sat tall, every inch the President.

However, that was the end of the leadership things. From then on, the meetings were completely orchestrated by his staff and whichever group was doing the talking. In one case, it was the Department of Defense briefing him on an overseas problem. In another case, it was a similar briefing by the NSC.

Reagan just sat there, in both cases, looking straight ahead, smiling occasionally, nodding occasionally to somebody. His eyes didn't close, but it was very obvious everything being said in the room was going right over his head.

At one meeting, he said absolutely nothing and, at the end of the meeting, got up and left. At another meeting, he did read a little statement off a three-by-five card he had in his pocket and then made a quip to Cap Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, as he walked out of the room.

It gave me the feeling that the United States was being run by the Reagan staff, a non-elected group of individuals in whom I had little confidence. The meetings were a scary insight to how our country was being run during the eight years of the Ronald Reagan Administration.

Nothing that happened during my subsequent posting to Canada and visits by Ronald Reagan led me to change my mind. The Canadian assignment was my final assignment in USIA and a most enjoyable climax to my career.

#### 1986: Reassignment Due: Request for South Africa, Assignment to Canada

Actually, in the winter of 1985-86, I knew that my three years as Area Director would be up in the summer of '86 and bid on the post of PAO Pretoria. Both my wife and I felt this would probably be one of the most interesting and exciting posts to go to, and would give us a real seat in history being made as the blacks assumed more and more power, or tried to assume more and more power in South Africa.

I was paneled for the job by Personnel and selected, and my name went forward to Director Wick on a list of other PAO appointments. It sat on his desk for several weeks and the list came back with my name crossed out and Gene Friedmann's put in its place.

Personnel called me up, the Director of Foreign Service Personnel called, and said that Friedmann had written a letter to the Director and asked for the position, and the Director had given it to him without a by-your-leave to Personnel.

I was about ready to take up the cudgels myself on this when Barry Fulton, the Director of Foreign Service Personnel, said to forget it, there was no way I would change the Director's mind; that the Director had promised Friedmann a favor, and here it was, and how would I like to go to Ottawa as PAO for Canada, a most appealing suggestion and one we accepted quickly.

Not only did I know a little bit about Canada and liked what I knew, it also kept us close to the United States and given the age and physical condition of my wife's mother, this was important to us, and the fact that we wanted to be near to our children, particularly our daughter, who was having some problems that we felt we could help her out with.

South Africa would have been a good assignment, but it would have been a long way away and would have required a great deal of travel, frequent travel back and forth, so we accepted Canada and undertook preparations for this assignment.

#### The Requirement of French Language Proved to Be Unnecessary

This was the first post in my entire USIA career that had a language requirement, and the PAO in Ottawa was supposed to have a 3-3 knowledge of French, because Canada was a bilingual country and he would have frequent use, so I was told, for the language.

We diligently set about to learn French. I am a very poor language student. I have a very poor ear for languages and, while I started early in the year with an hour of French language training every morning and then in April, went into full-time French at a so-so school, not the Foreign Service Institute, which I wish I had been at, the time for our departure came around late July and I still was barely above a 2-2, 2 plus, something like that, level.

The Agency, with a great deal of reluctance and finger pointing and so forth and making me feel extremely guilty, gave me a waiver and sent me off to Canada. When I got there and after three years in the post, what a farce the requirement was.

Unless you spoke French like a native, the Canadians you were working with, even those from Quebec, spoke English better than you spoke French and the minute you opened your mouth in French, they would come right back in English.

I suspect that there were two or three times in my entire career in Canada that I really needed the French, and this would have been for asking directions on how to get some place, and that required minimal French.

When we got to Canada, we continued French, an hour a day, every morning. We had a teacher come to the house for two years and, in that two years, whatever French I had almost disappeared, and we dropped the program.

I did, at the same time, persuade the Agency to drop the requirements to 2-2 and, if I had my druthers, which I tried to do and didn't succeed, I would cut it to the courtesy level. What is the ruling now is that if you get a PAO for the post who is well versed in everything but language and there isn't time to give him language, send him to the post. It is not a controlling factor.

#### U.S. Government Shows Little Knowledge of, or Interest in Canada

Also during the pre-departure time, I took a one-week program at the Foreign Service Institute, their area studies program on Canada. This was very well done, the best of any of the area studies programs I've attended, and I came out of it with a much better knowledge of what I was going to face when I got to Ottawa and the general attitudes in Canada and the problems in Canada relating to the United States.

I also talked with quite a few people in Washington in my briefings before I went there, and was very puzzled by much of the briefings I received. Here was the world's second largest country, though only 25 million people, but sitting on our northern border and nobody in the NSC or the State Department, outside of a couple of exceptions, or the White House or USIA, in that fact, were much concerned or very much interested in Canada.

It's there; it's our friend; it cooperates with us; we can't really be bothered about it. This attitude -- this was the beginning of what I found the minute I got there to Canada, a general ignorance in the United States about Canada, a general lack of appreciation for Canada, a general lack of interest, and the feeling in the U.S. government that it wasn't important.

Oh, it's important when we want to run cruise missile tests or it's important when our plane crashes at one of the air bases up there, but the rest of the time, forget it. Canada is there. It will always be there. It will always be our friend; and, we don't have to do much about it. How terribly wrong the U.S. government is on this attitude.

Canada is not in our pocket. By reasons of geography and size, it is forced against its wishes to go along with many things we're doing, but if you look at the recent history, and I predict this is going to continue, we're going to have more and more problems with Canada, particularly as the conservative government of Brian Mulroney is voted out of office and we get a more liberal government up there, or even the socialist government, as just voted in, in Ontario.

#### U.S. Attitude Toward Canada: Thoughtless, Arrogant, Demeaning

The lack of interest in Canada is also coupled with a feeling of arrogance and "We'll tell you how to run your country" attitude that one sees in Washington. It's mind boggling to look at some of the cables and the instructions to our ambassador to go into the Canadian

government and tell them, "We want them to do this," and "You will do that," and so forth.

I was quite pleased to see the Canadian government objected to some of these, but, also, they did do our bidding all too often, griping about it, grumbling, and wishing they didn't have to, I guess the problem of being a small country and being one sitting next to the most powerful country in the world.

We drove up to Canada, a delightful way to get to a post, and our furniture actually beat us there and we took over the house of our predecessor. I should mention we actually flew up for a weekend on our own funds in May, saw the house and decided to keep it.

So, when we got there, it was a Wednesday afternoon, we had enough material in the car to keep us for a couple of days. Our furniture arrived Friday, and when I went off to work Monday morning, two days later, we were settled, an unbelievably rapid move considering the Foreign Service.

#### Ambassador to Canada, Thomas Niles, Excellent, But Ignored USIA

The embassy was run by a really top-notch ambassador, Thomas Niles, who knew more about Canada than a lot of his predecessors ever dreamed of knowing. Tom was an economist and a lover of obscure figures. At a time when Canada and the United States were moving towards a free trade agreement, he was the perfect ambassador to have there.

He had a mousetrap mind, unbelievable. He could read a page of figures and just recite them off weeks and years later. He had an interesting attitude towards USIA. He recognized we were important, and he recognized our existence, but he never utilized us.

Tom's attitude was, "I can do anything USIA can do and can do it better. I can do better interviews. I can do better briefings with the press. I have better judgment on public relations matters, so why bother with USIA?" He almost never took our advice. He refused to write out any speeches and give them to us.

He refused to let us program him for public affairs matters and the one time we did do it, it was a disaster in that we carefully crafted, with Washington approval, a speech on security matters and U.S. foreign policy, brought together an audience in Toronto, notified the press, had a large group there, had the speech printed up, and passed out to the press, and then he got up there and ignored it and gave his own speech.

We never asked him to do it again after that. He knew we were unhappy, but he really didn't care. Outside of that, Tom ran a good embassy. It was a large embassy with a large number of other units such as the FBI, Internal Revenue Service, Customs, Immigration and so forth, there in Canada.

All of them suffered pretty much the same way I did from their home offices ignoring the importance of Canada and Canada's rights as a sovereign nation.

I knew very little about Canada personally. I'd been to Vancouver and British Columbia a bit. I had taken the train across Canada on a vacation. I had canoed in Northern Ontario and, as a child, visited Nova Scotia, but that was about the extent of it. It was all basically recreation.

I was determined to learn as much about the country as possible, starting out with extensive courtesy calls on government officials in Ottawa and then traveling out throughout the country, meeting with information, cultural, educational types in each of the cities I visited.

By the end of the three years, I had visited all ten provinces, both territories, all capitals, all major cities, and all major universities as well as media outlets and producers. We drove east to west on the ground, flew, took the train, and went north on vacation to the end of land in Canada, the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, about 500 miles south of the North Pole.

We got to know a lot of Canadians. They are probably the nicest group of people in the world. We became real friends with them, friendships that I think will last over the years, which I can't say is the truth about any other country we served in.

#### Extensive Travel in Canada Revealed Lack of Knowledge About U.S.

The one thing I did find traveling around Canada, though, was a woeful ignorance about the United States. They knew the facts about the United States. They could cite you the dates of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War and the invasion of Canada, as they call the War of 1812 and all of that, but they really didn't understand the United States.

They didn't understand how our country worked, what our hopes and aspirations were, why we acted the way we did and so forth. This all falls under the rubric of American studies, which I found was woefully neglected in the Canadian schools at all levels.

In fact, when I got to Canada, there were three programs that could be called full-fledged American Study programs, one of which folded almost immediately after I got there, and the United States government was putting almost nothing in the way of funds into these programs.

On the other side of the border, the Canadian studies programs in the United States were flourishing. There were 72 of them going. The Canadian government put over \$2 million a year into various grants and incentives for Canadian studies, and there was a very active association of Canadian studies in the United States operating throughout the 48 states.

## Devotion of Much Time and Effort Resulted in Establishing Some Good But Sparsely Funded U.S. Studies Programs in Canada

I decided that this was one program that I could really put some effort into and maybe make a bit of a change. Tied in with this was the fact that I quickly discovered -- in fact, I knew this before I left Washington -- there was no Fulbright Program with Canada.

Senior officers over the years had decided that Canada was our friend and we were close by, and a lot of Canadians came to the States, so there didn't need to be a Fulbright Program, and their attitudes were hardened in concrete.

So, I started in to see what I could change along this line. First of all, I took the grant money that we had, our grant program, we had about \$45,000 the first year I was there and then, thanks to Washington cutbacks in our budget, it dropped down to about \$15,000 by the time I left, but I set up a small grants program.

As a result of trips both in the United States around northern New York, where there are a lot of Canadian studies programs and in Canada, we set up this small grants program, grants in the amount of around \$500 to younger Canadian faculty members who wanted to become involved in American studies.

Grants could be used for travel to conferences, to set up a small library, to buy supplies, anything in that type, and they had to be matched. This was a very successful program. It was over-subscribed every year I was there, and I think it got some good American studies programs started.

I went around the country when I was traveling, promoting American studies, talking about them, trying to get more interest in them, and particularly worked with the fledgling American Studies Association in Canada, giving them some money to help with their journal and their meetings and hoping for a long-term advancement of this organization.

## Trials and Tribulations Involved in Setting Up Fulbright Program in Canada, Largely Funded by Non-Government Money

Then, I took on the Fulbright Program. After finding out where the problems lay on establishing a Fulbright Program in Canada, I started in the summer of 1988 in Washington visiting Washington on leave, to sound out the possibilities there, found that I ran headlong into an individual called Jean Smoot, who would have no part of a Fulbright Program, as well as several other people in the E Bureau who shared her lack of interest.

The one thing I had going for me at that point was the fact that all of these people were about to depart, and depart they did during the fall of 1988. At the same time, we were inspected, and I persuaded the inspectors to include the notion of a Fulbright Program in Canada as part of their inspection report.

By December of '88, things had rapidly changed. I visited Washington and with the strong cooperation of E/AEE, Donna Culpepper and her staff, as well as Bob Gosende, the Deputy Director of E, who was most enthusiastic, we started out with the initial action for a Fulbright Program.

Bob Gosende visited us in February of 1989 and gave his strong endorsement to the program, however, with one condition, which went back to the December meeting with Donna, that the U.S. government, Donna Culpepper's office, would contribute \$200,000 for two years only, if it were matched by the Canadian government and, after that, we were on our own.

The program would not be government-financed, which was unlike any other Fulbright Program, but we would have to find other ways of financing it, which meant this would be a privately financed foundation.

That was agreeable to me, because I could see the handwriting on the wall as far as government funding was concerned and didn't want to commit myself to that limited program, so I came back to Ottawa in December and, after Bob's meeting, Bob's visit in February, and went to work with the Canadian government.

Over a period of ten, eleven months, weekly meetings with my counterparts in the Ministry of External Affairs, we produced an agreement between Canada and the United States to establish a privately funded Fulbright Program between the United States and Canada, to develop a foundation, and to hopefully start by the fall of 1991, with the first Fulbrighters moving back and forth between the two countries.

I won't go into the whole history of this. It was a fantastic jumble of bureaucracy, bureaucratic rules, errors, delays, legal problems and so forth. The net result was, though, that early in 1990, when Secretary of State Baker visited Canada, through a series of flukes, we got him and the Minister of External Affairs, Joe Clark, to sign the agreement.

We then got to work setting up a foundation, appointing the Directors, and the first meeting of the Fulbright Foundation was conducted in May of 1990, and the program was launched.

And let me give credit to Ambassador Ney, George Bush's political appointee to Ottawa. He supported the Fulbright program 100 percent and got his wealthy friends to serve on the Board. His only problem was he took complete credit for the program, saying that he did things which occurred before he was appointed Ambassador.

Part of this was selecting the Executive Director, which we did in June, to come on board in September. The files in Ottawa provide a complete history of this whole situation. It's now up to the Board of Directors and the Executive Director to raise the money necessary to run the program.

I and the Directors feel this can be done and it will be an interesting experiment, plus an idea for other Fulbright Programs who want to expand, and are feeling the pinch from government cut-backs in funding.

A couple of other points about Canada I should mention. The Agency, in late 1986, the winter of '86-'87, was conducting a series of visits to Central America by PAOs to convince them of the righteousness of the American policy towards Nicaragua and the other Central American States, and I was invited to go with four other PAOs from Europe in January of 1987.

Why I was selected, I'm not sure. I don't think anybody in Washington knew I was less than sympathetic for our policy there, but I'll tell you, the other five PAOs were very sympathetic when we went down there, but they certainly had lots of doubts when we left.

The trip, as far as convincing us of the rightness of the American cause, was a dismal failure. Nothing changed my mind at all and, in fact, some of the things I saw and the way we were treated hardened my position.

One of the problems was the fact that the military and embassy people in Nicaragua, particularly, treated us like a bunch of tourists and gave us the equivalency of declassified briefings, which were an insult, plus very damaging to trying to convince us we should change our position or at least go along with the government's policies.

#### Agency Budget Cuts Not Intelligently Assessed: Severe Damage to Canadian Program

The other thing I should mention were the budget cuts. The Agency, in spite of what I said as Area Director, continued to do across-the-board percentage budget cuts. This effected Canada extremely hard because of the small budget and the high administrative costs of running that post.

When I got to Ottawa, we were running a total budget of around \$1.3 million, of which around \$150,000 to \$200,000 was for programming. When I left, less than \$100,000 was available for programming and that was rapidly decreasing.

The net result was that we had more officers than we had money to keep them busy, and attempts by me to make some major adjustments, to release more money for programming and cut back on administrative costs, were refused by Washington.

I went so far as asking to shut down Vancouver as a branch post. This was rejected. The Agency wanted to hold it as an ace in the hole, in case they were ordered to shut posts, and, therefore, the money for programming just continued to decrease and decrease and decrease.

My griping to Washington got some of it reinstated, but not enough to really do any real good. This, again, reflects the lack of overall Agency planning and leadership as to the role of various posts and their importance in the world.

To continue posts like Burundi and Rwanda and similar operations and to cut back on very important operations such as Canada and to continue to have the European area by itself fund the expanded Eastern European Program, which I think is very important, rather than take it out of the whole budget and cut back in other parts of the world, is a very blind way of running an operation, a budget operation for a government world-wide agency.

In spite of that, I found the Canadian experience extremely rewarding, I guess particularly since the Fulbright Program did come to fruition while I was there and because of the attitude of Canadians and the appreciation by them, if not by anybody else, of what we were doing.

In the summer of 1990, my time was up, and my wife and I decided to return to California to our home in Los Altos, and establish our own consulting business here.

*Mrs. Thurber's Comments on Canada*

*Q: This is Emmy Thurber again. I'll just add a bit about Canada. It was a wonderful post for me, mostly because it was close to the States. I was able to keep track of my mother and see the children and to keep in touch with friends on the telephone.*

*It was more foreign than we had imagined for a country that's so close and has the same language. I tried to take advantage of its foreignness by studying French and trying to meet people from Quebec. We both took French in the beginning, as Jim has probably said, and then I carried on the whole time I was there, going to the Alliance Francais the last two years.*

*My big activity was getting involved in the University Women's Club, which is the Canadian counterpart of the American Association of University Women. I joined because I wanted to be in a book group and became deeply involved serving as, first, head of their small groups and secondly as their program chairman.*

*It was kind of a laugh to have an American -- they always said Americans exert too much influence in Canada -- as program chair, but, still, I had a very good year, made lots of Canadian friends. I found them very nice and friendly people, and even though there was a gratuitous amount of anti-Americanism, I never personally ran into that.*

*We again spent a lot of time skiing and learned to cross country ski, improved our down hill skiing, learned to skate again after many, many years, and took advantage of the winter. Otherwise, you would have spent your time indoors just complaining, so we welcomed the advent of snow, and we also traveled extensively.*

*I went with Jim on almost every trip and went on calls with him, which raised some eyebrows, I remember, with the Consul General in Quebec. He didn't think that was such a great idea, but I felt that I was able to add some substance, and it certainly contributed to my understanding and appreciation of Canada, and my ability to represent our own country well.*

*We did lots and lots of entertaining. We were called the most "entertaining" couple at the embassy, beyond the DCM and the ambassador. This time, I did all the cooking and had just a cleaning woman come and help, who would do some of the simple cooking and do the clean up. So, it was really a lot of work, but we made some good friends and found the Canadians much jollier and friendlier than I think our predecessor had found them.*

*I don't know if Jim has mentioned how cold the embassy was. We, who had lived only in developing countries, were quite shocked to see how little cooperative spirit there was in the American embassy, partly because our first ambassador's wife was not eager to play a supportive role, but I think, in general, it was probably the way it is in Europe where people are just expected to go their own way, and we really missed that.*

*Also, we didn't have much of a diplomatic life. There are so many embassies that, even though Jim was moderately high up on the diplomatic list, we did not get many invitations, although, towards the end, we got some because of the people I had met through the various women's groups. Still, we didn't miss that because our main contacts were Canadian and those were very satisfying.*

#### Final Assessment of USIA Career: Suppositions Re: Future, If Any, of USIA

THURBER: Finally, before closing, let me make a couple of summation remarks. The first is: Did I do the right thing in 1967 when I joined USIA? Absolutely -- yes! Do I regret having spent the last 23 years in the government? The answer is a very definite no. Given the circumstances that existed then, both within the Agency and on a worldwide basis, I think it was the right move.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Agency. There are parts of it I didn't like, but on an overall basis, I couldn't have asked for a better occupation or profession and couldn't have gotten more out of it than I did.

What is going to happen to the Agency in the future? I strongly suspect you will see a vastly reduced USIA. It even might disappear if the political winds could ever be bent that way, for several reasons.

One is that the communications techniques-- satellites, fibre optics, sophistication in media, in most countries around the world or most developed countries, anyway, means we don't have that much of a job to do anymore.

While there are countries that are not sophisticated, really, what is the value to the United States of having USIS in Malawi or USIS in some remote and not very active post in the Philippines or in Indonesia?

The information function we served more and more can be done commercially and is being handled very well commercially. The Voice of America? Yes, I would continue that and I think it will continue, but probably as a separate agency.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, will probably be discontinued. Even though they are not a direct part of USIA, they serve much the same function.

Radio Marti and Television Marti, of course, which are part of VOA, could very well disappear after the death of Castro or even before that.

The one area that I think USIA should stay in or the function that should continue is the cultural and educational function, and this could be handled by the State Department.

It could go back into CU at State as it was up until the late '70s. There is no need to have an expensive, duplicate Agency like USIA operating with that in mind.

So, these are some of the factors. I could name many more that make me feel that, probably before the decade is out, you'll see the end of USIA as we know it and some sort of absorption within the Department of State. If nothing else, it will be a funding decision by the federal government.

I came into USIA at the right time. I had the best of all possible worlds and my only regret is that it's over, and that the USIA I knew and the USIA that I operated under really no longer exists today, and probably won't in the years to come.

Appendix A to

Oral History Interview of

James P. Thurber, Jr.

ISLAMABAD ATTACK REPORT BY JAMES P. THURBER, JR.

This report was transcribed by Alex Thurber, from a taped report made by Islamabad CPAO James P. Thurber, Jr., on November 23, 1979. The report concerns the sacking of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, by militants on November 21, 1979. As a note of explanation: the report was made, originally intended for his wife and family members.

It is probably a bit presumptuous of me to think that anybody would be interested weeks, months or years later, in what went on in Islamabad on the 21st of November, 1979. But

in case anybody in the family is thinking of joining the Foreign Service, perhaps they should know what life could be like, or actually was like on one day in November.

It was a lovely day in Islamabad, typical fall weather: crisp, cool, but not cold. There were problems in the Middle East, in Tehran, and particularly we were having reports that the historic and sacred Muslim shrine in Mecca had been attacked and occupied by some type of rebel group, identity unknown. These reports were coming over the radio in the morning; and somewhere in the late morning, there were vague references to the situation in Tehran. For those of you who don't remember, this was the time that the employees in the American Embassy had been taken hostage, and at the time of the incidents in Islamabad, had been captives for two weeks. From the best of our information, students at the university and throughout the Rawalpindi/Islamabad area came to the conclusion that the Americans, as a counter to the Tehran situation, had been involved in the takeover of the Shrine in Mecca, which naturally enraged them and sent them looking for a target. About ten past noon, 12 noon, two busloads of students arrived at the front of the Embassy building. Let me just very briefly describe this to you who haven't been to Islamabad, or weren't in Islamabad prior to the incident. The Embassy occupies a 30-acre compound on the edge of Islamabad. It is a long, low brick building, two stories high in front, three stories in the back, and in the back of the Embassy, there are two buildings of apartments, a total of 30 apartments, a club building, tennis courts, swimming pool and so forth. A beautiful compound, all done in brick with a brick wall around part of it, and a cyclone hedge or cyclone fence around the balance. The two busloads of students drove up in front of the Embassy compound, at which point our security guards locked the front gate, which is a large metal bar gate. The students came to the front gate, banged on it, and demanded entry. At this point, a small group of police officers who were stationed outside the Embassy as part of their normal duties, drove the students away, forced them back into their busses, and they departed in the direction of Quaid-e-Azam University, which is located several miles behind the Embassy. My office is located at the back side of the Embassy, facing the university and the road that leads past the Russian and Chinese embassies, from the university to the back of the American compound. After about fifteen minutes, I happened to be looking out the window - - this is now about 12:45 on Wednesday afternoon -- and saw the two red busses that we had originally had in front of the Embassy, coming back, followed by four university busses jammed with students, with many of them sitting on the top. I immediately notified the Marines, who sounded a general alert for the entire Embassy. This means all safes are closed, classified material is put away, windows are closed, people get away from the windows, and the Marines go to full battle condition. The buses arrived at the front of the Embassy, and the students poured out -- completely overwhelming the very small police-guard -- taking away their weapons from them, and started at the Embassy. They could not get through the gate. They pushed against one of the sections of the wall, a combination of brick and steel bars, and much to our absolute amazement, the whole unit gave way and collapsed in. At this point, our soldiers -- or police I think they were -- had retreated inside the Embassy grounds in front of the building. They first fired tear gas canisters at the oncoming crowd. This didn't work, and they started firing rounds of 30mm cartridges over the heads of the oncoming crowd, which of course did not stop them in the slightest.

If this all sounds unemotional, I'm dictating this 48 hours after the incident, with one hour's sleep in the whole interval, and I'm sort of out-emotional at this point, having helped carry one body down front the Embassy, discovered another one 50 percent burned, and helped get both of them into caskets and on their way to the States. One's emotions just last so long I guess, and then temporarily disappear.

Anyway, to go back to the discussion: at this point as I've said, it became pretty obvious that there were just too many demonstrators. It looked to me as if there were hundreds outside. I understand that the final count came closer to ten thousand. It was obvious that they were going to get into the Embassy somehow. We moved everybody upstairs to the top floor of the Embassy, or the third floor, however you want to call it. We were at the top of the stairs with about 80 people, half Pakistanis, half Americans, and the Marines -- tear gas, the whole works. We had one grillwork between us and the bottom floors, and when the demonstrators finally just literally tore massive steel grilling apart by sheer weight of numbers and ropes and whatever else they managed to get their hands on, they got into the downstairs area. We moved there down the hallway to the so-called vault area, which is where the Embassy has its very secure classified materials, cryptographic information and so forth. Usually, this is completely secret, but since a Time Magazine reporter was in my office at the time all this took place, and joined us in the vault, I am sure you've all seen graphic descriptions in Time Magazine of what it looks like and where we were. We moved into the vault, there is a double door system there. You move through one steel door from the corridor to an ante-room, and then through another steel door into the vault itself, which is a room, which is where we spent the rest of the afternoon. You sort of have to picture this as 80 people in a room that could probably hardly take about ten or fifteen, Marines outside, holding off first a mob and secondly a fire, and a very great lack of communication. Let's take each one by itself, because it is hard to put all this together.

At first the mob came up to the door and tried to enter. The Marines had rolled tear gas canisters out into the corridor and had held off the mob this way. The best we can figure out as to what happened was that then, seeing that they couldn't get in, the mob at that point set fire to the Embassy, hoping to drive us out by smoke. Many of us who have now seen the Embassy from the outside and talked with enough people, have the feeling that they weren't trying to drive us out -- they were trying to get rid of us. And from all the reports, I think that was probably correct. Inside, we were trying to find out what was going on outside. For a few minutes we had communications with Washington, and we were able to send reports to them -- we didn't receive anything back; things were going too fast. Then our main power was cut, and all we had was auxiliary lighting, which of course isn't enough to run our high-powered transmitter. Following that, we resorted to telephone, which did work for a while, and when that broke down, when they managed to destroy the main telephone system in the basement of the building, we resorted to our walkie-talkies, which several of us had brought into the vault. These worked with a fantastic irregularity. All of a sudden, we could talk with someone out at the International School, which is several miles away, and they could talk with us, and then that would go

off, and we wouldn't be able to reach our Ambassador, who was only a mile away. Things fluctuated back and forth all afternoon. In another corridor off to the other side, they brought down the Marine who had been on the roof of the building and had been hit by gunfire at the beginning of the attack. He was being treated by Fran Fields, our Embassy nurse, who made repeated calls for help from a doctor -- none showed up, and we aren't sure that the calls even got out of the Embassy. If they did, it would have been almost impossible to get anybody in. The Marine unfortunately died at 3:35 in the afternoon. He was a young man, I think the youngest of the Marine Corps, one who we all knew and one who was extremely popular. Another American was killed -- I'll try and cover him later, as he was in another part of the compound. So the situation at that point, as we approach three -- four o'clock in the afternoon, was about 80 people, half Americans, half Pakistani employees, located in the vault, very sporadic communications. Obviously things were going on outside. Explosions rocked the building, and we didn't know what had happened.

A great deal of noise and confusion on the roof over our heads, banging on the grills, eventually firing with, I guess, again 30 caliber rifles down the grills. Bullets rattling around over our heads --none actually came through, why, I haven't a clue. And the heat in the vault. As the afternoon progressed, the temperature started to build up. We got smoke in spite of our attempts to cover the doorways and all the cracks around the doors, and then we started to get tear gas as a combination, and it turns out that smoke rises and tear gas drops. So to find yourself in a happy medium between these two, when you are in the vault is pretty difficult. In spite of all this, morale was just miraculous -- nobody panicked, nobody yelled, nobody screamed. It was getting hotter and hotter, we were discarding excess clothing, and yet everybody kept their cool. About four o'clock, the first real reaction to the tear gas and smoke set in. We were getting vomiting and a tremendous amount of coughing, but again, no hysterics. And there never were any hysterics during the whole afternoon.

Time sort of leaves us at this point. it is hard for us to remember exactly what did happen at the time. As the heat built up around five o'clock, we started to get a little more desperate on the radio. We were getting some communications through, and there was a tremendous amount of confusion as to what was going on outside. We kept being told that the Pakistani military had guaranteed that the roof was cleared and that we should come through a hatchway onto the roof and get out that way. At the same time, our Marines who were located close to that hatchway were telling us, "No, people are banging on the hatch." And they were banging on the incinerator roof pipe, and there are "unfriendly forces" on the roof, as they put it. In fact, the bullets that came down the pipe were evidence of that. The explosions on the roof and the explosions in the back were further evidence that there were not friendlies up there. Finally, and now I have absolutely lost track of time, I would say this was now 6 o'clock -- I could be an hour off -- it could be 5 o'clock.

At about 6 o'clock, the temperature had built up to a point where it was not only uncomfortable, but the floor was buckling under our feet. The vinyl tile was melting, the

rug was burning -- we managed to put it out with some cans of beer that we found, we didn't dare use the CO2 extinguishers, because they absorb oxygen from the air -- at least that was our memory, and we didn't want to do anything more. People were showing effects of oxygen starvation, and the tear gas was still pretty heavy. That stuff doesn't go away in a hurry.

We notified our one contact on the outside that we had to get out and that they should clear the roof no matter what it took. We got no response. In the room, in a little corridor leading off to where the Marines were, is a hatchway up to the roof. It had been banged on all afternoon. Somebody had been trying to get into it, obviously, as we saw it when we went up. It was badly damaged, and there were a lot of attempts to break their way down to where we were and do whatever they had intended to do. We decided to send out two Marines to reconnoiter the situation. The hatch jammed on them. Finally, with a great deal of banging and clacking, we managed to break the hatch open. They went out on to the roof; it was vacant. Nobody was there, and they -- we ordered the immediate evacuation. We sent out first the women, three at a time through a very heavily smoke-filled corridor, up a ladder, straight up about 12 feet, and then onto the roof where the Marines had laid down a security area with protection, and helped everybody out. The evacuation of all 80 people, 3 to 5 people at a time, took about 15 minutes. I was one of the last people out. As I left, vision had disappeared in the vault, you couldn't see, and I could hardly breathe. I would say, at that point, we had probably another 5 minutes, or you would have had 80 casualties right there in the vault itself. It took me 48 hours after that to clear the smoke from my lungs, and three washings of my hair, and it still smells of smoke and tear gas, but I think that will go away. But just to give you an idea of the density of it.

We got up on the roof, and that had to be a scene as close to Hades as you could possibly imagine. Flames were pouring up on all sides of us. Luckily, it was a heavy cement roof with a tar top to it. The tar in many places was melting, but we were protected. We went over one -- well, we had to go down three levels. Emy, you will recognize this, as you face the Embassy, we were at the far right, and we had to move all the way down the length of the Embassy, down three roof levels, to the auditorium roof, which was not burning at that point. And we went down one of them, which was a short one; we could jump down about 4 feet. The next one was a short one. The next one was 12 feet. Some of us jumped at first, at which time I managed to take care of half the side of one leg, but it's healing up nicely. And then we helped everybody else down, literally, by just having them drop into our arms; there was no other way. The flames were getting too close for comfort. Then we got over at that point where we were on top of the auditorium, which was not burning, and we were finally able to scare up the fire department, who came and put a ladder up, and we took everybody down by ladder, onto the ground. Once on the ground, we were right there at the front of the Embassy. They brought up trucks, the Pak military were everywhere; there were armed guards and soldiers. It looked to me like they had a system of one-on-one, because there was one soldier who just stood right next to me everywhere I moved. I was on the radio communications, trying to move everyone out

of the compound, because there were still large numbers of hostile demonstrators screaming and yelling outside the compound, and it was a little bit nerve-wracking.

The military put us in ambulances and moved us out relatively quickly. I would say that I wasn't on the ground more than 10 or 15 minutes. I again was one of the last ones to leave the compound, of the Americans. We were put on the ambulances and taken about a mile at the most, maybe only half a mile, to the British Embassy, which was completely untouched, and there were no demonstrations there at all. We were taken under the wing of the British for, whatever you want to call it, asylum.

The scene at the Embassy was unbelievable. From the front of it, the entire Embassy was on fire. There wasn't a single window that didn't have flames shooting out of it. When I was on the roof, as I was running along in a crouch position to stay out of the way of bullets, and looking over at the apartments, Darling, which you know are down lower, and the clubhouse, it was just one sheet of flame coming up, including the staff quarters and so forth. The motor pool with flames pouring out all over the place was really a scene right out of a movie horror story.

Okay, we were rescued, and as we left, they started pouring water on the building. Obviously, they ran out of water very quickly. They asked us where's the water? We pointed to our underground supply, gave them a wrench to open it up, and left. The ambulances took us up to the British Embassy. I should say by way of that, the Marines, who I can't have enough praise for, wouldn't leave the building without the body of their comrade, and he was taken along with the rest of us, to the British Embassy. The British had a great risk to themselves, I would say turned out in great number. We were welcomed there. There was beer, and there was hot soup, anything we wanted. The Ambassador, our Ambassador was there. He, by the way, along with the DCM, were home for lunch, luckily, when this thing hit, and once they knew we were going to get out, they had gone over to the British Embassy to greet us. We went upstairs, and the British Ambassador couldn't have been nicer. He took all of the senior officers into his office, we patched in a phone line to Washington and started in on our reports at that point, all of us taking turns. The Pakistan military came in around 3:00am and said that the streets were clear and we could go home. And you know, at this point, I don't know who took us home. Somebody took me home. I honestly can't remember whether it was British or Pak military or police. Somebody delivered me to the house. I got in, and the phone started ringing; the international press was on it. I lay down somewhere around 6 o'clock. The phone started ringing again around 7. That was that for the night. Nervous energy and adrenaline are marvelous; they keep one going.

Thursday, Thanksgiving Day, was a funny day. I find it very hard even to recall what happened. Our first concern was for the families on the train heading for Morenjandara. Let me see if I can piece this together. The night before, at the British Embassy, Bashir Khan Baba was there. He was the American desk officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I talked to him -- told him about the railcar heading for Morenjandara, and asked him to divert the railcar, or told him not to disengage it for the Morenjandara trip, but to

keep it on the Karachi Express. SGM Harmone agreed to do it, and, by God, it worked. Somehow, he got in touch with the people, they diverted it to Karachi, and I'll let Emy and the others who were on that pick up tell what happened to them in Karachi at the time of diversion. That was our very principal concern on Thursday, Thanksgiving Day. Basically, we all assembled at the AID building, which was not touched in the confusion, and made preparations for an evacuation of all dependents and non-essential personnel. Everybody is in pretty good shape on Thursday, from outward appearances. Obviously, and I'm no exception to this, the emotional shock was pretty tremendous. It was a funny feeling; one, I'm alive, and I don't know why I'm alive, because never have I come so close to not being alive, but it was more a shock about: where are our families? I know all my emotions were tied up with: did the railcar survive? Did Emy get and Mary get to Karachi? Are they all right? Can I get in touch with them? I think this was a much more prevailing emotion than exactly what we had been through before, and over the past 24 hours. As I said before, the adrenaline was flowing, and you can put up with an awful lot if you don't really have to face up to reality. Our problem on Thursday was to get the people ready to get them out of the country. The Secretary of State had said that all people will leave who aren't essential, and we were making plans to do that.

So -- my memory, again is very foggy on Thursday. I know I spent most of the time in contacting members of the ICA staff, and members of the school. I had two responsibilities: one were all the teachers and school staff; the other was my own staff. I was telling people who was going to go where, arguing, debating, setting up lists, deciding who could stay, who had to stay, how would we use the people who did stay, and so forth. Anyway, this was just an all-day affair. It was just one phone call after another, standing around vacant offices in the AID building, using vacant telephones, and so forth. About 8 o'clock, Fran Fields, who had been home off and on during the day, called and invited me to Thanksgiving Dinner. She had invited us earlier, and to tell you the honest truth, I had forgotten all about it. I left the AID building; I went out to Fran's house. It was a very strange Thanksgiving. Lovely food, I think. I hate to tell Fran, if she's listening to this, I really didn't taste a thing. Most of the emotions were sadness; it was a sadness of departure. Thanksgiving, I guess that we were all alive. And this was particularly true when there was a prayer said before, somebody started a prayer, they choked up, and I think there was a good three or four minutes when not a word was said. Finally, one of the kids who was there, probably Adam, said, "time to eat," and he broke the emotion or tension, thank God. From then on, we talked about what was going to happen in the future. Emy and Mary, you certainly were missed, I'll tell you. After that, it was back to the Embassy to complete the plans for evacuation. We were getting reports from Pan American, they had dumped all their passengers on Pan Am Flight 1, around the world in Delhi, and heaven help us from the wrath of those passengers, and they were ready to bring their plane into Islamabad. This required clearances and all that sort of stuff, and everybody getting together. The Army was there. We made plans for the motor pool or caravan to the airport. We had to alert the warden system. We had to get a hold of everybody, assemble them into 17 different locations in Islamabad. Our house was one of those locations, and we had 20 people here, staying the night, in various states of disarray, on beds, sofas, floor, and so forth. At 3 o'clock in the morning, I left the AID building,

and the set-up was quite interesting, actually. We worked this out with Pakistan military, and they gave us one bus and one truck for each house. So at 3 o'clock, we departed from the AID building, where all these busses and trucks were parked. Each one of the wardens or individuals was responsible for a safe haven house with a truck and a bus and a couple of soldiers. We went to our house here, as an example of all the others, got everybody up: children, pets, the whole works, with our guard, two guards we had in our group, soldiers standing guard outside our house, plus the reinforced security guards, which are still around the house today. We loaded up the truck with all the baggage and those animals that people took out with them, put the people in the bus, and then went back and assembled at the British Embassy. It actually worked out that we had 10 busloads of people, and 10 truckloads of luggage, this was 310 people for the flight, and God knows how many pounds of baggage.

For the record, we flew up the night before -- this was a problem -- the evacuees from Lahore. They came to Islamabad and spent the night at the Ambassador's rest-house. The Peshawar evacuees came in that morning under military escort -- I gather this was necessary -- all the way from Peshawar, to arrive at the Islamabad airport at 7:00 am. Time again eludes me, I think somewhere around 5, because we wanted to move everybody out under the cover of darkness, the convoy moved off from the British Embassy. We went around the corner, for those who know Islamabad, this is right in front of the American Embassy, where, to the greatest concern of many people on board, we stopped in front of the American Embassy to form the convoy. If there is a single complaint about this operation -- I really have none, it was beautifully handled by all concerned, and everybody should get kudos, including the Pak military -- it was that we used the area in front of the American Embassy to form up, while flames were still licking up behind us. But we were so heavily covered by security forces, there was no problem. We then moved out. I guess we left around 6 am, 5:30, 6 -- somewhere around in there, to the airport. We went fairly steadily there, got to the airport in convoy fashion, around 6:30, and the airport was under the most heavy security guard I have ever seen. There were soldiers in full battle dress everywhere. And standing on the ramp, outside the VIP lounge, was the most beautiful sight we had ever seen, a Pan American 747 being refueled, or fixed for flight. I'm not sure if they fueled here or not.

Everybody went into the VIP lounge. My job continued with the press. The world press had started to arrive at that point, in fact they were there in numbers. We did not want them in the VIP lounge, for obvious reasons, and Pak security would not let them on the airport runway or on the observation platform to film. So I had the fun job of keeping them happy out in the parking lot, and explaining why they couldn't come in. This kept me busy, and I kept running back and forth between the lounge and the parking lot, telling the scenes in the lounge and the tearful goodbyes and the crying children. It really did look like a nursery school in there -- I've never seen so many kids in one place. And so forth, but I think we gave them enough to at least cool them for a while. Somewhere around 7:30, they started loading the plane, after the baggage was on board. And if I remember correctly, around 8:30, with a lot of very sad and unhappy males and a couple

of secretaries standing outside the lounge, those of us, 63 of us who were left, the plane departed for Karachi.

What else can I tell you? We went back to the AID building, again all of us very groggy but loaded down with things to do to start the wheels moving to try and pick up the pieces and see where we go from here. As I said, the world press was there. We had a press conference with the Ambassador, which was fairly general. I had I don't know how many interviews on camera, off camera, on the telephone, London, Bonn, Tokyo. It was like a miniature United Nations trying to tell what had happened to the press and media of all types.

I am right now, this Friday afternoon at 3 o'clock, I scheduled a press conference at the Embassy itself. All the press, television and so forth, gathered there, and I escorted them around the buildings through the compound, not in any buildings, both for security and safety purposes, throughout the entire place. It was my first view of much of it, and it is a sight I will never forget. I hope you have seen it on television, and I hope we get some films of it. Supposedly fireproof buildings -- it's hard to describe it -- absolutely burned out from top to bottom. As I look through the windows this afternoon, into our offices and other offices, you could just see safes melted -- steel, solid steel melted. There wasn't a window or a window frame left in the main chancellory. Destruction was absolutely complete -- things hauled out into the courtyard and torn apart. We moved from there to the motor pool, and back into the covered parking areas, there wasn't a car that you could even identify. Everything was burned out. We went into the motor pool itself, and we went through that, through the storerooms, or we looked into the storerooms. Things had just been pulled out, smashed, destroyed and fired. A great discussion was underway with Dave Fields as we escorted the correspondents through, as to how the fire got to the intensity that it did. A great deal of paint was thrown around, and it is very possible that they used paint as Molotov cocktails, I'm not sure. We went down into the residential area. There wasn't a single apartment out of 30 in the residential area, that hadn't been absolutely, completely burned out. I went into the health unit. There wasn't a thing left in the health unit. It was unbelievable, even the examining table, which is steel, was melted into a hunk, or a pile of molten lead, or metal, or whatever it was made of. The swimming pool: full of junk. They must have taken every flower pot in the area and thrown it in. And fires everywhere. They even managed to light a fire under the referee's chairs at the tennis court, but for those who love tennis, for some reason, they didn't know how to destroy a clay court. And we are going to be back there in a week or two, because all we got to do is clean up a little paint and get rid of some charred chairs and so forth, and we're back in business, if we can find some nets; they were destroyed.

The club burned out; nothing left of the club. The servants' quarters in back absolutely burned out -- nothing left, completely destroyed. We then walked back up, and Marsha, the Time correspondent who was in the safe with us, Dave Fields, myself, stood outside the end of the Embassy looking up at the vault area, which was solid brick from the outside, wondering how we ever survived in there. If we had known what was going on outside, the extent of the fire, that everything around us was burning, I don't think we

would have made it. It was probably just lucky that our communications were so lousy, that we did survive. Survive by just faith that we were going to get out. But if you could have seen, and could see now the sight I saw this afternoon, those bricks absolutely blackened, fires still smoldering from the cars, smoke still rising from the Embassy, a sight that is just unbelievable, that so much damage should have been caused.

We tried to get an estimate on the number of people involved. The papers, people who were there, report 10,000 to 20,000. I think probably that's too high, probably far too high. I don't think they could get that many people together in Islamabad. But it was very high.

A tragic event: Chief Warrant Officer Ellis, I think those who served here will know him, somehow was caught in his apartment. I don't know whether he saw the people coming and ran in to it, ran into the back. We found his body this afternoon, burned beyond recognition in the bedroom area of his apartment, in the A group. He was the only casualty that we found in the apartments. Two other bodies were found in the basement of the building, two local employees, both of whom we all know. They apparently didn't want to jump out of the window, and tried to go back into the corridor during the burning of the Embassy, and were overcome by smoke and then died from that or the heat. And there were at least two demonstrators who were killed in the process. So with the Marine and the Chief Warrant Officer and the two demonstrators and our two local, you have six deaths out of this absolutely useless display of I don't know what -- emotion over something which meant nothing, and nobody, when it was all over, knew what they had been demonstrating about.

So here we are in Islamabad; I'm not quite sure what to say. Security seems good now; the town is an army camp. We've all taken the license plates off our cars, what we have left of our cars. Dave Fields lost their lovely little convertible; it was at the Embassy. I lost my Holden, my lovely Holden was at the Embassy and is burned to a crisp. Though we still have our Datsun, which I am now driving with Canadian license plates. Our friends at the Canadian Embassy loaned me a set. For safety's sake, I'll keep them on for a while. But it looks like the lid is on. The army's got control, and they're not going to let it happen again. We've taken what security we can, and I feel fairly confident that it won't happen again.

I guess my only feeling now is I've got to get some sleep. It's been a long two days, and, as I say, I want to put this down on tape; I haven't the energy to type it out. So I'll send the tape to the States. Pass it around to anybody who wants to hear it, and they'll know what happened here in Islamabad. What we went through was probably minor compared to what is going on in Tehran with the hostages there, and I guess the only things that really shake us are the reports that we've now heard from the students and the other demonstrators, that their goal was to kill us, and to prove a point. They are now somewhat shamefaced, somewhat bashful about it, glad, I guess, that they didn't create 80 corpses, and glad that we did get out and they proved a point, and certainly anybody who drives past the American Embassy today in Islamabad has seen the destruction that a mob can cause upon an installation, one that was here for peaceful and humanitarian purposes, and for the conduct of governmental business and which, unfortunately, was in the wrong

place at the wrong time. I like Islamabad, I like Pakistanis, and I want to stay here, only if my family comes back, but I think we have a place here, and I think the Pakistanis like us. As I say, I want to stay. I'm going to do the best I can to make our government let us stay here to recreate the atmosphere that we used to have here, because I think it's the right way to go, and I think we should be here working with the Pakistanis for the betterment of both our countries, and for the relationship between our two countries.

So -- I'm going to bed and try to catch up on my sleep. I'll be in touch with all of you again, very shortly, and we'll start working for the future and I'm sure a lot better situation than we've had in the past two days.

A D D E N D U M

As I mentioned in the beginning, this report was dictated on tape for my wife and family. But since it has been transcribed, and now forms the centerpiece of this book, there are a couple of inaccuracies and/or mistaken impressions that should be corrected for the record. I will not correct the garbled English -- it is truer to the situation I was in, to leave it the way it was spoken.

The major correction is that there were 137 persons in the vault. My much smaller estimate was generally accepted by all involved until a few days later, when exact lists were made of the occupants.

I have left the impression that I actually found Bryan Ellis's body and assisted in the recovery of both his body and Steve Crowley's. I had no direct role in either case. The death of both these young men was such a personal experience to all of us at the post, that we mentally and emotionally felt that we played a role in every step of their return to the United States.

The fire department did not put the ladder up. We did, over their protests. It was one more example of the refusal of Pakistani officials to help us, and the last -- once we were on the ground, they couldn't do enough for us.

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Six months have passed. Summer is here, and the burned-out Embassy simmers in the 100 plus heat. Birds and butterflies have made their nests in her shattered walls and vacant windows. Men have come and measured, poked and photographed her from every direction, but reconstruction has not begun. The perpetrators of the raid have not been punished; they are back in school and show little remorse. Their leaders talk of doing it again.

Meanwhile, we play tennis and swim at the Compound in the shadow of the remains of a beautiful Embassy -- a monument to the utter senselessness of mob violence and terror. It will be rebuilt, but for those of us who were here on November 21, 1979, this ghostly

building on the hill holds special memories of an incident that cannot help but have changed our lives, for now and for a long time in the future.

*End of interview*