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WILLIAM HENRY WEATHERSBY

Interviewed by: Jack O'Brien
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Vice President for Public Affairs, Princeton University

INTERVIEW

Q: This is August 1, 1989. My name is Jack O'Brien, and I am talking with an old friend, Bill Weathersby. I am going to ask Bill to give us his full name and how he got into the Agency. Bill, speak up, please.

1951: Recruitment Into Predecessor Organization of USIA

WEATHERSBY: My name is William H. Weathersby, and I was working as one of the editors of the World Service of the Associated Press in New York early in 1951 when I was invited down to Washington by the State Department, which then included the functions of what became USIA. I spent two days being interviewed as scheduled by Mildred Vardaman, a Department and later USIA officer, now retired. Although I was then undecided, Mildred asked me to fill out an application in order to speed the process in the event I should decide to accept one of several possible jobs. I filled out the application, and in answer to the question, "May we contact your present employers?" I checked "No."

Upon my return to my office in New York, the Director of the AP World Service met me at the elevator, and asked: "What's this about your going to work for the government?" I explained that I had been asked but had not decided. Then when I got home that evening, my next door neighbor invited me over and opened with: "Bill, what kind of trouble are you in?" He explained that an FBI agent had been there asking questions. There was a copy of "Das Kapital" on his table. He said the agent asked if I read books like that and that he had replied he didn't know but that I had given the book to him. He was trying to make a joke, I supposed, because, although I had not given him the book, I had read it. In any case, I was asked to go to Cairo as Information Officer, and I did so.

First Assignment Cairo; Hectic First Day

Q: I understand you had an exciting first day. Tell us about that.

WEATHERSBY: It was a nice first day, although my family and I were somewhat exhausted. We had arrived by ship early in the morning at Alexandria and waited a long time for luggage before my wife, two children and I finally moved by train to Cairo. An Embassy car took us and baggage to a hotel overlooking the Nile. It was late in the day, and we collapsed for a little rest, which was disturbed by a telephone call. The Embassy protocol officer was sending a car over to convey me to the palace to sign the royal register. About half an hour after my return to the hotel a special messenger brought an

invitation for my wife, Ruth, and me to the reception that evening at the palace celebrating the marriage of King Farouk and Queen Narriman.

I phoned the Embassy fellow who was supposed to be keeping up with diplomatic etiquette and asked under what circumstances I might avoid going to the reception, given the shape we were in, with no pressed clothes and no one to care for small children, and he replied: "If you don't go you're either out of the country or on your death bed." I told him I was going to bed immediately on the chance of beating the odds and recovering the next morning. I did recover.

Ouster of King Farouk
Role of U.S. Ambassador Jefferson Caffery

Q: There's an interesting story I have heard about the circumstances of Farouk's departure and how that was facilitated by the American Ambassador. Can you tell us that?

WEATHERSBY: The most experienced ambassador of the United States at that time was Jefferson Caffery. Egypt was his last assignment, but that summer, as usual, he and all other ambassadors were in Alexandria, because the King was there in his summer palace. In his absence we received through one of our military attachés a report of a coup d'etat in the making. Several of us were called into the Ambassador's office by the Deputy Chief of Mission about midnight. We were monitoring the radio broadcasts, were in touch with the Ambassador by telephone, and messages were being sent to Washington. I happened to answer a telephone call. The cultivated voice asked in English to speak to Ambassador Caffery, and I explained that he was in Alexandria. There followed an explosion of expletives in Arabic, only a few of which I understood. In any case, our Embassy telephone operator called me back to the phone and explained that it had been King Farouk calling for help and that his colorful language was bawling out his operator for the mistake of placing the King's call to Cairo instead of Alexandria.

Just before dawn General Naguib, who later turned out to be the figure-head leader of the coup master-minded by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, read over the radio a statement announcing the formation of a military regime. I got into my Chevrolet and drove through empty streets some thirty blocks to Egyptian State Broadcasting headquarters. There I parked directly in front of the main entrance, found to my amazement the door open and no one in sight, and began to think how strange a coup it was. I searched the first two floors and, finding no one, ascended the stairs to the third, where a man in civilian clothes sat at a desk. I introduced myself and said we had heard the speech and would like to get a copy of it.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said. "After General Naguib left, a man from the BBC was here, and he got the only copy that we had." On my way to the BBC offices, all was still and virtually nobody was in the streets. The BBC made a copy of the speech for us.

Q: Did the Ambassador help King Farouk?

WEATHERSBY: Certainly not to hold on to his throne. But he may have saved his life. There was a dispute within the Revolutionary Command Council, which became the governing power, over what to do with the deposed king, who was in effect under house arrest in his Alexandria palace. Ambassador Caffery convinced them to let him go into exile, and was cheered in the streets of Alexandria as he was driven to the palace to see the ex-king off aboard his yacht.

Q: How did the revolution affect our activities in Egypt?

Coup Had Little Initial Effect On USIS Activities

WEATHERSBY: The USIA programs were continued without any real change in the first months after the revolution. Our libraries were well used. Our Arabic language periodical maintained its circulation. The Franklin Book Program was begun by Datus Smith, with the cooperation of USIS in Egypt, and it continued as did the excellent Fulbright program through both the easier and more difficult times. Some of us of the USIS staff were invited to lecture at Egyptian institutions as well as the American University of Cairo.

PAO Robert Payne Transferred to Tehran;
Weathersby Becomes PAO. US-Egyptian Relations
Deteriorates; Gradually Adversely Affect His USIS Program

Our Public Affairs Officer, Bob Payne, was assigned to Tehran, and I succeeded him and returned to Cairo for a total of three tours. However, as disputes between the U.S. and Egypt began to grow over such matters as the U.S. withdrawal from the Western undertaking to help build the high dam on the Nile, military pacts in the region, and the U.S. rejection of an Egyptian request for arms, the government caused some difficulties in our communications with Egyptians. Some of our work continued to be effective, but it was a time of uneasy relations between the U.S. and Egypt when I left in 1957 to return to Washington.

Ambassador Caffery Originally Disdainful
of USIS, Changes Attitude Later

Q: I understand that Ambassador Caffery underwent a change in his attitude toward the United States Information Service. Can you tell us that story, Bill?

WEATHERSBY: The day after my arrival there I was summoned to see him. He welcomed me, shook hands, graciously sat me down and said: "First of all, I'd like to say that I don't have any use for USIA." My only response, as best I remember, was: "Well, I hope we may be able to change that."

Then he let me have some of his views on the practice of diplomacy. After these many years I remember some of his points, such as, "It is not always necessary to tell all the truth you know, but you should never tell a lie, and if you do you surely will be found out." My greatest act of diplomacy at the time was to let him continue talking without interrupting beyond showing my understanding. When I was allowed to return to my office, his secretary, Eunice Taylor, who did all of his telephone talking for him, called to say, "The Ambassador is going to the research center on the Red Sea this week, and would like for you to join him and the Marine guard." We flew to Ghardaqa and with Eugenie Clark, American research at the Marine Biological Station as our tutor in a glass-bottomed boat, we learned a great deal about the underwater riches of the Red Sea.

Dinner lasted for three hours, not because so much food was consumed, but because the Ambassador enjoyed talking mainly about his experiences and had no reluctance to share his wisdom. As time went by, he became very supportive of USIS. Before retiring, he called me into his office to say that he had learned to appreciate the work of the U. S. Information Agency.

I resisted commenting upon how smart he had become but did suggest that since he was the senior diplomat in the Foreign Service it might be useful for him to write his views on the subject to the State Department. "Good idea," he said, "draft me a letter."

1956: Abbott Washburn and James Halsema Arrive For Visit Just As British, French and Israeli's Attack On Egypt Begins

Q: Good story. Bill, I think you told me you were in Cairo nearly seven years. Later, Abbott Washburn, then Deputy Director of USIA, along with Jim Halsema visited during the time of Ambassador Ray Hare. Can you tell what happened on that occasion.

WEATHERSBY: The trouble was that we in Cairo, and as far as I know the U.S. Government, had not been kept advised of the British, French, and Israeli planning of the Suez War. By the time Abbott and Jim landed, Cairo was under attack from the air. I escorted Abbott and Jim into Ambassador Hare's office, and the Ambassador welcomed them but immediately added: "Don't take your hats off! We'll have to get you on a plane right away if we can get you out at all." We did get them on what I think was the last flight out.

National War College (1957-8); Deputy Assistant Director of USIA for Near East, South Asia, and Africa (1958-60); Then Director of Personnel, 1960

Q: Welcome to Cairo. Your next assignment was what, Bill?

WEATHERSBY: The following year, after the war, I went back to Washington for a year at the National War College, and after that was named Deputy Assistant Director of USIA for Near East, South Asia and Africa.

Q: How was that office organized when you first went there?

WEATHERSBY: We called it IAN, and Bill Handley was Assistant Director for that vast area. As time went on we got another Deputy Assistant Director for Africa, and the area of my work then became only the Near East and South Asia. Still later the area was split and Ned Roberts became Assistant Director for Africa.

Q: You told me that you were somewhat surprised to learn of your next assignment.

WEATHERSBY: George Allen, then Director of the Agency, had told me that he wanted me to succeed Bill Handley, who was moving on, as Assistant Director for the Near East and South Asia, but along came another idea from L. K. Little, the Agency's Director of Personnel. He had made up his mind that he should retire, and, secondly, that his successor should be a Foreign Service officer. For no reason that I've been able to fathom in view of my lack of experience in the field, he proposed me as his successor, and George Allen approved the idea. Fortunately, there was an able staff in place, and along the way I was able to attract Lionel Mosley from the Voice of America as my deputy.

Q: During that time you were supported in your personnel decisions by the front office, is that right?

WEATHERSBY: Excellent support from George Allen and Abbott Washburn for the short time they remained in office. Along came a change of directors with the election of President Kennedy. Edward R. Murrow became Director of the Agency, Donald M. Wilson was appointed Deputy Director, and Thomas C. Sorensen, a career officer, was moved up to the job of Deputy Director for Policy and Plans. G. Lewis Schmidt continued as Assistant Director for Administration. I assumed that it might be possible for me to get an overseas assignment, but Ed Murrow wanted me to stay. As usual when the national administration changes from one party to another, there were pressures on USIA, and I'm sure on other agencies of government, to take advantage of talent in the private sector interested in government jobs. There was a lot of interest in USIA, and personnel proposals came from members of the new administration, from members of Congress and from other quarters. Of course, there were not many vacancies in either the civil service or foreign service sectors of the Agency. A few able people were brought into the Agency. I had to turn down some strongly backed, highly unqualified candidates, and every time Ed Murrow backed me up no matter how heavy the flack.

Q: What was done then, if anything, to improve exchanges between State and the Agency?

WEATHERSBY: There was an interest in both the Agency and the Department in exchanging personnel for assignments when it made good sense, and we had an informal joint committee working on it. The exchanges grew slowly in number. We got the services of some excellent people from State, and they had some of our best people, if only a few. I may be a little prejudiced, but I believe that while we were offering our very best, and while we got some outstanding officers from State, sometimes we were offered some who were a bit below their top performers, but we accepted very few of those.

Another personnel development in which I was interested, and which Ed Murrow and the rest of the top leadership of USIA supported, was the imposition of stronger language requirements than we had earlier required for Foreign Service officers. We drew up specific language level requirements for certain jobs overseas. An officer whose proficiency in the language of the country was below the level required would be assigned to language school until he or she passed the test. There was an improvement in the assignment of officers with the needed language ability, but I believe our plan later fell by the wayside probably because of costs involved.

Q: Was there a basic decision reached on the matter of using agency personnel for cover positions?

WEATHERSBY: When Ed Murrow came in, he felt that USIA should have no cover positions whatsoever and let his view on that subject be known wherever it needed to be known in the government. He obtained an agreement from all concerned about that.

Q: Do you think there had been an abuse of that practice?

WEATHERSBY: I think so, especially in the early days of the Agency, although I did not know for sure how much. I believe the practice had decreased and was definitely stopped in Murrow's time.

Q: Yes. After Personnel, Bill, you were back overseas. Tell us about that assignment.

At John Kenneth Galbraith's Request, Weathersby Becomes PAO, India

WEATHERSBY: Well, a vacancy developed in the job of Public Affairs Officer in India. The Ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, was pressing his friend of long standing, Ed Murrow, to fill the job. We proposed a series of names, and the Ambassador kept turning them down. In one message he said he would like for us to reach outside and get someone of the stature and talents of a Carl Sandburg or a Robert Frost. Finally, a friend involved in personnel work in the State Department called to tell me that Ambassador Galbraith was arriving the next day and one of his objectives was to get the matter of a Public Affairs Officer settled. He realized that Galbraith had turned down about a dozen nominees. He asked if I would like the job. I told him that I would like to

go but that Murrow had said that he wasn't ready for me to leave. "Well," he wanted to know, "do you mind if I mention your name to Galbraith?" I told him that it didn't matter.

A couple of days later my friend called to say that Galbraith wanted to see me and made an appointment. We talked for an hour or so, and I wanted to go over the best names we had for Public Affairs Officer in India, but he was interested in a more general conversation.

The next morning Murrow summoned me with all the background on our best candidates for PAO India and told me to wait outside his office until he called me into his session with Galbraith. I did, but instead of calling me in, Murrow came out with Galbraith and told me that the Ambassador had convinced him that I should go to India. It turned out to be an extremely interesting assignment for me, in large part because we had in place a strong USIA program with some able people, including Barry Zorthian, Deputy PAO, and later Lawrence J. Hall in that job.

Q: We had branches in how many cities, do you recall?

WEATHERSBY: We had a branch in each of the four cities in which we had Consuls General, those being New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. In addition we had about a half dozen centers with libraries in lesser but still important cities. Prime Minister Nehru had allowed these centers back in the early days of Indian independence. Later, when I was back in Washington, the Soviet Union was operating a center in Kerala when the roof collapsed and the question arose as to whether they had permission from the Government of India for the center. Apparently they had not. It became as issue for the Indian press. Of course, there was no written evidence of governmental approval much earlier for the American center in Kerala. Both of the centers had to close.

Q: Did Ambassador Galbraith take an active interest in USIA?

WEATHERSBY: Very much so. His travels through India were planned with USIS, he spoke a great deal, he made himself available to the press frequently, and he was primarily responsible for bringing some outstanding speakers and other talented people to India. He had high visibility in the Indian press and also in our own publications, including the periodical, The American Reporter. He prevailed upon a number of scholars, including some of his colleagues from Harvard, of course, to tour India.

Q: At that time you had three years in India. And your next assignment?

1965: Ambassador to Sudan

WEATHERSBY: I went to Khartoum.

Q: And your job there

WEATHERSBY: Ambassador.

Q: And that was for what, two years?

1967: So-Called Six Day War (Israeli-Arab)
Leads Ultimately To Break of Diplomatic Relations
Between Sudan and U.S. Though Some Embassy Elements Remained

WEATHERSBY: Two, not quite two years. My wife, Ruth, and daughter had already left for home leave when along came what became known as the six-day war. Both our Embassy and the British Embassy were under siege day and night. As the war started Israeli war planes pounded Egyptian air fields, and some of the Egyptian planes escaped to be preserved in Khartoum. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt incorrectly charged that British planes from Cyprus and American planes from Wheelus Field in Libya had joined in the Israeli attack. I had assurances from Secretary of State Rusk and President Johnson that the Nasser accusation was untrue, and the Sudanese Prime Minister, Mohammed Mahjoub, wanted to believe them. I'm sure he did believe them. However, pro-Egyptian mobs were organized to surround and attack the embassies with bricks and stones around the clock. This went on for days. Our USIS library and U.S. Marine guard housing unit were attacked and partly burned. I was driven daily to and from the Embassy, and the attackers made room for the car to go through. Sudanese police stood guard around both embassy buildings, discouraging attacks against people but allowing the hurling of bricks at the buildings. Fortunately, the windows had exterior metal shutters. For several days and nights we incinerated papers in a special oven for the purpose and burned papers on the flat roof but only during the days so the flames would not be noticed.

The purpose of the pro-Egyptian mobs was to get the Sudanese government to break relations with United States and the United Kingdom as a number of Arab countries had already done. Nasser was strongly advocating the break by all Arab countries over the powerful communications system of Radio Cairo. Mahjoub told me that he was shaken in his confidence in the messages I had given him from our President and Secretary of State by a report from King Hussein of Jordan. He said that he had received information from the King that the Jordanian intelligence service had confirmed American and British participation in the Israeli attack. Shortly thereafter, both the British Ambassador and I were summoned at the same time in the evening by the Foreign Minister. The purpose was obvious. I was invited first into his office, and the Minister regretted deeply that the Cabinet had just voted to break relations with the U.S. and the U.K. He not only was sorry but wanted a "soft-break" with the necessity of only the ambassadors and the military attachés to leave, and the other embassy staffs, including aid programs, were welcomed to remain. The Nasser claim about U.S. and British planes later became know as the "big lie."

Some of our friends in the Cabinet told us that one of the advocates of breaking relations announced at the meeting that he had assurances from Cairo that all ministers who voted against severing relations would be denounced by Radio Cairo within five minutes.

The Foreign Minister urged us to take our time in departing, and I stayed for several weeks arranging for the Dutch to look after our interests and to make sure that all Americans who wanted to leave the Sudan had an opportunity to do so. That was not easy. The airport was closed to civilian planes. There were desert trails but no hard surface road for egress in any direction, and there was no regular train service even to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, even though railway tracks between the two cities existed for freight.

With the rupture in relations the mobs left the areas of the embassies. Finally, the airport was opened to civilian traffic and we were able to charter Air Ethiopia flights to take out all Americans who wanted to leave. A friend and former cabinet minister urgently called to ask: "What's this I hear about Americans going home? You're not going to break relations with us just because we broke with you, are you?" I wondered whether he thought the Sudan was developing the habit of severing relations too casually. Only a short time earlier, the Organization of African Unity had condemned an action of the British government and suggested that member nations break relations with the United Kingdom, and the Sudan, I think, was the only one that did. I had been called upon to look after British interests for about six months, and that had included treading on egg shells to get those relations restored.

Our Deputy Chief of Mission, Cleo Noel, an outstanding Foreign Service officer, remained in Khartoum with a few others under Dutch protection. The work of USIS continued, and the library after some interval was restored. AID programs lapsed. Several years later upon the restoration of relations, Cleo, who, was then in Washington, was assigned to Khartoum as Ambassador. As you may recall, Cleo and another able officer, George Curtis Moore, who had been in charge of the staff there, were captured at a reception to welcome Cleo and to say goodbye to Curt at the Saudi Arabian Embassy and killed by foreign terrorists who had penetrated the Sudan.

Q: Bill, where did your travels take you next?

1967: From Sudan, Back To New Delhi As Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM)

WEATHERSBY: After the Sudan I went back to New Delhi as Deputy Chief of Mission and concurrently Consul General for Northern India.

Q: Who was the Ambassador to India then?

WEATHERSBY: Chester Bowles, the only person I know who served as U.S. Ambassador to the same country twice, first in the administration of President Truman and then in the time of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Q: I had forgotten that if I ever knew it. Of course, he was the Bowles of Benton and Bowles, one of America's great advertising agencies back in the '30s and '40s.

WEATHERSBY: They began the business, as I recall, when they both were fairly fresh out of Yale. In the hard times of the great depression from the crash of '29 they had remarkable success in their new advertising firm. As Chet, as he was generally known, sometimes said, the work had to be very good, but the real secret was in convincing business leaders that in a deep depression there was no way to survive without putting whatever was needed into their advertising budgets. At the outbreak of World War II he went into government as Federal Price Administrator, then as Director of Economic Stabilization, and later served as special assistant to UN Secretary General Trygve Lie. In 1948 he was elected Governor of Connecticut, in 1951 went for the first time as Ambassador to India, and thereafter was elected to the U.S. Congress.

Ambassador Chester Bowles Took Great Interest In USIS
Work In India As Did Ambassador Galbraith

I remember that Ambassador Bowles appraised the work of USIS in one of his numerous books. Let me find it. It's in Promises to Keep, an account of his years in public life. Here it is; he wrote: "Much of the burden for correcting the distorted views of America held by many Indians was on the United States Information Service.....During my first assignment to India, the USIS had published The American Reporter, a twelve-page fortnightly newspaper in eight Indian languages with a circulation of 450,000. When I returned to India, I was delighted to see that this paper was still in operation, still well edited and still dealing honestly with the common problems of America and India. It also reported world-wide developments in the fields of science, education and politics, interviews with recent prominent visitors, and excerpts from speeches by prominent American officials. In 1964 I began to contribute to The American Reporter a regular column, which was also published regularly in papers throughout India with a total daily circulation of two and a half million. In these columns I outlined my personal views on such questions as economic development, economic justice and world politics.

"At least half of our information program in India was designed to reach young people. A particularly effective USIS program was its series of American Cultural Weeks at various Indian universities. These comprehensive presentations of American problems, accomplishments, music, art, and political views often lasted four or five days. To help conduct the various seminars, we recruited wives of Foreign Service officers, Fulbright Scholars and specialists from a variety of fields, as well as our own USIS staff." [Chester Bowles, Promises to Keep (Harper and Row, 1971) pp. 466, 467.]

Q: With his background, he had more than a passing interest in the U.S. Information Agency.

WEATHERSBY: He had a great deal of interest and was very helpful in many USIS activities. For his return as Ambassador his re-entry was from the east and I flew to

Calcutta and accompanied him and Mrs. Bowles in the flight to New Delhi, doing some briefing on the way. He was delighted to see that USIS was still publishing The American Reporter, which was begun with his encouragement during his first term in India. Earlier when I was with Ken Galbraith in the far reaches of Eastern India, -- the Ambassador in a speech had taken pride in saying that he believed he was the first American Ambassador to have the pleasure of visiting Shillong, and an Indian arose in the back and said, "No, Ambassador Bowles was here." I would say that both Ambassadors Galbraith and Bowles looked upon the work of the U. S. Information Agency as an important part of American diplomacy and participated in a wide range of activities.

Although Frictions Occurred, U.S.-Indian Relations Were Basically Good During Weathersby's Tours In India

Q: What were overall Indian-U.S. relations during this period, as you recall, Bill?

WEATHERSBY: Relations generally were good ever since Indian independence. It was recognized by many educated Indians that President Franklin Roosevelt had been an advocate of Indian independence in his talks with Sir Winston Churchill, even though he failed to convince him to preside over the liquidation of the empire. Prime Minister Nehru strongly believed in nonalignment and so have all of his heirs who have been elected to Indian leadership. In the Eisenhower years, Secretary of State Dulles was heavily engaged in putting together defensive military pacts around the world. India turned aside offers of arms and other inducements to join but that would not have greatly disturbed U.S.-Indian relations if Pakistan had not joined and begun strengthening considerably its armed forces. With Pakistan in an alliance with the United States and China building its military might with the help of the Soviet Union, India saw itself as nearly surrounded by potential enemies. In fact, the course of events brought wars with both Pakistan and China.

The difference of view on the values of alignment and of non-alignment was a major cause of friction between India and the United States for many years. There was an important exception to the general supply of U. S. arms to South Asia in 1962 when the Chinese-Indian border dispute resulted in Chinese attacks in Ladakh and the northeast frontier. The Soviet Union had agreed to supply MiG warplanes to India and to aid Indian aircraft manufacturing. In reneging for awhile on the promises, the Soviet Union referred to a serious international crises, which might be taken to refer to the Indian-Chinese border or concurrent problems between the U. S. and the USSR around Cuba. Nehru asked our Ambassador at that time, Galbraith, for weapons, and American cargo planes began flying military equipment to Leh in the high center of Ladakh near the battle areas. Later Nehru said that Indian leaders had been "living in a world of our own illusions." A large request for arms went to Washington but was blocked by Congress.

Through all of this USIS India was engaged in the cultivation of improved relations, and I believe over the years there has been considerable success. Later when Pakistan and India engaged in one of their brief wars, all U.S. arms to the region were stopped, but the

supply to Pakistan was later resumed. Over the years India and the U. S. certainly have managed to know each other better.

Of course, U. S. aid to India has been an important factor and was helpful, even though Indians mainly were responsible for a green revolution which achieved self sufficiency in basic food production.

1969: Weathersby Is Chargé d'Affaires In India For Some Months After Bowles' Departure

Q: What was your next assignment, Bill?

WEATHERSBY: Next came a temporary job in India as Chargé d'affaires. That was because there had been another change of administrations in Washington, and after Ambassador Bowles went home President Nixon took some months to name a new Ambassador. Even though I was due back in Washington, when the new Ambassador, Ken Keating, arrived I was asked to stay on in New Delhi for a visit there by President Nixon.

1969: Deputy Director, USIA, For Policy and Plans; Last USIA Assignment

Q: And your next Washington assignment was in USIA?

WEATHERSBY: Yes, as Deputy Director for Policy and Plans. Frank Shakespeare had become Director and Henry Loomis Deputy Director of the Agency. I was glad to return from assignments away from but closely related to the work of the Agency. Moreover, most of the very able staff members with whom I had earlier worked were still there.

Upon my return I found an elevated cold-war tone in some areas of the Agency's activities. I remember particularly that media preparations had been undertaken to condemn some Chinese activities about the time that President Nixon's visit to China was secretly being prepared. A file later was destroyed, I believe. It was also in those days that the incident I earlier mentioned in India happened -- the collapse of the Soviet Union's information and cultural center in Kerala. There was some considerable reaction on the part of the Director to the Indian Government's requirement that we as well as the Russians close our center there. I was asked whether it would be wise to close all of our centers as a sort of retaliation, but I argued that what centers we were allowed to have were in our own interest and we should keep as many as we could.

Q: Was that your last Agency assignment?

Vice President For Public Affairs, Princeton University

WEATHERSBY: Yes. After about a year, during which I had been asked several times if I could suggest anyone for a newly created job as Vice President for Public Affairs at Princeton University and had nominated three very able people, I was asked if I could consider the job. I told the recruiter at the University that I couldn't. He wanted me to pay a visit anyway to find out more about the job and various people involved in the University since I at least was serving unofficially as a head hunter. I agreed to visit and some time later President Bob Coheen went to Washington and convinced me over lunch that I should take the job. I retired from the Agency and worked the next eight years at Princeton.

Q: Was your earlier press, USIA and State Department work relevant to what you were doing at the University?

WEATHERSBY: Very much so. Of course, I had a lot to learn about the workings of a university, with which my only experience was as a student long ago, and about that particular institution, its history, principles and customs. I had oversight of University publications, an information office, relations with local, state and federal governments, a university conference program, alumni and public relations, and there was much to learn. There were even a few dealings with foreign governments. I thought a background in USIA was very helpful.

End of interview