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GORDON WINKLER

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INTERVIEW

Q: Gordon, we'd like to hear something about your education and your background and any of the professional developments after your education which finally led you to join the Agency.

Bio-Sketch

WINKLER: Dorothy, I was born in Chicago and raised there and in Los Angeles. I went into the Army Air Corps in World War II, and flew bombing missions in B-24s out of Italy. I had been at the University of Illinois for about a semester prior to going into the Air Corps, and decided I wanted to go somewhere else when I came out. I went to Dartmouth, majored in English, worked on the daily student newspaper, The Dartmouth, and felt I wanted to go into the newspaper field.

When I got back to Chicago, after graduating, I went to work for the City News Bureau of Chicago. The City News Bureau was owned by all of the Chicago papers--there were four or five of them in those days, and the Associated Press. It was a citywide wire service which backed up the coverage of the newspapers and the AP and also trained newspaper people. After a couple of years at City News, I went to work for the Chicago Tribune as a reporter.

Unfortunately, in those days, journalists, particularly beginning journalists, were paid what I recall as being the minimum wage or less, and I simply could not afford the luxury of being a journalist. I was married during the period that I was at the Tribune.

Q: Whom did you marry?

WINKLER: I married a Chicago girl by the name of Margaret Mayer, who was at Radcliffe when I met her. She left Radcliffe after a couple of years to get married, but she continued her education overseas when we were in Ethiopia. She attended courses at Haile Selassie University, and also took courses at other posts.

I left the Tribune after three years and took a job with a public relations firm in Chicago. I was in the PR field there for about 11 years. I worked for two different agencies doing

financial public relations, product publicity, trade association PR, and corporate public relations.

Entrance Into USIA

When John Kennedy became President, there was a kind of excitement throughout the country. My public relations work took me to New York a great deal and to Washington, D.C., about three or four times a year. The atmosphere in Washington and elsewhere those early Kennedy years was terribly alive--the whole idea of government service was positive in a way which it has never been since. Kennedy's inaugural address made a lot of people think.

Q: Everybody remembers the excitement.

WINKLER: Yes, it was very exciting in Washington, and a number of very good people from Chicago, a number whom I knew, came to Washington to take jobs. I guess I kind of got the bug. I was also getting a bit fed up with commercial public relations and the hand-holding of clients.

I had no idea what I might be suited for in government. I knew nothing about government service. I went to the Chicago Public Library and got some books. I had no thought of going overseas; I wanted to go to work in Washington. But I came across something about this outfit called the U.S. Information Agency, and it looked like it was populated basically by PR and newspaper types. I thought maybe it might be interesting to get a job there for a few years and go overseas.

So I called a friend by the name of Bill Rivkin, who had been very close to Hubert Humphrey and had been appointed by Kennedy as Ambassador to Luxembourg. I asked him if he knew anybody at USIA, and he said yes, he knew Don Wilson, who was Ed Murrow's deputy in those days. He arranged an appointment for me with Wilson, who thought that there were possibilities, and turned me over to Lionel Mosley, the Chief of Personnel, who was one of the great figures, I thought, in USIA.

Q: I agree with you. I think "Mose" really understood, indeed.

WINKLER: Mosley set up a panel interview for me on my next visit to Washington, and said, "If your wife happens to be with you in Washington, bring her in for the interview." That would hardly happen today, but I figured that Peggy would certainly be helpful to me. So I brought her along. The chairman of the panel, a three-person panel, was Ned Roberts, who was then the area director for Africa. I really didn't know much about the world, but with Peggy's help, I got by, or we both got by. This was in the days when they took you in as a Foreign Service limited reserve officer. I think I had a three- or a five-year appointment, and then they could throw me out.

Q: That's how I came in.

1963 Initial Assignment: Addis Ababa

WINKLER: Roberts said, "Look, we'd like to have you, but we can't hire you until we have an opening for you." So they went through the whole security investigation. As that was winding up, I got a call from Roberts, and he said, "I'd like you to think about the possibility of being information officer in Addis Ababa." That was probably the second time I'd ever heard about Addis Ababa. The first being when Mussolini marched in there in the mid-1930s. Well, I held my breath about that for a few days, and discussed it with my family. We had three little boys, and we were living in a suburb of Chicago, but we decided to pick up and go.

Q: A big adventure!

WINKLER: It was a big adventure.

Q: Kind of crazy, but a big adventure.

WINKLER: It was kind of crazy. I quit my job, and in September of 1963, I came to Washington for two and a half or three months of orientation. Peggy and the kids stayed in Glencoe, Illinois, and closed out the house. This was a task that Peggy repeated in a number of posts where she had that kind of onerous responsibility.

Q: This is always one of the joys of a wife in the Foreign Service. She's always sort of left behind for a period of time to pick up the pieces.

WINKLER: Right. So we left just before Christmas of 1963, spent Christmas in Paris and New Year's in Rome, and arrived in Addis Ababa about the fourth or fifth of January.

Q: Did you have any language training?

WINKLER: No language at all. Really, no one was trained. I had a fair amount of Spanish in both high school and college, but I really couldn't handle it. Peggy spoke French before she spoke English, because she and her sisters had a Swiss nurse. Her French is quite good. But as far as the Ethiopian language, Amharic, is concerned, maybe one officer in the embassy was trained in that, and some of the Peace Corps volunteers, but nobody in USIS had it.

Q: What was it like in Ethiopia at that time? This was in January 1964. It was still under Haile Selassie?

WINKLER: It was still under Haile Selassie. I keep relating my recollections about Ethiopia to my recollections of my last post, which was Iran, because there was a great deal of similarity in the political atmosphere. In both cases, the United States was as close to being the metropole as is possible with an historically independent country. These were

countries that had been independent for centuries, although, parenthetically, the Iranians might say that they hadn't been that independent, given British and Russian influence in the country since the past century.

Q: Maybe longer.

WINKLER: Maybe longer. But technically, they had been independent. But the United States really had a very, very powerful influence and role to play in both of those countries in the modern era--that is, since World War II.

Q: How had the U.S. come to play such a role in Ethiopia? I would have thought more the Italians.

WINKLER: The Italians had been in Italian Somaliland, and they had been in northern Ethiopia--Eritrea. It had been an Italian colony; the principal city is Asmara. Following the war, Eritrea became an Ethiopian province, but never a comfortable one. The Eritrean liberation movement was going on when we arrived in 1964, and it is still going on.

Q: I saw a bumper sticker this morning about Eritrea. "Free Eritrea" or "Always Free Eritrea," something to that effect.

Anti-American Feeling In Ethiopia

WINKLER: Our interests, to a large degree, in Ethiopia were military. We had a very substantial communications facility in Asmara, at a base called Kagnev Station. That, to a considerable degree, was a thorn in the side of many Ethiopians, particularly young Ethiopians. But in comparing those two countries, while we did hear in Ethiopia a considerable amount of criticism about the U.S. role and we were conscious of anti-Americanism, it wasn't quite as clear and as sharply defined as it was in Iran. I think it was just as strong, but I suppose it relates to the character of the people and their culture.

Q: Would it have to do with literacy and media?

WINKLER: There were a lot of very literate Ethiopians; there was a media presence. Newspapers were fairly rudimentary, but as in Iran, there were many Ethiopians who were American-educated or European-educated. There was still the connection, to a degree, with Italy.

Q: That's an asset.

WINKLER: Yes. We would hear criticisms about the United States role in the country, but not quite as sharply as we would in Iran, because Ethiopians are somewhat more reserved, less direct, less forthright. Iranians, as you know, are not direct in the Anglo-Saxon sense, but Ethiopians are even less so. At the same time we had close Ethiopian friends, and the country is beautiful. We lived right in Ethiopian neighborhoods.

Q: There wasn't an enclave?

WINKLER: Happily, there was no enclave. We could look out of our bedroom window on the second floor of our house and see the neighbors defecating in their yard, but that's the way it was, that's the nature of the town, and we got used to it. There was a primitiveness, a considerable primitiveness when you got out into the countryside, but the country was spectacular.

Ostentatious Haile Selassie Banquet

There was a huge dichotomy between the poor and the wealthy, which is standard, of course, in most of the developing world. But in Ethiopia it was particularly startling. I recall being invited to a huge dinner when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited the Emperor, and the dinner was in a monumental dining room about the size of a football field under a kind of straw roof. There must have been 1,000 people invited to that. I obviously was way below the salt.

Q: A guest of Haile Selassie?

WINKLER: A guest of Haile Selassie. I'll never forget the beautiful china, the magnificent crystal, the very costly silverware and linens on this absolutely huge banquet table that seemed to go on for city blocks. The basic Ethiopian drink is a honey mead called tej which I found to be cloyingly sweet. At the banquet, there was crystal for about six or seven kinds of tej.

Q: I bet it's very potent after a while.

WINKLER: I never drank that much of it, but this tej was good. The palace tej was dry. I recall that every two guests at this banquet had a liveried butler or waiter standing behind him or her in an 18th century costume--it may have been satin. So the service was very good.

Q: This is how it is at the palace in London, as I understand it.

WINKLER: Haile Selassie didn't want the Queen to feel homesick. The greatest fireworks display I've ever seen followed the dinner.

Q: Where did Haile Selassie's money come from? Was there wealth in the country or land? Was it agriculturally viable those days?

WINKLER: In those days, it was very agriculturally viable, but underdeveloped. The country had terribly rich soil. In recent years they've had droughts. They've had periodic droughts throughout history, but it would rejuvenate itself. As in many developing countries, high-level corruption was rampant. There was great wealth in the Coptic

Church, which owned a huge amount of land, probably most of the land. The country desperately needed land reform and tax reform and never really had it. We were also putting in, of course, substantial amounts of money through a very big military advisory group and an AID program. An awful lot of Americans were there.

Q: Did you meet and encounter Haile Selassie? What kind of a person was he?

WINKLER: I never had a conversation with Haile Selassie. We were invited to the palace as part of the diplomatic corps on a number of occasions, and I was introduced to him and shook hands with him. He was a dignified, very small man, who always had at his feet, or sitting on his lap, one or two Chihuahua dogs, or Pomeranians.

Q: Is this where the stories come from about the lions?

WINKLER: We had horses there, and we used to ride several times a week. When we would ride around the palace, I was often unnerved in seeing a lion sitting by himself on top of the palace wall, and wonder if the lion was hungry! They told a story about Kwame Nkrumah, who was the first president of Ghana, visiting Haile Selassie, and as he was ushered into the palace by the Ghanaian ambassador, he saw Haile Selassie seated at his throne with a couple of lions walking around in the throne room, and the Ghanaian ambassador said, "Mr. President, just ignore the lions or pet them." Nkrumah is supposed to have said, "You're out of your mind. I know better. I'm an African."

Q: This was, after all, your first post. You were the information officer for the embassy. How was the transition from the private sector, where, in effect, you were an information officer into the government? Was it an easy transition for you?

WINKLER: Yes, it was. I think I was selling a better product in Ethiopia than I'd been selling. There was an awful lot to do. We didn't seem to have funding problems. We had enough money to spend. I had developed a habit in the private sector--one had to--to work very hard and work very long hours.

Access To Ethiopian Press

Q: You were dealing primarily with the print media?

WINKLER: With the print media and broadcast. Television came in while we were there. Of course, all the media was government media. There was no private media. We could get editorials written, and we could get a great deal of material into the papers. The editors, though, were not patsies for us. Many of the editors were European or American-educated. They often looked upon us with a jaundiced eye. We had to become friendly with them. I saw an awful lot of them socially and professionally.

There was one fellow who went to Boston University, by the name of Tegegne Yetashework. He was editor of the Ethiopian Herald when I was there. We became very

close. He'd come over to our house three or four nights a week, and sit down at the dinner table with us--not to eat, but to have a glass of orange juice and chew the fat and be with us and our kids.

I'll never forget, when we sent Marines into the Dominican Republic, which must have been 1964-65, I heard it on the VOA, went to the office, and got a call about 10:00 in the morning from Tegegne. He said, "Come on over to the office if you've got a little time. Let's have a cup of coffee."

So I went over there and we sat at a little sidewalk cafe outside of his office, and he bought me a cup of coffee. He said, "This has nothing to do with your job or my job, but I'm terribly disturbed. Tell me when I'm going to see American Marines coming up that street." I said I didn't think he would. They never have. But I relate this anecdote because it was things like this, events like this in various parts of the world, that concerned people about the U.S.

Tegegne later became assistant minister of information. One morning in Iran, Peg and I were at the breakfast table, and she was reading one of the Iranian papers, which headlined the fact that in Ethiopia, the new regime which had thrown out Haile Selassie, had taken 60 people out and shot them. The Iranian paper listed the names, and Tegegne was one of them.

Q: Was there any censorship in that kind of a totalitarian state? I don't know how totalitarian that was in comparison with Iran.

WINKLER: It was totalitarian, as Iran was. There was an absolute monarch in both places. There was a kind of self-censorship. The editors knew what they could run and what they couldn't run. There was a weakly enforced Third Country rule, which you're familiar with. They wouldn't take anything from the Russians that knocked us, and they wouldn't take anything from us that knocked the Russians. But in those days, the Russians really didn't amount to much in Ethiopia. They had a small cultural center and library--a place to play chess--which was usually empty. I walked through there a number of times. But the USIS post was very, very busy, and we had an excellent library. For a country of that size, we had a pretty substantial staff. We had seven Americans and about 35 Ethiopians.

Q: Who was the PAO?

WINKLER: The first PAO was a very able fellow by the name of Glen Smith, who had some problems with the ambassador, who was a terribly interesting guy by the name of Ed Korry. It was simply bad chemistry. Both men were quite talented. After two years, Smith left and was transferred to Cyprus. I became acting PAO for about six months, and then Eugene Rosenfeld, who had been PAO in Dar es Salaam, and whom Korry knew from newspaper days, was sent in. The Rosenfelds and the Winklers became very close, and still are. We coincidentally now live across the street from each other.

Influence Of Coptic Church In Ethiopia

Q: How very nice. These associations that you develop overseas, there's nothing really quite comparable. I have one other question about Ethiopia. I just wondered to what degree the Coptic Church was a force of the sort that Islam is in Iran, in view of your own comparisons here.

WINKLER: The Coptic Church was a very substantial force in Ethiopia. I was much more conscious of the religion in Ethiopia than I was of the religion in Iran, believe it or not. Maybe that was one of our problems in Iran.

Q: I was there during the year in which the religious fervor escalated and the revolution finally broke out. It was a tremendous escalation of religious power.

WINKLER: We were, to a degree, in touch with the church in Ethiopia. There were a few church leaders who were sent to the States by USIS on leader grants. There was no restriction whatsoever by the palace on American contacts with the church. A fundamental problem in Ethiopia was that very few of the church leaders spoke anything but Amharic, and virtually none of us had the language. There is something of an excuse for that, because it is one of the most difficult languages in the world. It's just a frightfully hard language. The church was a force. As in Iran before the White Revolution, the Ethiopian church owned a tremendous amount of land, just as the Mosques owned a vast amount of the land in Iran. So I guess there were similarities. But the revolution did not come out of the church. It's a very fundamentalist kind of religion, Coptic Christianity, and Ethiopia is one of the principal seats of it. But the revolution came from other quarters.

Q: You had two tours in Ethiopia?

WINKLER: No, I had two and a half years in Addis. Then I was assigned as public affairs officer in Accra.

Q: You went home in between?

WINKLER: Yes. We arrived in Accra in the summer of 1966, about four months after the revolution there. Nkrumah was thrown out in February of 1966 and went to Guinea for most of the rest of his life.

Q: Did you request another African post?

Competition Between U.S. Embassies In Africa Winkler Case In Point--Addis Ababa And Mogadishu Differences

WINKLER: No, but it was almost assured. I might say that one of the things, getting back to Ethiopia for a minute, that surprised me about the management of American diplomacy overseas was the seeming competition between American embassies.

Q: You mean from one country to the other?

WINKLER: Yes. During the period that we were there, Somali irredentism was at its height. There was a lot of shooting in the Ogaden desert, a territory which the Somalis felt belonged to them, and where Somali herders were grazing their flocks. The Ethiopians felt it belonged to them. So this battle was going on constantly, and continues to this day.

I early got into the habit of going to the embassy at the end of the day and reading the traffic.

Q: USIS was in a separate building?

WINKLER: We were in a separate building. We were downtown, about four or five miles from the embassy. It was amazing to me how our embassy, which was under the direction of Ed Korry, was at odds in its cable reporting to Washington, with the embassy in Mogadishu, which, as I recall, was headed, I believe, by an ambassador by the name of Thurston. I had the feeling, as a fledgling in the Foreign Service, that here were two American embassies that were defending the views of the countries they were in. It seemed to me they both often strayed from coldly objective reporting on this very contentious issue between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Q: Did we have a strong policy coming out of Washington on the subject, or was it all sort of a locally developed reaction?

WINKLER: My recollection is that we probably didn't, that our policy was, "This is a local problem. Watch it." U.S. interests in Ethiopia were, of course, substantially more significant than in Somalia.

Q: So they reported it differently?

WINKLER: They reported it differently, and regularly contradicted each other in a way that, on the one hand, the embassy in Mogadishu seemed to defend Somali views as though it totally accepted these views, and our embassy, often did likewise vis à vis Ethiopia.

Q: So they hadn't done their own research, either one of them. Who was the head of the African Bureau at State, do you remember?

WINKLER: "Soapy" Williams.

Q: Oh, that was the period for "Soapy"?

WINKLER: Yes, this was the period when Africa was "hot."

Q: Yes, it was just really coming.

WINKLER: Africa was the place to be.

Q: Yes.

WINKLER: Kennedy had come into power. Nkrumah had achieved independence in 1957 or '58, in Ghana, and that was the first country. Then they all began to get independence. This was about ten or twelve years after India and Pakistan became independent. While we were in Ethiopia, I recall Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi, and others became independent. Nigeria had it before.

Williams and Kennedy had decided that any sovereign state would have an American embassy, and, I might add parenthetically, whether it needed it or not, or, importantly, whether we needed it or not. But we had them.

Q: It was only later they began to double up.

WINKLER: We still have them, whether we need them or not.

Q: Now we double up a little bit, don't we?

WINKLER: We don't double up. When I was African Area Director in the early 1970s, I recall we had one ambassador covering those three countries around South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Now we've got an ambassador in each of those countries. I don't know whether you've ever visited Africa.

Q: No. Africa is one of the blanks in my geography.

The Disappointment Of Western Hopes For Newly Independent African Nations

WINKLER: There was tremendous hope for Africa. Africa was terribly exciting, a wonderful place to be. There was hope among the Africans. They had achieved independence. There was a considerable amount of American aid coming in. There was aid coming in from all over Europe. The Scandinavians were big donors. The PRC was in, doing wonderful agricultural work. The Israelis also were doing wonderful agricultural work. The PRC and Israelis were in there fundamentally because of the U.N. votes the Africans had. The Peace Corps was there. Working in a country at the beginning period of the Peace Corps was just marvelous.

Q: It was such a joy, wasn't it?

WINKLER: You'd go out into the bush, and there was no place to stay in Ethiopia but in some hovel that a Peace Corps volunteer occupied. You'd take your sleeping bag and you'd sleep on the wooden floor of his little cottage. They had great verve and there was much excitement. The Peace Corps also has changed a great deal.

Q: It's somehow very sad that Africa has declined so terribly in terms of just general morale and capacity. Have you any notions? There was no sense of this in either one of your two posts?

WINKLER: When the British left Ghana in Nkrumah's hands in 1957, it's my recollection that the Ghanaian treasury had about \$8 billion. When Nkrumah was thrown out in 1966, nine years later, Ghana was about that much in debt.

Q: Was this sheer incapacity?

WINKLER: Literacy was low. There was very little understanding of work. There was the whole problem of tribalism which overlaid everything. If the minister was of one tribe, the people hired for his ministry would be of his tribe, whether they were able or not, by and large. There was no escape from that. He had to do that because they were part of his extended family.

Q: It's part of the culture of Africa.

WINKLER: It's part of the culture. The culture demanded it. They were fundamentally agricultural people, and the cities attracted them. They rushed to the cities, and the urban areas couldn't handle them.

Q: But you were there before the urban problems began?

WINKLER: The urban problems were certainly occurring in Ghana and in Nigeria and other parts of Africa during my contact with Africa. People were rushing to the cities. Education, to some degree, began to develop. The British, of course, left universities and left preparatory schools.

Q: They always leave the structure there, don't they?

WINKLER: Yes. But then it was taken over by Africans, and they suddenly came upon self-rule and all the possibilities for growth and didn't handle it well. There was infrastructure in some of the countries, but there simply were not enough people prepared to take over--and the possibilities for corruption were very seductive. Here I am generalizing, of course. Some countries--such as the Ivory Coast--did fairly well. One very important point about Africa is that it is very dangerous to generalize. There are so many factors--historical, cultural, economic, social, etc.--impacting on each country in different ways that to speak about Africa collectively is a mistake.

Ghana In 1967

Q: Tell me a little more now about your time in Accra. How long were you there?

WINKLER: I was there for two and a half years. That was the most enjoyable post we had, because of the people.

Q: You mean the most enjoyable of all of your posts?

WINKLER: Well, I've only had three posts. Ghanaian people are terribly attractive and warm and outgoing and direct. There wasn't the kind of elliptical personality one finds in Iran, and which is quite pronounced in Ethiopia. The Ghanaians are very open people.

In the days we were there, in spite of the terrible debt problem, they were fairly happy times for the Ghanaians. They had just thrown out a tyrant, Kwame Nkrumah, who had put an awful lot of people in jail, particularly in a place in Accra called Usher Fort, spoken of with considerable fright by everyone. When Nkrumah left, they opened the fort and these people were back in circulation. Many were able technocrats--educated people.

The Ghanaians were different in many ways from a lot of Africans. For the British, Ghana was a kind of model colony. It was a colony--the Gold Coast--where it was not too difficult for the colonial power to stimulate development. It was relatively small. At the time of independence, the population was in the neighborhood of six million. There was gold, there were diamonds, and, most importantly, there was cocoa. The country has always been one of the chief cocoa producers of the world. One of the problems is that so much of the economy is based on cocoa, that when cocoa prices drop, the country is in deep trouble.

There was bauxite in the country. Kaiser Aluminum built and brought on stream a very large refinery in the port city of Tema while we were there. The country had the water power. They built the Akasambo Dam on the Volta River about 150 miles upstream from the Atlantic. So there was plenty of power. They had to have this, of course, for the aluminum operation.

Q: So this was all a part of development. Everything was possible in Africa at that time.

WINKLER: That's right, but in Ghana, more so. If Nkrumah hadn't put the country into such terrible debt, which exists to this day, Ghana may have achieved some of the hoped-for success that all of Africa had expected.

Q: How much of a staff did you have?

WINKLER: Ghana was a little bit smaller than Ethiopia. There were five or six Americans, and we had 22 or 23 Ghanaian employees. It was the usual configuration-- cultural, information, library.

Q: Did you have any special public diplomacy problems when you were there?

WINKLER: No, I don't think so. That was also a pretty open situation. I've been lucky in that I've been in receptive situations wherever I've been. Our cultural programs were well received. I've never really been in a situation where we had to vet nominations for grants with the local government, and where we did, it was usually complied with in the breach. There was more of that in Iran.

Q: I used to have to go through that.

WINKLER: But it wasn't too onerous. We had a very good local staff in Ghana. I later became Deputy Area Director for Africa to John Reinhardt for two years, and then I was Area Director for two years. So I traveled all over Africa and got a view of the local staffs. My recollection was that the Ghanaian staff was as good, if not better, than any of the other African local staffs.

Q: So you had good atmospherics and a good staff.

WINKLER: In Ghana, there were three large universities. This was in a country of 6 million people, and that's a lot of universities in a developing country for that many people. The principal one, the University of Ghana at Legon, which is just outside of Accra, was, along with Makerere in Uganda and Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone, among the best universities in English-speaking black Africa. There also were several first-class prep schools on the English model, a famous one called Achimota near Accra, where traditions had developed, prescribed outfits were worn and generally the kids went to school like proper little Englishmen.

Q: I was always very interested in African education before I went into the Foreign Service. We began to be concerned, however, that this kind of very proper British education was not training people to cope with the developing world, and that what they really needed was more agriculture schools from the United States than this proper British education.

Kudos For AID And Peace Corps In Africa

WINKLER: I think to a large degree that's true. I'll never forget going up country in Ghana, up in the north, and seeing a huge Caterpillar tractor that looked brand new, lying in a ditch, abandoned. We found out from a U.S. agricultural advisor that it had been abandoned there, and it was virtually brand new, because the fuel pump was broken. The fuel pump could have been replaced for \$50 or \$60, and the thing would have been moving again. But that, I'm afraid, was rather typical. Peg noticed with some dismay

looking over a student's shoulder in a school exam that the questions mostly related to the agricultural products of East Anglia.

I might say that the AID people I came across throughout my career, particularly the agricultural people in the rural areas, impressed me. Most were experienced farmers who were not afraid of dirt, and this was impressive to the Africans with whom they worked.

Q: They knew their job and they did it.

WINKLER: There was a guy in Mali, I'll never forget, who was known as "Chicken" Davis. He was famous all over west Africa. He ran a poultry development operation there, and he was a terribly impressive, productive guy. We met many such people; they were like the Peace Corps. These were people who wore blue jeans and rough shirts. They tried very hard, they were highly motivated. They wanted desperately to contribute to progress.

Q: They had the same spirit as the Peace Corps people, too.

WINKLER: Yes. The two countries, as I suggested a moment ago, that did very well agriculturally were the Chinese and the Israelis. You would go into a market and you would see a squash as big as a pumpkin, you'd see a pumpkin with a diameter of two and a half feet, huge watermelons, wonderful beans and potatoes, and you would know almost immediately that there must be an Israeli or a Chinese agricultural project there.

Q: And there usually was.

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: So you traveled around Africa a great deal, I take it?

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: Because of your assignments back in Washington.

WINKLER: About 20 trips over the four years.

Nine Years In The USIS Program Gave Winkler
Great Opportunity To Observe Much Of Africa (1964-73)

Q: So your two posts were approximately five years, then another four years. So you were involved with Africa for about nine years.

WINKLER: That's right.

Q: Did you see much change in that period?

WINKLER: No.

Q: You were there in the halcyon days.

WINKLER: From what I saw at the end of that period, I'm not surprised that really nothing much has happened since. As I say, tribalism was pervasive, and I don't think they've overcome it. The South Africans used to claim that the blacks in South Africa were better off than people in the rest of Africa. On the surface, it was probably true; except politically, of course.

Q: In physical terms.

WINKLER: Physical--the way they lived, even in the locations. I went to South Africa three or four times during the period I was in Washington, and each time I would spend a half-day in Soweto near Johannesburg. The worst living conditions in Soweto and the other locations outside of Durban or Cape Town were certainly no worse, and probably better, than the way an awful lot of people lived in Lagos or Kinshasa or other places.

Q: But the spirit of the other people was a little bit different, I assume.

WINKLER: South Africa is a totally different story. I can't testify to what the spirit of people was, for example, in the hovels of Kinshasa, but they were in their own independent country. At the same time they have been subjected to years of civil strife and repressive leaders.

Q: Do you have any final things you want to say to me about Africa or your thoughts about Africa and your two posts?

The Fascination Of South Africa

WINKLER: South Africa fascinated me. I used to enjoy going there, because I was impressed by what USIS was able to do in South Africa. We were one of the few places--and perhaps the only place in Johannesburg, our library and our cultural events--where people of all colors could gather. The same was true of our homes. We had some first-class PAOs there. The first one I visited was Fraser Draper, who entertained people of all colors in his house and knew people of all colors, and knew them well. Bob Gosende, who later was country PAO, was the branch PAO in Cape Town during a good deal of my tour as Area Director. He and Mary Beth were like Fraser and Howell Draper. The USIS people generally were very comfortable in stimulating multi-racial events in South Africa--probably the most comfortable of any part of the U.S. mission.

Q: You mean than the embassy people?

WINKLER: Yes, more than embassy people. This is possibly an unfair generalization, but I believe it to be the case.

Q: That's often the case, because USIS people tend to know a broader range of people, I think, than many people in embassies, who focus so much on either the politically elite or the foreign ministries.

Insensitive Ambassadors

WINKLER: We have had in South Africa, on a number of occasions, political ambassadors. There was one from Texas, who, I thought, was a serious problem. At one point, he created quite a furor by his insensitivity in accepting an invitation to shoot birds on Robin's Island. Robin's Island is off of Cape Town. It's the prison for political prisoners. This is where Nelson Mandela spent years. Mandela was there at the time. It seemed to me that he and his wife were less than comfortable at mixed parties at Draper's house.

Q: Do you want to name the ambassador?

WINKLER: His name was John Hurd. A nice man.

Q: It's amazing that they would put a political ambassador in a country like that, except maybe South Africa was not considered quite as sensitive as it is now.

Travels With Director Shakespeare

WINKLER: This was in the Nixon Administration. This ambassador, however, did one very interesting thing. On one of my trips there, I escorted Frank Shakespeare, the Director of the Agency. Shakespeare had a wonderful ability to sit in a living room or at a table in a dining room and articulately hold forth his views of the world. I wasn't always in agreement with his views, but he was terribly interesting, and he spoke very well. He was totally honest.

Q: That sometimes makes even unpopular subjects acceptable.

WINKLER: It made him unpopular with people who were not in sync with him politically. We were at lunch one day in the country club in Pretoria with the Ambassador. Draper was PAO then. Six or seven high officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the deputy minister were there. Frank, after lunch, was expounding his views of the world and the importance of South Africa. He talked about the importance of the minerals we were getting from South Africa, the strategic importance of the sea lanes south of the Cape, the importance of the Indian Ocean to us, the fact that we could depend on South Africa to keep the sea routes open, and the fact that South Africa was a bastion of anti-communism in Africa.

When we came out of the country club, the Ambassador called him aside, and they walked down the street for a block, talked, and came back. Frank got into a car with me,

and the Ambassador went on his way. Frank said, "I've been doing dumb things. I was just told that I can't talk that way to them, because as I build up their importance to us, it reinforces their feeling that they can continue things the way they are here, that we're not going to do anything about it."

Q: The South Africans.

WINKLER: The South Africans.

Q: A very savvy kind of thing.

WINKLER: It was savvy. And Frank never did it again. We were in South Africa for at least another week, and we put him in a chair in living rooms all over the country to talk to people, to talk to groups of journalists, academicians, and others, and he learned. At that time he was the highest level U.S. official ever to visit South Africa.

Q: A bright guy.

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: Whatever you think of his point of view.

WINKLER: I liked Frank, though I didn't agree with him very much or in what he believed.

Q: Well, that's good. We haven't interviewed Shakespeare as yet.

WINKLER: He'd be very good.

Q: We have to try to see what we can do, if he brings himself back from Italy.

WINKLER: Yes, the Vatican.

After The African Tour, Iran: 1973

Q: Those are good stories. What did you do after your African period?

WINKLER: I went to Iran.

Q: Directly?

WINKLER: Yes, in 1973.

Q: You were there until when?

WINKLER: Until July of 1977. I went there in April of '73 just after Dick Helms had taken over as Chief of Mission. He'd interviewed me for the job in Washington. I got called home from my last African trip, as a matter of fact, a week or two early, to be interviewed by Helms. He was going out. I arrived about six weeks after he did.

Q: Initially you had no particular interest yourself in Iran?

WINKLER: Yes, I always had an interest in Iran. Iran seemed exciting. I can't explain what it was. The idea of Central Asia seemed interesting to me. It also was a considerably more developed environment. It wasn't Europe, but it was a much more developed environment.

Q: From what you'd been having in Africa, of course. I did it exactly the other way; I went from sophisticated Japan to Iran, which is very different.

WINKLER: You may have had some culture shock.

Q: I did. If nothing else, I had a lot of culture shock on distance.

WINKLER: Traffic wasn't quite as bad as Tokyo's, but it was terrible.

Q: They reacted differently. They would get out and bang on your car, or whatever was going on.

The Cultural Rudeness Of Some Iranians

WINKLER: Yes. This sounds awful, but it's a fact. I used to say that I was crazy about every Iranian I knew, and despised every Iranian I didn't know. You were treated so miserably by strangers. I found many Iranians so discourteous, so impolite. An awful lot of this, I'm sure, grows out of my feeling about the traffic and the driving. But you know all the culture and all the idiosyncrasies of Iranians. If I pulled up to a stoplight next to an Iranian driver, I learned to try to achieve eye contact. I would lean out of the car and look at the person driving the other car, and could feel him fighting against eye contact, because if they didn't achieve eye contact, they could do anything. They would pull out and cut right in front of you. If you achieved eye contact, then they had to be polite. Their culture required it.

Q: And they did this to each other.

WINKLER: Oh, yes!

Q: I think that's got to be made clear, this is how Iranians treat Iranians.

WINKLER: This is interesting about Ethiopia, too. They often were dreadful to each other. I went to a USAID agricultural conference involving about ten embassy officers

and about 20 people from the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture at a rather nice motel outside of Addis. The Americans were assigned to share a room with an Ethiopian. I was in a room with an assistant minister. I was in bed, and he came in, after brushing his teeth, and got into the other bed. There was a bed table between us. He put a gun down, a revolver, on the bed table. (Laughs) I didn't know what to think. I said, "What's that?"

He said, "That's my pistol."

I said, "Well, why is it here?"

He said, "Because I'm an Amhara," which meant that he was of the dominant--but not the biggest--tribe, and he always felt a sense of danger. An awful lot of Ethiopian men carried firearms, and they were capable of shooting each other when arguing. They treated each other very badly. To a degree, the Iranians were much the same way. The Ghanaians were not like that.

Q: I'm not sure if foreigners in Iran understood that this terrible rudeness was kind of a universal; it wasn't anti-American. I think people sometimes mixed that up. They didn't have the proper understanding of the culture or the people.

WINKLER: But it was terribly difficult not to feel that it was directed toward you; they seemed so insensitive. The Iranians that you knew socially and professionally couldn't have been nicer.

Q: How did you and Helms get on? Why was Helms sent there?

WINKLER: I gather he was sent there because Nixon wanted to put somebody else in CIA. Who was it?

Q: Gee, I can't remember.

WINKLER: Who did Nixon put in? Did he put Bush in?

Q: I think Bush was later.

Richard Helms--An Easy Ambassador For Whom To Work

WINKLER: Helms reputedly got eased out, and I gather he was asked where he wanted to go. Of course, Helms had been in the CIA for 30 years. I think he was the first career director. The CIA connection with the Shah had been very, very close for all these years, and Helms, so the story goes, asked for Iran.

He and I got along very well. Our wives were very friendly. We played tennis a good deal with the Helmses. We saw a lot of them socially. He was a fine guy to work for, because he allowed you full range. When I first got there, he said, "Gordon, you've got the

experience to run the USIA operation here. If you have problems, or troubles, or need me for anything, walk into my office. If you want me to go to any kind of a social or cultural event, let me know in advance and get it on the calendar, and I'll be there. If you want me to give a talk, set it up and I'll do it. Just do your job; I won't bother you."

Q: This is a blessing, isn't it?

WINKLER: Yes. I think the fundamental reason was that Helms' previous job had been so much more complex, so much more demanding, such greater responsibility, than being Ambassador in even as important a country as Iran, that he had no ego problems. He had no need to get into everybody's hair. Other ambassadors do, as you well know. But Helms was really fine to work for.

Q: And it was an easy job for him, relatively, compared with what he had been coping with earlier.

WINKLER: Yes, I think so. He was very social. We seldom went to a party where he and Cynthia weren't there. You know what that environment was. That social environment was pretty heady. You went to dinner parties in houses with three-acre backyards covered with Persian rugs.

Q: And tureens of caviar.

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: It was exhausting. I know even in the time I was there, it got to the point that by the time the weekend days came, I was often just shaking with lack of sleep, because we always had a very early morning staff meeting, and you were out. You'd go someplace and they never served dinner until 11:30.

WINKLER: Yes, if you invited people for 8:30, that meant they'd be there at 10:00 and would drink until 11:00.

Q: That's right. I used to eat twice. I would eat in order to survive the dinner party.

WINKLER: Helms always had a sandwich before he went to a party. When I got there, I arrived about two months before Peggy, there were three or four invitations, including black-tie invitations, on my desk when I arrived. People I didn't know!

Q: But they knew who you were.

The Constant "Hedge" Of Iranians
Around The American Embassy

WINKLER: They knew who I was. It was a wonderful way to get acquainted. The problem was--and this goes to the basic dilemma--that all of the people we knew, everybody on the USIS staff when I was there, and I'm sure everybody in the embassy, or just about everybody in the embassy, saw the same group of Iranians that our predecessors saw. We inherited them. We were the new generation of Americans, and we inherited the friends of the preceding generation.

The first week I was there, Jim Bill, then at the University of Texas, came through. He's written a very good book. I don't know if you've read it.

Q: I've read some reviews of it, but I haven't read the book.

WINKLER: It's worth reading. It's called The Eagle and the Lion. At any rate, Bill and I got acquainted. He came by the office and talked with me for an hour or two. He said he was doing a monograph. I'm not sure he's ever published it, but it was a monograph about the American Embassy in Tehran. It outlined his vision of the American Embassy, as having a kind of wreath or a shrub around it.

Q: Around the big campus.

WINKLER: Around the big campus. That mythological shrub was made up of all the Iranians the embassy people saw, and that shrub was the same year after year after year, and no one from the embassy ever got through that shrub. I guess one of the reasons was that the Iranians making up the shrub were attractive people, they were European - or American-educated, they were fun to be with, they entertained us marvelously. When we had parties, they would come to the house and stay late. We knew their children, we knew their uncles and their aunts. We became very close. Today, here in Washington, I think we see as many Iranians as we do Americans, because you make close ties. They made certain that they had good contacts at as high a level as they possibly could in the American Embassy, whether it was to assure getting a visa or whatever.

Q: The American Embassy had prestige.

WINKLER: Yes, it did. There were all kinds of attitudes, I think, towards the American Embassy. I think an awful lot of these people saw us as being people they could enjoy themselves with, because we were a touch of the modern world for them, where they had been educated and spent a great deal of time.

Q: They'd go to Paris for new clothes or whatever it was.

WINKLER: That's right, Christian Dior or Saville Row. We were England and America and France and Germany and Italy for them. They wanted to be around us, and they made themselves very accessible.

Q: And they were very attractive.

WINKLER: They were very attractive, they were fun to be with, and they spoke our language. But at the same time, I think that there were dimensions in their attitudes towards us we did not sufficiently grasp. Some may have said, "These fools. Their policy has been going on for 20 or 25 years, and it can't last. Something is going to come a cropper."

Five Years Before Revolution, Iranian
National Employees Of USIS Warned About The
Over-Close American Association With The Shah

The first week I was there, two of our senior local staff came to see me and unloaded. They gave me chapter and verse on Iranian attitudes about the U.S., about the Shah, and about our close association with the Shah. This was in the spring of 1973, five years before the start of the revolution. One of these staffers was the chief public affairs assistant, a man, and the other was the chief cultural assistant, a woman.

He came to see me alone, and then she came to see me alone. Then she insisted on coming in with him, and he was never comfortable talking in front of her, because I think he felt, even in those early days in '73, that she was an agent provocateur. But they both said, "Something's got to be done in your policy, in your relations to this country."

Q: You mean U.S. policy.

WINKLER: U.S. policy and U.S. relations. They both said, "You're going to lose this. Change things dramatically or you are going to lose this." Interestingly, when she was present, he wasn't quite as voluble as he was when he and I were alone or went out to lunch. (Parenthetically, I should note that he was right about her. He spent time in jail after the revolution, and she became part of it.) But I got an awful lot of this. I got to know Helms well very quickly, and I filled him in on all of this. Doug Heck was the DCM at the time, and he was first class. He was very close to USIS, and had a very clear understanding of the country. He and Helms made it very clear they wanted full reporting of "everything you hear along these lines."

Q: Back to Washington?

WINKLER: No, to them. USIS heard many things, because we knew an awful lot of people, and a lot of the people we knew were not in government. They were journalists or they were academicians. Of course, they were all in government to some degree, but we picked up a great deal all over the country. So what happened in 1978 and '79 certainly is no surprise to me.

Q: How much got reported back to Washington? Was there much in the traffic?

WINKLER: That's a fundamental question. We put everything in writing: "To Ambassador Helms from Gordon Winkler. Subject: Gleaning. Marilyn McAfee tells me that she heard this from so and so. Our BNC director in Shiraz heard this from so and so. I had lunch with S(inaudible) and this is what he said."

An awful lot of people--I'm sure you had this experience, also--would call you up, after they got to know you, and say, "Can I come over for a drink some night next week?"

I would say, "Certainly. Anybody else I should have?"

"No. Absolutely not." They'd come in. The cook would come in with a brandy, and the conversation would stop until the cook got out of the room. The person would say, "Are you sure about your cook? What do you know about him?"

"He's been a cook for six generations of PAOs here. He's a pretty good cook."

"Well then, what's in the bird cage, besides the bird?" They were paranoid about the secret police.

You would get an awful lot, but the problem was that you never got chapter and verse. You'd hear an awful lot from faculty members about kids being picked up on campus by Savak and not return. But there were seldom specifics.

Q: Did you almost begin to feel as if you were surrounded by a kind of miasma of rumor or semi-rumor?

The Rumors Of Discontent With Shah And Potential
Revolt Were Widespread In Mid-1970s--But Winkler
Never Saw Reports About Them Going Back To Washington

WINKLER: Yes, but there was so much of it, it couldn't be just rumor; it had to represent fact. You would hear stories about the corruption of the court and about Princess Ashraf, the king's twin sister. You would hear, "People are upset about this military build up. People are upset that there's not enough money going into hospitals and into education; it's all going to Grumman and Northrop. You've got to do something about it."

Well, this is a long way to answer your question about whether anything ever got back to Washington. The simple answer is that in spite of the fact that we were giving the ambassador regular reports, I never saw anything in the traffic. He may have been packing them up and putting them in an envelope and sending them to Charlie Naas, who was then the Iranian country director at the State Department. I don't know. I do know that I saw an awful lot more of the incoming and outgoing traffic when Doug Heck was the DCM than when Jack Miklos, who replaced Doug, was DCM, because every morning when I'd go to the staff meeting, I'd go in and see Heck's secretary, and she'd say, "Here's

your file." My file had the back channel traffic and other things Doug thought I ought to see. When Miklos arrived, that stopped. I asked for it but never saw it.

Helms, half a dozen times during that period, at staff meetings would cite the USIS gleanings, and said, "I want more of that from other embassy elements." I wish I had all those memos. But the bottom line is that I never saw anything go back to Washington. Some may have; but I never saw it.

Q: One of the questions has been, "Did the United States see this coming?" They've asked that question in one version or another. By and large, the answer you get from the outside is that the Americans at the embassy were not privy to anything really important that was going on. I don't mean to overstate it, but you see the point I'm trying to make.

WINKLER: I think a lot of us did have concerns, certainly at the time I left in mid-1977. That was about six months before things began to fall apart. They began to fall apart in January of 1978, as you recall. You were there then.

Q: I arrived as things began to collapse.

WINKLER: I knew, and others knew, it was a sick society. It was a very sick society. It became so wealthy so suddenly. It had been quite wealthy, but then when the Shah quadrupled oil prices in December of 1973, it became almost insufferably rich; the epitome of a nouveau riche society. Like in Ethiopia, the poor were very poor. They weren't quite as badly off as in Africa, but they were pitiful. Social services were terrible, rudimentary, particularly health and education. As in most developing countries very little got to the provinces.

Q: We were talking about the gleanings and the results of all that. When you were in Iran, did you travel around? I don't mean just to visit the cultural centers, but did you get out and have a chance to see for yourself at all? Or were you somewhat restricted? Fully the second half of my time in Iran, my heavens, there were only certain days in which I could even go to south Tehran. So you know how restricted I finally got. My whole career, I was interested in getting out beyond the capital cities, to try to feel what was happening.

WINKLER: I was the same way. It was very easy to do in Iran, simply because of those Binational Centers, the American-supported cultural centers. There were six or seven of them when I was there, and they were always a good excuse to get out of the capital. I don't think I ever made a trip in Iran without going to a BNC, but they made it possible to see a great deal of the country and to get to know people in the regional cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashed, Shiraz, Abadan, Ahvaz and other places.

Q: We were talking about the fact that the embassy, Jim Bill's concept of the wreath around it, and that we talked to the same people whom we've been talking to forever.

WINKLER: The same thing was largely true in the provinces. The people one tended to meet in the provinces were not provincially indigenous. They were the same kind of people one met in Tehran. They were sent to the outlying cities to handle the major responsibilities. They were the trusted ones, of course. These people were all very metropolitan people, very cosmopolitan. So I don't think we ever really got a taste of the provinces. I think that also was a function of not having the language. That was one of the greatest gaps in our preparation for service in Iran.

Q: Well, that's Washington's problem, as far as I was concerned. I finally had three months of Persian, and everything I had heard, I even said, "Why don't you give me a good brush-up in French, which might be better for the cultural attaché?" They said no. So I had Persian.

WINKLER: Your predecessor, Bill De Myer, had excellent French, and he used it with the chancellor of Tehran University. But that was about the only person he used it with.

Q: There was the split in the educational world between those who were English-educated and those who were French-educated. But three months of Persian doesn't do anything for you.

Rumors Of Revolution Extensive, But No Hint
That Religion--The Mullahs--Would Be Its Source

WINKLER: That's right. You asked earlier whether we had a sense that things were coming apart. I answered by saying that I was not surprised that the monarchy was deposed. But I never had a clue as to the source, the mullahs. We never saw any; never ever. I don't know what it was like when you were there. When I first got there, there was a junior political officer who had good Farsi by the name of Stan Escudero. Escudero, I would guess, was probably a grade 5, very junior, at the time.

Escudero sometimes came to staff meetings. He didn't come too often. His boss, the political counselor, usually came. The political counselor would occasionally report that Escudero had been to a mosque and talked to such and such a mullah, had lunch with a mullah, did this or that with a mullah. I overlapped with Escudero six or seven months. It seemed to me that Helms was not terribly comfortable with this at these meetings, and eventually I learned that the Shah had told us he didn't want us involved with the religious community at all.

Q: He had told Helms?

WINKLER: That's my understanding. In my presence at the staff meeting, Helms wasn't saying to the political counselor, "Call him off," but I felt he was not terribly pleased by these contacts. That was my impression. I think he knew that Escudero was leaving, and it would die there, because there wasn't anybody at that table who could speak Farsi, and

there was no way to be in touch with much of the Islamic religious community without the language. This was all about 1973 or '74.

Q: So that was a deliberate policy, really, then?

WINKLER: Yes. As far as I knew, we were totally in the dark. As far as the Shah's illness was concerned, I recall, probably in late 1973, maybe early 1974, Helms came back from the palace and reported to us at a staff meeting that he was terribly worried; the Shah looked like hell.

Q: 1973?

WINKLER: About 1973. It was early in my tour. He looked like hell, he looked like he'd lost weight, he was pale, he was acting tired. The Shah was usually very vigorous and with it and alert. Helms was quite upset and said, "We've got to find out something about this." Whether we did or not, I don't know. I have a hunch we didn't. He must have had the lymphatic cancer at that time. It's the kind of disease that people can have for ten years. Golda Meir had it for ten years until she succumbed to it. I gather he had it.

Shortly after this, the Shah went to Vienna for his annual physical checkup, and I gather we got reports that that came out very well. Apparently, the French knew before we did that he had cancer. Do you recall any talk about this?

Q: I knew by the summer of 1978, when I was there. In the summer of '78, there was a long period in which there were no pictures in the media of the Shah, about six weeks. Our friend, Farah, I can remember discussing this when I went up to the Caspian to be with her and her family. But the great concern was that there were no pictures of the Shah doing this or that or the other thing in the newspapers for an inordinately long period of time.

WINKLER: This was unusual. His picture always was at the top of page one--palace orders.

Q: And the word was out that he had cancer. This was also the reason given for the fact that he was lethargic in reacting to the fire at Abadan and all the other things that went on.

WINKLER: When was the fire in the cinema at Abadan?

Q: The fire in Abadan was in August of 1978.

WINKLER: Was it that late?

Q: That was the considered the beginning of the absolute end.

WINKLER: I figured that that was, too, when I heard about it.

Q: I've got my own stories that you and I could share, which are not appropriate for here. I think I've said it on my own interview. But that was the beginning of the end, because the Shah came out with a new policy statement at the very end of August and the beginning of September, which was placating, new approaches. But by that time it was too late.

I'm interested in what you say about Helms, because I'm a great admirer of Sullivan. I think Sullivan got all the Americans out of Iran magnificently. When I think of what happened in places like Vietnam and other things, I think Sullivan is to be congratulated. I keep wondering about Helms, who was a CIA kind of personality, whether he was swallowing this information. When I was there in 1978 to '79, we were told that the CIA was called off of any of its normal field activities at the request of the palace, and therefore we didn't have all the intelligence that we should have had. You are suggesting that Helms may or may not have reported back the gleanings that you're talking about.

Doubt As To How Much Of Information Picked Up
By Embassy/USIS Personnel Ever Went To Washington

WINKLER: Yes. We'd report these things to Helms, and others around the table would come in, reporting terrible situations, such as a repressive event at a university, or Governor So-and-so was stealing such and such. Helms' position, which I never felt you could argue with, was, "What you're giving me are rumors. Give me specifics. I can't go into the palace with rumors. I'm perfectly willing to take these things up with him (e.g., the Shah), but I can't go into the palace unless I have chapter and verse."

Q: He was very close to the Shah, I take it.

WINKLER: Very, very close to the Shah.

Q: Sullivan was, too.

WINKLER: Helms was . . .

Q: Probably closer.

WINKLER: I would say that Helms probably was closer because of the whole CIA relationship. He was terribly close to an official by the name of Alam, who was the minister of court. Alam had had every top job. He'd been foreign minister and just about everything else but Shah.

Q: I don't know that name.

WINKLER: He was the minister of court, a very elegant, aristocratic person. Of course, I think that Helms was terribly respected by them because of the CIA background and because Helms himself is a rather Brahman type.

Q: Yes, he's a very attractive person. I don't know him well at all, but he is a very attractive person.

WINKLER: He was a very much sought-after person. Of course in most developing countries the U.S. Ambassador is a celebrity--but Helms was special. There is a strong point of view that the CIA operation in Tehran--and you're familiar with this--was getting everything from Savak. It knew what Savak wanted it to know. What we were getting from the Israelis, I have no idea. In most countries it has seemed to me that they have remarkable intelligence gathering ability. I am sure this was true in Iran.

Q: I remember a dinner party in which I think both Jack Shellenberger and I were present. This was at the embassy. My heavens, there were a batch of Iranian military brass. Jack subsequently was invited to a lunch or something or other, and he indicated that he had been sort of told not to tamper with the military, and this was the first and only contact he had. He was surprised at the follow-up and all this kind of thing. It's almost as if people were compartmentalized.

WINKLER: We never were steered away from the military. I used to go to military bases. We were distributing publications to the military.

Q: So you had contact with the military.

WINKLER: Yes. We were setting up lectures on security issues and other issues. There was a military academy or an officer school, something like the National Defense College, in Tehran. I went over there at one point and talked with the director, I think with De Myer. We set up a series of talks. When we dealt with the military and brought somebody in to give a lecture, we always had to have simultaneous translation, because an awful lot of military officers didn't have English. That kind of made it a bit clumsy, but we did it.

Q: You never were at a post where there was this complication?

WINKLER: No. I went to military bases whenever it seemed worthwhile. It didn't seem to be a particularly significant target for USIS, because we had so many military that were dealing with them. It certainly didn't seem to me to be a potential problem area for us. The whole subject of a potential coup d'état or potential revolution was usually muted, and we relaxed because we felt the Shah would maintain control of the military, and the military would . . .

Q: Keep control of the country.

WINKLER: Yes.

Question As To Validity Of Binational Center Operation

Q: What about the other programs that you had? What did you feel was particularly important, and why?

WINKLER: I'll tell you what I did not feel was important--our biggest program there, and that was the Binational Center.

Q: In Tehran.

WINKLER: In Tehran. It was the largest U.S.-supported binational cultural program in the world. I thought the English-teaching was very worthwhile. We were teaching English to upwards of 25,000 different Iranians every year in the six or seven installations that were involved. Aside from that, I felt the BNC was, to a substantial degree--the cultural center, that is--a waste of time. We had a total of three officers there, including the librarian. We had a director and an assistant director. The board of directors was made up of American businessmen and the kind of Iranians who were in that wreath; Jim Bill's circular shrub. All of the board members were from the top families. These were the already persuaded; these were the people who we were close to. Most are in this country now.

Q: So we had a big operation.

WINKLER: We were talking to the converted. We'd go to great expense to put on cultural events, and very few people came.

Q: Really?

WINKLER: Yes. I would walk in to hear a pianist or a violinist or a singer, and there could be half a dozen people in the room, and maybe half of them were our local employees.

Q: Lois Roth?

WINKLER: No, Lois was not there. Phil Pillsbury, then Ted Kennedy were the Directors during my tour of duty. It was a very different country from the period when Lois Roth was there. First of all, even before the quadrupling of oil prices, but certainly after, the indigenous cultural infrastructure in Tehran was substantial. There was that splendid opera house, there were museums, there was a concert theater. Do you recall that one in downtown Tehran?

Q: Yes, I know. Downtown.

WINKLER: We did much better when we would get cultural attraction from USIA scheduled into one of those places. I didn't feel we needed the Center at all.

Q: The Center had so much geography and it had to keep the geography filled.

WINKLER: Parking was difficult there. The traffic was terrible. Even the already converted, who might come, were so busy because social life was so intense, that they didn't come to many of our programs. The library, as far as I could tell, the Abraham Lincoln Library, was full of American kids, very few Iranians. I've got great questions about American libraries in most parts of the world, as a matter of fact, if you want to get into that. But I asked for a study of the Center after I was there a year. Jim Mocerri was USIA's director of research. He came out and spent a week with me talking about this, and he set up a research project. He brought in a firm from Lebanon to do it. The upshot of the study, which I got hold of just before I left, indicated that it wasn't a terribly valuable institution for us, that there was an awful lot of wheel spinning there and an awful lot of resources wasted.

At the time I got there, we were putting in upwards of \$100,000 a year in budgetary support, and I was able to end that fairly quickly. But we were still putting in the officers. I don't recall whether we paid any salaries of any of the locals. I think that was all being supported by the profits from English-teaching, which were unreal. English teaching was a cash register.

Q: That was very impressive.

WINKLER: That was worthwhile. I would meet people all over the country, military officers, academicians, government people, who would say, when you introduced yourself as from USIS, "Oh, yes, you taught me English." They never forgot that.

Are Libraries, World-Wide, Useful To USIS?

Q: For a long time I kept arguing about using the English-language teaching as a vehicle for more programming, using that. What about libraries?

WINKLER: I've got serious questions about libraries all over the world. When I was Area Director for Africa, I urged the PAOs to take all the chairs out of the libraries. (Laughs)

Q: How can you function in a library without chairs?

WINKLER: Because they should be circulating libraries and reference libraries, and people should come in, look for a book, find it, and take the book out. Obviously, serious work in a library is worthwhile, but I'd walk into those air-conditioned buildings and most people, with clothes falling off their back and no shoes, were looking at the girdle ads in the magazines. That was it.

Q: It's a very controversial question.

WINKLER: It still is today.

Q: Yes, yes.

WINKLER: I inspected our post in Germany twice, and I very seldom went into one of those beautiful America House libraries where I saw anybody but two or three Ethiopians or Africans. That was, of course, of value, but the libraries there were aimed mainly at Germans, and I saw very few Germans in those libraries. Seriously. But the USIS Director there didn't want to give them up, and nobody else wanted to give them up. Actually, the whole question of our program in Germany is worth another discussion.

Q: Germany is a very special kind of situation, I think. I'm devoted to the written word, may I say, by comparison with other things. It isn't that I don't recognize the value of other approaches, but having spent so long in Japan, where the written word is critical, I think there are ways to go about the library situation that is useful to USIA.

WINKLER: I think the work we do in USIA is terribly important. I don't think it's as important as some other kinds of diplomacy. But it's become increasingly important. As more and more people in the world vote, we must reach large segments of the population with our messages. But USIS programs are only as good as the policies they represent. Better to have a mediocre information program and a good policy than a great information program and a mediocre policy.

Iran was one of the biggest posts in the world. At one time in the 1950s and '60s, I would guess they must have had 30 Americans and 300 or 400 Iranian staffers in USIS. When I was there, there were 15 Americans and 80 or 90 Iranians. I think we did a good job, and I think that the people who preceded us did a good job. There were no inhibiting factors. We could reach anybody we wanted except the religious community. But I'm dubious as to whether all the books we distributed, all the lecturers that we brought in, the magazines we produced, the interviews we had on television, the stuff we got into the papers, really did a hell of a lot for us in a situation where the people fundamentally questioned our policy, our role in Iran, and our motives, and where they said to us, "You people control our country and you can change things."

The Peaceful Resolution Of Watergate Was
The Best Example To Iran Of What The
U.S. System Is All About

I felt genuinely that we didn't control their country and they had to change things themselves. Now I'm not so sure. As I think back, maybe there are things that we could have done, about which our Ambassador could have taken a more forceful approach. We did have great clout with the monarchy.

I was there during Watergate. Watergate may have been one of the best things that ever happened to us in Iran, because the way Watergate turned out was a startling eye-opener to Iranians. They just couldn't believe that a country could get rid of a President and not have a revolution.

Q: And no troops in the streets.

WINKLER: And nobody got hurt. They couldn't believe it! Peggy and I went to a dinner party the night Nixon resigned, at the home of the chief aide to Prime Minister Hoveyda. This man later became ambassador in London. He gave a very small dinner for an Englishman who was the Mideast correspondent for Newsweek out of London. Peggy and I were the only Americans there. There was this Englishman and about a dozen Iranians. The host started the dinner party by saying, "I've just got to raise my glass to the United States. Nowhere in the world could something like this have happened. It is to the great honor of American society that this exalted thing happened."

And the Englishman said, "It's an exalting thing for the whole world." I couldn't speak. I almost had to leave the table, it was so emotional. But Watergate was one of the best things that happened to demonstrate what our society is like. And this is what many Iranians hoped we could in some way bring to their country.

Q: The real strength of the democratic process and the Constitution.

WINKLER: That's right. When Carter came in and preached the gospel of human rights in a very forceful way many Iranians said to me: "Finally America sounds like we expect America to sound." Unfortunately, Carter ruined it all by public obeisance to the Shah. It's important in this connection to note that people in many cultures simply expect more from America than from other developed countries. In black Africa people would complain if an American rifle was found on a Portuguese soldier during the last years of the colonial period in Angola. We would explain that the weapon got to the Portuguese as part of their NATO membership and was not to be used in Africa. Then we thought we would clinch the argument by pointing out that the French were selling Mirage fighters to South Africa. The usual response of a black African was, "Well, that's the French. Don't compare yourselves to the French. More is expected of you." Perhaps they understood our history better than we did. When those special expectations no longer exist, we'll be in trouble.

Iranians Believed U.S. Had Power To Control
Shah And Cure Excesses That Erupted In Revolution

Q: Do you think we could have changed the Shah and his proclivities?

WINKLER: I don't know, perhaps. Actually it might have hastened the revolution if Iranians knew that we were making an effort or that we weren't quite as tied in to the monarchy. What happened after the revolution might have been less dramatic, not the

horror that it was. I'm not necessarily suggesting that the hostage experience would have been avoided.

Q: But by mid-summer of '78, when I would talk to some Iranians, they would say, "You Americans, you're the people who can do something about this. Why don't you do something about this?"

WINKLER: Of course, by then the revolution was in progress.

Q: It was not overt. It was not absolutely overt.

WINKLER: There were demonstrations every 40 days.

Q: I know there were demonstrations, but it was not absolutely overt. There was all this preliminary. I would say, "But there's nothing we can do. It's you who must do something about this." I can remember they would always come back to, "It's not we who can do something; it's you who must do something." All the time.

WINKLER: One of the things that most Americans don't understand or are not aware of is the conspiracy theory of human events and human actions.

Q: Yes.

WINKLER: Much of the rest of the world to a large degree believes it, that everything is a conspiracy. We can't grasp this, mainly because it really is not compatible with a culture based on individual initiative--people functioning on their own.

Q: It doesn't really work that way here.

WINKLER: No, many Iranians saw us as part of a conspiracy with the monarchy and that as the senior partner we could really call the shots.

Q: It's really very interesting. May I say, from my point of view, it was very traumatic, the whole general situation and the progress of events. You were still there when things were good.

WINKLER: Well, they weren't so good. They were good on the surface, Dorothy, but we were getting a monumental amount of criticism and complaints in face-to-face situations. There was nobody--and I don't think this is an exaggeration--there was nobody that I knew at the levels that I knew people, which obviously were at fairly high levels, in journalism, academia, and in society generally, that if I scratched a little bit, I couldn't get a great deal of criticism about the Shah (and many were closely associated with the palace), about our relationship to the Shah, about Princess Ashraf and her corruption, about the monarch's bizarre priorities, about the choking political oppression. I had the feeling while I was there that Iran was more closed than the Soviet Union. In those days

we would read about dissidents, speaking out to some degree in the USSR or giving interviews. There was nothing of the sort in Iran. The really intensive negative attitude about the U.S. followed the Nixon and Kissinger visit in May of 1972. That may have been the low-water mark in relations, because they said to the Shah, "You can have anything you want, anything you can pay for," and the Shah became the epitome of Nixon's Guam doctrine. The Brits had pulled out of the Persian Gulf in 1971-72, so there was a political vacuum in the Gulf, and the Shah wanted to fill it. He wanted to fill it with American-made frigates, F-16s, F-14s, and the most contemporary electronic capability. He had plenty of money, and he quadrupled that money by raising oil prices. He was one of the real driving forces in that event. Our balance of payments were good. There were years of close to \$20 billion in orders. Top officials of Northrop and Grumman and Lockheed and McDonnell-Douglas were commuting. Practically every business in this country was at the Iranian door. Yale University was in there with a \$50 million proposition. If they could have gotten it out of the Shah, it could have been the biggest foreign grant to any American university.

Q: From where I sat, the corruption, or the venality of the American educational institutions, as they reached out to Iran for students and grants to supply them with the wherewithal to continue their existence, I'm not even talking about the Yales, I'm talking about the other institutions who had no business to be in existence.

WINKLER: It was a rich lode. The Iranians were the biggest group of foreign students in the U.S.

Q: But what problems! The orientation and everything that went with it. Of course, the Iranians didn't want to learn; they just wanted to go be with their cousins.

WINKLER: Some of them did. They wanted to be in America.

Q: They wanted to be in America, but they didn't want to learn how to function in America, which is something else again.

What were the best programs in USIS when you were there? You told me about the Binational Center.

WINKLER: The magazine was very, very good--Marzayenow. We put it out 11 times a year. We printed 50,000 copies or so. I heard about it everywhere I went in the country: "Oh, you're the man who puts out Marzayenow." So that was excellent. English teaching was very worthwhile. Cultural and educational exchange, as it is in most countries, was very worthwhile for us. But I suppose if I was launching a USIS program in Iran all over again, I would start with Marzayenow (but probably with a new name) which was a four-color, life-sized knockout publication in the Persian language. I'm sure I would be more careful in managing distribution to make certain we got it through that "shrub" surrounding the embassy.

Q: When you would go back to Washington on the policy side, you would go back essentially to USIA?

WINKLER: I would handle this mainly on the embassy level with the ambassador and others. Of course there were letters to USIA in Washington, but the Agency never has had much policy input at any level in Washington, so the best place for a USIS director to have input is in the field. However, there really was little opportunity for modification.

Frequent Kissinger Visits, And Kissinger/Nixon
Visit Of 1972 Probably Encouraged Shah To
Adopt Policies Detrimental To Iran

Most of the time that I was there, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. He really ran it. Kissinger came a lot. We had huge press conferences and events involving him. All he had to do was wink his eye and there would be headlines in the Iranian papers for several days. I had the feeling he relished the visits; the Shah was his kind of guy, who implemented the Nixon doctrine in Iran, and the Nixon doctrine in Iran was, I think, one of the things destructive for Iranian society, because it led to domestic and foreign policies by the Shah which turned out to be self-destructive. Our situation was going downhill for 20 years, and we did not know it. I think the coup de grace was the Nixon-Kissinger visit in 1972. You see, it made possible an effort by the Shah to chase an idea that must have been going around in his head for years--to make Iran one of the world's leading powers. This does not mean on a level with the U.S., the USSR, Japan, or Germany, but a power on a par with the U.K., France, or Italy, ahead, for example, of India or Brazil. He equated international power with military strength, and the May 1972 visit opened substantial possibilities for military power.

Q: Did you serve under Sullivan at all?

WINKLER: For about six weeks. I found him very bright and quick, very crisp.

Q: Anything final to say about Iran?

The Iranian Revolution Is Probably
Permanently Established

WINKLER: I won't say that I think the revolution is a success, but I think the revolution is established. I don't think the monarch is coming back, as fervent as the crown prince is. It is a revolution that completed its first decade a couple of months ago. They've had elections. They were not like American elections, but they were elections. I think it's established. I have a hunch that when the old man dies, somebody else will appear, hopefully less troublesome, but I think it's going to continue, probably for many years, as the Islamic Republic.

Q: That's a good final statement.

WINKLER: Happy. (Laughs)

Q: Happy statement. Is that your "satanic verse"? After Iran, what did you do?

1977 Return To Washington--Director
Press & Publications Service; Then Deputy
Associate Director For Programs; Followed
By Assignment As Chief Inspector (1980)

WINKLER: I came back to Washington under Director John Reinhardt as head of Press and Publications Service, which was a job I loved. I think that's one of the most professional operations in USIA, an operation with great pride and great talent. It produces wonderful products in the wireless file and the magazines.

I was in that job for about 18 months, when Allen Carter was shifted to Area Director for the Far East, and I replaced him as Harold Schneidman's deputy, as Associate Director for Programs. I was in that job for about 18 months, maybe closer to two years, and I liked that job. It was an important job then because there was an awful lot under it--research, television, press, and publications, speakers, and policy. Those were the days when Reinhardt and his deputy, Charlie Bray, used to talk about the programs Directorate being the intellectual nerve center of the Agency. We really were in touch, and were pretty much at the Agency's center.

Before he left, Reinhardt wanted me to go to India, but I didn't pass the medical examination. That was about when Reagan got elected. Mike Pistor went to India, and John Shirley was coming in to replace Schneidman. Schneidman retired. This was 1980. I didn't really know Shirley, and I didn't know whether he was interested in having me stay on.

Q: He was a European type.

WINKLER: Yes. I got to know and like him a great deal later on. Reinhardt asked me, "Is there anything you'd like?"

I said, "I understand Dick Curtis is retiring, and I'd like to be Chief Inspector. I'd been on a special inspection team that Jim Keogh sent to Germany, and then I went on a very interesting inspection in Brazil in 1976, when I was in Tehran. So, in 1980, I became Chief Inspector. That was a fascinating job. You saw an awful lot of USIS in various parts of the world.

Q: You changed things around in that office, didn't you?

WINKLER: We changed the inspection process somewhat. This was in response to John Shirley's views when he was counselor of the Agency. We went to Germany, six of us,

spent five or six weeks there, and produced a 125-page report. Shirley said, "This is ridiculous. I don't think you ought to do a report that's more than six pages, and you should never take more than three inspectors to any country, India or anywhere." We were about to go to India. Three of us went to India: Joe Boerner, Ron Oppen, and I. We inspected India in four weeks.

Q: It seems to me I can remember.

WINKLER: Were you the desk officer? That was about 1981-82.

Q: Yes, I was on the desk.

WINKLER: Then Boerner went off to some other post. I think he did Malaysia by himself, and Oppen and I did China in about three-and-a-half weeks.

Winkler's Concept Of An Inspection's Purpose:
Personal Contact As The Basis Of Successful Operation

Q: So the whole concept changed.

WINKLER: The whole concept changed, and the reports were much tighter.

Q: Did you look for different things?

WINKLER: I was always interested in the post's contacts; who were the officers seeing, and in what kind of milieu were they seeing them. When I came into the Agency, it was made very clear to me that the success of my career would depend on how well I did with people, how useful my contacts were. This was the way to achieve basic goals. It was made very clear this was the most important thing. I'm afraid the Agency and the Foreign Service has changed markedly in this regard. It's very troublesome to me.

In an inspection the first thing I would want to see was the representation vouchers. I'd analyze them for each officer to see how often the same name came up, how many different names there were and the kind of events in which contacts were involved. What I found--and it's almost safe to generalize on this--is that most of the representation was done at lunches, in restaurants, which, first of all, were terribly expensive. The limited representation dollars do not go very far in restaurants. You would find key officers, Deputy PAOs, Information Officers, senior officers, who, over the course of a year, would see less than a dozen people. They just weren't seeing people in a planned and intensive way.

You would meet with them and ask them questions: "But do you have people to your home? Does your family get involved? Do you go on picnics with people? Do you know the editor of so-and-so? Do you see him with his kids and your kids?" Nothing like that, or at least, very little--mostly a few expensive restaurant meals. The point is that if an

officer can turn an essentially business or professional contact into a more personal relationship, the possibility to influence ideas and to glean information is dramatically enhanced. This was standard operating procedure 25 years ago. I don't think it is today in the Foreign Service.

I have thought about this a great deal because it is so disturbing. I think the whole change in the role of the spouse has contributed. I had an Information Officer in Tehran, a career officer, excellent officer, whose spouse would not come to parties at our house. She didn't think that was her responsibility. She was right, technically. Very often he would come, but he was very family oriented--nothing to criticize in that regard--but he very often excused himself at 10:30. As we said earlier, that's when the Iranians were beginning to arrive. Sometimes he'd go home without dinner. And there's little you can do about that. So that's one thing. I think that it also grows out of a different motivation of people coming into the Foreign Service.

When you and I first came in, we were told, "You're going to get so much for representation from the government, and then you'll have to spend the rest yourself, and it will be a tax deduction for you." You can't say that to somebody today. You can't say that you expect them to spend \$1,000 or \$2,000 a year out of their pay to augment the paltry amount the government gives them. And they don't entertain at home. They spend money in restaurants and after a couple of good meals in Rome, it's gone. Motivation is just different.

The Present Versus The Old Way Of Conducting Foreign Service Panel Exams

I spent six months as one of the panelists interviewing candidates for the Foreign Service. That is, for the State Department and USIA. These are people who had passed an awesome written examination. About ten percent pass it. They would be scheduled for a day of oral examination. I've been paneled twice, once when I first joined USIA, and then when I became a Foreign Service career officer, I was paneled again. That was a long, three-hour discussion led by one of the senior officers of the Agency at that time, plus two or three other seniors, one from State. That experience began with a discussion of my background, like we've had this afternoon. "Tell us what your motives are for being in the Foreign Service. Tell us about your family. Tell us this and tell us that." They learned something about me, where I had been educated, why I wanted to be there. Only then did they begin asking the standard questions to find out what I knew. That was a good session. That doesn't happen today. The only interview experience is actually two on one. Two officers go into a little room with the candidate. The candidate has a name tag on. The first thing one of the officers says to the candidate is, "All I want to know about you is your name. We'll be together for 45 minutes. We are going to ask you six questions. You have approximately six or seven minutes to respond to each question. Make sure that in your response, you do not tell us where you went to college, or where you're from. We don't want to know anything about you. You'll be asked a political question, an American society or history question, an economic question, a cultural question, and then two

hypothetical questions." They put the person in a consular administrative situation. "What do you do if a plane crashes in the mountains above Lima and you're the consular officer?" You see how they respond. You see how they answer questions about American cultural or world events. And that's all. Then they do some writing for you. There are two writing projects.

Then in the afternoon, six of them sit around a table, and they deal with a mock embassy situation, and four evaluators are on the periphery, and they watch the people to see how they interact, how their personal relations are. First of all, it's very difficult to pick out a person with very good personal relations who doesn't seem passive, because if they are too aggressive, they won't have good interpersonal relations. At the same time, if they seem passive, you wonder about their leadership potential.

They finish that, and they do an in-box test, which is pretty good.

But I relay all this to you to point out that an essential element of the culture of American personnel management is eliminated; it's not there. That's the basic personal interview. "Tell me about yourself. Tell me why you want this job. Tell me what you can do in this job." None of that is there. I understand one of the reasons it's not there is that Congress is concerned about equal opportunity. The evaluations might be unduly influenced if they learned that a candidate went to Harvard, I suppose. But there are all kinds of people, I think, who are passing these oral examinations who are bright, able, potentially hard working, but we don't know anything about their personalities. We don't know anything about their interests or their motivations.

Q: They're technicians.

WINKLER: Or whatever. We don't know if they've got a sense of humor. We don't know how they're going to get along with people. We don't know if they're interested in people. We don't know if they have a gut need to get to know other cultures, which is essential. In my judgment, it's a shabby selection process. Have you ever been through a panel?

Q: I was through two panels.

WINKLER: Did they start off asking you about yourself?

Q: The first one did, yes. It was a very personal panel. The second time around was in Tokyo, the same kind of thing. They knew who I was; I guess I knew who they were at the moment. But then we went on. There was a State Department person and a USIA person. But it was a more human sort of thing. I sat in on minority interviewees. It wasn't even mid-career. They needed a more senior woman on some of these panels. We were three or four people on those panels, and we had questions which were put in front of us which we had to offer, but we could use follow-up questions.

WINKLER: We did that, too.

Q: But I often found that I was negative about the person when the rest of the people said, "Well, technically they were fine." But I thought they would have a terrible time adjusting to the Foreign Service at a mid-career or upper level, with the kind of attitudes and background and so forth which they had.

WINKLER: But you were getting information about their background.

Q: Yes.

WINKLER: You weren't just asking six questions.

Q: No, no. We knew. We had a bio and all that kind of thing.

WINKLER: So your decision could be based on a lot of things.

Q: That's right. I also remembered my experience of coming in as a lateral entry and what happened as a result of that, the kind of lumps I took. But there was a tendency, as I say, on a lot of these panels, I was the most negative person because I was concerned about the adjustment process and, therefore, the capacity of the person.

WINKLER: If you were on the Board of Examiners now, there would be no way you could find out any of that. You could find out how much the person knew about the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. That's what you would find out.

Q: That's sort of like reading the newspaper.

WINKLER: But you can't ask a person, "What do you really know? What book is on your bed table?" That kind of question is verboten.

Q: Gordon, if you're overseas and you're in the middle of a revolution, by golly, what you're interested in is not how much that person knows about some foreign policy issue. You want to know how they're going to function and can they deal with a crowd, or what can they do. You know. Because living overseas in a crisis situation is a very different kettle of fish.

WINKLER: Yes. The experience in the Board of Examiners was interesting from another standpoint. We had these six questions. One was international politics, one was on economics, one was on American history and society, and one was on American culture. The responses to the American-culture question, by and large, were so pitiful it was frightening. The easiest question was, "Name five American novelists of the 20th century. Tell us the title of several of their books and why they were important." And from seemingly very bright young people, you would get, "Well, let's see. Hemingway." And it would stop right there.

We had a question on the movies, which you'd think most young people would do well on. That was a disaster. I designed a question on architecture to be given to people who seemed particularly bright. You'd get somebody who would give you chapter and verse on NATO, who would know everything that was going on in Central America, could discuss in a very sophisticated way the debt problems in Brazil and Mexico and so forth, and couldn't even dredge up Frank Lloyd Wright. This country has got some problems.

Q: How did this come about, do you know? Is this a reflection of the times? My own reaction on lack of the human quality overseas is that some officers, after they've been in the Foreign Service long enough, are just almost bored with another group of people, another society, that's getting on with life.

WINKLER: There are problems in being overseas. Spouses have difficulty getting employment. Today the security issues are very, very serious. There are all kinds of problems for teenagers; drug problems. Living abroad, I think, is a much more fragile experience than living in an American urban area. You're uprooting kids from school for two or three years, possibly throwing them into a British school, then bringing them back. One of our kids went to 12 schools in 12 grades. I hasten to say he's normal.

Q: Maybe his parents. The USIA entry system is now completely linked to State.

WINKLER: Almost totally.

Q: Is this a good idea?

WINKLER: That's another subject. I don't think that would be a bad idea at all if the entry system was better. I think that USIA, as opposed to what most of my colleagues, active and retired, feel, ought to be organizationally closer to the State Department. I said earlier that I think the work we do is terribly important, but I'm not convinced that we're the only ones who can do it. I think that at the very least, the personnel systems should be combined, and there should be one officer corps of Foreign Service Officers, not Foreign Service Officers in the State Department and Foreign Service Officers of the U.S. Information Agency. I think more political and economic officers should know how to write a press release, how to talk to a journalist, how to be interviewed on television, and conversely, I think more information and cultural officers ought to know how to sit down and talk to a leader of a political party and get information, get intelligence, or should know something about trade policy and so forth.

Q: This would suggest a change in training programs.

WINKLER: It does, but more importantly, it suggests a broader assignment policy, where a good political officer can be sent out as a cultural officer and it won't hurt his or her career, and a good information officer can be sent out as an economics officer or a consular officer and it won't hurt that career. Then more USIA people would have an opportunity to be ambassadors, because that's been a serious weakness in our system.

Q: If you're a USIA officer, you would just assume an ambassadorship is not . . .

WINKLER: What I'm saying is maybe we should not have USIA officers. Perhaps there should be some cultural centers and there should be a press service and a speakers bureau and the kind of research we do, but the officer corps should be from a central pool of Foreign Service Officers. "For the next four years, you're going to be assigned to the policy office at USIA." Or, "You're going to be assigned to Worldnet for Latin America" (if Worldnet survives). Or, "Your next assignment is as assistant pol/mil in India."

Q: After all, Gordon, you ended up your career at FSI. This is a training area. You were in area studies. Do you have any comments about that? That's a different element which really deals with languages and substance.

WINKLER: My responsibilities dealt basically with substance. I won't get into the details of how I feel about the pedagogical approaches, but I think we could have done well with somewhat less in the way of lecturing and discussions, and more in simulations and games. But that's being worked on now, and being worked on by my successor, Jack Shellenberger, who also replaced me in Tehran. He is now the second USIA officer to have been a dean over there. So it's good that we've had that exchange with the State Department.

It's almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of instilling a feel for cross-cultural communications at FSI. I don't think we did or are doing enough of it in the School of Area Studies. The School of Language Studies feels it does a great deal because every teacher is a native-born speaker of the language. They impart an awful lot of cultural information about their countries, but they are not academics. Many of them have not been to college, so one wonders as to the accuracy of the information and whether or not purely personal prejudices creep into what they're telling students. But the sum, I think, is worthwhile.

But this goes back to the contact lacunae in the Foreign Service. I think that if people had a greater interest in other cultures, if they understood, for example, when they waited in line to get into a movie in an Arab country or in India, that just because people were brushing up against them and touching their bodies, they were not being antagonistic; that it's the way they are, and because we're not that way doesn't mean that their way is wrong. I think there should be an awful lot more attention to cultural matters, to habits, values, behavioral patterns so that we can gain an understanding and a respect for people of other societies. The more I got into it, the more I realized that except for the people of a few northern European countries, we are probably more different culturally from the rest of the world, than the rest of the world is from each other, that is, as other cultures are from each other.

Q: That's quite a statement.

WINKLER: When you hear lectures on cultural manifestations of Latin America or on the subcontinent or in the Middle East or in the Far East, there's a great deal of what, to our mind are idiosyncrasies, that are similar. The whole concept of the family for example; it's shocking to people almost anywhere else in the world, that we put older people in nursing homes. They don't do that in Japan, they don't do that in Brazil, they don't do that in Africa. They stay in the home. They're honored. They're with their grandchildren. They're not in the way. They're in the way here. There are all kinds of examples of this sort.

Q: So it really means, what you're saying, we need to appreciate the nature of our own society before you can go out and be an effective Foreign Service Officer in other cultures.

WINKLER: No question about it. But you have to be willing to accept that other people are different and that is not necessarily wrong, not necessarily less ethical and less worthy of respect than our own way of doing things, our own values and our own beliefs. We have real problems in getting this across.

The students at FSI will listen to this, because usually the lecturers who do this for us are among the best. They're lively and they're funny and interesting, so they can command attention. But what the students basically want to know about is the political situation in the country of assignment; they want to know about the economic situation.

It's very difficult to get an American to understand that when he arrives in Paris and he's a political officer, or if she's an economic officer, if, at the first social event they can show some understanding of French literature, it's going to be much more impressive to the French than if they can talk about the French economy or French political parties. Our society doesn't prepare us for that. You know very well in Iran how important it was to be able to know a little bit about Saidi and Hafiz and Ferdosi. I'm sure nobody at FSI thought much about those three poets when we were teaching area studies to people going to Persia. Maybe somebody mentioned Omar Khayyam, who was a minor Persian poet.

Q: I think you have said a great deal. Is there any last word?

WINKLER: You've been very patient.

Q: You've said some very interesting things. I tend to agree with much of this. Thank you very much.

WINKLER: You're welcome.

End of interview