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

AMBASSADOR AURELIA E. BRAZEAL

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Interview Date: September 22, 2007
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Q: This is Dan Whitman, interviewing Ambassador Aurelia "Rea" Brazeal on September 22nd, 2007, in Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Brazeal, if you had to write your own entry in Wikipedia, could we have a synopsis, an overall synopsis, of the whole story, and then we'll go back later and get it part by part?

BRAZEAL: Sure, we can try that. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, in St. Luke's Hospital on November 24th, 1943. I don't claim Illinois as a home, however. I was born in Chicago and I stayed there for two weeks, and then was taken by my parents to Atlanta, Georgia, and so I'm from Atlanta, Georgia.

Q: You got tired of Chicago.

BRAZEAL: Tired, very early. My parents had their children in Chicago for two reasons. One, my mother's mother at the time lived in Chicago, and so in a sense she was going home, or to her mother's home. Two, my parents lived in Atlanta, Georgia, and at that time it was not always a sure thing that Negroes were issued birth certificates consistently, and they wanted to make sure that I had a birth certificate. So for these two reasons and others that I never figured out, they went north to have their children, and then we went back to Atlanta, as I said, when I was two weeks old.

Q: These people had their act together, your parents that is.

BRAZEAL: Yes, they did.

Q: They had figured out how to make sure that the beginning began the way they wanted it. I'm going to ask you about your parents, grandparents, but do you know how far in advance they contemplated this birth certificate question? Did this come up suddenly?

BRAZEAL: No, I think they must have thought about it, because I have an older sister, and she also was born in Chicago in St. Luke's hospital.

Q: It was your maternal grandmother who housed you as this was happening.

BRAZEAL: Yes, right.

Q: What an organizational triumph.

BRAZEAL: Yes, in a sense, it was.

Well, my father was originally from Dublin, Georgia, and he had a wonderful dry sense of humor. He would always ask people, "Why is Dublin, Georgia called Dublin, Georgia?" And he'd say, "because it's doubling' all the time (in terms of population)."

My mother was originally from Jackson, Mississippi. We don't know much about our family, to tell you the truth. Negroes didn't talk very much about family history, partly because they didn't know their own history, and partly because some aspects perhaps weren't pleasant in historical memory, meaning how white ancestors might have taken advantage of their slaves. So my sister and I haven't really put together a lot of the background. I know on my father's side, my grandfather, whom I never met, was a Baptist minister. My father was sent to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and he was a graduate of Morehouse.

Q: This explains how he got from Jackson to Atlanta.

BRAZEAL: From Dublin to Atlanta.

Q: Dublin, yes.

BRAZEAL: And my mother was a graduate of Spelman College, also in Atlanta. Both Morehouse and Spelman, when they began, early in their history, had elementary schools and high schools, and these were feeder schools into the college, because as the institutions grew and became colleges, they had to educate people in a pipeline in order for them to enter college.

So I know my mother went to Spelman when she was maybe 13 or 14 and went through the elementary, high school and then into college. I know my grandmother on my Mother’s side was from Howard county Louisiana and my Mother’s father was an American Indian, Creek we think, who was a stonemason. Her parents lived in Jackson, Mississippi.

Q: This meant living away from home.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So it took some resources to do this.

BRAZEAL: Some, yes, it did. But fewer resources than ambition and family support, because the schools would find a way to keep students who really wanted to be there, and I don't think there was money on either side of my family, per se, just family dedication to education. So both my mother and my father graduated from college. My father then

went on to Columbia University to get his Ph.D., and I think he was the second or third Negro in America to get his Ph.D. in economics.

My mother went to the University of Chicago and got her master's in history, and both of them returned to Atlanta, my father to Morehouse, my mother to Spelman, and worked in education all of their lives.

Q: At what point did they meet? Before, during, after?

BRAZEAL: They met in college, and they would tell stories.

Q: Spelman-Morehouse.

BRAZEAL: Spelman-Morehouse. Morehouse is an all-male school, and Spelman is all female, but right across the street from each other, so there is a natural association. And when they were in college, rules were still very strict. These were religiously founded schools. They would tell stories that you could only call on a young lady once a month for 15 minutes, and you would come into a large room and there was a table in the middle with a clock on it and chairs around the sides. So you'd sit and talk to the young lady and every now and then someone would get up and turn the clock, just to make sure of the time, because you could only visit for so long.

But, of course, they found a way around this rule, because the next week your friend would sign up to call on your girl and you'd sign up to call on his girl and then, in the room you would switch and sit next to your girlfriend.

Q: They both seemed chaperoned.

BRAZEAL: Right, you could sit with whomever you wished.

Q: This is your parents.

BRAZEAL: This is my parents, right. And so they met in college and then married after.

Q: So they sat in chairs with timers on them long enough to become acquainted.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and to make very good friends. And so throughout my life, I've always had people sprinkled around the United States who were very close to my parents and I could call them aunt and uncle. And, in a way, having friends around the country was a way that my parents used to shelter my sister and myself from segregation, because when we would visit Chicago, we'd usually drive, obviously, because transportation was segregated and my parents actually shielded us as much as possible, and so we'd pile in the car. We'd have everything we needed. We'd have food, and our rest stops would be with friends of my parents, you see, so we never had to stop in public places and be humiliated. Or, if we couldn't reach somewhere, stop by the side of the road but never go to a segregated place. That was an adventure.

Q: So it takes tremendous planning and ambition and dedication to make such a trip.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: You have to know where you're going to stop, it just is exponentially more complicated than a run-of-the-mill person who didn't face these obstacles.

BRAZEAL: Well, that's what segregation brought to you. White people could drive, stop, eat, use rest facilities, stay in hotels whenever they wanted. Clearly, we had to contact our friends to say, "We're coming this day, we'll be there around this time." And always in the South, of course, people fed you whenever you stopped some place, so it was a plan. So, wherever we drove, we would have rest stops or overnight stays with friends.

Q: Well, let's dwell on this, because this is an important part of American social history, I think. You came into this as a child. Your parents evidently had completely grasped not only the obstacles presented, but they had figured out how to deal with it.

BRAZEAL: And how they wanted to teach their children to deal with it, which was really to treat everyone equal. Treating people equally does not mean treating them the same, it means dealing with them at the stage where you find them. Spelman and Morehouse also had faculty who were integrated, not the student body, but the faculty. So I grew up around all kinds of people, but without the consciousness of the segregation, per se.

I remember when segregation sort of hit me in the face and, I must say, I had a decidedly negative reaction to it. My mother and I had gone downtown on the bus and, of course, the custom and law required that whites sat from front to back and blacks sat from back to front, but if a white person got on and there wasn't a seat, a black person had to get up and stand and give the seat to the white person. Actually two black people had to give up their seats because a black person could not sit next to a white person. My mother and I were sitting in the two seats directly behind the back door bus entrance, and a young white girl came on and my mother – My Mother -- was supposed to get up and give this young white girl her seat. Well, we got up, but we got up and we got off the bus and walked home, basically, from there.

Q: Do you remember how old you were?

BRAZEAL: I think I was about 11, and I was furious that someone who seemed to be my age or a teenager would have the right to demand that my mother give up her seat. Segregation was not something I tolerated. I had to hand it to my parents, however, that they were able to protect me from the brunt of segregation until the age of 11.

Q: Was this the first time you'd seen this happen to your mother?

BRAZEAL: Yes. My parents, as I said, would cushion us, but were insistent on getting their recognition as human beings. As the only Dean of Morehouse College my father did

a let of traveling, and I remember we took him to the old Atlanta Airport, and he would go into the whites-only restaurant. And, of course, they wouldn't serve him, but he would sit at a table and we would be very proud of him for that, because outside the restaurant door was a black man who was dressed up as the days-of-slavery stereotype of a “darkie” sitting on a bale of cotton, minstrel-like figure, and sort of juxtaposing that to my father who was more formal and just demanding to be served was an image not to be forgotten.

Q: So defying a stereotype is what your father did.

BRAZEAL: He was defying segregation that manifested itself as stereotypes, which by the way continues to this day. And demanding that he be treated as an equal human being.

Q: Was it permitted or discouraged for him to even be in the restaurant?

BRAZEAL: This was a whites-only restaurant. They wouldn't serve him. They would ignore him.

Q: Ignore him?

BRAZEAL: Yes, as if he were invisible. But he would sit at their table to make a point.

Q: And you remember seeing this.

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes. He did this several times at the old airport.

Q: This would have been in the '50s. Well, it takes my breath away. Those of us who were raised in Ohio know of these things.

BRAZEAL: But hearing about them.

Q: Yes, exactly. Now, you're speaking for the record. I'm seeing that you're very good-natured about this.

BRAZEAL: Well, no, that would be the wrong impression to give. I was not and am not good natured about segregation, Jim Crow, racism or whatever you want to call it.

Q: Let's get into it, then.

BRAZEAL: Well, segregation was a system that resulted in – in a sense, Negroes coming closer together to survive, so there was, certainly contrasted with 2007, much more of that village sense of pulling together. For example, all of the faculty, or most of the faculty at Morehouse and Spelman lived around the schools, so that students had role models right at hand. Role models of educated professional Negroes who persevered under segregation.

At that time most of the high-school children close to the historically black colleges in Atlanta expected to go to college, because the colleges were right there in the community. Of course, the schools are still right there, but there is more of a dispersion of population. My parents and their friends expected us to be the best we could be, so their exhortations countered society's trying to tell us we wouldn't amount to anything or we only had certain roles to play or that we weren't smart enough.

So perhaps reaching the age of 11 before the ugliness hit me in the face, certainly, helped develop a stronger sense of self worth than many blacks who weren't sheltered or couldn't be sheltered.

Q: Now, your father, evidently, was an extremely disciplined person. He acquired a Ph.D. in economics. He was one of the first African Americans to do that. As a child, did you have a sense that you were a living exception, or did you have a sense of society outside of the village that you described? Or did that come later?

BRAZEAL: Well, certainly, my sense of white people – because, in the South, it was black and white. In 2007, you can talk about Hispanics and other immigrant groups and certainly other diversity pools, but not in those days, not back when I was born and growing up. It was a black and white issue, which is why I think race is still a sensitive point in America today, because we have not ever resolved this black and white issue, and until we do I do not think we can release all of the potential in this country.

But, back then, well, the schools we went to, the nursery school was at Spelman College. Don't forget, as I said, the schools themselves sort of incubated people, so I went to Spelman Nursery School. I went to Oglethorpe Elementary School, which was a laboratory school connected to Atlanta University. The expectation of all of the teachers was that you would meet a high standard of excellence. There was just no teaching to the test or expectation that you were not going to make it. All of our teachers were Negro.

In fact, many of my friends still in my life today I know from nursery school and elementary school, and some of them can tell you exactly where we were sitting in the classrooms at the tables and things like that, which I find astounding, since I don't quite remember. But I remember Mrs. Lewis, our 7th grade teacher, and she would come in sometimes and say, "Honey child, sugar love, love of my life, you didn't do your homework last night, did you?" She just expected that you would exceed the standard; she was a very formidable person.

But don't forget, to some degree, Negroes at that time were not allowed to work outside certain professions and certainly, if they were working, it was in a segregated setting. And so you had exceptional people who were teachers because that was, at that time, all that they could do.

Atlanta, in a sense, was somewhat of an exceptional city for blacks, because – and I'm interspersing the words Negroes, blacks and African Americans because I tell people I was born a Negro and I grew up being black and I am now an African American, but I've

always been a woman; I don't want to change all of the names we were called. But Atlanta had a black bank, a black building and loan association and other black professional organizations. And, therefore, blacks did not have to go to white banks to get loans, black people could get loans to build a house. We did not have to go to the white power structure.

Most blacks in Atlanta when I grew up owned their homes, built their houses; my father was associated with the building and loan association, and I remember he would go around and inspect the houses for the association as they were being built. And so I knew people were building homes, I knew that they could get loans, they could repay them and that kind of thing.

Q: At a later date, this might have been more difficult to do.

BRAZEAL: Well it was always difficult for blacks to access capital from the white power structure, which was a way to keep us from progressing. Even today, you can see the structural discrimination build into the access to capital system and blacks are discriminated against today.

Q: So I won't draw conclusions, but you're encouraged to. The disadvantages seem evident. If there were any advantages, let's get to that. There's reference made to the top 10 percent. You remember that notion.

BRAZEAL: W.E.B. Du Bois.

Q: Du Bois. Did you feel in the period when you were living a protected – I think you described your childhood as protected in some ways, and your parents were sealing you off from an ugly outside world. Did you feel, or in retrospect do you feel, that you were a selected member of the elite?

BRAZEAL: No, and my parents didn't raise us that way, because to me that talented tenth implies the class element creeping in. And, at least the way I recall being raised, everyone was equal. Everyone who had a job or who wasn't able to work for whatever reason was equal. Both my parents would recruit, my father for Morehouse and my mother for Spelman, and they would recruit throughout the South, going to black high schools to look for people to come to Morehouse and Spelman.

My father would tell me that anyone can mispronounce a word, so if he found a young person in rural Mississippi say, who would say "electriscity," he said it takes as much intelligence to mispronounce a word as it does to pronounce it correctly so the basic material was present; then you can teach someone to pronounce a word properly, etc. And there are still Morehouse men today who I run into, who came from the smallest of the smallest towns throughout the South to Morehouse, who express appreciation for my father getting them to Morehouse. And they were put into that college and today they are doctors, lawyers, educators or whatever. Their potential was there, and so my father

taught us never to look down on anyone or make fun of anyone who couldn't pronounce a word correctly or who was not this or that.

Q: That's an amazing, and I would say admirable, balancing act that your father did. He himself attained exceptional achievements. And yet he found it very important to inculcate in you a sense that everybody – am I putting words in his mouth if I say everybody deserves an equal amount of respect as a person?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely.

Q: Looking back at that, does that seem extraordinary? I mean, it's a balancing, he did two opposite things, actually.

BRAZEAL: Well, looking back, not extraordinary because at the time it was the environment in which I was growing up, and so it seemed very normal. My father wore a hat. Men at that time used to wear hats. And he would of course tip his hat toward the ladies and people would speak to each other in the South on the streets. You'd just say hello and exchange a pleasantry, and that was the recognition. And so such practices in a sense have stood me in good stead in the Foreign Service, because I certainly think that in other cultures where it's very important for the person to be recognized, even if you're not agreeing with them, some Americans can give short shrift to that social need to recognize the personhood, if you will, before you get down to business. But this came easy to me, because in a sense it was how I was raised.

Q: Very interesting, as a background to what you later did. You described in your childhood being raised in an ambience of formality and discipline. Am I correct? Do you feel that that was unique at that time? Did you feel that this would be the experience if you were to relive in Atlanta at this time? If this were a court of law, that would be an inadmissible question. I'm leading the witness.

BRAZEAL: Not unique, certainly not unique in the black community. We as black people had/have variety among ourselves. It was whites who saw those blacks who were excelling as “unique” or “exceptional” because such blacks did not or even today, do not fit their stereotypes of what a black person is.

Q: But when I hear you describe your world growing up, it gives me a sense of a world that has been eroded in some ways.

BRAZEAL: I think that world has changed and it's not a world that I would seek to recreate in any sense – but it does explain, I think, the nostalgia that sometimes creeps into modern-day comments by some blacks of the good old days of segregation. What they mean is that the sense of community and of unity that comes from the fact that you know you're all facing the same structural white supremacist, unequal system that seeks to use your own weaknesses against you and seeks to make permanent in terms of where your station should be in life, has eroded. And so in that respect I wouldn't want to recreate the past but I do believe we need that sense of community. For example, we

grew up hearing the great black artists of the day, singers and pianists, because they couldn't appear in white establishments or white concert halls but they could appear at black colleges. And so we had the benefit of exposure to all this talent, if you will, but without—in my early years—the recognition of segregation outside of my world. My world growing up was sufficient and full, I thought at the time, with my family, my friends and my community.

I gave little thought to what was happening and my parents, as I said, protected us from having the ugliness intrude to the point that it became a crippling blow to one's own self esteem. And certainly I grew up being told I could be and do anything I wanted to be and do, and I think that, too, was forward looking from my father, because he had two girls. My father and my mother – I can't ignore her because she was well educated and traveled for her generation and certainly they were in partnership in their approach to how they were trying to bring us along.

Q: As for the nostalgia that some other people express, do you think that they distinguish between nostalgia for a system which was misguided and nostalgia for the ability of people to adapt, the camaraderie of the trenches, so to speak? When other people speak with tones of nostalgia, do you believe that they confuse what was good, the ability to hear fantastic artists, with the bad that meant that they needed to do this to compensate? That's a pretty complicated question, I guess.

BRAZEAL: It is. I think they speak from a place of recognition that we as a country have fallen short, still, of where we had hoped to go with integration. My personal theory is that we never reached integration, certainly not of the kind that Martin Luther King Jr. and others were talking about. We did desegregate to an extent. Then the backlash came and is still coming. And you can see it, in my view, because we have re-segregated our country in many ways. Look at housing, look at schools, look at social interaction and the like and you can see re-segregation.

I made a speech maybe two years ago now, 2006 – I guess last year – at my high school (I haven't reached my high-school years, but my parents sent both of us away to high school, which, again, took planning and sacrifice).

Q: You can talk about what you said last year. That's OK.

BRAZEAL: What I said last year in the speech to my high school, at the commencement – they asked me to be commencement speaker – was that I find America more segregated now, today, than even when I was growing up. And so people rail against busing of children to integrate schools, but no one seems to want to understand that what busing represents is that housing is still segregated, or ghettoized, if you will, to the point that communities can be defined by race.

And then no one speaks to how one breaks the housing barrier down. There are still “covenants” – of class and of race. Juxtapose the covenants against the free-market justifications that anybody can buy anything if they make it in this country, blah, blah,

blah. I think the nostalgia you asked about represents the feeling that those nostalgic folks would like people to pull together behind a common objective. But I don't think its to go back to a bad situation where you're so besieged that you have no other recourse. One of the ways that I would tell whether race relations in America were going well or not when I would come back to this country from being overseas was whether, in the State Department, blacks spoke to each other or not.

My universe would be blacks who were in the char force, black officers, black support staff, anybody black in the building. If things were not going well, then people would make eye contact and essentially recognize each other, because you knew you were in the situation together. If things were going relatively well, there was a little less eye contact, a little less of the group recognition, if you will. At least that's how I interpreted it. That was one of my yardsticks, and believe me, in 2007, we're all speaking to each other.

Q: Yes. Sometimes the speech is not even necessary.

BRAZEAL: No, exactly, just some contact, some recognition.

Q: Let's hear some more about you used the word resegregation. The rules are gone, the signs had come down, and the veneer has been removed. You talk about housing being ghettoized. In what other ways have we gone backwards?

BRAZEAL: Well, the public schools in the "old South" are segregated. I don't know of any public schools that aren't, and that's not just in the South. The erosion of public support for public education, to me, is a dangerous, sad situation because, without the porousness of education to allow someone to move up through the layers of society, or move down for that matter, you will change the nature of our democracy. Without a commitment to public education we will have a plutocracy. And, of course, the Constitution says the "informed consent" of the citizens, so you have to have informed citizens, which to me means educated citizens.

So education to me, personally, is something I've always been interested in and involved in, and it's crucial to the continuation of the kind of society that I would think most Americans would like to see.

Q: The decline of public education is racially motivated?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely, absolutely. After Brown versus Board of Education, for example, you had whites in Mississippi—all the white children were put in private academies, except for the very poor whites. These private academies still exist. There are all white public schools and all black public schools all over the country. Given economic advantages that whites have compared to blacks, many whites can educate their children in non-public facilities. In my view, in the minds of many whites, public education equates to education of blacks. The DNA of the U.S. still contains the belief that black citizens should not be educated – at least to the level of whites. So, with all black public schools and the lingering belief about educating blacks, such underlying thoughts erode

public support for public education. In addition, when schools were first desegregated you had black teachers put out of jobs and the white teachers took over.
White teachers were not prepared to teach a black child who had been damaged, if you will, by segregation. Many such teachers used what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations and others just didn't want to teach blacks at all. Black children suffered then and still do today.

Q: Put out? Laid off, you mean?

BRAZEAL: Black teachers were not kept on in most desegregated schools. Today you still have difficulty finding enough black teachers in white schools to even be a role model for whites to show that blacks can be a teacher. And, generally speaking, you still have teachers in different schools who are the same race as the people in the school.

And so right after integration, as I recall, in Atlanta, Georgia, you had a lot of excellent black teachers without jobs, because the children were bused to white schools and some black schools were closed or were consolidated, and some positions were lost. The thinking then and now is that the white school was better and should serve as the norm.

Q: Busing, whatever the motivation, missed the main point. Is that what you're saying?

BRAZEAL: Yes. You would not need busing if you integrated housing. This is my point, that integration to me means full integration, but you can't have full integration without the psychological preparation of both blacks and whites to recognize the white supremacist system, to recognize that whites receive benefits in our system – unknowingly, perhaps to them in their conscious mind – but they receive them nonetheless and, to recognize the structural barriers against blacks and other minorities.

Q: So we're going backwards. Now, actually, we can get away from the purely autobiographical part here, because this is too interesting to not talk about more. We've gone backwards. Is there any redeeming this? Have we gone beyond a point of no return?

BRAZEAL: I think there is redemption. I do not believe we have gone beyond a point of no return. But I certainly am conscious that I'm speaking as a product of my generation, with my memory set. When I meet younger Americans (and I most recently had the diplomat-in-residence position at Howard University; I sought it out on purpose because I really wanted to get to know the younger generations of Americans) they are quite different from my generation. I can honestly say that I have met young Americans, black, white, Hispanic, whatever mixture of background they might have, including some economic class distinctions, who are without the baggage of the struggle for equality.

But that gets back to my point about the need to consciously address structural barriers in this country, because young whites feel that everybody should be treated equal. My definition of treating people equally does not mean you treat them the same. You have to

treat them from where you find them so they can benefit from that equal opportunity we are talking about.

Q: So you're saying we've gone backwards structurally and yet young people, some young people, seem to have escaped.

BRAZEAL: Well, young Americans are less conscious of race or ethnicity as a factor of inequality; they seem more willing to mix together in school. Then, in the work world, or in the job markets, or in the social world there is still the element of racism that creeps back in. Plus there's much more of a class distinction now, I think, in America than when I grew up, because there's more of a permanency to the underclass in this country than before. These may be cycles, but such class rigidity is not healthy for our kind of democracy, either.

Q: Different people define underclass differently: economic, social, ethnic. Do you see that all as related? Are you talking about an ethnic underclass?

BRAZEAL: In my case I am talking about poor blacks. I have had trouble figuring out why a young black person, 15 or 16, could feel so hopeless, so without hope. It's because they feel they're in a permanent class (and racial) position and cannot do anything about it, and, therefore, act out with self-destructive behavior.

And of course they can get swept into the school to the penitentiary pipeline. I mean, you just look at what's happening to these young black people in Jena, Louisiana. Black and white high school boys get into a fight and because one white boy gets knocked out, the police charge the black boys with attempted murder. The white boy was home within hours of being knocked out. I have been to Louisiana. I have visited some of our military bases in Louisiana. I've talked to black soldiers and I know there are towns in Louisiana in 2007, where if you're black, you better not be found after sundown, even in 2007.

So I see racism in the authorities' reaction to the fight. When the white young man was knocked unconscious, but was well enough that evening to go to a school dance, to have people charged with attempted murder is excessive. Their lives are ruined. One of the young men in jail was a star athlete, presumably with plans for going to college.

Where is the Department of Justice in all of this? Why is the Civil Rights Division not going down there and investigating? I mean, I didn't think you could put juveniles in with adults and he's been in adult jail since December. Who knows what has influenced him at this point? I mean, it's a heartbreaking situation, but it was enough to galvanize some Americans to demonstrate again.

Q: Several thousand people have gathered in Jena, Louisiana. I gather, though, that most or all of them are African Americans.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: This would be different from the 1960s.

BRAZEAL: It would.

Q: So this is a tough view of what's going on. We're not putting any false optimism here.

BRAZEAL: I like to be optimistic, and I think I basically am, as a person, or I wouldn't have reached this lofty age. But, that said, I think there's a missing element, a missing recognition in this country, that we have unfinished business on the issue of race. Regrettably there is no urgency about finishing it. I think U.S. race relations reflect on U.S. relationships around the world and until we solve our race problems we cannot have a completely healthy relationship with the world.

Now, back to my growing up.

Q: This is too interesting, sorry. But, wait a minute, just lost the track.

BRAZEAL: I'm sorry.

Q: A lot of lip service is given to what you're saying, but I think what I'm hearing from you today is that the lip service has not carried through. The sense that people must have equal chance at potential, the sense that wrongs must be rectified, we hear this in the media all the time. It's an unfinished business, that's the phrase that had sparked this. Unfinished business, you hear people saying this all the time. What's missing? Do you not hear it? I hear it everywhere I go, but it's not happening imminently.

BRAZEAL: I think it's a lack of will on the part of Americans to address the structural issues we have that is making more permanent the class and racial distinctions. What the foreigners want to see when they come to the U.S. is how we care for the least of our people? How do we care for the least of us? If we have good examples of caring, the foreigners can see us as relevant.

When you have large groups of people now who are permanently, in their mind, among the least of Americans, without hope of moving up – the U.S. is not relevant to other countries who want to see us succeed at having a peaceful diverse country. To me, hope equals education. I see education as that way out. Without the commitment to public education, without the commitment to improving the public schools – and I don't mean throwing money at them, and I don't support the No Child Left Behind approach either, because you're teaching to a test, and that's not educating people to think for themselves – we will not be successful.

Q: And so instead of correcting inadequacies, you're punishing them.

BRAZEAL: Yes, you are. You take money away from schools.

Q: So the opposite.

BRAZEAL: A nation's budgets reflects a nation's priorities. More resources, it seems to me, should flow to areas where help is needed to ensure the widest possible opportunities for all our people. So you can address education needs. Health coverage is another area that we should address. The area does not have to be addressed in terms of black and white relations, but really in terms of the haves and have-nots, or how do we care for the least among us. So I think some key issues are on the political agenda; unfortunately, we don't get too far with them in our collective means of addressing them.

Q: I promise we'll get back to the biographical part here, which is the part of this, but before doing so, one last paintbrush. Growing up in the North versus the South, the largest human migration recorded in history is the migration of African Americans from the South to the North after World War II.

You have described your childhood in a totally segregated city, Atlanta. I'm from the North, where there were other problems. Well, people in the North – I can say this, because I am from the North – can be very smug about being more advanced. We look down our noses at the behavior of whites in the South. And yet there was a hard landing for African Americans in Chicago and New York and Cleveland and the others.

Do you have any comment about advantages or disadvantages in this whole structure, of having been from Atlanta, when it might have been Chicago or New York?

BRAZEAL: I think in a sense, as I said, Atlanta was unique even compared to the North in the sense that there were black banks, a black building and loan association, black schools of higher education, associations of blacks who were visible in the community in terms of doing good work. I still support the March of Dimes today because my mother took me up and down the street, marching for dimes, way back when.

So I think that people in the North were...

Q: Just switching.

BRAZEAL: People in the North were less subjected to the daily harassments or indignities of segregation, of not being able legally to eat or sit where you wanted or ride a vehicle. But the North wasn't very nice either, and that gets me back to my education, because you noted my parents had planned, and they planned well. When my sister graduated from the elementary school associated with Atlanta University, my parents believed there were no acceptable high schools for blacks in Atlanta. The two high schools of which I was aware had poor facilities, had poor books and had poor teachers plus were overcrowded.

My parents sent both my sister and myself away to high school up North, as a matter of fact, in Massachusetts. So my sister went first to Northfield School for Girls in Northfield, Massachusetts, and I followed in later years. I had one year at the public high school in Atlanta before going away.

Q: Northfield Mount Hermon.

BRAZEAL: Northfield Mount Hermon now, but at that time it was Northfield School for Girls and the Mount Hermon School for Boys, across the river.

Q: I see.

BRAZEAL: So we both went to high school, and while I didn't really have any overt events per se happen to me in high school, overall it was such a traumatic experience I wasn't able to go back and visit my high school for at least 25 years, going on 30. Why? My expectations of the north did not fit reality.

I went away when I was 14 years old until I finished high school at 18. Those are important years when social skills are developed. My sister paved the path, if you will, but I remember her dissolving in tears when she received a letter from Northfield on her way there her first year, saying we have a nice colored roommate for you. We had not expected a segregated roommate system.

Q: And what year was that, again?

BRAZEAL: This was in the '50s, latter '50s. And our disappointment in part was caused by the piercing of our stereotypes of how the North would be, particularly New England, in terms of freedoms.

Q: You had expectations.

BRAZEAL: We had expectations of a much more liberal, open, welcoming society. Instead, there were less visible racist practices. In order to have a white roommate at Northfield, and this got under my skin, parents were supposed to write a letter to say it's OK for my child to room with Aurelia Brazeal, and my parents would write a letter saying it's OK for my child to room with so-and-so. They didn't really care about my parents' letters, only the letter from the white child's parents, to allow a black roommate.

Otherwise, we had the luxury of being in the single rooms, which was OK. But little things like that were enough to break the rose-colored glasses of looking at the North as a place without prejudice or fully open to blacks, et cetera. No white young man at Mount Hermon would date a black young woman at Northfield.

And the teachers somehow had trouble distinguishing black students, although we all looked differently. There were not many of us – I think there were three blacks in my sister's class, and two in mine; they would call us by whatever name of one of the black students that came to their mind until they hit upon the right name. So you'd raise your hand in class and there would be...

Q: As in "they all look alike."

BRAZEAL: As in, we all look alike. And I had fun, actually, because I had a very deep Southern accent at the time I went to Northfield. Of course, classmates would ask, "Well, how do you pronounce H-I-L-L?" and I'd say "heal," and they'd ask, "Well, how do you pronounce H-E-A-L?" and I'd say, "Well, heal." Kids would laugh and then I found I was adjusting my speech to eliminate the Southern accent.

But, that said, I would have fun with them and their stereotypes of what to expect from Southerners or southern blacks or whatever, and I would raise my hand in history class. And they'd say, "Yes," and I'd say, "Well, when are we going to get to Sherman's retreat to the sea?" And they would say, "What?" And I'd say, "But that's how I was taught." I'd say, "You mean, they didn't retreat to the sea?"

And when they'd say, "Yes?" I would go by a nickname. My nickname is Rea. And I'd say, "Do you know why the earth in the South is red?" They'd say, "No." I'd say, "It was drenched red by the blood of our Confederate soldiers."

And they would just have fits, because they thought, these poor people have been through – they thought we had been brainwashed.

Q: But you were pulling their leg?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I was pulling their leg, because of their expectations, which were very clear.

Q: Do you think, as a young girl, were you able to change their mindset?

BRAZEAL: I think so, but only to the extent of the usual mindset, which is to label any black attending a boarding school as an exception. So you could change the mindset that I was an exception to the black race, to include a mindset that all blacks had the same potential that I had and could certainly excel, if I was excelling at the time, to the extent I was. And I believe that any person has the same capability/potential, given exposure and encouragement that you have a mind and that you can use it. So, anyway, I went up North.

Q: Despite my subterfuges, you are now back to your biography, where we belong.

BRAZEAL: That's right, that's right.

Q: So we'll get into it.

BRAZEAL: So I had three years at Northfield Mount Hermon, or Northfield, anyway, and I remember being shocked. The first time it snowed heavily, I woke up and looked outside and decided that obviously school would be canceled because nobody in their right mind would go out in that weather. And, of course, school proceeded and I had to get up and get out in that mess.

I really don't like snow. I must say, I used to lie when I was younger and say, yes, it is beautiful in its pristine form, but I really never liked it.

Q: Looking out to it from the inside, maybe.

BRAZEAL: Yes, yes, but getting out there, and of course I tried ice skating and couldn't really do that. I tired skiing once and that was just hilarious.

Q: Did anybody else at this school do these things? I mean, was this part of the normal thing, ice skating?

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes.

Q: And you just didn't take to it?

BRAZEAL: No, I didn't, because young ladies in the South, at that time, weren't encouraged to be sports minded. You weren't encouraged to wear pants, unless you were going to a picnic or some other informal outdoor event, so that I wasn't too inclined to sports to begin with, and then having never been around ice or snow, it wasn't my favorite element.

I loved the fall. The fall was beautiful, and of course spring was fine, but the winter...

Q: That spring that was three days long.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: It went from May 23rd to May 22nd.

BRAZEAL: Right, exactly, and, to this day, as old as I am, I remember a late snow my senior year. I had considered going to Colby College, in Maine, and I had been accepted, but it snowed on the 3rd of May of my graduation year. The 3rd of May. I never will forget it, and I said to myself, I am not going any further north than where I am now for school, because I couldn't imagine.

Q: We'll get you to college, I promise, but nowadays it costs a fortune to send somebody to Northfield. How did this work?

BRAZEAL: Well, my parents planned ahead. We were not rich. I would say probably we were on the poor side, but I never knew it. And I also quibble, usually, with people on their definition of poor. I think Americans make the mistake of thinking poverty is having a lack of physical things but, to me, poverty is the lack of the mental prospects and options that you foreclose for yourself because you lock yourself in and you don't get an education.

But, that said, I know as a family we only ever had two new cars, not at the same time. My father would keep a car until it was on its last legs. My parents, I know, didn't buy a lot of new clothes. I remember them having the same clothes for many years. They bought good clothes, but they did not change wardrobes. They planned ahead. It took money, and they somehow sacrificed and saved, and I honor them for that.

Q: So your father, who was an economist, economized.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: And took this into his personal life. I don't know what branch of economics he went into, but it sounds like good microeconomics.

BRAZEAL: He taught economics generally but wrote a book on labor economics: The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Actually, my father also was Dean of Morehouse College and my mom was the Alumni Secretary at Spelman, after teaching history initially. When my sister and I look through family papers, even today, both of them have passed, have died, and we find pay stubs. I don't know how they did it. I just don't. But they managed because they planned for their children's education and they wanted their children to have that education, and we got a good education.

Q: Again, you were protected from the details, perhaps. Their wish was for you to have the best opportunity without being hindered by knowing the sacrifices that it took.

BRAZEAL: Yes, but at a certain age, you recognize the sacrifices. Yes, you do, and you appreciate things. I would, of course, send letters home and my parents would read them and they would send them back with grammatical corrections. Now, some children might think of that as a negative, but I thought of it as loving. Who would take the time to do that and to send it back? And I thought this was wonderful.

Q: Tell me a bit about your sister, and you went in one direction and she went in another.

BRAZEAL: Yes, she went into social work.

Q: Where?

BRAZEAL: In various places, in Chicago, in New York, in Atlanta. She's done various things, and she loves to travel. She's visited me everywhere I've been, but she never joined the Foreign Service.

Q: And where is she now?

BRAZEAL: She's in Atlanta.

Q: In Atlanta.

BRAZEAL: And her name is Ernestine.

Q: Ernestine, which is her middle name?

BRAZEAL: No, my middle name is Erskine, and I should stop here a moment to say something about our names. In African-American life back in the '40s and earlier, as a people we were still close enough to slavery to have traditions in the family. So I have a cousin whose first name is Brazeal. That's because of the tradition that the oldest son would be named the last name on his mother's side, a name that might otherwise be lost.

My first name and second name, Aurelia Erskine, was my grandmother's name on my mother's side. My sister's name, Ernestine Walton, well Ernestine was my mother's name, but Walton was my father's mother's maiden name. So this naming practice was a way of keeping names in a family and was very helpful during slavery and after the Civil War as a means of finding family members who had been sold off to different parts of the country. You could find them by the name, if you see what I'm saying.

Q: Names which were not the original names, obviously, and which were not given as a gesture of respect, then later became a tool in tracing roots.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and tracing family members, maybe not roots.

Q: Relations, and the sets of family.

BRAZEAL: Exactly, but young blacks today don't know this practice because I ask them if they know and they don't know these things.

Q: It's ironic.

BRAZEAL: It is, and so now people make up names for kids and whatever. There is no continuity of using the same names throughout the family tree, but our names are linked back to family.

Q: Just a postscript here, you mentioned your father traveled a lot and your mother to some extent. Traveled where?

BRAZEAL: Well, my father would go to business and academic meetings around the U.S.; both my parents went on recruitment trips for Spelman and Morehouse throughout the south. We also went on family vacations to Chicago, New York and elsewhere around the U.S. As a family we also traveled overseas, Here is the story about our European trip: there was a person called Charles Merrill, a rich white person, I should say. Mr. Merrill gave Morehouse College money for faculty and students to go overseas on trips. Merrill Scholars, people were called, and professors would get a stipend to make a trip. He gave money to Morehouse College, so I understand – this was the oral history, as I heard as a child – because in the Korean War, one of his military colleagues in a foxhole was a Morehouse man. And they talked about their lives, and Mr. Merrill was very impressed

with this colleague. After Merrill came out of the military and made money (I don't know if it was his money or family money), he provided money to Morehouse for the scholars program.

That said, when I was 11 years old, my father and mother and sister and I went to Europe. That was a unique experience.

Q: Do you remember what year?

BRAZEAL: 1955. I remember, because we were one of the few black families, I guess, some Europeans had seen after the war (WWII), and we'd go out to buy some fruit at a stand and we'd look around and there were maybe 100 people just standing and staring at us. Yes. It was sort of like, oh, my goodness we are on display.

Q: Did you see this as curiosity, malice?

BRAZEAL: Not malice. They weren't hostile. It was curiosity.

Q: Didn't know what to make of it.

BRAZEAL: Didn't know what to make of this black family. Just didn't have a clue.

Q: What countries?

BRAZEAL: We went to Italy, France and Great Britain, including Scotland and Ireland, and I think that was it, as I recall.

Q: I think and I hope that this will be a thread throughout the whole interview, the issues that you've raised. But one comes to mind, HBCUs, historically black colleges and universities, which I guess there was no alternative in the '40s, '50s, maybe. What is your feeling now about in the year 2007, about – what would you advise a person of color today, if they had to choose between going to an HBU and a mainstream, so-called mainstream, university? I'm sure you've had this conversation with people?

BRAZEAL: Not really, but I would encourage the young person to go to the historically black college or university. I did. I chose to go to Spelman, perhaps because I had strong family ties, but actually because I decided at that time in America most of my friends – most of the friends you make - you make in college, it seemed to me. And it seemed to me that I was going to be part of a black community for my life, so I chose to go to a black school, with the caveat that obviously I'd been heavily influenced all my life, because I grew up around Morehouse and Spelman. Moreover, in an HBCU you are not seen as a stereotype, you can be yourself, with the chance to grow or make mistakes but as an individual, not a part of a race, if I am making myself clear?

But I did make a conscious choice because, as I said, I was accepted at Colby, but I explained about the snow, May 3rd, and I had applied to some other schools. But I

realized that they might not have a supportive environment – because of the isolation I felt I had experienced in high school in terms of no dates, etc.

Q: This is up North.

BRAZEAL: This is up North, and it was not an incentive to stay up North, actually, to go to school, so I went back to Atlanta to Spelman. And, indeed, I'm in touch today with Spelman sisters with whom I went to school. I am not in touch with the Northfield people I went to school with, except, more recently, when I was able to make myself go visit the school, and I have become more interested in it. In fact, Northfield Mount Herman just invited me to come up and participate in their strategic planning for their next iteration because, in my speech at commencement, I talked about the need to produce multicultural individuals in America.

Q: You described the adversities of living in Northfield as a minority person. Do you think that that would be the same situation in 2007?

BRAZEAL: From my point of view there are still not enough people of color there. I have one friend at Northfield, a staff person, whom I actually met in Ethiopia because she came over to adopt a young Ethiopian child. She has an Ethiopian daughter now and we have talked about how isolated she feels her daughter is, living up in that area, because there are not that many people of color. She even mentioned some adverse reaction on the part of other people to her daughter.

Q: So avoiding the adverse side and then let's just complete the tableau, the advantages then of would you call it retreat? When you're in an environment that is confined in this sense that you have the same type of person, what are the advantages to that environment?

BRAZEAL: I don't find very much of an advantage.

Q: You were saying that you would advise a young person to go to an HBU.

BRAZEAL: Oh, I see what you're saying. Because you can find that confidence in yourself without the distractions of having to deal with the structural inequities built into the larger system, you can explore and make mistakes and fail without being seen as a permanent failure of the race, of the class, of the group, of the gender, of the whatever. You have more of a chance, I think, for growth and hopefully for beginning to be a thinking individual.

Q: So at a time one's learning, it's best to reduce the distractions and to just find your own capacities without a million different...

BRAZEAL: You don’t need the distractions of racism. It's not an argument for segregation, however, because what people don't realize is historically black colleges and universities have never been segregated. Spelman has a graduate from Japan. It has had

attendees who are white. So we have never sought out that exclusivity. But, in fact, one of my theories, which is neither here nor there, is that what whites lack -- and one way we need to address the racial issue -- is whites have very few coping skills for being in the minority. And we really need to teach white people how to cope, the coping skills that others have because they are seen as a minority.

One of my favorite questions I like to ask young blacks today, or diverse groups today in America, is how many of you – I ask by a show of hands – how many of you feel that you're a minority. Usually, most hands go up, and I tell them they're wrong, if they think globally. They are in the majority. The world is of color, and so it's the whites who need the coping skills, and they need them quickly, because they're going to need them.

Q: OK, this is Dan Whitman on September 30th, 2007, interviewing Ambassador Rea Brazeal. When we spoke a week ago, we had gotten you as far as your tertiary education at Spelman, and we were about to go forward. So where might we go?

BRAZEAL: OK, we'll pick up still at Spelman. I should mention that I think another strength of education at HBCUs is the fact that people can learn about their own culture that you don't get – at least, certainly, when I came through college - you don't get from the national textbooks that were being used, knowledge about the contributions black people have made and a sense of your own history and your place in it. And you do make your friends for life in college, frequently. And so to me that was important. I was a city student, if you will, but I lived on campus for one semester, the first semester in my freshman year, to solidify my relationships with my classmates. I majored in political science and minored in economics and English, double minor. I graduated cum laude.

Q: And the year of graduation?

BRAZEAL: I graduated in 1965, the mighty class of '65. I went to Columbia University for graduate school; I'm sure I was influenced not only by the fact that my father attended Columbia, but also that they had an excellent School of International Affairs. I lived at International House in New York City.

Q: I've stayed there.

BRAZEAL: I was at Columbia for two years and got a master's in international affairs. I had the Foreign Affairs Scholars fellowship, that was the program to bring more minorities into the Foreign Service, that paid for graduate school, and I remember, I thought my parents had made enough sacrifice for me. So I remember my father asking me how much I needed a month, and I said, well, $50, so I lived off of $50 a month.

Q: In New York City.

BRAZEAL: In New York City. Well, the tuition at International House and Columbia was paid for, so $50 was just for incidentals, so I ate a lot of yogurt and a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, met people from all over the world, and learned to adjust to

different cultures. New York was itself different, because it was, again, up North, and I was more accustomed to the Southern way of living.

People spoke to each other on the street in the South. You didn't necessarily do that in New York. I also learned that New Yorkers – or not New Yorkers, I should say Northerners – will eat right in front of you and maybe offer you a drink, whereas in the South you always were offered and given food but not necessarily a drink. I guess these customs helped me get attuned to identifying cultural differences.

Q: To bad behavior, let's just say it. It's bad behavior. Actually, you majored in political science, but then you had an interest in international affairs. Did you know that – well, you did if you went to do a master's in that field. What was it that drew you to international, as opposed to domestic political science?

BRAZEAL: Well, I had traveled to Europe as a child, participated before college in the Encampment for Citizenship in Puerto Rica and in college in the Experiment in International Living. While in college I applied to and was accepted in the Foreign Affairs Scholars program, funded by the Ford Foundation. The Scholar's program was designed to get minorities into the Foreign Service. So I was a Foreign Affairs Scholar, and in this program I had two internships at the State Department while I was in college, and then they helped pay for a master's degree and then you came into the Foreign Service, very similar to the ongoing Pickering programs and Rangel programs of today.

So, needless to say, I am a supporter of affirmative action, or I would never have considered the Foreign Service as a career. I also became fascinated by the differences in cultures, which drew me to a career on the international side.

Q: Tell me about those internships. What bureaus did you work in?

BRAZEAL: Well, the first internship I had was really more in records, as I recall. It was over at the old FSI (Foreign Service Institute). I remember being around some of the instructors. I remember taking the language aptitude test, but they didn't tell me you could only take it once in your life and the score would stick to you. I was just taking it for fun.

But, in any event, live and learn. The internship was checking records of people. It was interesting, but it was the second internship that really influenced me toward a career in the Foreign Service. I was – and again, I think I can't remember really what office I was assigned to, but what I did was latch onto one of the State Department photographers. And, because of that, I could go around to many meetings where photos were being taken and meet/see people.
I remember seeing Bobby Kennedy up close and being able to shake his hand and, of course, the Secretary of State and visiting dignitaries and international leaders like that. So I just thought such access was fabulous.

Q: What were you doing with the photographer?

BRAZEAL: Just going around, really, exposing myself to what the State Department did and it was something that I initiated. It didn't have much to do with the intern job, so I'm afraid I've pushed the job into the recesses of my mind.

Q: As the best people do.

BRAZEAL: My internships were not like the organized internships we have today where you really do substantive work. They were more clerical, again I think, reflecting the fact that people didn't quite know what to do with the minorities in the State Department. So I just made myself an avenue to see what else went on and to talk to people about their careers.

Q: But you became steeped in the culture, so to speak, of the State Department. You saw the protocol, as it was happening. You saw, perhaps, foreign ministers or even heads of state.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: And you saw the choreography of the American officials receiving them, a certain choreography there. How did that strike you? Did it strike you as being among celebrities? Did it seem very formal?

BRAZEAL: Well, it seemed formal. It wasn't celebrity hype, but it seemed suited for the occasion, if that makes sense. Of course, this was back in the '60s and things were still relatively formal. Mind you, Spelman College taught you that you took gloves with you when you went to formal occasions, so all of the things that I saw in terms of the protocol made sense to me.

In terms of how people were, there were not really any women that I noted in the meetings, but these were just a few weeks in a summer. I also participated in a camp in Puerto Rico, and that was, I think, the experience that really made me interested in the Foreign Service. It was called Encampment for Citizenship. It doesn't exist anymore. And the idea was that people from different cultures would come together and try to work out a system of government amongst themselves. There were a lot of Latin American students there, and this was back really before I started college, in high-school years.

And I was amazed at the Latin American students who would stand up and say, as a future leader of my country, I'm here to tell you XYZ, and here we were, 16, 17, 18 years old.

Q: Pretty cheeky.

BRAZEAL: I was thinking, what made them tick? What made them like that, especially when I felt I could not stand up and say as a future leader of my country at that time, with segregation and the roles that blacks were supposed to play. It just fascinated me that

these students my age would feel such empowerment. So their behavior made me interested in other cultures; this story also has a connection to Columbia, because at Columbia I specialized in Latin American studies because of that camp experience and being exposed to those Latin American cultures.

Q: So within a masters in international affairs, you concentrated in Latin America studies, and this was a two-year experience.

BRAZEAL: Two-year experience.

Q: So you had the, I guess we could say, culture shock of living in a city where people don't greet one another.

BRAZEAL: That's right.

Q: and you were living in International House, so you had people of every conceivable culture, I think.

BRAZEAL: Exactly, and background.

Q: Did you get to know Latin Americans in International House, or what type of – when you weren't hitting the books, what type of person were you getting to know?

BRAZEAL: Well, I did get to know some Latin Americans, but for some reason I got to know more people from Lebanon, people from the Middle East, some African students, but not very many. Other American students, I had two women who became friends and we've kept a lifelong friendship.

There was one Atlanta acquaintance in New York at the time I went there and she kindly showed me the ropes of how to ride the subway and to not stare at people, to not point at people. She amused the heck out of me because she had a large pocketbook and she had a rolling pin in the pocketbook, because that was her defense mechanism. So she told me where to go and where not to go and how to behave and I was very appreciative of her instruction.

I met people from Haiti, just all over the world, but in particular I think the Middle East and Lebanon.

Q: Just a long shot, did you meet anybody from Operation Crossroads Africa back at that time? It had just been created, I believe.

BRAZEAL: I knew about the program, but no.

Q: OK. I did.

BRAZEAL: And that's how you got to Africa?

Q: That's one way.

OK, so this was a voyage of discovery. It wasn't all smooth. I think probably not everybody gets to have a cultural guide when you go to a new place. That's fortunate. And how quickly did you feel you were able to feel comfortable in New York, if you ever were?

BRAZEAL: Oh, I felt comfortable. Perhaps my experience was the start of, or contributed to, a habit I have of sitting back, occasionally, to ask, "Now, what are you learning? What are the differences that you're seeing between people and their behaviors and why do they do it this way as opposed to that way?" I think I adjusted to New York quickly and I enjoyed my time there. It's a fascinating place; for example, students could get cheap opera tickets up in what I call the nosebleed section. You could go to the museums, the stores, just any number of things, the Cloisters. New York is a fascinating place and a good place to be when you're young, I think, to spread your wings and to find out about different people and your reaction to them.

I should preface my Columbia years. The summer after college I went on the Experiment in International Living. You asked about Crossroads Africa, but I did do Experiment in International Living in Sweden, which I found fascinating. There were two blacks, myself and another woman, in the group of about 14 Americans that summer. When we were not traveling as a group, I lived with a Swedish family. The Swedish parents were divorced, so my Swedish sister and I would switch houses.

Cultural differences abounded. For example, I was puzzled when it was, to me, cold outside and the sun was out. A very weak beam of sunlight would come and the Swedes would rush outside and sit on chairs and just look up and soak up the sun, and I found that different. The father's house was built with the living rooms on the second floor and the bedrooms on the first floor. I learned how to eat artichokes for the first time. The family loved artichokes. I learned a lot.

This trip was in the '60s, and there weren't that many black people in Europe. There were some but mainly they were American soldiers. Invariably, when we were going through a train station, black soldiers would see me and the other black woman and come and pick up our bags and talk to us and walk us to our train. The other members of our group would look around and feel somewhat slighted, because no one was helping them with their bags. The leader of our group, we felt, did not like black people. For example, sometimes we'd take overnight trains when we were going through Europe and our accommodations were in sleeping compartments; there were three beds in each compartment. She would put herself in our compartment, perhaps to punish herself for some imagined infraction or because the other white Americans did not want to sleep with us. It was clear she was uncomfortable but she managed and so did we.

Q: Why would she punish herself?

BRAZEAL: I don't have a clue.

Q: Some guilt trip?

BRAZEAL: Some guilt trip. I wasn't into introspection too much at the time, but I remember talking to the other black woman about it. But this leads to a story of sorts that was sort of interesting.

In Paris, there's that famous outdoor restaurant near the American Express office, where if you sit at a table, supposedly you see someone you know walk past.

Q: Benoit?

BRAZEAL: I can't remember the name of the restaurant. Perhaps that was it. I was sitting there with this other black woman participating in the Experiment program; I can't remember her name now. It's been too long, and we didn't stay in touch. But we were sitting there having tea and, sure enough, a friend from Atlanta, Georgia, walks by. Her name was Anne.

So we get together with Anne and the next day we go to Versailles and then Anne said, "There's a party, a farewell party for a young man who's going to be going to Columbia University and he's Ethiopian, so come along."

Well, Anne and this other lady and I are walking down the street and some African men come toward us. I had gotten hesitant in New York about speaking to African men because of the cultural differences. They thought black women in America were loose and forward and, therefore, they were very forward.

And so Anne said, "Oh, no, you can say hello to them in Paris. They are OK." So the African men passed by and they said hello, and we said hello. Unfortunately they then turned around and started following us. And so we ran down into the subway and got on the subway train and they came behind us and got on the train.

We got off at an arbitrary stop. We didn't know exactly where we were, because we were just going to backtrack.

Q: Do you know what nationality they were?

BRAZEAL: No, I don't.

Q: OK.

BRAZEAL: But, interestingly enough, at this arbitrary subway stop we look across the platform to the other side and we see another African American woman from Atlanta who is living in Paris.

Q: Oh, my gosh.

BRAZEAL: So we crossed over to another platform to say hello to our friend, and these men were following us; I'm sure by now they were totally confused. We get on the subway, going back the way we just came from and we go to this farewell party. As soon as the African men saw we had joined a group, they left. They left us alone.

Q: They actually followed you on the metro through various stops.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Very unnerving.

BRAZEAL: Yes, very unnerving. But we get to this party and the young Ethiopian man for whom this farewell party was for later married one of my Spelman classmates, proving it's a small world, in any case.

Q: Now this was just before college, but not before graduate school.

BRAZEAL: This is between college and graduate school.

Q: So you didn't see him at Columbia.

BRAZEAL: I did see him and may have introduced him to Judy and then their romance took off.

Q: It was your doing.

BRAZEAL: Well, I don't claim credit. They got divorced later due, I think, to cultural differences. They went back to Ethiopia and Judy was supposed to live as an Ethiopian wife, which she found very difficult because it was more of a cloistered kind of life and I think that's really what did the damage in the relationship.

But, anyway, I told this story to illustrate how small the world was in the 1960s at that time. Who would have thought that many members of the black diaspora would have stumbled across one another in Paris when we didn't know each other would be there.

Q: I'm told that at any given time there are 40,000 Americans living in Paris. Yes, it is quite amazing. At that time then, the '60s, the Africans that you would have seen there at that time might have been from the foreign colonies, and this would have been the very optimistic period right after independence, perhaps.

Did you sense the optimism – well, people following you in the subway must have been optimistic, because they followed you.

BRAZEAL: They followed us, but, no, we didn't really talk to them.

Q: It was just a brief visit in Paris.

BRAZEAL: Yes, with the Experiment in International Living.

Q: Basically in Sweden.

BRAZEAL: Sweden, and then traveling through Europe and then coming back home.

Q: OK, now did this experience give you the bug to be living overseas? Is there any particular formative moment when you said to yourself, I must do this for a living?

BRAZEAL: I think, again, it was that camp in Puerto Rico that got my interest in Latin American cultures and that's what did it in terms of the direction I chose and the Foreign Affairs Fellows program that led me to the State Department.

Q: OK, and then, now, you picked the program, Foreign Affairs Fellows and they picked you. Was there a meeting in the middle? Did you pursue them? Did they pursue you?

BRAZEAL: Well, you had to apply and go through an interview process and then you were selected.

Q: At the time was this one option among others or were you determined that this would be the thing you would do?

BRAZEAL: The Foreign Affairs Fellows program was an option among others. Again, being a believer in education, I was always intending to go for a masters, at least. I think that the Encampment for Citizenship deepened my interest in government, political science and then the international aspect.

My brief forays into going overseas just contributed to my interest.

Q: So during your two years at Columbia, at some point you decided – I'm not sure quite how the program worked – you had internships and your entry into the State Department perhaps was facilitated in some way, but you had to decide whether to actually do it.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: And had you decided early during those two years, this is for me?

BRAZEAL: I decided to try out the Foreign Service, and I still am trying it out.

Q: OK.

BRAZEAL: I say “trying out” intentionally because I think it's important for people to believe that they have options. I find that once people believe they have no options, they feel trapped or hopeless or some negative feelings creep in.

Q: That's an important point. People who have a single formula for life, if the formula does not work, they sometimes have great trouble adjusting.

BRAZEAL: Yes. So I've always tried to keep the viewpoint that the Foreign Service was one option and that there are many others out there, but it was one option I wanted to try.

Q: This recalls, to me anyway, your comment about sitting back and observing, having several options and sitting back and observing. And we'll get to the actual anecdotes and the actual experience in the field, but sitting back and observing, did this become a pattern in your Foreign Service career?

BRAZEAL: Thoughtful observation is something I tried to practice. Observation taught me that there are many ways to do the same thing and that it isn't only our American way that's the best or the fastest, or even the correct way; there are many ways that people do the same thing. And it also taught me that people are operating off of the same emotions, but their culture makes them express those same emotions in different ways.

Q: In your average Foreign Service assignment, how long did you feel that it took to get the hang of it, in the sense of people want, I guess they want, attention. They want gratification. I don't know what people have in common. I'm not sure. Whatever it is, you say that their cultures cause them to express this in different ways. How long does it take on an average to decode the language of a culture?

BRAZEAL: My goodness. I think it varies. I don't think there's any particular timeline. Certainly, as a Foreign Service officer, you go through the same cycle everyone else does when arriving at a place – you first have a lot of high energy and then you go in the slump and then come out the other side.

What I mean by the same emotions are the basics: love, anger, sadness, and the like. Every human being shares those emotions. Their culture shapes what is the acceptable way to express those emotions. I think that I've always been curious about why people do what they do in a certain way, as opposed to another way.

Q: I'm asking, because some Foreign Service officers arrive at a post knowing everything about that post and operational, very often badly mistaken.

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes.

Q: And other Foreign Service officers observe before they become engaged—any comments about that?

BRAZEAL: Well, yes, and there are Foreign Service people who have made up their minds and never open them again. And I see a closed mind as a dangerous thing; I always encourage my staff and myself to challenge conventional wisdom. You would arrive somewhere and one of the old-timers would tell you what they think is going on or how things are done and then, if you accept that and never question it, you are distinctly hampered not only in your abilities to interpret, to press the case of what you're trying to press on behalf of the United States, but also to just maneuver in that society.

So I never believe that I've learned enough about a culture. But if you ask local people, people love to talk about their culture but you have to want to be out among the people. Another practice I've always tried to follow is not to hang around Americans too much when I am overseas. I didn't join the Foreign Service to be with Americans. And yet we have a lot of people in the Foreign Service who cling together in a little American group and don't get out.

So I always urge young people, officers, to get out. Always challenge conventional wisdom; while some things may have been done a certain way, circumstances or motivations may now have changed. Always as why and constantly ask questions.

Q: OK, well, there's an operating principle there – challenge conventional wisdom, get out and have a look and ask people questions about their culture. As we get into the career, we'll see instances to bring these principles to life, to give them anecdotal richness.

BRAZEAL: Hopefully.

Q: Yes, OK. Now, so you received your master's, would it have been in '67?

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: And, at that point, were you on a career track already? Did you pack your bags and go to Washington at that point?

BRAZEAL: Well, I took the summer off, but I was in Washington by that fall. I was working in the State Department's Latin American Bureau, the *Alianza para el Progreso.* That program goes way back.

Q: The Kennedy thing.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and I wasn't in a Foreign Service position, per se, because I was trying to still make up my mind if I wanted to enter the Foreign Service. But I was working at the State Department. USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and State officers were working together in my office. I had a lot of exposure to USAID at the time. I learned how statistics could be manipulated, which taught me to be skeptical about data in general and to always look at what was being said and why it was being said. The *Alianza* objective was to have a 5 percent GNP (gross national product) growth per year

in the region. My office wrote papers that said the 5 percent target had been met but looking closely you'd see Argentina and Brazil had been left out of the chart. Of course, you've left out half the hemisphere.

Q: Leaving out Argentina and Brazil because they were relatively more developed, I guess, and the percentage would be less.

BRAZEAL: Including Argentina and Brazil's data in the chart, the 5 percent target would not have been met. So I learned that numbers can, of course, lie, which you know anyway, and you had to look behind the details to see exactly what was being said. I enjoyed my job but then I decided to enter the Foreign Service because they were about to have a freeze on hiring, so people suggested I should enter before the freeze because they weren't sure how long that would be. And so I decided to come on into the Foreign Service, and that would be in 1968.

Q: I'm trying to remember. I know there was a freeze during the Nixon administration, but that's a different time. Before we leave the topic of AID, AID has changed a lot in its agenda. It's gone into something called democracy building, which I've never understood what that is.

At the time that you were back to back with State Department, AID, working together on things, I believe they were working more on economic development.

BRAZEAL: They were working more on economic development, but also large projects.

Q: Infrastructure, airstrips and roads.

BRAZEAL: Roads and bridges.

Q: So you were there during what some people think of as the heyday of AID. Did it seem to you, looking back, and having seen the shift in AID agenda, did it seem to you that this was a heyday? Was this AID at its best?

BRAZEAL: No, because I do agree with the shift away from large infrastructure projects and more toward programs that transfer skills to the local people. At the time I think people were still animated by President Kennedy's enthusiasm for what you can do for your country and there was a sense that, of course, infrastructure is needed for development, but, again, there was just a lot of enthusiasm among the AID people. But I guess I've never thought of it as a heyday, per se, at a pinnacle of any kind. No.

Q: Some people say that. Now, there was a hiring freeze, so maybe we're not 100 percent decided, but you realized this was a good time to do it and it was an opportunity and there would be some risk in not doing it.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So you did it in 1968.

BRAZEAL: Yes, I entered the Foreign Service.

Q: And your first experience after joining the Foreign Service?

BRAZEAL: I went to the A-100 course and then I had Spanish language training and then I went to my first assignment in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Q: The one that was not counted in the 5 percent.

BRAZEAL: That's right.

Q: Well, now, you were not unaccustomed to living in other countries. You'd lived in Sweden, you'd traveled. You'd made the cultural bridge between Atlanta to New York and the North in general. How did Buenos Aires strike you when you first arrived?

BRAZEAL: Well, I think you always love your first post. It was a large city, and I tend to like large cities – and a beautiful city, sort of like Paris, London and Rome rolled into one. I was initially staying in a hotel, away from the embassy by about six or seven blocks. People assigned to Buenos Aires had to find their own housing.

I would walk those blocks from the hotel to the embassy downtown. I recall that by the time you arrived at the Embassy walking, if you had on sunglasses, your face would be black from soot, except your eyes. Buenos Aires had substantial environmental pollution from the buses and other emissions. And so I think a little bit of environmental consciousness crept in my system.

I was one of two junior officers in Buenos Aires. I was assigned to the consular section my first year and then the economic section my second year. And this rotational experience came about because the other junior officer and I got together and went to management, if you will, and said, “You don't have a rotational program here for junior officers, but we would like to switch positions to gain experience in different cones," and people agreed. I was happy for that.

My first boss was Lou Villalobos. He's passed away; he was chief in the consular section. The economic counselor was Ed Williams.

Q: This thing of two junior officers switching is now kind of a standard in some places.

BRAZEAL: In many places it is.

Q: But you came up with it yourself, as an idea. You proposed it.

BRAZEAL: Yes, because, again, it accorded with my view of having options. And, while I didn't dislike consular work, I found that it bothered me because I didn't necessarily

agree with U.S. immigration law as it was at that time but I had to implement it. Turning down some people for visas just bothered me.

Q: Demoralizing, yes.

BRAZEAL: Because I only did nonimmigrant visas. I didn't get to do other consular work.

Q: I don't know, this was before the time when they had so-called career tracks. You were a generalist. In the '60s, what was the normal career track? Was a person expected to be equipped to do anything? Political, economic and management?

BRAZEAL: You were expected to pick a career track eventually, but your first assignment generally was more on-the-job experience and training.

Q: So it would emerge later, as to what your specialty was going to be. It wasn't as formalized as it is now.

BRAZEAL: No, it wasn't. And, in fact, my second-year experience in the economic section made me want to become an economic officer and I did become an economic officer as a result of my experience.

Q: Again, let's get into the details of it. The consular experience, U.S. immigration policy, there were parts of it that you found a bit uneasy. Tell me about that. Were you quite aware of immigration policy before you were in that position?

BRAZEAL: Well, not until I was trained to be a consular officer. The training was very good and exact/precise.

Q: So you feel that your job was to refuse visas?

BRAZEAL: No, the law was written that anyone coming to the United States as a non-immigrant is assumed to be an immigrant and they have to prove they are not. And you could tell sometimes honest people were denied visas because they did not have sufficient proof that they were not intending to immigrate. One man, for example, fainted right in front of me when I told him no, and the reason I had to tell him no was that he and his wife-to-be were going to get married, go to the States for their honeymoon, but they also intended to immigrate in later years.

Q: So you got that one right.

BRAZEAL: Well, they said all of this in their visa application, so of course I had to say no. But he fainted. I think they would have gone on their honeymoon and come back, but based on the law the assumption was they would go and stay. A consular officer had to really probe people well. I can't say that every decision to grant or deny a visa was the correct one. For example, I went to New York at one point, after serving in Buenos Aires,

and my waiter was an Argentinean who I had given a visa. He had come to the U.S. on a tourist visa and told me that he met and married an American sweetheart on that trip. One never knows, but this chance meeting was again the small-world syndrome at work.

Q: Six degrees of separation. That's great. What was the workload? Nowadays, some people say that for some consular officers, the crush of work is such that they have to really decide within one or two minutes. Was that the case back then?

BRAZEAL: Yes, even then, because I was the only person really doing nonimmigrant visas.

Q: You were the only one?

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: In a huge country like Argentina?

BRAZEAL: Yes, but we were just a small section. Somebody else did immigrant visas, another did assistance to Americans and that kind of thing. I smoked heavily at the time, I'm not proud to say, but I did. And sometimes people wouldn't accept my decision. They'd say, "But we want to talk to the consul." And so I would go into my office and smoke a cigarette and then come back and say, "Well, I'm sorry. The consul still says no."

Q: Did you ever say, "I am the consul"?

BRAZEAL: Sometimes, yes. But I looked young and some applicants always thought there was someone higher. I had a boss and I could ask him for his opinion. You also could cable Washington and ask for an advisory opinion on difficult cases, et cetera. I enjoyed talking to the applicants because you could find out, for example, if a particular part of Argentina was having economic problems, because there might be a surge in visa applicants from that part of the country. And I perfected my Spanish, and so I had a lot of good experiences. I learned another reality lesson -- that people can be friends of the position, I'll put it that way, and not your friends, personally, but friends of the position.

And so as a consular officer, or even as an Ambassador, you might have a lot of people coming to you not to be your friend because they like you, but because of what position you hold and how your work might be able to help them. I learned not to take this personally.

Q: Did you catch onto that pretty quickly?

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes.

Q: So you weren't disillusioned when you found that people – you had a lot of friends and yet they had an agenda.

BRAZEAL: No, and I'd like them perfectly well and socialize with them, but I never took it personally, because it's what we do. And, again, such behavior is an insight into that society that perhaps shows how they have to be amongst themselves in order to get things done. And you could ask probing questions about such approaches and their thoughts on the strength of their institutions if who you know trumps what a person can contribute, etc.

Q: There are jokes in Latin America about the arrogance of Argentineans. Did you find these jokes far-fetched? Did you find them painfully accurate?

BRAZEAL: I could see how people could think Argentines as a group might be arrogant, but, individually, I did not find them arrogant. Don't forget, this was my first assignment. I'm a young single person. I enjoyed meeting Argentines of all kinds, Anglo-Argentines, Spanish-Argentines, Italian-Argentines and the like. I didn't meet too many German-Argentines because of the history there, but I did travel around the entire country.

My boss in the economic section was kind enough to give me time off and I drove with my roommate and some of her friends to Tierra del Fuego. I had a roommate, Charlotte Jones. She worked for USAID in Argentina and USAID provided their employees with furniture. State did not supply furniture and because this was my first job and I'd never lived away from home, I had no furniture. Rooming together allowed us to get furniture and a great apartment

Q: You hadn't accumulated stuff.

BRAZEAL: I hadn't accumulated anything. So it worked out well that I found the apartment and she brought furniture. And Charlotte told me recently that she had visited Buenos Aires recently and had gone back to the same street and our building is still there. But it was a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment. These were her friends who drove to Argentina from Brazil and then we drove all the way down to Tierra del Fuego and back. I really saw a lot of Argentina, different parts, and people were really very friendly. There wasn't that kind of arrogance to which you were referring. Still you could hear it a bit in their comments about other nationalities on the continent.

Q: Now, to pick at a wound, you've spoken about it in Atlanta and Columbia and your travels, about the ever-present reality of your being a member of a minority. Was this a factor in Argentina?

BRAZEAL: Not among the Argentines, that I could tell, but among the Americans, yes. For example, I was asked to give a speech to the American Embassy community about black power movements in the United States because, of course, these were ongoing at the time. And I said, sure. Some Embassy attendees had been out of the United States for many years and had not caught up with the civil rights movement or even knew whether they agreed with its objectives.

I spoke about the Black Panthers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) and SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) and other things that were ongoing. I never will forget that colleagues and their families came up to me afterwards and patted me on the shoulder and said, "Oh, but you shouldn't feel that way." And I was absolutely flabbergasted because I thought I had expressed a range of views and never really identified myself with any particular viewpoint. I felt I had been pigeonholed by my own colleagues.

Q: You were doing exposition, but people misunderstood and thought these were your opinions.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and so I became the sort of "resident black radical" in the Embassy and believed this view of me affected for a while what I was asked to do in my work. Again, I learned a lesson from that experience -- that I should avoid being pigeonholed in the future and should be circumspect in sharing my real views. It took me many years to learn to share my real views, which you must do if you are in a leadership position.

A second example of being a minority concerns my love of opera. There is a fabulous opera house in Buenos Aires, built exactly on the specifications of La Scala, and because the seasons in the southern hemisphere are reversed we had outstanding U.S. and European opera singers coming down. I would attend performances and some people from the embassy would say, "Well, I didn't know 'You People' liked opera."

Q: Oh, my.

BRAZEAL: You have to take it all in stride, which was a saying of my father. While in Argentina I was rethinking my choice of being in the Foreign Service. I was in Buenos Aires writing reports about the price of Argentine beef or whatever on the economic side when it looked as if my own country was going up in flames in terms of the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War. By the way, in subsequent years I added my name to letters written by Foreign Service officers protesting what we viewed as the illegal U.S. bombing of Laos. In any event, at the time, I was questioning my career choice versus things I could be doing back in the U. S.

I thought, what am I doing so far away from home, disconnected from all of the changes that were apparently going on? And it made me question my choice; I decided not to resign on the spot but to seek my next assignment in Washington.

Q: Well, so what was going through your mind, if I understand, you were doing issues overseas when there was a very compelling situation in your own country. You considered, but did not decide, to actually shift your agenda in life. You considered working in the U.S. on domestic issues? Is that correct? But you ended up sort of meeting in the middle and staying in the Foreign Service, but seeking a Washington-based Foreign Service position. Is that correct?

BRAZEAL: Yes. I recall talking to people about my concerns and what I was feeling. I remember we had some inspectors in Argentina, and so I was talking to them about whether I wanted to stay in the Foreign Service.

Q: These were friendly and benign inspectors?

BRAZEAL: Well, they were my first inspectors, so what did I know?

Q: But they were forthcoming when you went to them for personal advice?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I think so. I also talked to my boss Ed Williams; I'm still in touch with him. He's retired down in the Durham-Raleigh-Chapel Hill triangle area. He's a Southerner himself, and he said – this is slightly off the topic -- but he said he thought I was the resident radical because of what other Embassy officers had said about me (remember my speech about different civil rights groups/personalities) and when I was coming to work for him in the economic section, he wasn't sure what to expect.

Q: Did he say this with a twinkle in his eye, or did he really mean it?

BRAZEAL: No, he meant it. We've talked about it subsequently.

Q: So he was open enough to actually say that.

BRAZEAL: Not at the time. We became friends and years later he was comfortable telling me this story.

Q: OK.

BRAZEAL: Not at the time, but years later, because we've stayed in touch as friends. I said, "Ed, I didn't realize that." I knew I had been pigeonholed.

Q: Maybe I didn't understand. You said a principle you learned was to avoid being pigeonholed, and it took you some time to unlearn that.

BRAZEAL: I think a person shouldn't be pigeonholed. When you are pigeonholed you are only allowed access to information that accords with the box in which you are placed – for me that was the resident radical box. My experience led me to stop expressing my own views, for example, to just simply not talk about civil rights movements or politics.

Q: To pretend not to have opinions?

BRAZEAL: Or just not give an answer that exposed my personal opinions. And I think such behavior is a mistake. In your life you must have core beliefs and views that you share so that other members of your team feel compelled to follow you. You need to be able to express your views and core beliefs.

Q: Now, the econ reporting, you were reporting on the price of beef and, let's just say it, this is a bit irrelevant to the cataclysms taking place in the U.S. at that time. You knew it was for a limited amount of time. Was it one year at consular, one year economic?

BRAZEAL: My Argentine assignment was a two-year assignment, and then the Department assigned me to Trinidad but I asked to be assigned to Washington, which eventually came about.

Q: Was this in fact because of your concern about the state of the United States at that time, wanting to be here and to see it and perhaps to play a role in it in some way?

BRAZEAL: Yes, not only to play a role in what was happening in the U.S., but also to counter my experiences in Argentina with my American colleagues. My work experience was great. BA (Buenos Aires), however, was not an easy assignment for me in terms of socializing with my own fellow Americans because of their own views of where I should be, either as a black or as a woman or as a young person. You could tell that there was a disconnection in terms of our life experience.

My thoughts were, do I want to be in the Foreign Service working with some people who don't like me or who I find suspect in terms of their ability to deal with me on an even playing field? Do I want to be away from all of the changes that were going on in the United States?

So I had questions, but I didn't have a lot of answers. I just knew that I wanted to experience an assignment in Washington because I thought that after hours I could pursue my personal interests in civil rights, but still be in the Foreign Service to see what it was all about.

Q: Was it also a way of testing and making a transition to a different career, possibly, by actually being in the U.S.? Did that go through your mind?

BRAZEAL: Not directly at that time. The main thing was to just get back to the States with an assignment and, hopefully, determine what I wanted to do.

I didn't dislike the work I was doing in the Foreign Service. I enjoyed it tremendously. My parents and sister came to visit me in Argentina. I really became bilingual. I think I was the only person they've ever seen off at the train station in Buenos Aires, because when I left, I left by train and traveled through Bolivia and into Peru. And then I had to start flying from Lima to get back to Washington on time. I remember my train roommate, a Bolivian woman, was talking about Yankees, and I was looking around saying, "Well, where are they?" And she meant me! I had not thought of myself as a Yankee, and that was a new experience.

I jumped off the train with her before reaching La Paz, because her husband met her with a car about an hour out of La Paz. She assured me we would reach La Paz before the train. We stopped and had a meal with her relatives and then we drove into La Paz. I have

always enjoyed meeting ordinary people during my Foreign Service career. I stayed with some Foreign Service friends La Paz. So I was quite happy in the Foreign Service, but I was compelled to be back in the States for reasons of wanting to participate in the social change.

Q: Sure. So what was the post that you took in Washington?

BRAZEAL: Well, this was a job in the Economic Bureau, and it was an office that I really came to dislike, so this circumstance did lead me to think about leaving. It was an office that kept track of whether posts had sent in their required commercial reports, and you had to write up a nice airgram, at that time, commenting on the quality of the post's commercial reports.

Q: You were the bad cop.

BRAZEAL: No, because the office director and deputy director wouldn't let you say anything bad. You were supposed to analyze post reporting both for content, as well as for timeliness. But the bosses in the office never let you say anything negative, and there wasn't a lot of work involved, frankly. I'd save up work. Maybe you could have one full day of work in the week and the rest of the time I felt there wasn't a lot to do.

Q: That's demoralizing.

BRAZEAL: It was, and so I had an officemate, and he would get the "New York Times." I'd get the "Post." We'd read them and switch and then see what reports had come in by airgram and read those and then go home. So this "work" did make me question my choice to be in the Foreign Service.

I don't know if I was put in that office because I had insisted, so to speak, on coming back to Washington and this job was the only thing available so late in the assignment process, or this assignment was supposed to be the system punishing me because I didn't want to go to that next overseas post. I wasn't sure.

Q: They had actually asked you to go to Trinidad. This was not just an option.

BRAZEAL: I had been assigned to Trinidad but something happened there; frankly, I don't quite remember how it turned around and I went to Washington, except that I was expressing these preferences. And you always have unknown helpers along the way.

Well, one of the helpers at this stage of my career was Dick Fox, Richard Fox, who is an African American Foreign Service officer. He had an office down the hall from where I was located. He was kind enough to let me come in and ventilate occasionally, just to get things off of my chest. His advice was that I should do the boring job for a year, to show that I could do it, and then seek to break the assignment, because breaking an assignment in the Foreign Service at that time was not something that you did willy-nilly. It was a big step.

The other person who helped me was Francis Wilson. She was the Executive Director in EB (Economic Bureau), a very powerful person and famous in the Foreign Service, one of the few senior women. And if she was on your side, then you were OK, but if she wasn't, you either didn't get into EB or you didn't proceed smoothly in your career.

But she was on my side. I think she knew about the office and I had gone to see her to explain that I would like to leave, or break the assignment.

Q: So on your second assignment, the fact that there were two officers senior to you who took an interest in you was key.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Yes, I was going to ask who advised you, but you've just gotten into that. So this was a two-year assignment, but Dick Fox convinced you – you wanted to just leave, but Dick Fox said do it for a year to prove that you can do it.

BRAZEAL: Right and I took that advice, good advice.

Q: Were you able to curtail at that point?

BRAZEAL: Yes, and I curtailed in...

Q: In '69, '70?

BRAZEAL: No, I was in Buenos Aires '69 to '71, so this is mainly '72/'73. I was able to switch to an assignment in the Operations Center, a choice assignment given to officers expected to rise to higher levels.

Q: Totally different.

BRAZEAL: Totally different. However, being a person who likes to create options, I also had considered what I might do if I were not accepted in the Ops Center. You had to be interviewed for the Op Center and discussed, because they didn't take anybody into the Ops Center or the sister office called "The Line". I also had applied to the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard, in part, to acquire more skills that might be useful if I decided to leave the Foreign Service. I did not assume I would be accepted to either position.

But I was accepted into the JFK School at Harvard. By then I was already working in the Ops Center, but I had been accepted at Harvard, so I told my bosses I had been accepted. I wanted to line up my assignment for when I came back, because I was going to take an academic year long "leave without pay" from the Foreign Service to attend. I thought Harvard was a good opportunity. I had learned from the EB assignment that I "broke" not to depend upon the assignment process to cough up a good job, so I worked out ahead of

time my assignment after Harvard. Actually, for the rest of my career, I avoided the personnel system as much as possible.

The Ops Center liked me so much that the bosses agreed that after Harvard I could come back to the sister office "The Line", or the Secretariat side of the operation. I took a leave without pay, and went to the John F. Kennedy School at Harvard, on my own dime.

Q: Wow. And so getting a leave without pay, which is not always the easiest thing, administratively, no friction?

BRAZEAL: No.

Q: Because you had gained the trust of the people at the Ops Center, I think.

BRAZEAL: I think so.

Q: Yes. Now, the line is related, but it's not the same as the Ops Center, but these are people who knew others at the line and helped you set up an assignment for after that year.

BRAZEAL: Yes, I talked to them.

Q: So, you're in Cambridge, Massachusetts, another cold Northern city.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: But a smaller one, and a more tightly knit community, I think, Cambridge. So you did this totally on your own initiative.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: This was not a State Department program, but they were willing to say, "Go ahead for a year and then we'll be happy to have you back." The Ops Center, before we leave the Ops Center, which too is another bureau that's changed enormously with the more sophisticated electronics and the round-the-clock stuff. I'm told that at one time it consisted of one officer and a cot. That was the origin of the Ops Center, so this was something more – I think it was the Cuban Missile Crisis that it was a single person and a telephone and a cot, and that was the Ops Center.

What had it turned into by 1972?

BRAZEAL: It was quite an operation. There were three person teams working shifts around the clock. There were other people working the shifts with us. We had the latest technology. At that time the Ops Center saw communications from posts overseas and from the Department back to posts overseas. Sam Fry was my supervisor, the senior watch officer, and April Glaspie was the editor on my team. Sam would say, because

people would always ask him about having two women working for him, "Well, would you ask that question if I had two men working for me?" So he was sensitized to gender issues.

Q: I cannot not ask you about April Glaspie, I have to.

BRAZEAL: Yes, exactly. April trained me in the Ops Center; she was excellent. I mean, I had the best Foreign Service officer trainer that I could possibly have. I remember asking April why she wore dresses that were high necked and long sleeved and long, because this was a time of miniskirts; the answer to my question was because she served in the Middle East and such clothing was her comfort zone.

Q: So April Glaspie in '72. Well, we won't dwell on that.

BRAZEAL: She was already a developing Middle East expert. She was excellent, I mean, she had a high level of skills and she was an excellent teacher.

Q: I worked with her in the late '90s, after she became well known.

BRAZEAL: Well, they hung her out to dry.

Q: Yes, yes, they did. Maybe we'll get to that.

BRAZEAL: But, anyway, Sam was the senior watch officer, April was the editor and I was the associate watch officer.

Q: That's it? That was the whole staff?

BRAZEAL: That was the team. You worked in teams, and there were other teams.

Q: Oh, I see, I see.

BRAZEAL: And so the Ops Center was a sophisticated operation. You would work shifts. There was instantaneous communication. We had an outlet for the hot phone between the United States and the USSR. I think that line did run through the Pentagon, but in any event the communications systems were impressive. There were two public lines where people could call in, but otherwise you were connecting officials through other lines.

Q: So that was a one-year period. There were daily crises, I think. Any one in particular that stands out?

BRAZEAL: During my time we had the garden variety coup or weather related disaster or plane crash and the like but not any crisis that stands out as emblematic of the time.

Q: The atmosphere, there is a high-octane atmosphere there, I think. You sit there and nothing happens and all of a sudden there are three things going on, I think.

BRAZEAL: Well, yes, it is high octane, and when you're sitting there, there are things to do, so it's not boring. It's what they call today multitasking and you learn how to write and condense reports into a few lines. You learn what's important. It's really the flow of information from the field into the department and back out. You know who to notify, who to talk to, how to reach people.

Q: Did you have cases of AMCITS (American citizens) in difficulty? Did this happen frequently?

BRAZEAL: Nothing I recall that reached the Ops Center's attention.

Q: Fine, fine. OK, well, let's move to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Colder even than New York City.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Did you live in Cambridge?

BRAZEAL: I did. A friend had gotten me an apartment right on Harvard Square. I went there and it was an unsecured building. The market in Cambridge is not good for renters, because there are so many students that landlords don't feel they need to clean the apartment before the next tenant comes. They don't have to paint, they don't have to maintain the space. Somebody had been murdered in the building the year before, so I said to myself, I don't think I want to stay. I found a clean room with bath and a little cooking area in a private home.

And, in fact, I should have my Ph.D. now if I were in social work and could have written about the family that let the room, because it was a very dysfunctional family and they would have arguments. One night, I was coming home late and the son was running up the middle of the street with a knife in his hand and I thought, oh, well, he has murdered everybody. But he hadn't.

I stopped and asked what was happening of course. He said that an alarm was going off at some building on the next street over and he was going to see what it was. The family was interesting to observe.

Q: In that same year, I was driving a taxi in Harvard Square, myself. I probably took you somewhere.

BRAZEAL: I could not afford taxis, so I don't think so. I took the subway and walked, and I had a little VW Beetle.

Q: I did, too. OK, so now you were in the Kennedy School, which can be many things. It can be domestic policy, it can be foreign policy. What was it to you?

BRAZEAL: It was a mixture of domestic and foreign and it was an interesting year. Again, it was interesting to get back to academia. I felt Harvard, to some extent, was living off of its reputation and, therefore, I didn't feel connected to the university.

I thought the John F. Kennedy School was different, had a little different atmosphere, but Harvard, in general, I wasn't that impressed with.

Q: Now, you had spoken about your need to be back in the States and experiencing, or be witnessing, the things that the United States was going through. This particular period, in Boston, not to dwell on this, but I remember it as a time when there was great racial tension in Boston. Did you feel that you had fulfilled your need to come back and see what was happening in the United States?

BRAZEAL: I did. I did feel that, because certainly in the academic setting you could talk about many of those issues in a less-threatening way than you could if you were confronting people. I should back up. I have to back up, actually, to my college years, because I did participate in two civil rights demonstrations.

I learned that I was not particularly nonviolent, because I was picketing in front of Rich's Department Store at that time. Rich's was a major department store in Atlanta. While I was picketing, this little old white lady tried to push me in front of a bus. I, of course, resisted the push and didn't get run over by the bus. I thought to myself that I may not be nonviolent. I didn't do anything to the elderly white woman, but I decided that I would have to defend myself if challenged, and, therefore, my respect for those who really were nonviolent and received beatings went up in my estimation. My respect for them went up quite high.

Q: Not everybody's been pushed in front of a bus.

BRAZEAL: Well, true. But I also decided not to get arrested, because, again, with my belief in the importance of education, I didn't want to interrupt my education by getting arrested or having a police record, which probably, in hindsight, was a good thing or I wouldn't have gotten into the Foreign Service, no doubt. But, in any event, I attended rallies. I was at the March on Washington, for example.

Q: This was the 1960 or the 1962 March?

BRAZEAL: The Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream March on Washington".

Q: The Martin Luther King. Yes, so you witnessed that.

BRAZEAL: I did.

Q: Let's talk about that for a second. I attended a school where I heard him speak, and very inspiring. I actually have a tape recording of what he said that day, '67. So you were at that historic event.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Tell me about what that meant to you.

BRAZEAL: Well, that was the summer I had been at this camp in Puerto Rico, and I came back to New York and I was staying with my aunt, my father's sister, in New York. I wanted to go, and I finally got permission from my parents that I could go to the March on Washington, and also approval from my aunt. But the only transportation I could get at that point was on a Jewish school bus, operated by the Hasidic Jews, with the big hats, black hats, and the beards. And the bus had a governor on its engine. We could only go about 50 miles an hour, and as we counted all the other buses passing us on the highway, we wondered if we'd ever reach Washington in time.

I went with a couple of people who had been at camp with me in Puerto Rico -- a Puerto Rican young man and another black woman --so we were sort of a group. We finally did reach Washington. We situated ourselves near the steps to the Lincoln monument but back under trees since it was hot that day; we weren't too far from the State Department, and we were to the side and just listening to the speeches, enjoying the atmosphere, which was a very positive, powerful atmosphere. Everybody there had chosen to be there. Blacks and whites were together, not wanting anything to happen. People were very polite to each other. If you bumped into someone, you'd say, I'm sorry.

And, actually, that was my first exposure to the State Department, because after the March, we were walking back to the buses and we came to the State Department C Street entrance. I had to go to the bathroom so we asked the State Department guards if we could come in and use the bathroom, and they let us do so. This visit was my first exposure to the State Department. Maybe this exposure had an influence on me later. I don't know, but I thought it was awfully nice of the guards to allow me entrance

Q: It was, in historical hindsight, an enormous event. There were a lot of people. It was exciting, but did you have a sense on that day of what this was going to become in American history? Is that a fair question?

BRAZEAL: It is. I think, yes, you knew that it was an irresistible statement by the body politic, ordinary citizens in America, demanding a change. And you could see that there would have to be a response from the politicians, but I expected, I think, more action by our leaders than was generated. I've often argued that we never really attained integration in America, so we don't know whether it works or not.

We certainly haven't gotten as far as Martin Luther King would have wished in the changes that we have today. You can just look at the Jena Six issue in Louisiana right now to see that blacks and whites, the color issue in America, as much as people would

like to dilute it and ignore it and put it in the rubbish bin of history, that it's unsettled business and it's something that we still have to grapple with as a country. And, of course, Katrina just highlighted the race issue in bold relief not only in America, but in the world.

I'm not sure the right lessons have been drawn yet by the politicians in terms of what needs to be done. The March on Washington attracted so many people that you knew it had to result in some kind of change.

Q: OK, let's fast forward to Cambridge, a very troubled period. I think busing was a big issue at that time. I don't know if that was an item of conversation in Harvard Square. I don't know. You found that Harvard to some extent was living on its reputation.

BRAZEAL: Still is, as far as I can tell.

Q: Yes, I think so. Not a lot to say to that. What did you do that year?

BRAZEAL: I really hunkered down and studied. I didn't really participate in public events. I didn't know that many people in that area to get involved in any local organizations, per se. I had one friend from college who was from Boston, and we would talk about the issues, but it wasn't as if we were going to meetings or joining any groups. I just did the schoolwork and then I left.

Q: So the value of education you've stated a number of times as a major theme. What did this program give you, in terms of training, preparation for the future assignments that you were going to have?

BRAZEAL: The JFK School gave me a way of analyzing issues, updating myself on academic thinking, and time enough away from the Foreign Service to conclude that I really wanted to remain in the Foreign Service, and this was an important conclusion, I think, for me.

Q: Time away in the sense that you missed it?

BRAZEAL: The work, I missed the Foreign Service work. In talking to people in other fields, I saw that they weren't as challenged or they weren't as called on to use all of their mental faculties as I was in the FS. They were less curious about the world and more focused on where they were in the U.S. This contrast made me conclude that I was better suited for the Foreign Service.

Q: So you went to Harvard not entirely convinced that you would go back.

BRAZEAL: No, I planned to go back, because I made a commitment to go back to the Secretariat. I would go back, but I might have then resigned at some point and gone in another direction.

Q: OK, so you went back and there was a job waiting for you on the line, is that right? Somewhat similar in the adrenaline factor to the Ops Center, I think, but closer to the Secretariat, I guess.

BRAZEAL: Well, working on the line you travel with the Secretary of State. If you think of the Ops Center as the flow of information from the field to Washington and back out, the Secretariat is the flow of paper inside the building up and then back down, plus trips. So you got to see a lot of information and to travel.

Q: How often did you travel, and where did you go?

BRAZEAL: Well, for example, I traveled with Secretary Rogers, and went to Australia and some of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. I traveled with Kissinger when he became secretary on some of the Middle East shuttles.

Q: You were on those? I had a friend doing that and I know that was extremely hard work. What were you doing when you were with Kissinger?

BRAZEAL: Well, you were sort of the mobile communication node, if you will. You had briefcases full of cables. You worked with the embassies to ensure that they couldn't send out anything from the official delegation unless they had certain signatures, yours being the key one, because otherwise erroneous or confusing reports could be sent. So you had to interface with the embassies, you had to work with the delegations, the U.S. delegations that were there, and of course with the Secretary.

Kissinger didn't really like strange faces around him, so you tended to try to blend in if he came along, until he got to know you.

Q: Did he get to know you? I mean, were you with him a number of times?

BRAZEAL: I think he got to know me. For example, I went on a trip to Atlanta, Georgia with him. He was speaking at an international meeting and I was part of the Secretariat team. He went to Spelman College for a reception and my mother worked at Spelman College. She was the Alumni Secretary at Spelman. I was working in the office we had set up at the hotel, so I was very late arriving at the reception. I finally arrived and my mother took me by the arm, went over to Secretary Kissinger, who was talking to someone else, grabbed his arm, pulled on it and said, "This is my daughter, who works for you."

He said, "Ah, yes, your mother was just chastising me that you were not at the reception." So, I knew he identified who I was at that point. That incident was very funny. I also traveled with Secretary of the Treasury Blumenthal to the Middle East.

Q: Did you feel you met your stride with this? Some people find this lifestyle disruptive. Did you?

BRAZEAL: I enjoyed it. I did not find it disruptive.

Q: You enjoyed it, and it was the right time in life to be discovering – it kind of reminds me of some of your comments about your internships, seeing the protocol and being involved. Now, at a professional level, you were very much involved and making it happen right.

BRAZEAL: You might have helped make a trip successful but the most important and enjoyable aspect of Secretariat work was in shaping the substance of what the papers contained and making sure that they were coordinated, either interagency or within the Department, so that the Principal, the Secretary or whoever else, wasn't going to be getting bad information or foreshortened options because some substantive aspect had not been coordinated. So the substance of the work I found fascinating, plus, of course, working with people. For example, I tried to give drafting officers an authentic timeframe for when papers were needed, not the imperious, "We need them by X time or else," approach used by some colleagues.

Q: So you were with the conduit that made it possible for people to do their work.

BRAZEAL: Yes, yes.

Q: Now, they say that the Ops Center and the line enhance rapid career development. Did it do that for you?

BRAZEAL: I think those two assignments put me on a good trajectory. I should stress, however, that in keeping with my interests in domestic issues, I stayed in Washington assignments for eight years. At that time eight years was the limit for staying in the U.S. so I had to go overseas at that point.

I went on an overseas assignment, and then I came back and stayed in Washington for six years, because the eight year limit had been lowered to six years. So my pattern was established of staying in the U.S. for the maximum time allowed. After the Ops Center and the Secretariat assignments among other positions, in no particular order I also had training at the Foreign Service Institute, served as the desk officer for Paraguay-Uruguay, and I also was detailed to the Treasury Department to help it establish a secretariat operation.

Q: So, at some point, you had to go somewhere, and where was that?

BRAZEAL: The U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

Q: Change of pace, to say the least.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Did you have a year of Japanese before?

BRAZEAL: No, I did not have any Japanese language training. I was assigned to a new non-language designated position in the economic section as a trade officer, so I went to Tokyo not having really heard a lot of spoken Japanese. I remember thinking, when I got to Tokyo and heard Japanese, that it sounded just like one long word. In the beginning I couldn't distinguish really where each word ended and the next began. I did take early morning Japanese classes at the Embassy, which helped, until I got so busy.

Q: So the year would have been late '70s, I guess.

BRAZEAL: Yes, this was '79 to '82.

Q: And the issues, we weren't yet into the period when Americans were very suspicious of Japanese imports. We weren't yet at that point, I think.

BRAZEAL: We were there, because during this period we put in place the voluntary export restraints on Japanese automobiles, and so we were there. I'll tell this story and then we'll stop, but I was in a new position. Being new, the position had no job description, no portfolio really, so what was I to do?

My boss was not at all specific about what he wanted me to do; by the way, I'm still friends with him. Embassy Tokyo had a joint economic-commercial section at the time, so I thought to myself, it would not be nice to expropriate the portfolio of a colleague, so I talked to all of my colleagues and asked them, if they had more time, what issues might they cover, what issues they felt needed more attention but they were unable to cover.

And then, after listening to them, I came up with a list of issues I thought important enough to incorporate into my portfolio.

Q: So they created this position without knowing what it was going to be?

BRAZEAL: Well, when I got there, there was no job description.

Q: They just wanted another person. They didn't really know what for?

BRAZEAL: They might have had some things in mind, but no one bothered to share their thoughts with me.

Q: OK.

BRAZEAL: In fact, for example, because it was a joint section, I also had a boss on the commercial side, who I did not respect at all. He was a male chauvinist, and I didn't like the way he treated his wife in public. He controlled the list of which positions received newspapers.

Q: Oh, God.

BRAZEAL: I wanted to get an English language local newspaper, so I went to him and I said, "I would like to get a newspaper," and he said, "You'll get exactly what your predecessor got," which meant I'd get nothing, since I had no predecessor.

I went to my office and I thought, well, now, how am I going to deal with this guy because obviously he's going to be around? My solution to the newspaper issue was to arrive at the office before he arrived and to take his newspaper from his cubicle, for the entire three years that I was there.

Some of the other women officers in our section wound up in shouting matches with him, but I never did that, because I just tried to work around him.

Q: I think the art of doing that might be the subject of our next conversation: How do you deal with a contentious person productively? That's a pretty fascinating topic, and to the extent that this is lessons learned, maybe we should dwell on that next time.

So this is Dan Whitman.

Q: Ambassador Brazeal, this is Dan Whitman interviewing you. Its October 6th. And in our second interview, the last one, we had gotten you as far as Tokyo, in the economic section, and you were talking about some of the challenges you faced, both internally in dealing with your colleagues, and also in terms of some of the issues, bilateral issues between Japan and the U.S. Could we take up at that point?

BRAZEAL: Sure. I was saying, I arrived in Tokyo to fill a new economic officer position that didn't have a job description. And I didn't really get any guidance from the economic counselor or the commercial counselor, per se, and I decided that I would talk to my colleagues and find out from them what issues they thought were un-covered, what issues they hadn't had time to dedicate to covering and sort of carved out and created my own job description.

I covered automobile trade; I covered Japan's east-west trade with the USSR, China and other communist countries. I also handled some aviation trade issues. By the end of my tour, I had covered almost every economic area, but without having antagonized my colleagues. You can't snatch another officer's portfolio and work in harmony.

I also covered some sectors on the commercial side. Harkening back to the supervisor in the commercial section who I thought was a male chauvinist, he assigned me to the textile sector "because women sew", and U.S. frozen bull semen exports to Japan, because he thought the issue would embarrass me. I found the bull semen sector absolutely interesting, because it was a new topic for me and I had not known the U.S. even exported such products.

Q: In creating a position where there had been no job description, this can't be easy. And you mentioned the perils of snatching a portfolio from someone else. How did you survive this? How did you make a portfolio without treading on the toes of others?

BRAZEAL: Well, I took time to talk to my colleagues. I told them I wasn't trying to take issues away from them, but I was in this new position, so what did they think this position should cover? I didn't believe that I should sit and do nothing. I didn't believe I should go and whine to my supervisors that they weren't telling me what to do. I figured I should find out how to be productive on my own. I enjoyed the challenge. Throughout my career, I have been asked to take several new positions and have enjoyed the creativity that comes from uncharted territory.

I remember, too, educating some of my military colleagues in the embassy on gender matters. I covered east-west trade, and they wanted to host a dinner on this topic; they telephoned me to give them names of some of my contacts to invite. But then they said, "Well, I'm sorry you can't be invited, because the dinner is stag." I decided to show I was irritated with them, so I said, "Stag? Stag means no spouse. Stag doesn't mean no women, and if you think you're going to get another contact name from me, forget it" and I hung up the phone.

About 10 minutes later my phone rang and they said, "You are invited to this dinner." And I said, "Oh, thank you very much. I'd be delighted to be there." But I just couldn't believe that they thought stag meant no women. This was maybe 1981?

I'm friends with many of my peers from that period. We had a great group of officers in Tokyo, and one of them recently reminded me that I had a sign on my desk – I had forgotten about it completely – that said "No quarter asked, no quarter given." And I must have had it for a reason. I can't quite remember the reason, but the sign was probably meant to alert colleagues to treat me the same as their male colleagues. There was one officer, for example, who would ask me about the auto industry and then he would go off to have lunch with his contact at the French Embassy to tell that contact about the U.S.-Japan auto issue. Once I wised up, I stopped briefing my colleague and suggested that either I get invited to their lunch or he could read my cables, if he wanted to be up-to-date.

I decided at that time that you have to take care to analyze people and their personalities to get things done. I remember calling one officer in another section, the management section, because I needed a decision. I sat and thought about what approach to take with him. I called him and said, "I need this specific decision from you because you have a command kind of personality." He really appreciated my approach. Maybe I was over-complimenting him. I don't know, but he did like to make decisions. And, of course, I got the decision I wanted, which was a good thing.

Q: Was that a lucky guess, that you just tripped this wire, or you knew that this would be the effective way to deal with him?

BRAZEAL: I knew my approach would be effective. I sat for about two minutes and figured out how to approach him, how I thought I should approach him, because I had to take my own personality into account vis-à-vis how we interacted, his personality and how he liked to be seen, and then figure out how to get what I wanted.

Q: At that time, of your professional diplomatic skills, what percentage of them were devoted to dealing with your own American colleagues versus dealing with what you were supposed to be doing, which was dealing with the Japanese? What percentage?

BRAZEAL: Oh, I'd say maybe 10 percent on the Americans and 90 on the Japanese. The Japanese appreciate several things – one trait is perseverance. I remember going with a Foreign Service National (FSN) colleague to see a gentleman who was one of my contacts on east-west trade issues. Maybe for the first 12 to 14 visits to this contact's office, he really wasn't saying very much. He would receive me, but he didn't really say very much. And then, on my next visit, the dam opened and he became a very good interpreter for me of the kinds of trade decisions that were being made by Japan.

Q: You attribute this to perseverance. You passed the test of just going and going and going.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and not being turned off. We'd sit and have a cup of tea, talk about other things. He wouldn't necessarily answer my questions. He wasn't rude, but he wasn't giving anything away.

Q: Do you think he did this consciously and purposely?

BRAZEAL: I don't know. I thought eventually he would come around, because the Japanese also liked to get to know you as a person, first, before they really open up. This trait was something you should understand, and also understand how to use silence. Americans tend to jump into any vacuum and talk. I can sit and be silent with the best of the Japanese.

Q: How did you learn this? You learned that the Japanese culture favors perseverance, that there's a certain period necessary to get to know you before information flows and that silence can be useful. FSI did not teach you this, correct?

BRAZEAL: No, no. I learned it by being there and being curious and asking questions.

Q: How long did it take you to decipher this coded behavior?

BRAZEAL: Not very long, but that's not to brag. That's simply to say that if you look at other people as people, they're people as well, then ask what makes them tick? Eventually I got to know some Japanese extremely well, to the point that I could make a joke and they might even laugh, but they had these very strict rules of protocol, in part because it was such a crowded, small piece of land that they all lived on, that without those rules, chaos would reign, so to speak. And so once you appreciated this, and then learned local

habits you could figure out why some things happened. I would learn them in various ways. I would sit up front with the Embassy drivers, for example, if they took me somewhere, and talk to the drivers, ask them about life. Particularly if you ask people about death and funerals, you learn a lot about a culture. How many days after the death do you go back to the cemetery, etc?

And it comes up naturally. You don't have to force it. There are days in Japan when people go to the cemetery and clean the graves and talk to ancestors. So you can ask questions.

During my assignment, I was the only FSO to give a party for the Embassy drivers. I was in the economic section, and I'll never forget. I was almost speechless, because they brought me flowers, and I couldn't really understand why, but they said no FSO had ever done this for them before. And I was pleased, but also slightly embarrassed, because my colleagues kept working in their offices. A few came out to attend the party, because it was just the economic section, but some just walked by and went about their ordinary business.

Now, I held the party because we had had a back-to-back series of economic delegations from Washington and had put quite a strain on the motor pool but they had come through for us, and I just thought that was fabulous. So I thought, come on up to the office, we'll have some cake and punch and whatever, and they brought me flowers instead. I mean, the motor pool persons came, but it was just shocking to me that no one ever thought to host the drivers. Too many people see drivers and other support staff as invisible and ignore them.

So you talk to people and you find out about the local way of living. One charming story -- I had met an ordinary Japanese gentleman – I like to meet ordinary people, as well, everywhere I go. And the Japanese gentleman had asked me to correct his English. In his business, he wrote letters in English. As a friend, I began to correct his written English, and later he invited me to meet his family.

I was married at the time. My husband and I went to his rural village. We were the first foreigners, apparently, ever to visit this little village. There was a semi-famous dancing troupe from the next village. The dance group came over, and it was just a fabulous weekend. The family were farmers.

I got up one night to go to the bathroom. Japanese have slippers that you use in the house and other slippers you use just in the bathroom area. I wasn’t fully awake and hadn't turned the light on so I kicked something; I opened my eyes, turned the light on, and a bathroom slipper had gone down the toilet hole in the floor. I thought, oh, my God, what shall I do? What shall I do? And I'm afraid I kicked the other slipper down the hole and hoped, maybe they'll think they forgot to put out their bath slippers….

Q: Time for the confession of past...

BRAZEAL: Yes, past sins. But we had a wonderful visit, just two ordinary people out in the countryside. And they, no doubt, thought we were very strange, and particularly me, because I think I was the tallest Western woman in the country at the time, and I wore heels, also, at that point, so I was quite tall.

Q: When you were at the village – I spent a couple nights in one of these inns, where everything is – they tell you what to do. They tell you, "You will now take a bath." When I said, "I'm going into town," they said, "No, you're not, its dinnertime."

Did you have this socialization process that weekend? Did they instruct you all the way through?

BRAZEAL: They did. The other thing I kept doing, unconsciously of course, was to automatically pull the plug in the bathtub after I had my soak; the family would let me take the first bath and I'd forget that the tub was only for soaking and everyone used the same water. You would bathe outside the tub. I mean, we were only there a couple of nights, so it was a learning experience for me. But, yes, there was a regimen to follow. I had learned about regimens earlier by going around Tokyo with Japanese friends who wanted to take me to different shrines. I thought that in Japan even “fun” was regimented. I'd say, "I'm tired. I'd like to go home now." My Japanese friends would respond, "No, we have two more shrines to visit." It was like everything had to be planned, and it was hard to be spontaneous.

Q: Did this weekend take place early in your tour, mid-tour? Early enough so that it really fed your understanding of the culture for a great amount of your tour?

BRAZEAL: I made a point about socializing with Japanese as much as possible and these experiences took place early enough in my tour to expand my understanding of the country.

Q: So it was '79 to '82. It was purely economics and commercial.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: You created a position, basically. And you started out, it was a rough ride at the beginning, because there was no job description. There were some people who it appears didn't appreciate your presence or were trying to give you a hard time or something. What's your sense of the progress that you made in those three years?

BRAZEAL: Oh, my Tokyo tour was great. I didn’t take the initial parts as a hard time. It was just simply a challenge. It was just something to go through. I mean, it wasn't negative.

Q: What do you feel that you learned during those three years, and what do you feel you accomplished for the bilateral relationship.

BRAZEAL: Well, I think with the Japanese, we moved from complaining about one particular product to talking to them about entire sectors and we also began to talk to them about structure adjustment issues. For automobiles, of course, the voluntary restraint agreement was negotiated.

I think on the economic side, we were making progress in terms of levels of sophistication to understand that you can't solve economic problems writ large by negotiating product by product. You have to talk sector by sector, or especially systemically.

Q: The sort of commonplace in the U.S. at that time was that the Japanese were being unfair. They were dumping the market or they were providing a cheaper product in the U.S., whereas they were putting tariffs against U.S. products going in. I have no idea if that was true. That was the commonplace.

Did anybody make the argument, "We're able to make good automobiles more effectively and more cheaply, why should we be penalized?" Did they make that argument?

BRAZEAL: You mean the Japanese?

Q: Yes.

BRAZEAL: No, initially they didn't, that I recall. If you recall, the Japanese were making smaller more fuel efficient cars, but Americans weren't buying them in large numbers, until the first oil crisis, where we had long lines in this country for gasoline; at that point Americans saw the attraction of a smaller, more fuel-efficient car. The Japanese had the product and the inventory so sales really increased. It was really just luck for them. I don't think the Japanese could plan that Middle East oil crisis in that way. They really were struggling to expand market share in the U.S. until the first oil crisis, at which point people bought their cars and knew they were good.

I'd always believed we made a mistake as a government on the voluntary restraint agreement (VRA), because, from my point of view, we should have extracted an agreement from the U.S. auto industry that it would use the timeframe of the VRA to make changes and become competitive. You will recall that the U.S. auto industry, from my point of view, pocketed the protection they got from the VRA and kept doing business the same way as before. We can see that, in my humble opinion – I haven't worked on automobiles since I left Japan – that as an industry, collectively, the U.S. auto industry had not improved substantially. Some makers were using the same skeleton, if you will, of a car and putting different models on the outside, but they weren't really upgrading the frames and introducing new technology.

And in 2007 they still haven't done enough in my view; some makers shifted back toward larger, gas-guzzling vehicles, when I think as an industry they could have educated Americans on the utility of fuel efficient smaller cars.

Q: This is kind of outside the subject of you and your career, but the Big Three are having a terrible time now, and the layoffs and strikes and losing money. How could the U.S. industry have been so short sighted, even after the oil crunch, to not retool? How could that have happened?

BRAZEAL: It's hard for me to imagine. I think it's partly hubris and they really didn't think of the competition that was coming, from the Japanese and even other countries. You could see, even back in '71, when we were negotiating the VRA – I thought you could see the handwriting on the wall that the global industry was coming together, buying each other out. They were buying suppliers, the vertical chain to get the supplies. So you could see a consolidation happening and it just depended on where you wanted to be in that process.

I don't know why they weren't willing to do retool and become competitive, and even now, with the Congress pressing for what I would consider fairly modest fuel-efficiency standards, they're in opposition. And, this time, Toyota has joined them in opposition, partly because Toyota, I think, wants to continue to build large trucks to compete against our companies and drive us out. And Toyota is already exceeding the standards in their passenger vehicle fleet that they're fighting against. So its irony on top of irony and the consumer suffers.

Q: Some car manufacturers, I guess exceptional ones, have said we want more legislation, we want a level playing field that will oblige us, because we want our competitors – otherwise it make no sense for us to do this. Do you think this is catching hold in the U.S. car industry?

BRAZEAL: I don't think so, necessarily, not right now. I wish there was industry support for anti-pollution standards, but even the standards that are being proposed, the Japanese can meet now anyway, for their passenger fleet. It's the trucks still outside the standards. But the industry says they make what Americans want, but what Americans want can be influenced by what's made available and it's an educative process.

Q: How did your three years in Tokyo change your own perceptions about what you're seeing right now? You're following this as part of your professional portfolio, and you now see in some perspective some mistakes made in Detroit or by the U.S. government. What sort of understanding did you gain from actually being in Japan?

BRAZEAL: Well, I do support what's generally considered free-market economics and also the global trading system. And I do agree that it's very difficult for governments to pick winners and losers and ours, by and large, shouldn't try to do that, because we're really not very good at it. But, that said, if you are going to give protection to an industry, because we've done it for steel, we've done it for automobiles, we've done it for other products as well, albeit it for shorter durations, then, to me, as a government, we should extract something from that American industry that would make it, or press it, to take steps to become competitive.

In the steel industry, you can see we've lost the huge steelmaking plants, but what we have gained are niche steelmaking companies where we are still very competitive; people did retool and those who are in business now are much more competitive, even internationally, than they would have been, I hope, had no protection been given.

I think you have to acknowledge some role for government that isn't too intrusive, but governments usually step in with protection for any number of reasons, most of them political and not economic. For example, you can't freeze job numbers. You can't demand that jobs stay in this country, as a government. It would just be very difficult.

So I wonder now where we are going with the Doha round not having succeeded and people in Congress criticizing more free trade or open trade. Some people add "fair trade," but I don't know what that means; I've never seen an even playing field in my life.

Q: You're referring to the proper treatment of workers in other countries? Is that what you mean by fair trade?

BRAZEAL: Yes, in part.

Q: And paying them more.

BRAZEAL: Well, yes, but it's also, I think, paternalistic to tell other countries that they can't have children working, when local children might be by themselves completely and would starve without a job. You have to start where countries are, and it's very difficult to demand that they do this, that and the other thing when their entire culture doesn't include your position as a reference point. I do not mean to say you can't try, and you can certainly bring in civil society to work with children to get them in school, as opposed to working. But it seems to me you can't just simply ignore the fact that without working these children would be dead.

Q: They say that our economy, which used to be an economy of manufacturing, is now an economy of information and services. Is that going to serve us well as things become more competitive?

BRAZEAL: I hope so. I wish I had a crystal ball and knew what direction we were going, but it seems to me that the information/service economy certainly can serve, and is serving, us well but we need, again, nation-wide programs to retrain our workers who are losing jobs in the traditional industries. We should train them to fill jobs that our domestic companies say they will need in the future. I think that incentives can be given in our tax codes or other federal regulations for retraining labor, as well as – I don't call it government interference in the economy so much as I think we need to protect the environment. And, to do that, you're going to create new industries from simply passing laws that require fewer emissions or higher standards or different fuels. I think we should move away from fossil fuels, completely, and in my view we have about a 10-year window to do this, or we're going to be really in a crunch.

I don't know who should run around with their hair on fire making all these points. I just am amazed every day that such economic issues aren't a topic of conversation. Any urgency about such topics seems damped down; even businesses aren't coming out in a way that I can see, as an ordinary citizen, to urge changes that they should see by now are going to be needed.

Q: The change in a very large state like California, is that a drop in the bucket? Is that going to really change the equation? I believe they're putting their own emissions standards, regardless of what the federal standards are. Will this put somebody's hair on fire?

BRAZEAL: California's large market and California's advanced standards are certainly going to make California more competitive, vis-à-vis other states, and even internationally. I think other states might be looking to replicate what California is doing; we might see a movement state-by-state, as opposed to national standards from the federal government, which seems to be allergic to enforcing the laws we have, as well as putting others in place.

Q: Well, we've gotten way astray of the topic, which is you.

BRAZEAL: But thank you for that.

Q: The topic is you.

BRAZEAL: Thank you for allowing me to ventilate.

Q: It's a very important message, especially from someone who's worked at this and who is not studying it from afar, but it was your daily life, for three years, in Tokyo, at a time when Japan was a major, major competitor, and we were afraid of Japan, I think. I don't know if we still are.

BRAZEAL: No, I don't think we are afraid of Japan economically. When I was in Japan and even working on U.S.-Japan trade issues from Washington, the literature was all about Japan is Number One. When I was in Japan it was an interesting time because there were younger Japanese who thought they had created all they saw economically on their own; they didn't have the history and the comprehension that some of the older Japanese had vis-à-vis the American role after World War II with helping their recovery and even helping shape their constitution. And so many younger Japanese would be thinking, why can't they be number one? Why can't they win?

Younger Japanese also were changing physically during the time I worked on bilateral issues. For example, with the inroads of some of the American food habits, McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken and other things, the Japanese became taller, wider and bigger. I predicted they'd have to rebuild everything, their school desks, theater seats, restaurant seats, and the like. Kids couldn't sit at the traditional desks, because they were larger; I

would see young men walking down the street who were my height (6’1”), and that was simply not expected historically.

Q: Another challenge. You said that some of the younger Japanese felt that they had done it on their own and didn't appreciate the role of history. Are you referring to the U.S. occupation?

BRAZEAL: Well, yes, but especially the fact that we were relatively benign occupiers and really helped Japan economically. The younger generation would look at this fabulous city of Tokyo, and think that they built it themselves, so they were missing appreciation of the past and present U.S.-Japan partnership.

Q: Do you think there's a lack of a sense of history of the past 50 years or a century, as is sometimes said for Europe?

BRAZEAL: Well, there certainly is selective memory in Japan among some groups. For example, when I was in Tokyo there were big discussions about their schoolbooks, what was in them, specifically in terms of Japan’s behavior in World War II in Korea and in China.

Q: Manchuria.

BRAZEAL: Manchuria. So there was a lot of discussion and you could see these national waves of angst and questioning, but also waves of growing confidence. But I learned all of this by talking to the Japanese. I would tell my Japanese friends, well, if you're afraid of yourselves, I mean, if you're afraid that if you start marching down a certain road it's very difficult to deflect you, then I'm afraid too, because you know yourselves better than I know you. So let's have a discussion. Where would this lead?

Q: So how do you feel that the Japanese reacted to your interactions with them? How do you feel that you may have changed them, or their perceptions?

BRAZEAL: With my Japanese friends we could be open with one another. It's hard to say how Japanese in general viewed me. There were Japanese interested in African Americans -- an African American--Japanese Friendship Association -- and I would attend their meetings. They definitely operated off of American stereotypes about black people that they would get from movies and news stories about crime and things like that.

In general, Japanese did not know black Americans; there were some who were curious and many who were not. It was easy for me in Japan because I was an official U.S. diplomat and Japanese society reacts to a person based on the title on your name card. So you give your card, and your title determines how they first will react to you -- not that you are a man or a woman or black or not black or whatever. This is what your card says, so this is how they respond to you. I didn't feel I had any trouble, really, in Japan from the Japanese.

Q: OK. I was also curious about you were saying about how you talked with Japanese, particularly younger Japanese, saying, if you're afraid of where you're going, I'm afraid. The bilateral relationship and Japanese perceptions of themselves, do you feel that your interactions left an effect?

BRAZEAL: I would like to think so, but it's hard to say. I frequently tell younger officers that if you work in the political or the economic side of our profession you have to be comfortable with what I call “ambiguity”. Ambiguity means that you might work on an issue but you would not be present to see the results. You were in a country working on some issues for several years planting seeds, but you may never see the results of a negotiation or even the resolution of an issue.

If you're comfortable with ambiguity, then I suggest the officer consider working on the economic or the political side of diplomacy. So no, I don't know what effect I had. I would hope that it was positive, but I can't say for sure.

Q: Let's get all the juice out of these three years. During that period, what would you say were the events that took place that you were involved with? Were there summits, were there negotiations? What were some of the highlights in terms of things that happened during your three years?

BRAZEAL: Well, those three years, I think the automobile issue was the dominant one. Subtext might be aviation negotiations, because we always wanted more slots at Narita Airport, but the automobile – I went on from this assignment to really work on Japan trade issues for the entire decade of the '80s and left Japan again in 1990. So, in a sense, coming at the beginning of that decade of the '80s, it was more – I guess I would say less of a consciousness in Japan of the "we did it ourselves, we're number one" that I got when I went back or worked in the mid '80s, going toward the end of the decade.

When I first arrived, it would be, "Oh, you speak a few words of Japanese. It's such a difficult language, isn't it? And thank you for learning these few words." Sort of at the tail end of the '80s, it was more, "You've been here two years, why don't you speak Japanese?" kind of thing. And that's not to me personally, that's just to anybody who had been there.

So you could observe sort of the confidence growing during that decade, to expect people to speak Japanese as opposed to English, to learn what they and their culture could offer, as opposed to not. But I sometimes thought I had a slight edge on my colleagues who spoke a lot of Japanese, knew the Japanese culture extremely well, but they wanted to become Japanese. And you cannot become Japanese, and I never wanted to become Japanese, so I was comfortable in not becoming Japanese. But those who really spoke fluent Japanese and understood the culture, really wanted to become Japanese, and they got very frustrated because they couldn't become Japanese. They were not ever going to be accepted as Japanese, and there you have it. It didn't bother me.

Q: Do you think that they were generally less effective, as representatives of the U.S., in plunging so deeply into the other culture?

BRAZEAL: No, no, but I think they might have been less willing to be a little hard-nosed at times.

Q: Well, Japanese trade issues throughout the '80s, '82 you left Tokyo and you came to D.C. to work on these issues?

BRAZEAL: Well, I came back to D.C. to work in the Economic Bureau, actually, in the Office of Development Finance. I worked on issues concerning how the U.S. would vote on IMF (International Monetary Fund) programs or World Bank loans. I worked primarily with Treasury and A.I.D. I was in that office for about two years. I sought a position in this office because the Director, Adrian Basora, was someone I wanted to work for, someone who I thought could educate me about particular economic issues as well as about leadership/management skills.

The Japan Office in the State Department, however, created a new deputy slot, the deputy for economics, and I was asked to become the first incumbent in that slot. You now can see a pattern I was developing for accepting newly created positions.

Q: Yes, taking on the challenge of giving substance to a new position.

BRAZEAL: I accepted the new Deputy Director for Economics position on the Japan Desk, and the Economic Bureau agreed to let me move. I worked from Washington on U.S.-Japan trade and economic issues and then wound up going back to Japan in '87 as the Minister Counselor for Economics, the number three position in the Embassy, because I was asked by Ambassador Mike Mansfield to come back.

I thought he was a national treasure of the United States and I would have done anything he asked, so I went back to Japan. It had not necessarily been on my scope to go back, but I certainly agreed, to return.

Q: You just answered a question I was going to ask, which is whether Japan was your plan or whether it just sort of happened. Let's talk there for a little bit about Mike Mansfield. He was there for quite a while.

BRAZEAL: Yes. Both times I was assigned to Embassy Tokyo, he was Ambassador. The last year I was in Japan, Ambassador Mansfield left and Ambassador Armacost had come.

Q: In what way was Mike Mansfield a treasure?

BRAZEAL: Well, he was a national treasure if you only recite what the man accomplished in his life. He served in the Army, the Navy and the Marines. He never served in the Air Force, because it didn't exist at the time as a separate entity, but I think

that was the only reason. He served in the Senate, becoming Majority Leader. If you look at what issues he supported via legislation vis-à-vis civil rights, which of course would interest me, he was responsible for many positive results, from legislation, or from influence.

He then went to Japan as U.S. Ambassador and served for many years. The Japanese held him in complete respect, and he held them that way as well; he was able to accomplish a lot in Japan, if he asked for something. I thought he was someone to admire in terms of his life history, the paths he chose, his commitment to his wife, Maureen. Mike Mansfield was just an extraordinary human being.

Q: And he picked you out and actually asked you to return.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So you had worked closely with him in your first assignment.

BRAZEAL: Well, close enough. I was just a worker bee, as a trade officer. Perhaps, Bill Sherman, the DCM (deputy chief of mission) at the time I first went, and my bosses would talk about me to the Ambassador? Bill Sherman was another icon in the Japan Chrysanthemum Club that people would talk about. The Foreign Service needs these language "clubs" and not just for those who speak Japanese. I sometimes would asked Bill how did I get assigned to Japan the first time, because I thought it was very difficult to break into the club? He wasn't sure how I came to be in Japan. It was just an assignment, so there I was.

I did good work and I could understand the cultural context of both the U.S. and Japan and they seemed to like me. Bill Sherman and I became friends. I'm still an honorary member of the Chrysanthemum Club, if you will, around town, and certainly I think Bill Sherman and Mike Mansfield together were an enormously powerful and influential team.

Q: Was Bill Morgan there at that time by any chance? Give me a comment, if you would, about political appointees, in general. There are very mixed feelings. Mike Mansfield, I guess, would be an example of where it really works.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Do you feel that this was an exception? Would you be willing to generalize?

BRAZEAL: It is difficult to generalize. You get good people and not good people and s/he could be a political appointee or even a career person. But I think those who are successful have some traits that I would like to encourage. For example, they use their professional staff; they don't make them into the "other" or the enemy or push them away.

They take into account the advice they get from the staff so that you feel that you're a part of a team. That doesn't mean they have to take everybody's advice, but they at least seek it.

Q: That would be the case for any ambassador, perhaps.

BRAZEAL: I think so, yes.

Q: But you think it particularly marks the successful political ambassadors.

BRAZEAL: I do, because I think some political ambassadors or some political appointees—be they ambassadors or here in Washington—see the professionals as hostile to them, and that isn't the case. I believe we all want to see them succeed because we all want our foreign policy and our country to be successful. When you take the view that the staff is hostile, it overly complicates the lives of everybody and you may or may not have as easy a time as you could have if you went in embracing people and pulling them into what you would like to see accomplished.

Q: I hope someone will read this and take note. So you're now in EB, the Economic Bureau..

BRAZEAL: I'm now in EB.

Q: Where you stayed until you returned, I forget – '87?

BRAZEAL: I was in EB. from about '81, '82, '83. I went to the Japan desk I think in '83, and I stayed there until I went to Tokyo in '87.

Q: Wow, so that's quite a stint working on bilateral issues. That's a decade or more.

BRAZEAL: Yes, basically a decade on U.S.-Japan issues. But back to EB., I enjoyed that assignment. As I mentioned I had a boss, Adrian Basora, who was excellent. I felt, one, I could learn something from him and, two, he was an equal opportunity employer, if you will. I had a lot of fun in that Development Finance because I relearned the interagency process.

In EB I worked with people at Treasury, I worked with people in AID. If we wanted to move an issue, then we would all agree that I would run to my boss and say, "Treasury's really interested in this issue, we have to make decisions about it." And my colleague at Treasury would run and say, "State Department's interested in this issue. We have to make decisions about it." And in this way you could get issues moving up the decision-making chain. It was fun to learn how to maneuver bureaucratically.

I can’t lie. I know as a diplomat, you are supposed to be able to lie, but I never could. This fact made for some comical situations. For example, I would stand up at my desk with my high heels, which probably made me about 6'3", I don't know, and I would tell

colleagues on the telephone that “there's high-level interest in this issue”, meaning just me, because I was tall. But at least I wasn't lying. So I was able to move issues upward in the bureaucracy.

And AID, much to my amusement, and I won't name this senior AID official, really thought I worked for AID. I would find out from my AID contacts that this senior AID official was meeting with senior officials from other countries. I would just grab my little steno pad and pen and I'd go in the meeting and sit and take notes and then leave; the AID official got to the point that he recognized my face, and he would just nod, because I think he thought I worked for AID. But I was really with State and I'd come back to my office and say, “Here's what AID said to the Japanese or to whomever"; much to the amazement of my State bosses, I would have all of this information, which wasn't always shared in detail by AID. I just found ways to make the bureaucracy work in terms of cooperation.

Q: There are a lot of jokes about diplomats who lie, sort of like the way people joke about doctors and lawyers for different reasons. If there's any truth to it, that diplomats lie, why would anybody listen to them?

BRAZEAL: Why would anybody listen to them, indeed? You don't have to tell people everything, but you can certainly answer them in an honest way. I mean, otherwise, we're all out here lying to each other.

Q: No, it really was a question.

BRAZEAL: Your statement was actually just observation.

Q: I mean these jokes must be founded on something. The British define a diplomat as a person who lies for the country. That's sort of a joke, but it's based on some reality. Why do diplomats lie, or don't they? Or is it only bad diplomats who lie?

BRAZEAL: I just know myself enough to know that it's very difficult for me to lie, partly because I might forget what I've said and not be able to be consistent. I know that you have to be trained in that kind of thing, and it wasn't worth it to me. Frankly, a diplomat cannot mislead another country about her or his country’s policies. You do not, however, have to tell another diplomat everything you know about a matter.

I can sit across the table or informally in a meeting and not answer a question fully or even not answer the question asked but answer another question, but I don't consider that lying, necessarily.

Q: OK, well, EB., the Japan desk and then back to Tokyo in '87, I think it was.

BRAZEAL: Yes. The Japan desk, it was a matter of creating the deputate, if you will, and having the economic officers working more as a team and in Washington and in the interagency to get the sector talks going and to get structural adjustment talks under way.

We worked very closely with USTR, the U.S. trade representative, Commerce, Treasury, E.B., some industry associations from time to time, a mixture of the economic side of the U.S. government.

Q: The term you just used, structural adjustment, was a very controversial one in the '80s in developing countries. They saw it as an imposition, I think, by the IMF and World Bank, and it's always a very painful thing imposed upon them. How is this applicable to the Japanese, who were a developed country?

BRAZEAL: Well, it was not an insult. I think it was seen by both sides as a maturing of the relationship to the point that you could get to talk about the structural issues. They could talk about our structural issues, as well, as opposed to something that was being imposed.

Q: What was our motive there? To create a fairer and level playing field so that we could compete with them? What was our wish in carrying this agenda?

BRAZEAL: To make sure that they were a more efficient economy, because they could be an engine for growth globally, as opposed to the U.S. having the only engine. They could burden share if you will, the responsibility for growth.

Q: It wasn't that we were in a mentor relationship, as we had been in the '40s and '50s, but it was to create an economy which would assist us in developing the world economy.

BRAZEAL: Or assist the global systems that we had spent years putting in place, to which I think we should show some allegiance and support. But it wasn't mentor-mentee. It was certainly equals, and that makes that conversation completely different. So on the desk it was a matter of working interagency to come up with positions, and frequently at that time we would have what I would call the *Rashomon* effect at work. If you've seen that movie by Kurosawa, it’s the story, as seen through different eyes of different characters in the movie of the same event.

And I would call interagency meetings the *Rashomon* effect because you'd come out and ask your principal – well, you weren't in the meeting, because your principal was in the meeting – meaning maybe an undersecretary-level meeting or something and, "Well, what happened?" And they would say, "Well, this happened," and then you'd call another agency and they'd say, "But my principal says this happened." And it was completely different. And you'd say, "Well, were they in the same meeting?"

So, frequently, you'd come out and the lower working levels would not quite – I guess would continue the internecine battles that we would be having because there was no clarity coming out of meetings at the higher levels.

Q: Is this something about American culture or about bureaucratic culture? Is it something universal?

BRAZEAL: Bureaucratic culture and universal, absolutely. Absolutely, that principals somehow need to be rude to each other or particularly maybe making a decision, it was the lower levels that would duke it out. And so you would have that happening on U.S.-Japan trade issues, frequently. And what could frustrate you was that you would have what I call new teams of people coming from particular departments, so that when the working levels can vote themselves again to hash out a position, there was a fresh team from some critical department that didn't have a history. So you'd have to educate them and say, "Well, no, we've considered this, and we discarded it because of this, or whatever." And so they'd go back to the drawing board and you'd have to spend more time educating them.

Q: Is that a weakness in the frequent changes?

BRAZEAL: No, no, that was a tactic, I'm sure.

Q: I see. Well, what do you think about the frequency of changes in position that is inherent in the diplomatic profession? I mean, people change every two, three years. There's a learning curve. Do you think this is the proper way to conduct diplomacy?

BRAZEAL: It has worked for us, as Americans, I think. At the same time, people should be aware that they might be developing a subspecialty underneath, in the pattern of their assignments. I just ran into a young officer who worked for me in Addis yesterday, and he was in Addis as his first assignment. He then went to Sweden or Finland. I forget, Finland, perhaps. And then he volunteered to go to Afghanistan and now he's looking at a position in the Philippines or in Kuala Lumpur.

But the subspecialty I suggested that he think about is a subspecialty in the economic side of terrorism, and that's something that he could carry through, depending on where he winds up, as opposed to just the pure bilateral relationship side of the assignment.

Q: So you would encourage Foreign Service officers to have a comprehensive knowledge of a specialty, even when there's geographic variation.

BRAZEAL: I think that could be helpful. I think it's just a matter of sitting down. Most people don't take the time to do that, because we're all very busy as officers in the Foreign Service, because we're understaffed, and just sit down and sort of recognize what you might know or what your assignments have brought you in terms of experience. And maybe if you like it, and hopefully you did, and then you could parlay that into something.

Q: OK, well, you're now minister counselor in the economic unit in the U.S. embassy in Tokyo, in your second tour in Tokyo, '87 to '90?

BRAZEAL: '90.

Q: Any dramatic difference between – I mean, your position was different – but the events that you witnessed, the issues, the trade issues? What was different the second time?

BRAZEAL: The second time you had books out, *Japan #1* (ph). You had that sort of attitude change that I talked about earlier on the side of the Japanese. You had the commitment, however, on both sides to the relationship and the recognition on the trade side that we shouldn't allow tensions or disagreements on the trade side to flow over into the rest of the relationship, certainly not the strategic relationship. And that was also the case in my first tour and during the time I was in Washington, so that you had a more sophisticated, higher-level interchange with each other by the end of that decade.

As I said, we had agreed to talk about sectors. We then agreed to talk about the structural changes, so we had a higher level of dialogue and that was all to the good.

Q: I think Mike Mansfield, and maybe others said that this was the most important bilateral relationship we had.

BRAZEAL: Bar none, he would say.

Q: Bar none, he would say. Now, of course, that's partly a reflection of where he sat. Do you feel this was the most important bilateral relationship? Is that a silly question, because I suppose others could argue very effectively that the U.K. (United Kingdom) or Germany or the E.U. (European Union). Did you agree with the ambassador?

BRAZEAL: I think it was a very important relationship, and I think it's difficult to say the most important here or there. I think certainly in Asia, in the Pacific at that time, it was the most important relationship. People would question that. We had the opening to China, we had the Korean peninsula. You could look at other things and question that, but I think the strength of the strategic relationship, the alliance and the strength of the Japanese economy and our economy, there were potentials there that needed to be tapped and made it important.

Q: In some developing countries, the Japanese embassy cooperated very closely with the American embassy. Sometimes, in some cases I can think of, the AID mission at the U.S. embassy would do something and the Japanese would say, "You have the expertise. We'd like to offer some assistance or some cash." Did you see this as a pattern? You were in Japan, not in the developing world.

BRAZEAL: Well, they didn't really have a USAID equivalent to ours. They didn't have a lot of people in the field who had expertise in development, or even knew about the sectors or the issues. They had people out who were more trade oriented in different countries, and so they were really looking to benefit from experience of others.

Q: Do you think this was very enlightened on their part?

BRAZEAL: I think so.

Q: This is very untypical of a country to go to another country and say, "We want to help you." Is that not very unusual?

BRAZEAL: Yes, probably so, but I think it again is evidence of the strength of the alliance and the strength of the really common mutuality of our view of what's happening in the globe. So, yes, and also, I should point out as an economic officer, and maybe going back to when I first agreed to go, or was assigned to Japan and was delighted to go there, is that as an economic officer, basically economic policy is made in Washington, which could explain my many years of serving in Washington, because this is where policy is made, economic policy is made. But there are very few embassies around the world of influence or affect economic policymaking, and Tokyo is one. And, therefore, that is another illustration of the importance of the relationship, because our reporting out of Tokyo could affect decisions made in Washington vis-à-vis our own economy and how we saw things, and I think that is important.

So I think economic officers are driven to serve frequently in Washington, if only to be present as part of the decision-making policy.

Q: I'm mindful of the time. We're nearing the end of your second tour in Japan. We could get into, or not get into, any perceptions or comments you might have about China and the relative change in importance. We could not do that or we could do it in a future conversation.

BRAZEAL: Well, did I say something that triggered China?

Q: Well, when we were talking about the most important bilateral relationship, bar none, some people would argue today, in 2007, that Japan's presence in our existence is sort of stable, or there's a fixed relationship and there's some predictability there, I think. And Japan has had some difficulties in their own economy in recent years. The Economist *magazine talks about China becoming the world economic...*

BRAZEAL: Well, I will say this about China, I guess to end. I've never been to China. I should say that. But I found it fascinating that Americans describe, or used to – you hear it less now, but certainly in the '80s, '90s or earlier, Americans would say "I went into China" and "I came out of China," as if it was some mystical experience, whereas you would go to Europe or you would go to South America or you would go to China. But you would have people say, "I went into China" and "I came out of China."

So I think it has had a fascination for Americans for a long time that put it into a mysterious category for certainly the ordinary American to understand and comprehend. I don't really think we need to pick one or the other of an important relationship. I think, in my view, the importance of China right now is for the U.S. and China to work out a relationship that minimizes the potential of misunderstandings over Taiwan, because that can certainly lead to dire consequences in both of our countries, or for both of our countries.

I think that given the numbers of people that are in China, you can't ignore them, but China itself is going to have to go through these sector talks, these structural adjustment talks, the process of integrating itself further and further into the international systems that I hope they will see the benefit of, because they've certainly gotten it so far.

I think India is a hard-charging country, again, for that very reason, and you can get a variety of views of the relative strengths and weaknesses internally in India. But I'm not an expert on China or India, but what I can say, and back to Japan, is that Asia, the ASEAN countries – Asia, if you will, the Pacific – cannot be ignored. And the U.S. and Japan working in tandem on many issues can be a force for good, and I think that's something to remember and to preserve, if you will, and to make sure that that happens.

I then would hope that China becomes that force for positive good, as others, but that entire Pacific area, the ASEAN countries, are fascinating. The Pacific island countries can be fascinating, because they command huge chunks of the Pacific as their territory. It might be water, but it's theirs, and that also is a challenge, and so it's an area of the world we cannot ignore, should not ignore.

Q: And steadily growing in importance in every way.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely. But, to me, it's false diplomacy to minimize Africa or minimize Europe as a result of Asia's ascendancy. You have to take care of it all, because we're part of the global community.

(End File)

Q: This is Dan Whitman, interviewing Ambassador Rea Brazeal after a long hiatus. It's now December 8th. And in our last interview, Ambassador, you mentioned the notion of going into China and what that really means, what's behind that preposition. And you talked also about the new type of relationship that we must have and should have with China, with Japan in the mix. Could you take it from that point and continue?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I'll be happy to, if I remember correctly. I was observing that along the way, when I talked to Americans about countries, we used an expression vis-à-vis China that I had not heard Americans use for other countries, and that was the expression "I went into China" and "I came out of China," as if it was more of a mystical experience, going into a forbidden area, immersing yourself in something different. And then for other countries, Americans would say, "I went to Europe," "I went to Japan" or "I went to Latin America." But only with China did we say "I went into" and "I came out of."

And so in that sense I think China has had a special place in the minds of Americans, a benign place in our thinking. Even with the communist era, I think there was a residual wellspring of sympathy in the U.S. for China. U.S. views on China are evolving now. I think that China's role in the world is a preoccupation. What does China want?

To me, it's important that we not automatically make China an enemy, looking to replace the Soviet Union, but that we work with other countries, like Japan, in trying to influence China to be a more benevolent presence on the global scene.

Q: You used the word "enemy." You see many comments these days, written and spoken, about China being a nation of tremendous competition, not necessarily enemy. What does that mean? What's the implication of that? Is this something for us to worry about or to be happy about? Is it a possible partnership? Is it a possible threat to our economy, as we so often hear in public?

BRAZEAL: Well, I think already China is our banker. In 2007, China is our banker. I think I'd have to turn that question around to say it depends on how the U.S. sees itself in the future, and whether we are assuming that, as the sole superpower, we'll maintain that status. I think it is wrong to assume the U.S. will remain the sole superpower. I think the Chinese are intending to exert their influence beyond their borders in a way that allows them to continue economic growth, in a way that does not challenge their political system. We will have moments of conflict, globally, if China is not willing to make accommodations with a world order that includes the United States maintaining at least a shared, if not exclusive, position near the top of that order. And I don't think the U.S. has really articulated yet its own concept of the future., that I've heard in intellectual circles.

Q: You mentioned the political system. It's sort of a hybrid, isn't it? There is a Communist Party. It's a very capitalist economy. How would you characterize that political system?

BRAZEAL: Well, I'm not an expert on China, but I would say that its political system still really smacks of feudalistic tendencies, as well as Confucian elements. But this is my view as a non-expert on the country and the culture and the language. But I don't see that the communist system really replaced the feudalistic system. The change was simply who was on top and running the rest of the people.

Q: The commonplace now in public is that there's a Communist Party, but that the entrepreneurial nature of the country has been tremendous. It was something like 12 percent growth, which is incredible for a large country. What is happening there? And I guess they are damaging their own environment. It is said that the party can survive politically only as long they maintain a 12 percent growth rate. Are they in trouble?

BRAZEAL: Well, I don't think making or not making a percentage GDP target will bring down the Communist Party. I think as long as the Chinese people see some improvement in their lives, the government will keep its popularity. And, again, it depends on how “improvement” is defined. It is an exceptional act for the Chinese to be able to feed all of their people.

China’s growth has come from traditional policies promoting export-led growth. I bought something for children today that was made in China, a piece of clothing, but I had to ask the store clerk if there was anything in this product that wasn't healthy for a child, because of the way Chinese companies ignore safety standards in their rush to export.

So they've taken a very traditional approach to growth, as other countries have: export as much as possible, attract large capital inflows and have a high domestic savings rate, etc. Their savings rate is higher than ours. They haven't really broken new ground on the economic side. Moreover, they found it easier to open the economy than to open the political system. And many countries, I think, find it easier to open their political system, rather than their economic system. This approach evolves from the way their own culture changes and what is acceptable in terms of opposition.

Q: Let's go in one of two directions, either one that you choose. There's much talk about China in Africa, and I would ask if you have any observations about what they're doing or what they should be doing or what we might help them do. But we could also talk about you and your trajectory and how you got from Japan to Africa. Should we do that first?

BRAZEAL: Yes, when I left Tokyo in 1990, I was leaving to become the first U.S. Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia. I arrived in Micronesia in 1990 and I was there until 1993.

It was a great time for me. I learned a lot about running a mission. There were only two American officers at the Embassy, and I think if the State Department's Historian's Office ever gets a chance to check, it may find that I led the first all-woman embassy in the world, because the other officer was a woman, who has subsequently retired.

We had five FSNs (Foreign Service nationals), only one of whom was a man, so I don't know if they count FSNs in terms of all-women embassy or not. But, in any case, that was the size of the operation.

Our relationship with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) was run, operated, overseen, by a U.S. law, called The Compact of Free Association. After World War II, the U.S. was the Trustee of the FSM under United Nations auspices, until we helped them become independent and supported their membership in the United Nations. The elements of the Compact dictated U.S. policy toward the FSM, at least when I was there. It has subsequently been renegotiated.

The compact applies to the FSM and also to the Marshall Islands. It's a unique relationship in many ways. Citizens of the FSM can enter the U.S. without visas. They can serve in our military. They can enter the U.S. to work. I told them they were some of the smartest people I had ever met, because when I was there, they received over $100 million a year to a population of approximately 100,000 people, so I said that deal was mighty smart. I also told them they should not expect such a deal ever again.

Various U.S. Government entities since WWII had treated the FSM as if it were a U.S. state or a county of the United States; they did not perceive the FSM as an independent nation. In contrast, the State Department had a shorter history with the FSM and was accustomed to dealing with independent countries. There were domestic U.S. agencies

that did not operate overseas but they had programs in the FSM because, as I said, we had been the Trustee and we treated it as a county or a state.

Q: I'm sure you've been asked a number of times, but before they became independent, was their situation analogous with Puerto Rico, which is called a free association – Estado Libre Asociado *(free associated state). I think something like that. Was it at all analogous to that? I understand it's changed. It is no longer.*

BRAZEAL: When the FSM was a trust territory, the U.S. was the trustee, so we were the government; we ran all of the systems, including the education system and the health system. The FSM's evolution was fascinating to me, because as these Pacific islands evolved after World War II, (these entities being the FSM, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Saipan, even Guam), each was choosing a different relationship with the U.S.

Initially the consensus was that the status of all of these islands was going to be negotiated together, but the Marshall island group decided to negotiate separately with the U.S. because Kwajalein (a U.S. base on one of its atolls) is located there; the Marshall islands thought they could strike a better deal with us negotiating separately. The Palau islands, which believed the U.S. Navy had some residual interest, also decided they could negotiate on their own. So the islands that became the Federated States of Micronesia, in a sense, were the leftover island entities that the other island groups did not want to include with them, if you will, so they federated together and became a country.

Q: Now, there were two Americans in this post. In terms of square mileage, it must be the largest post in the world.

BRAZEAL: The FSM, if you consider its territorial waters, is about as large as the continental United States but most of it is water of the Pacific Ocean. There were 600 islands, but only about 63 islands had people on them. The Pacific is really huge. People forget how large...

Q: Once you've crossed it, it's hard to forget it.

BRAZEAL: Yes, it's huge. As the first U.S. Ambassador to the FSM, I felt I was giving "Government 101" lessons to the rest of the U.S. government, because, as I indicated, various parts of the U.S. government operated in the FSM under The Compact of Free Association, but not in a coordinated way that I could discern. As an Ambassador, all U.S. government programs are supposed to come under your authority but, in many cases, parts of our government did not even know there was a U.S. Embassy in the FSM or that the FSM was actually an independent nation. In addition, the State Department was not aware of all of the U.S. programs that were ongoing. The other unusual aspect of the bilateral relationship under The Compact was that the millions of dollars given to the FSM yearly were funneled through the Department of Interior, which had sway over the area when it was a trust territory. This money still goes through the Department of Interior but, of course, foreign policy is run by the State Department, so you have this bifurcated system.

Q: How did you cover such a vast territory with such a small staff?

BRAZEAL: Well, there are four states in the FSM. We were located on the island called Pohnpei, -- the capital is a small town called Kolonia, with a "K," -- that is where we were located. The main states were Yap, what was called Truk, before changing its name to Chuuk (which is closer, apparently, to the original pronunciation) and Pohnpei, which is spelled P-O-H-N-P-E-I.

Q: That's where Kolonia is.

BRAZEAL: Yes. And the state of Kosrae. Kosrae, historically, was considered an outer island of Pohnpei, but the FSM wanted four main states, so Kosrae became one of the four main states. And then, of course, all of the major states had outer islands, where people were living. So the FSM is a huge territory, but if you're talking to the national government, the national government is in Kolonia. We would visit the other major islands to talk to their governors and their legislatures and others leaders and groups. So logistically it took some doing, and it was a lot of travel, but you had to do it. Leaders also would come to Pohnpei.

My first year there I unearthed 44 different parts of the U.S. government operating in the FSM, uncoordinated with each other and some unaware that the country was now independent and that they had a U.S. Embassy that could help them with the host government. For example, everyone from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to the U.S. Postal Service to the U.S. Weather Bureau to U.S. Public Health, etc.

Many of those U.S. agencies ran their FSM operations from their offices nearest the FSM, for example, out of Hawaii or out of their California office or west coast office, not out of their headquarters in Washington. In some instances, their Washington headquarters were unaware of the details of what they were doing in the FSM, because these were domestic agencies. If you asked these agencies in Washington about the FSM, they would tell you that they did not have any programs overseas because they did not operate in a foreign country. Because of our long trustee relationship with the FSM, these agencies had integrated these islands into their operations the same as U.S. states.

That first year at post I reported to Washington in a way to get the State Department to begin to convoke meetings of all of these agencies so that they could begin to understand what the U.S. foreign policy was toward the FSM and how their programs fit, indeed even the basics of their headquarters discovering what they were doing out there. And then I would work with the national government of the FSM in a way to underscore the fact that it was independent and that the U.S. would apply our foreign policy (the provisions of the Compact of Free Association); the time when you could ask your contact from “X” U.S. agency to fund a narrowly focused personal idea was ending.

I basically told FSM officials that the first word they needed to hear out of the mouth of an American was "no," because we seemed to have funded any idea that came along. And

I tried to get the U.S. agencies aligned behind foreign policy in a way that was coordinated and sustainable.

So it was busier than you would imagine for a relatively small country, a relatively few number of people, but yet a lot was going on. And how did I meet these 44 different parts of the U.S. government? Frequently I met them on airplanes as I was flying to visit another FSM states. I'd see an American on the plane and I'd ask "Well, who are you and what are you doing here, et cetera?" and exchange cards.

Then how do you apply government 101? First, you educate U.S. agencies/officials about country clearances, and then you sometimes don't grant country clearance, despite the fact that it was in the plans of some of these agencies that once a quarter they would send out people to find out "what these people wanted". And I'd say, "Well, now you have an embassy so just send us your questions. We'll be happy to find out the FSM's plans or thinking and report to you." Moreover, I had to convince some parts of the U.S. government that economic development was actually possible in the FSM. Some Department of Interior officials, in particular, told me, as I was consulting on my way to post, that they did not believe economic development was possible in the FSM. I was surprised by such statements but then realized that Interior treated the FSM just like it treated Indian reservations. I thought to myself, now I know why American Indians reservations were so mishandled; such bigoted thinking would not bode well for what I had in mind in the FSM.

There was corruption, if I may say so. I believed there was less rigorous auditing by both sides of where the Compact funds had gone. I arrived on Pohnpei, for example, and there was no paved road around the island. I thought that was passing strange, because the U.S. had been the trustee for 50 years. Why had we not paved a road around the island in that time? Despite the differences in cultures certainly a road could have been paved.

I remember two distinct thoughts I had on my initial arrival, flying into the FSM for the first time. One was to look down from 35,000 feet and think, are we going to land there? The island looked so small. Micronesia is called Micronesia for a reason.

And the second thought was when I walked off the airplane, from the air conditioning, into the heat. I felt as if all the oxygen had been sucked out of the air. It felt like a wet heavy blanket had been wrapped around you. And I thought, am I going to faint on the tarmac on arrival, because of the heat? Once you are living there and get acclimated, eventually you can even feel cool.

Q: There is oxygen.

BRAZEAL: Yes, there is oxygen, but I had my doubts on arrival. The FSM also taught me patience. It taught me time can be infinity. Since I went to the FSM from an assignment in Japan, and the Japanese are very much on time, even early arriving people, I was accustomed to being on time. In the FSM time can be infinity. I had to sit down with myself within two days of arrival in the FSM and just say to myself, "You're going

to have to relax or you will have a heart attack by the end of the week and die." So I learned to let go in terms of worrying about things or worrying about time.

Q: Are you talking about your counterparts being late to meetings?

BRAZEAL: Well, that could happen, although after several weeks they found out that I tended to be on time, so they extended me the courtesy of being there.

Q: What was it that required a more laid-back approach?

BRAZEAL: Well, embassy staff my not come on time, or, if there was a funeral, they may disappear for two to four days or longer, because of obligations for the funeral. And so you just had to be flexible.

Q: So, to some degree, you say you had to adapt or have a heart attack, but they were willing to do so also, because you say your counterparts respected your schedule, so they sort of adapted, also, to you.

BRAZEAL: Yes, which was very nice of them to do that, I felt. But, for example, inside the embassy, for the first Christmas, I gave everybody a watch and I indicated that if they thought there was a message, they were right. I noted that when you worked in an U.S. embassy, you worked on the American system of time and the expectation was to work a full eight hours. I found, however, that we did not have a confrontation at all; the staff also felt frustrated by their circumstances, which made them late arriving. We checked regulations to see how we might address our concerns. I found that one of the few powers an ambassador has is that you can change the official hours of the embassy. The staff and I sat and talked; they were late because their babysitters were late, because everybody is late, and so they felt when they arrived at the office they were already behind the gun because of this cascade of lateness.

And so we agreed to change the hours of the embassy to open a half an hour later, and they understood that they would have to stay later than they had been accustomed. We also agreed that they would not tell their babysitters about the embassy hours change. The result was that staff was happier when they came to work because they were on time. I found a way to make the cultural adjustment without any confrontation whatsoever.

I also created a policy for funerals. It helped the staff because they could cite the embassy policy to explain whatever position they decided to take regarding a particular funeral; funeral obligations were expensive. You're expected to take a crate of chicken or other food/drink to funerals. Through group discussion we decided which funeral of the closest type of relative was it absolutely mandatory that you attend and which wasn't. I then wrote an embassy policy indicating that staff could be absent without approved leave for the death of X-Y-Z relative, but for other relatives not so specified, staff needed approved leave. And this requirement helped staff say "no" to family pressures and avoid large unexpected economic costs. For me, finding a way forward through the culture was fun.

Q: That's very innovative. It sounds that, as a trustee nation, I'm guessing that our policy, or our objectives, in this area were humanitarian and also to keep an eye on that part of the world, I suppose, because we'd had troubles some years before. When it became an independent nation, what would you say were the U.S. policy objectives?

BRAZEAL: In terms of the economic development, our policy was for the wise use of Compact funds: spending funds for projects/programs that helped overall development, getting the states to create long term trust funds that they could draw on in future years, and create jobs locally. Even now, I understand, the lack of local jobs and population pressures are such that young people simply go to the U.S., either through Guam or through Hawaii, to find work in the U.S.

U.S. policy discussions with the FSM covered education, health, economic development, job creation, anti-corruption. On the political side, the U.S. supported democratic institutions that were established: the national Congress, the Presidency, the judiciary, state institutions and the like; we supported development of the institutions and the strengthening of the institutions, not any particular individual.

Q: Were you ever asked on the Hill to explain why this was in the interest of U.S. taxpayers? These are humanitarian things. Was the idea to create less dependency?

BRAZEAL: The Hill did not ask questions of us; the Compact was a U.S. law and, if anything, the Hill would want the law implemented. In my mind, being the first ambassador, I wanted to draw attention the dependency syndrome on all sides that needed to be brought to light and then discussed.

Q: Do you think either the Hill or the executive branch of the U.S. government ever saw them as a potential market? Was there any?

BRAZEAL: The FSM did not have a large enough population, I think, to be seen as a meaningful market. The Japanese, before World War II, saw those islands as a breadbasket for Japan. Prior to WWII, the Japanese operated rice plantations and other agricultural operations on the islands. After WWII, as an U.N. trust territory, U.S. products dominated local FSM markets but the islands did not export much to us. The FSM is relatively close to Guam. So if you're asking what areas of growth might there be in future, there could be some agriculture exports to Guam, niche marketing such as black pepper, and fish products.

I found FSM thought patterns about economic development different. For example, when I arrived, there was a wonderful small black pepper export operation. The FSM grows tasty black pepper; the company was privately run by an American group. This group took the risk of educating local farmers on how to grow quality pepper, bought that pepper, processed it locally, marketed it, cultivated overseas markets and all of that. The company was beginning to be successful and beginning to make an international name for the FSM in this niche market area. Because of this perceived success, however, the FSM national government pushed the Americans out, took over the operation, because

they thought they could make money and, of course, ran it into the ground. That pepper business no longer exists.

On Pohnpei there is a wonderful soap that they make out of coconut oil -- soap that can make suds even using seawater. This was another product that could have been a wonderful niche export but was not really being exploited in any way.

Q: So the idea of expanding their export capacity, the idea was to make them more independent and to reduce the requirements on us as the former trustee nation.

BRAZEAL: Well, yes, except under the Compact of Free Association the U.S. was obligated to give the FSM $85 to 100 million a year.

Q: Pretty good deal.

BRAZEAL: For 15 years, regardless of their circumstances. So the FSM needed to make decisions as a country. In any event the money was given to each FSM state; some prudent states invested some of that money so they had a stream of funding later.

Q: Now, FSM, is it not geographically closer to Japan than it is to the U.S.?

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So were the Japanese there? What was the sense of Japan?

BRAZEAL: The resident diplomatic corps comprised the Americans, the Australians, the Chinese and the Philippines. While I was there, the Philippines closed their embassy because of their own economic pressures. The Chinese were there—don't forget, this is back in'90 to '93 – to influence one more vote in the United Nations for China, as opposed to Taiwan. Back in the 1990s there was still competition for diplomatic support between Taiwan and China globally. It is my belief that the Chinese had a diplomatic presence in the FSM for that reason. Australia was there because Australia sees the Pacific as its back door. The Japanese had their Japanese consul in Hawaii covering the FSM, and the French had their French consul in Hawaii covering.

Q: That's an awkward position, to be the Japanese consul in Hawaii, I suppose. I guess people have memories. It just sounds ironic.

BRAZEAL: The average age of the population in the FSM when I was there was age 15, so the memories you allude to were not necessarily present. The island entities near the FSM decided on policies to attract Japanese as tourists. Guam chose to develop a huge tourist market from Japan. So Guam had large hotels and became a honeymoon destination. If Japanese couldn't get to Hawaii for their honeymoon, they certainly could get to Guam. But the FSM when I was there had not really settled on a national consensus of what kind of tourism they could develop.

The FSM states have wonderful scuba diving. In fact, part of the Japanese fleet was sunk in the lagoon in Chuuk, and you can see it from the air. Yap state has its stone money. So you have lots of eco-tourism things that could be developed, but they had not decided between a mass-market tourism industry versus a selective, more high-end, pricy tourism. And they still haven't.

Q: Still haven't.

BRAZEAL: And, as a result, I breathed some of the cleanest air I ever breathed on the planet while I was there, because there was no industry and little pollution. It was wonderful.

Q: And so your first impression was "no oxygen" and your parting impression was "lots of oxygen."

BRAZEAL: Lots of oxygen and lots of clean oxygen.

Q: That's funny. This is a part of the world very little known by the Americans. For the Foreign Service officer considering Kolonia as a posting, what would you say?

BRAZEAL: Oh, I'd say accept the assignment, because you would be called upon to work in all areas of diplomacy and you'd gain basic experience. You'd learn the fundamental procedures and regulations of the State Department, which you need to know and you really are working on issues that are important.

I remember, back in the '90s, the military wasn't necessarily looking at the FSM as a strategic part of the Pacific. There seemed to be little recognition of the huge territorial footprint of the FSM and the need to stress open passage of that part of the Pacific. The thinking at that time was to downsize the military in Guam, move it back to CONUS (continental U.S.), so they weren't even looking at Guam as a resource. Today, they're building Guam up tremendously.

Q: Guam is U.S., if I understand it.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So it's not FSM.

BRAZEAL: No, no. It's separate from the FSM, but Guam's capital was our closest large city. I knew where every bookstore was on Guam and the U.S. commanders in Guam, who changed while I was there, of course, were kind enough to invite me to stay in the admiral's guesthouse. I'm sure a couple of them wondered about me. I'd fly in, rent my car at the airport, go to the grocery store, buy tomatoes and lettuce and salad dressing and a bottle of wine and go to the guest house, shut the door and turn on CNN. For hours I would stay there, happily overdosing on news and eating fresh vegetables and salad.

Every now and then, someone would knock on my door and inquire, "Are you OK?" I'd reply "I'm fine. I'm just happy to see real-time TV and fresh vegetables and greens."

Q: Were these things hard to come by?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely, absolutely.

Q: Well, then, again, addressing the future Foreign Service officer considering this as a post, what was daily life like outside of the embassy? Are there seasons? Is it always hot?

BRAZEAL: It's always hot and it rains over 300 inches a year, but yet there were water hours in the little town of Pohnpei, partly because the piping systems were not kept up. Maintenance was not a word in many vocabularies.

There are Americans, be they wonderful Americans or carpetbaggers, who specialize in working in the FSM and the Marshalls. And so there are enough Americans on the islands to have a social life, if you wanted to be around Americans. There were the other diplomats there. I'd prefer to socialize with all groups, especially the FSMers, who were interesting and complex people.

I remember making a day trip with my Australian counterparts. An Australian had brought a fishing vessel up from Australia to contract deep-sea fishing trips with tourists in the FSM. My Australian Embassy colleagues and I had put our money together and contracted the boat for the day; we went to one of the uninhabited atolls. We were sitting in the surf up to our necks, sipping champagne, wondering if the rich people could top what we were doing. You could do all kinds of things in the FSM.

Q: That's a nice image.

BRAZEAL: I learned to snorkel in the FSM. To me, anywhere you are, if you're bored, you're not accessing the things that exist, so it was getting to know the local cultures, it was traveling, it was talking to visitors. You could rent movies. The TV station, when I was there, showed taped three-week-old programs out of the San Francisco area. I'm sure none of those tapes respected intellectual property rights, but, that said, someone in San Francisco would tape the programs, ship them out. Three weeks later, they would just show these tapes on the local TV.

Q: So what was your source of news? You did not have CNN?

BRAZEAL: No real-time CNN, which is why I would overdose on it whenever I visited Guam. In fact, the Embassy did not know about the start of the first Gulf War, which was absolutely shocking. The State Department sent a flash message worldwide, but the Embassy did not have a 24-hour communication capability or even one that was sufficiently classified to have even received that alert. The first we knew of that war was when FSM citizens called to enquire about their son/daughter serving in the military. These parents had questions. There were all of these horrible rumors that FSM citizens

were being pushed to the frontlines so they'd be shot first, that the U.S. was going to bomb the airport in Kolonia, etc.

There was mild hysteria in the FSM, needless to say, and it took a while to resolve. Now, of course, the Embassy communication system is much better.

Q: Right. Why would they think that the U.S. would bomb Kolonia?

BRAZEAL: Just hysteria. I had to work with the U.S. military quickly to set up a phone system so FSM relatives could find out where their children were located.

Q: Do you know how many FSM citizens were in the Gulf at that time?

BRAZEAL: No, I don't think we ever really had a firm handle on numbers.

Q: Yes, well, fascinating.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: Anything else about the FSM assignment? Very unique. Do you have any sense of how things have evolved since you left? You said that they have not yet decided which type of tourism they're going to go for. They're still getting $100 million a year?

BRAZEAL: Well, the compact has been renegotiated. I'm not sure how much The FSM and the Marshall Islands get now, but at least any amount would reduce over time and presumably, by the time it would be renegotiated in future, there will be no one left in our Congress who has any memory of World War II and its aftermath. Any residual U.S. guilt would have dissipated or disappeared. I think future payments under The Compact will have a harder time.

Again, it's not the Foreign Affairs Committee that oversees any negotiations. Remember, I said the money comes through the Interior Department, so it's the Congressional committees that oversee Interior that really get to do this. So a lot depends on domestic U.S. oxen being gored or not, as the case may be.

Q: Now, what guilt would we have reason to have?

BRAZEAL: Well, for the Marshalls, and I'm trying to be conscious that these remarks will be published, we send missiles from California into the Kwajalein bay, and in the early days there was release of radioactivity. The Marshalls have played off of that fact, and any U.S. guilt, forever. I mean, we are maybe 10 to 15 generations later, but still there's this residual plague on them, which is why the Marshalls felt they could make a better deal with the U.S. separate from the FSM islands; there is also the fact they expected access to Kwajalein would remain important to the U.S. over time, and so they could strike a better deal in their compact of free association.

Q: Well, the French were using the Bikini islands, I think. Is there anything analogous? Do the French have guilt?

BRAZEAL: I don't know.

Q: I think everyone was removed from those islands, I think.

BRAZEAL: Were they? In my view the U.S. seemed to have been running the FSM and the Marshalls as if they were an Indian reservation, which I guess, would say a lot in terms of our mindset about what could be accomplished and what was possible. I believe this to be an indictment of the U.S.

I had no historical baggage with the FSM. I didn't look at FSM people as people who could not develop, who could not make their own decisions. Yes, they had a lot of negotiating to do among themselves, but they worked out their differences long enough to federate together. So you can find pockets of good news and pockets of bad news there.

I think the corruption resulting from the amount of money that has been thrown that way over time has not been good for local communities. For example, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease are very common now because people got away from their traditional diet. Their traditional diet was fish and vegetables they grew themselves. When I was there a person would fish all day and sell the fish to go buy a can of Spam. So the popular food was spam and turkey tails. I didn't even know that the U.S. exported turkey tails, and I mean the last part of the turkey that goes over the fence, and that's just fat. So under the U.N. trusteeship the people shifted from what they would have eaten as a normal diet to a diet that's very unhealthy, and there are few doctors.

Q: Why did they do this? Did they feel it was prestigious? Did they actually like Spam?

BRAZEAL: Go back, mentally skip back to World War II, and think that their lives, of course, were disrupted because of the war. The U.S. military comes with processed meat that can last a while.

Q: Canned. I see, I see.

BRAZEAL: They begin to eat it. People like it. So, for example, many FSMers thought mahi-mahi was a garbage fish, it was a sort of bottom-eating fish. When they caught it they'd throw it away. I said, "Throw it my way. Bring the mahi-mahi to me. I'll buy it." I had fresh mahi-mahi, fresh tuna, whenever I wanted. The vegetables were lacking, but you work your way around.

Q: Well, mahi-mahi is now the thing in fancy restaurants. Was it in the '90s?

BRAZEAL: Yes, in Hawaii at least, it was.

Q: But people in FSM did not even know that this was a coveted item in the United States?

BRAZEAL: They did not care.

Q: Didn't care. They liked their Spam. That's interesting. Well, I've never heard anything at all about this part of the world.

BRAZEAL: In the local cultures women are way down on the totem pole. At my farewell party – the FSM President had a party for me and it was very nice. He said, "Well, sorry you're leaving. I hope your replacement comes, and I hope *she* comes soon." I felt that I had made some minor inroads on gender issues.

The FSM is a part of the world very much impacted by the Japanese; some of the biggest family names in the islands are Japanese names, because the Japanese intermarried. Consequently, like the Japanese, FSMers would say yes all the time. I told the FSM president, "Well, look, I figured out when yes means yes, and I figured out when yes means no, but I haven't quite figured out when yes means maybe." And he said, "Ah, well, when you know that, you will really understand Micronesia." I thought that was quite insightful and a fun fact.

Q: And when did you have this discourse? At the end of your tour?

BRAZEAL: Toward the beginning of my tour.

Q: Well, the stereotype for even the Philippines and Southeast Asia in general is that yes is the answer to every question. I don't know if its because of that part of the world.

BRAZEAL: I'm not sure either. The same in Japan. People would say yes, but it means, yes, I've heard what you said, or yes, I understand your question. It doesn't mean yes, I agree with you. Americans can get confused when we think it means agreement.

In any event, a fascinating part of the world. I enjoyed it tremendously and I respect the people.

Q: That's great. So that took you to what year was it, '93?

BRAZEAL: Ninety-three.

Q: Ninety-three. OK, let's pick up at that point, then.

BRAZEAL: And so from the smallest embassy in the world – a two-officer embassy – I went to the largest embassy at that time in Sub-Saharan Africa as ambassador in Nairobi, Kenya. I believe I was chosen for a couple of reasons, as you try to delve underneath these things. A political appointee was my predecessor; by naming a career person the State Department was wresting this position back onto the career side, as opposed to the

political side. Second, at the time I think I was considered the top black woman officer in the Foreign Service and unassigned; I was happy that they wanted me to continue as an ambassador.

So I went to Kenya after Senate hearings and all of that. I never met my predecessor, Ambassador Smith Hempstone. He was reported to have said, and other Americans I met in Kenya told me this story – he was reported to have said, "Ah, a black woman ambassador to Kenya. Kenya doesn't matter anymore." And so he refused to meet with me. Traditionally, the departing U.S. Ambassador meets with the incoming Ambassador.

Q: This was in 1993?

BRAZEAL: Yes, '93. His wife Kitty and I met; I found her very helpful.

Q: I've met her, yes.

BRAZEAL: But I never met Smith Hempstone, or he never deigned to meet with me. I never criticized him while I was in Kenya. I would tell people that I felt that he was the right person in Kenya at the right time but I was there with a eye to the future, not to the past; I could not live anybody else's life, because I was busy living my own. In this way, I would not be seen as trying to be Smith Hempstone. I broke with the past and could simply be me.

In a sense, Hempstone was perceived as siding with the opposition, or at least the opposition felt that he led them, or was on the ramparts with them, for change in Kenya. And they wanted the U.S. to continue leading their efforts, when I went there. The government, basically, had stopped working with the Embassy and the U.S.

Q: Was this Moi?

BRAZEAL: Moi. Yes. So I arrived in Kenya needing to repair relations with the government, at least to the point that we could conduct business. I needed to recalibrate our relationship with the opposition to indicate that they were the opposition, and while we certainly agreed with them in many instances, they needed to carry forward their own fight, not be led by the Americans.

Q: You didn't have the benefit of meeting him, but what would have been his rationale in undermining a government? I mean, Moi was not the worst leader in the world. He had some issues. Was he actively – is an overstatement to say he was undermining the government?

BRAZEAL: I’m not sure. Hempstone wrote a book about his time in Kenya. I have not read it. I'm mentioned, I think toward the end, according to people, but I don't intend to give any money to buy the book and I've not checked it out of the library. It was a time of corruption, huge corruption, repression of opposition and a lot of internal pressure.

Hempstone placed himself in public opposition to the government, and so our dialogue therefore with the government had basically atrophied.

Q: Why do you suppose he was not persona non grata?

BRAZEAL: Maybe because he was the American ambassador and that was a fight the Kenyan government did not want, but I'm not sure. Again, I don't want to speculate, because I don't want to put myself in a corner.

Q: Well, that's quite a task you took on.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: How did you go about it and how long did it take before you were able to normalize just a standard relationship between an embassy and a country?

BRAZEAL: Kenya has wonderful people, but tribalistic approaches to many things. I decided to make many speeches – one a month at first and most I wrote myself. I guess we call that public diplomacy now, but they had a vibrant civil society and private groups before which I could speak and be heard. They had a vibrant press, although with elements of self-censorship. The contrast between when I arrived and when I left in terms of the editorial cartoons was striking, in terms of what was possible when I left, as opposed to when I arrived.

I went around with the intention to meet all of the people I needed to meet, and met government ministers, President Moi, opposition people, just everybody. I had a very vigorous speaking schedule that I kept up for three years, and I wrote many of my own speeches, because there were things I wanted to say. And I visited every part of Kenya, so I was visible, outside of the capital. Perseverance counted, and also setting the rest of my staff and me on an agreed path of how to interact with Kenyans. Throughout my career, but in particular as an ambassador, I wanted to always show respect for the people who I'm engaging.

Q: How long did you feel that it took to convince Kenyans of your good will?

BRAZEAL: I'm not sure, maybe seven or eight months—somewhere in there. But I hear from Kenyans now that I'm still spoken of, and people have sent me clippings from newspapers in Kenya where *The Nation*, which is one of their leading papers, will say, 10 years ago Ambassador Brazeal said such and such. I was in editorial cartoons, which I thought was wonderful. If people thought it would offend me, I thought the opposite. I thought it meant my message was getting out. And so I started asking the cartoonists for the original sketch, which they would autograph; I have some framed that I haven't put out around the house, but I have those.

Q: On the unfortunate day in August of 1998, you were not there, I guess.

BRAZEAL: No. I had left about a year and a half before.

Q: Is there anything that you remember about your impression when you learned of the bombing that day?

BRAZEAL: Well, of course, disbelief. I knew five of the Americans who were killed and all of the Kenyan FSNs. The building was simply on a very busy corner, a little set back.

Q: I remember it, yes.

BRAZEAL: And so I experienced shock and dismay. I remember going to the Kenyan Embassy in Washington to sign the condolence book and also writing a letter to President Moi. I felt that, not to be overly dramatic, a new covenant had been established between Kenyans and Americans, through the co-mingling of blood, to address the issues of the 20th century such as terrorism and in a way that would let the best parts of humanity shine through. And so the bombing was very traumatic.

One of the FSNs killed was a Greek-Kenyan and she was really great; her family wrote a book about her and they asked me to be at the launching of it in Addis and I was happy to be there and say a few words. It took me years – I guess I went back maybe in 2002, before I was really able to visit the sit

Q: Well, let's go back. I skipped ahead to this gigantic event that came after your tour, but let's get back to the tour. Seven or eight months persistence and perseverance, as you said, to convince Kenyans of your good will, personally, and you were the representative of the president of the U.S.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: So what else comes to mind about your tour in Nairobi, either personally or things you saw in your travels across the country?

BRAZEAL: There were refugee issues, there were humanitarian issues, there were ethnic conflict issues, there were corruption issues, there were terrorism issues, there were regional issues, there were economic development issues, and there were political issues. There were just issues of every stripe that you could think of that would come up and we tried to be involved in all of them. I was recalling with someone the other day my black-tie country team meeting. If you remember our Congress was again threatening to shut down the executive branch over budget issues and our day started before Washington's day, so I decided we should have a black-tie country team meeting with appropriate libation, because we would be meeting more or less just after Washington was awake, to find out if we had a budget. I said, if we go out, we go out in style.

I refused to call anybody nonessential. I felt all of us were essential. I refused to play the essential and nonessential game because psychologically with people who are doing their best overseas, you cannot call what they do nonessential. Congress managed to come

through. Today, I get upset with our Congress because it seems not to recognize the damage it does to U.S. influence overseas when it shuts down our government, not to mention the cost, which are my tax dollars being wasted!

I mean, at the end of that day in Kenya, we had a budget, and the country team meeting was a wonderful occasion, because we all dressed formally, the men in tuxedoes and the women in long dresses.

Q: I was in Pretoria that day and we did not have an ambassador as inspired. A little bit down the road.

BRAZEAL: I had a very diverse country team and embassy, which the Kenyans noted and appreciated in their remarks to me.

Q: Well, had you recruited them as such? Were you able to do that? Is it true then an ambassador can pick the individuals?

BRAZEAL: An Ambassador cannot pick officers below a certain level but you can influence who is selected to be the head of a section or agency. I remember, with some agencies, I had to spell the word diversity out and ask if they understood it. Some agencies would send senior officers to look at the operation, meet me, and maybe they decided after meeting me they didn't want to work with me. I don't know. But eventually we had a very diverse group of people and I think that made us stronger.

For example, my AID Director was African American and his Deputy was Asian American. My political counselor was a black woman, my economic counselor was a white woman, my regional affairs director was a white woman and her deputy was African American, my refugee coordinator was an African American woman, etc.

I mention my diverse team to make the point that diversity makes you stronger as a team because you have a variety of ideas that are put on the table that may or may not get there when you have people who think alike for whatever reasons. And we made a difference in operating in the country.

But we had all kinds of issues. We had, of course, the Somalia debacle, we had Sudan as well, and so there were just many, many things. It was a very busy time to be in Nairobi, and I think we made some progress.

Q: The Somalia debacle, which goes no better now than it did then. Was Nairobi a staging point for the various things going on?

BRAZEAL: Well, not Nairobi, but Mombasa was one for staging.

Q: Mombasa by Doha (ph), right?

BRAZEAL: Mombasa, Kenya. The U.S. Embassy in Khartoum moved to Nairobi. I made sure we had room in the embassy. The U.S. Embassy in Somalia moved to Nairobi, so we were hosting two other embassies. In fact, you used to say "ambassador," and people would have to say "Which one?", because we had so many ambassadors there.

Q: Is that Tim Carney.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and he's a hunter, too, by the way.

Q: I know.

BRAZEAL: But my point is, I think, that we were flexible, because – at least in that part of the world -- you can't say no to colleagues from Khartoum or from Mogadishu. I would expect the same hospitality. That was the Foreign Service I came up in.

Q: Well, I don't remember what happened to the ambassador from Somalia. I believe that Ambassador Carney stayed in Nairobi for quite a long time, like a year or two or something like that.

BRAZEAL: Same for the Somalia operation. The point is, these relocations put a strain on our administration section in particular, and it put a strain on our physical facilities. In addition to the bilateral relationship with Kenya, the Sudan and Somalia operations had to be accommodated. I think you set an atmosphere from the top, and my atmosphere was one of we can do this. It's not a burden. It's not a big sigh.

Q: Again, going chronologically, zigzagging, I should have asked this much earlier. You went from possibly the smallest embassy in the world to the largest one in Sub-Saharan Africa. Is this a natural progression?

BRAZEAL: Not necessarily a natural progression, and it was my first time serving in Africa. I was happy, of course, that it was Kenya, because it's a spectacular place.

Serving in Micronesia helped me serve in Kenya, because in Micronesia, you learn the basics. You learn the fundamentals. You learn the rules. We were inspected, also, when I was in Micronesia, and an inspection helped our operation overall. I didn't even mention the fact that we had a Navy ship come into Kolonia to serve as a hotel for a big Pacific islands meeting. But putting the Navy ship story aside, I knew about the administrative operations of an embassy, because I had had to be the administrative officer. I knew about communications because I was the communications officer in Micronesia. I knew about consular issues, because I was the American services officer and general consular officer, etc.

So because you wear many hats in a two officer post such as Micronesia, this multitasking helped give me the confidence that I knew the basics about how an Embassy, large or small, would have to operate.

Q: So the principle of never asking something of somebody that you've not done yourself applied in Nairobi.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely.

Q: Well, if I use the term, the high moments and the low moments, what comes to mind from your tour in Kenya, from the vantage point of your own achievements, or from the things that you may have seen which really astonished you? Is that a fair question, or can I ask it later?

BRAZEAL: You can ask it later. I did not have many low moments, frankly. I was just trying to think of low moments. Maybe if we didn't get funding for something that I thought was important would be a low moment, but you can't get frozen in those moments because you're running a large operation. So I guess mentally I may have minimized them or eliminated them. I can't think of any particular low moments.

Q: I may interject that I was there as a visitor when you were ambassador at a PAO (public affairs officer) conference and I remember the extraordinary hospitality. You did meet the PAOs, I remember very vividly and we stayed at that place Mount Kenya.

BRAZEAL: Mount Kenya Safari Club.

Q: It was an incredible place. It seemed very decadent, like your description of drinking champagne in the surf. It was having the fellow come in at night and say, "Sir, may I make a fire in your room?" It's just extraordinary and I have the most pleasant memory of that visit, while you were ambassador.

BRAZEAL: Good, my Embassy team was hard working and I attribute your fond memories to their efforts. Sadly, I did not do many safaris to the tourist safari places. I traveled everywhere in Kenya, but I stayed in basic places for the most part. I remember once driving through a cornfield and up the side of a hill, to meet 500 people who were gathered there expecting me. I don't know how we even found this place.

The Kenyan hospitality was overwhelming and heartfelt. In my travels to the countryside, I was given ceremonial sticks that chiefs carried because, I presume, I represented the U.S. President, a man. I never met a chief who was not a man. On these occasions I began to carry a chief stick on purpose, because women had never seen a woman in such a high position. Men had never seen a woman in this position. I wanted people to understand that, of course, I represented my chief, who was president of the United States, but a woman also could have this power, this ability. I always stressed the ideas of sending “your girl-child” to school and women’s rights.

Q: You said, "I don't know how we found these places." It leads me to ask about if you have any recollections of FSNs and their interactions with the American staff. Does anything stand out as things that FSNs did to make your mission more productive?

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes, the FSNs were the backbone of our Kenyan operations. For example, the public affairs section played a large role in arranging my frequent speeches and disseminating the texts, and the like. My habit from Micronesia -- which had no press, no newspapers, no media, and yet information in that culture was power -- would be to send copies of articles to everybody, I mean, the president and all the cabinet members, all the governors, all the opposition, et cetera.

At first people in Micronesia would call me up and say, this is a very interesting article, how many people have it? And I'd say everybody, because what they were really trying to figure out was how valuable is this information, because information was power. That was Micronesia.

In Kenya, I would write my speeches. I would always have a text because the press was not always accurate and I wanted them to have a hard copy. In addition, having a text meant we could disseminate what I had actually said to audiences and groups around the country who may not have been at the event. Eventually, I was in the media a lot: newspapers, weekly editorials, excoriated by the government newspaper, all kinds of things, during the time I was there. But, to me, such coverage was not ego gratification, rather it was a gauge of how our message was getting out and to which people.

Q: Excoriated for what?

BRAZEAL: Oh, saying something they thought too critical of the government, putting my nose too closely in their business.

Q: And this was, you think, a message from the government through its organ?

BRAZEAL: Oh, sure.

Q: Did you ever have a dialogue in which a government official said this type of thing to you, or did they do it very obliquely through their own press?

BRAZEAL: Obliquely through the press after about three months into my tour. When I first arrived, I got some hostility face-to-face because I was the American ambassador taking the place of Ambassador Smith Hempstone and officials did not know what I intended to do.

Q: Criticized by Moi's regime, I guess. Is that what you mean? Was the opposition when you didn't take up, the same?

BRAZEAL: Some. But they understood for the most part that I was not going to be the same as my predecessor.

Q: Amazing. This is rich fruit. I want to get the juice out of it. What would you say about the development, the professional and personal development of some of the American officers who were there?

BRAZEAL: Oh, there were great officers in Nairobi. I've kept my eye on a few and one officer is now the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

Q: I know her well.

BRAZEAL: She was my refugee coordinator in Nairobi when I was there. Some of the officers who were there have retired. I am pleased to say that many country team members stayed with me for my full tour.

Q: Linda Thomas-Greenfield is my current boss and she's wonderful.

BRAZEAL: Exactly. Now, she should tell you her story of being in Rwanda.

Q: Oh, at a bad time, she was there?

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: I did not know that.

BRAZEAL: Linda had traveled to Rwanda from Nairobi in the capacity of Refugee Coordinator. While there the genocide started. Some people thought Linda looked like a Tutsi. Although she was staying with the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), armed men stormed the DCM's compound. They held Linda at gunpoint for some hours. Because she had her U.S. diplomatic passport in her pocket, Linda was not harmed but imagine having a gun in your face for hours.

Q: She's taller. Oh, my God, she was taken as a Tutsi? Wow.

BRAZEAL: So these are close calls.

Q: She was there visiting from Nairobi. I mean, it wasn't TDY (temporary duty) or something.

BRAZEAL: No, she was a refugee coordinator with regional responsibilities, and so she just happened to be there, staying with the DCM, who was a woman, as well. Those were dicey times. Our people departed Rwanda by car caravan to Burundi and then flew in U.S. military transport to Nairobi. Nairobi was the recovery point for people coming out. When I saw Linda I hugged her and told her she could not travel again because we did not want to lose her.

Q: This is an extremely eventful period.

BRAZEAL: Oh, absolutely, all around Kenya.

Q: Somalia imploded, Khartoum, our embassy shut down, genocide in Rwanda, my God, and you were the one stable embassy in the region that people could come to. There must have been enormous traffic.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and you're running the operation. The Embassy staff, Americans and FSNs, did it all, but the ambassador set the tone and my tone was "we can do this".

Q: We can do this, we can be hospitable, we can manage – now, at the time, at that time, Kenya was not in terrible spasms.

BRAZEAL: No.

Q: So you were able to accommodate the problems in the region. I cannot not ask you about Rwanda, what was happening there, from your vantage point. I mean, with the benefit of hindsight?

BRAZEAL: With the benefit of hindsight, I think it was the scale of the killing that was not comprehended quickly enough to call for a change in how the U.S. government reacted. And, to a certain extent, there was the residual lethargy, if you will, that still exists, which allows/looks to whatever former colonial overseer for that part of Africa to take the primary action role. I think the U.S. did not want to be in front, taking actions; we wanted to support the Belgians in this case.

Q: Although the French were very involved during – I mean, as history would now say, siding with the wrong side during the genocide. I mean, what were they doing there? This was a Belgian thing.

BRAZEAL: The Rwanda genocide was a Belgian thing. I think the U.S. was slow off the mark because we expected to take cues from others and there were distractions elsewhere, and we missed the scale of the killing. In hindsight, the scope takes your breath away, but at the time the genocide wasn't something that was coming through, as I recall. Because I certainly hope I would have spoken up in a different way, but our concern in Nairobi at that time was being on the receiving end of the Americans, trying to get them out.

Q: In retrospect, President Clinton and Kofi Annan were blamed to a roughly equal extent. Is that fair? Was the U.N. more or less culpable – I don't mean culpable—unable to understand what was happening?

BRAZEAL: I think people did not understand what was happening. I think we should have called the violence genocide earlier and had a different reaction, more quickly. I will say that in terms of Africa, at that time, there was less attention paid to it in U.S. foreign policy circles than we pay today. A question might be are we paying more attention today because the Chinese are there or are we paying more attention because we understand the importance of Africa?

Q: Let's talk about China for a moment. I attended a talk yesterday with David Shinn, who, as you know, has become somewhat of an expert on this whole matter of China in Africa. This is not a study, I don't think, that you've pursued formally, but you must have some perceptions about what are China's intentions and are we in conflict, are we competition? Are we in possible collaboration? It's a very complex relationship. What do you think China wants from Africa?

BRAZEAL: I think China wants the same thing that all Western countries have wanted over the centuries, which are resources, and China needs these resources to continue its economic growth. It needs the raw materials. It also needs markets for its businesses to learn how to become world class and compete at higher levels than they now compete. I think it's all of that.

I think we should not look at China in Africa as either competition for the U.S. or as a way to collaborate with China. We should be able to compete and collaborate. I think American business, regrettably, is losing out in Africa because it doesn't see the advantages of being on the continent, and most U.S. companies do not make the commitment to be there for the long haul, in many markets. And so there isn't much competition with China on the business side, because American businesses have made themselves absent, for the most part.

In the 90s, American business generally wanted to base its operations out of South Africa and serve the entire continent of Africa. It seemed to view Africa as one large country. It did not take into account political, economic and social nuances; for example, some African countries resented South Africa and would place impediments in front of U.S. products coming from South Africa. A business model of basing your operation in South Africa to serve the continent was not smart in my view.

However, I do have some resentment of the Chinese in how they conduct business in Africa, because I think that they are using it as – what is it, a loss leader? In other words, many of their companies are subsidized by the Chinese government, and so they are underbidding for projects that they really don't have the capability of doing. Under the loss leader business strategy, a company offers its service at a less than profitable price to attract new customers or build a customer base.

Q: The equivalent of dumping, sort of?

BRAZEAL: Well, the equivalent of losing money just to get your foot in the door. But the point is that they are winning contracts that ultimately cost the African governments more because the contracts are usually, invariably, renegotiated along the way. But the Chinese companies are really using the project to teach themselves how to do this kind of international work, the building of roads, the building of this or that, to a higher level of expertise, so they can compete in developed countries for similar work.

And so, at least in Ethiopia, where the Chinese were the most visible during my time in Africa, they are building roads, but it was taking years, whereas if the bid had gone to

another company – it doesn't have to be American, but a different one – you would have had the road built promptly.

Q: So it did not benefit Africa, as it did future Chinese competitiveness.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and, furthermore, in many African countries the Chinese have been able to continue the practice of bringing in their own workers as labor, and so the local labor force doesn't even benefit to the extent that local people get jobs or learn how to build or operate machinery, or acquire planning skills, etc. There is little transfer of knowledge.

Q: Right, and my sense is there is quite a bit of resentment in Africa over that issue.

BRAZEAL: As well there should be. The Ethiopians were smart, I believed, because they limited the bringing in of Chinese laborers. Some Chinese supervisors/workers came in to oversee the project, but the bulk of the work was done by Ethiopians. There were skill and knowledge transfers as a result of this Ethiopian decision.

Q: It was said yesterday at this talk that in Kenya – what was it? The Chinese had understood because of the local labor laws that you have to compensate somebody you fire with a whole year of salary. Therefore, never hire them in the first place if you can get away with it.

BRAZEAL: That may be; too much has changed since I was in Kenya. When I was in Kenya back in the '90s, the Chinese were not yet that visible on the continent. They were just beginning their own sustained economic growth and search for raw resources. But now the Chinese have money and they do not have anti-corruption standards to which they adhere internationally, that I can see, and so anti- corruption is a policy to which they do not adhere in my view.

So the Chinese companies can get the business, and then they learn how to do that project or to provide that service, and then they can compete in other markets because they used Africa to learn how to do the basics. The work might be done shoddily, and certainly not up to standards, and certainly be more expensive to local governments.

Q: Now, I'm mindful of the time. I think, if you agree, we should come to the end of a chapter on Kenya, and we should foresee – I would love to get some of your recollections of post-Kenya and some of your teaching experiences if you're willing to do another session.

BRAZEAL: Sure. We've got those and other things to cover.

Q: Well, then let's close the chapter on Kenya and, before doing that, let me ask you, what else do you think should be said about your three years in Kenya? My questions are very general. I want to give you the opportunity.

BRAZEAL: Well, I hope I made a difference in Kenya. I think we were there at a time of great stress and strain and flux internally. As I mentioned, there were ethnic clashes around the country, among other things, famine and refugees and corruption and many issues. And I think that, perhaps because of the emphasis I gave to issues, but, as a team, we were able to really address important issues and do a lot of things that pushed Kenya toward further development, both politically and economic, and we rebalanced our relationship so we could talk to all parties -- opposition and government. And we were a leader in the donor community, as well, and that I think was important, particularly on policy issues.

So I think it was a great time. I'm still in touch with people in Kenya and it's a great country. Their election is going to be December 27th in Kenya, and candidates include Raila Odinga, whom I knew, and, of course, Kibaki, who is the president now and whom I knew, as well as Kalonzo Musyoka, who was the Foreign Minister when I was there. I try to watch Kenyan issues with interest to see what is having an effect on the country.

Thank you.

Q: Well, thank you. It's December 8th and we've put a book end.

(End File)

Q: Here we are. It's Dan Whitman, interviewing Ambassador Rea Brazeal. It's now December 15th, and in our last interview we spoke about your service as ambassador to Kenya, and we're now ready to go forward in time chronologically, Ambassador.

BRAZEAL: Happy to do that, Dan.

Q: So we're going to the next step in life past Kenya.

BRAZEAL: My next step in life past Kenya, I came back to Washington for an assignment. This was 1996. I had been asked by then EAP Assistant Secretary Winston Lord to be one of his deputy assistant secretaries. I accepted his request but I recall at the first bureau staff meeting when he introduced me, he said something to the effect that I was there because I was an excellent Foreign Service Officer, not because I was African American. Regrettably, for me, that introduction took the wind out of my sails because I had not thought my race was part of any equation. A/S Lord soon left his position for higher positions and another political appointee came into the job.

In any event, I was one of the deputy assistant secretaries in the East Asia and the Pacific Bureau, and I had an enormous portfolio. There were three DASs (deputy assistant secretary). We had a DAS for China, (Taiwan and Hong Kong). We had a DAS for Korea and Japan. I had the rest of the East Asian countries. I always thought our portfolios were unbalanced.

So I was extremely busy. I worked a lot on ASEAN issues, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, on the ASEAN Political Forum issues, and then, of course, individually with all the rest of the countries.

Q: Let's just briefly name, that would be what? Indonesia, Malaysia...

BRAZEAL: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand, and the 12 Pacific island nations.

Q: Unbelievable. That's one DAS portfolio?

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: That's humongous.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and transfer of issues to my portfolio never stopped. I won't say that I didn't have some questions, but I'd been in the Foreign Service a long time and was used to doing what I was assigned to do, so I accepted the additional work. For example, ASEAN and ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum) were given to me about two weeks before a ministerial. This short deadline actually gave me a good insight into the talents of the people in the bureau, because some preparations had been done. A lot of work on shaping the substance of the agenda and our positions remained, however. In addition, during this time we had the Asian financial meltdown; happily, one of the bureau's other senior officers, who just followed one particular issue, helped me by stepping in on the interagency process, because there was just a lot to do, a lot to juggle, a lot going on all the time.

I enjoyed it, but I wondered at that time, which is a sad commentary, in a sense, on one's career, if, as a black woman – I was the first black woman in that position – if somehow that had something to do with the lopsidedness. I don't know. But I remember being taken aback.

Q: Sorry, something to do with the nature of the portfolio?

BRAZEAL: With the nature of all of the work being sort of...

Q: Put on you.

BRAZEAL: Placed on my position, whether it was meant to be helpful or not. I would never know. As I said, I went to EAP at the request of Assistant Secretary Winston Lord. He's a very fine person, but my sense of what he said at my first bureau staff meeting was that I was the best person being brought into the bureau, although I was black. There seemed to be some little angle there that just deflated my internal ego, because I'd thought, well, this is 1996 and I had not expected to hear that kind of reasoning.

Q: That should not be an issue.

BRAZEAL: It shouldn't be an excuse.

Q: I'm sorry, brought the best? Is there an ellipsis there? The best of something?

BRAZEAL: The best person, but still he mentioned my race. I thought his view that he should mention my race but still maintain I was the best candidate for DAS was interesting.

Q: That's very interesting.

BRAZEAL: And he's still, of course, doing great things. And then the Assistant Secretaries changed, and Stanley Roth became the new Assistant Secretary. So I was a DAS for two years and then I went to the Foreign Service Institute as the dean of the senior seminar.

Q: The now-lamented senior seminar.

BRAZEAL: Yes, although people are preparing documentation for resuscitation, so the next administration can make up its own mind.

Timing is everything, so I was there when Secretary Powell came to the department, and he...

Q: This is '98? Is that right?

BRAZEAL: Ninety-eight. Well, I headed the senior seminar in '98 and '99 and then Secretary Powell came along, and he came with an emphasis from his military background on leadership training and wanted to get more leadership training into the State Department. So I was asked to head up and to help create the new Leadership and Management School at FSI.

Q: What is it called? Anyway, there's a name for it. Leadership and Management.

BRAZEAL: Yes, Leadership and Management, LMS.

Q: LMS, right, of course.

BRAZEAL: So I helped create it.

Q: You created it.

BRAZEAL: Yes, we created a continuum of leadership courses beginning with new officers and continuing throughout a career --with the senior seminar at the apex, of course, because that was the most senior training that we offered, although the senior

seminar was never exclusively a leadership course. But I worked with the director of FSI, her deputy and their team.

Q: Peterson?

BRAZEAL: No, Ruth Davis, and Ruth Whiteside and other people at FSI who were really key. I had to put together and propose a new budget for the leadership school with FSI colleagues. I had to recommend which courses should be part of the leadership continuum. Some of the components in SPAS (School of Professional and Area Studies) were moved to LMS. For example, I argued that crisis management should be moved to the leadership school because crisis management is leadership in action, if nothing else is.

We worked with human resources and other bureaus to make leadership training mandatory, so we established that principle, which was a first for the department, because training wasn't really mandatory, per se. So a lot of things were accomplished. It was a great time. It was a time of growth, a time of excitement, some staff expansion. We had three elements in the school – the senior seminar, the leadership continuum and crisis management -- and I felt that we were making a difference in the department.

Some department officers occasionally took swipes at the senior seminar over cost concerns or "elitism" concerns, but, at least when I was at FSI, there was no one seriously trying to abolish it.

Q: Now, there's a lot of talk about Secretary Powell. Actually, he gets credit for this mandatory training that addresses leadership issues. Since you were involved right there – I'm not seeking to know who gets credit for this, but was he receptive to this idea? Did he initiate this idea? There's a lot of speculation out there about how this really happened.

BRAZEAL: Well, how shall I say? There were some of us flying under the radar before he came, when Secretary Albright was still with us as secretary, who were moving in the direction of more leadership training for foreign policy professionals, both foreign service and civil service. So Powell came at a time when there had been substantial lower level thinking about the issue; when he became Secretary, he added the missing ingredient - commitment.

The U.S. military has long believed that you can teach people how to be leaders, you can teach leadership and you can teach management. The diplomatic culture, through its evolution out of France, as I understand it, basically believed that diplomacy required on-the-job training; junior officers should sit patiently, watching their superiors deliver demarches, write up reports, make interpretations and analysis. Traditionally officers learned on the job, so that training per se was not something particularly valued in the culture of the State Department.

I think that Secretary Powell and his team understood that they were trying to change the culture of the State Department to one more accepting of training, particularly mandatory training and training on leadership.

Q: Not to dwell too much on this, but was this serendipitous? You had a secretary of state from the military, was from this tradition, but just by coincidence there were lower-level people who were developing this idea. Did it meet in the middle?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I think so. Serendipitous, indeed; I would use that word. The timing worked out, the stars aligned, however you want to describe it, but the idea of mandatory leadership training worked in a way that met receptivity, within the department, among both the Foreign Service and civil service plus on the Hill.

Q: And I know that Ruth Davis and Ruth Whiteside were very supportive of this and obliged people. When you say mandatory, it really was.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: People were pulled out of TDYs, I remember that. It was quite a serious thing. Looking back at it, what's your feeling about the degree of success of that program?

BRAZEAL: Overall, I think mandatory leadership training has been successful. I think that it's a generational issue, as well, in the Foreign Service; old fogies of my generation, unless they're aware of how the younger generations have changed, are going to have their leadership challenged; younger people are getting this mandatory training and they expect their supervisors to know the latest concepts and practices that they've been taught in their courses. If the leaders haven't taken those courses or haven't glommed onto the fact that this is a different generation, then there could be, and there are, bubbles, hiccups and intergenerational misunderstandings. You have to lead the younger generations differently. When I came into the Foreign Service, if a superior told you to do something, you did it more or less without question. Today, as a leader, if you tell an officer to do something, that officer will certainly ask why but also might challenge the reasoning behind the request.

Q: Would you say this was a golden age for that type of training. I mean, it still exists, but the senior seminar doesn't. Do you feel that that was a special period that came and went, or are elements of it still?

BRAZEAL: Well, no, the leadership school is still there. I haven't really tapped into all of its offerings to update myself, but I'm sure it's continuing to give people tools that they find useful, both in management and in leadership. At the same time, I am a proponent of reestablishing a senior seminar. The Senior Seminar was the most senior training offered in the U.S. government, led by the State Department, as it should be, because State is the senior department for foreign affairs. Other foreign affairs agencies attended the seminar. There were several purposes to the senior seminar – education about the intersection of

domestic and foreign policy, about interagency cooperation, about leadership training – which, I think, to our detriment we are not continuing.

Career Foreign Service officers by in large spend large blocks of their professional life outside of their own country. A purpose of the seminar was to re-familiarize senior officers, or officers on the cusp of becoming senior, about their own country. If you don't know what's happening in your own country outside of Washington, it's very difficult to represent it in a way that's going to impact at policy levels. You need to understand how foreign and domestic policy intersect.

The next component of the seminar was the interagency aspect. Because you had professionals from different agencies, you learned about each other's cultures and how to interact and cooperate. For me such understanding was important because overseas, the Ambassador oversees all U.S. programs and it was important that other agencies learn about what we do and how we are trying to coordinate across the board, both in Washington and overseas. Having other foreign affairs agencies learn about the State Department in a State run program is more important than sending more State officers to the military war colleges, which is what State has done as semi-compensation for doing away with the senior seminar. That only militarizes, or further militarizes, the State Department, which we don't need. You don't need to have civilians immersed in military culture. You need the military immersed in civilian State Department culture, is the way I look at it. And the mantra is civilian control of the military.

The final component of the seminar was leadership training; we used the latest practices in adult learning. Hard charging senior leaders learned how to work smoothly in groups and other leadership approaches.

There is a Senior Seminar Alumni Association. I'm a member. We are working to have some policy material for the new administration that comes into office to consider. If they raise issues about budget costs, any senior seminar-like program budget would be offset by what other agencies pay to send officers to the seminar. Still it will take one or two years to restart anything, because other agencies have wiped senior seminar allocations out of their training cycle. In my opinion, any new seminar has to be nine months; some people tried to suggest only six months but our assignment practices favor nine months. The Foreign Service Institute actually pared elements of the old senior seminar down to one or two-day courses, but busy senior people are not going to step away from their jobs or fully commit their mental energies for that short amount of time. In order to command their attention any seminar has to be a full time assignment.

Q: I'm going to ask you in a minute about the training float (ph) that we do not have, but before that I'd like to get your thoughts about leadership. What is leadership? I hope that's not an ambush-type question, but what thoughts come to mind when that word is used?

BRAZEAL: Well, leadership can be many things. There are lots of books and theories on leadership but, in essence, in my view you manage paper and you lead people, to put it

very simply. You can lead from behind, the servant leadership theory. You can lead from the front. You can hold hands and sing "Kumbaya," you can do a lot of things. In the Foreign Service there is a hierarchy. At the same time, younger officers really want a flatter kind of organization, where their voice is heard. You simply have to balance.

I was telling someone the other day that in Addis Ababa, I would take junior officers to be note-takers in my meetings. What this meant was I always had to take notes at my own meetings, because I needed to compare their write-up with what I believed was said in the meeting. I was willing to do it, took more time, but that's how people learn.

Q: Until you mentioned the word "flatter" structure, the rest previous to that, it sounded military. You were talking about hierarchy, leading from behind.

BRAZEAL: These are theories in books. I found for some younger officers an Ambassador should be more accessible and was expected to personally take an interest in their career development.

Q: Yes, right. What's your own sense of a more horizontal, less vertical, structure.

BRAZEAL: Well, when I say flatter, for example, I stopped people standing up when I came in the room. Traditionally, as you know, employees would stand when an Ambassador entered a room. While I believe human beings need rituals and celebrations and other practices in their lives for purposes of socialization and to give meaning, at the same time, junior officers don't want an ambassador so distant that they have to stand up; they do not want that degree of formality.

I would telephone junior officers directly to speak to them. This worked well with some people. Other people preferred the layers of the hierarchy between us. I told the officers that I expected them to be on top of their portfolio better than I could be, but I might have picked up some information. I was just trying to compare what I was hearing with what they know, so let's talk. And I would always, of course, inform their supervisors I had been in touch. But I found it interesting that some people thrived under my direct approach and other people wanted the protection of bureaucratic layers and thought I was micromanaging.

Q: Yes.

BRAZEAL: You just have to be accessible in ways that sometimes ambassadors in the past didn't feel they had to be accessible. And you have to convince your staff, including junior officers, to go in the policy direction you want to go. You can no longer dictate.

Q: Convince, rather than dictate, or show by example maybe.

BRAZEAL: Or explain. If somebody has to do something, they will ask, "Why do I have to do this?"

Q: I have never seen an ambassador take notes in their own meeting.

BRAZEAL: Well, you should have been with me. I love to take notes using pencils, so I had lots of pencils in my purse.

Q: How did the younger officers react to that? Did they see that as a challenge? Did they see it – were they positively affected by that? In effect, this was quality control, I think.

BRAZEAL: Yes, this was quality control. I don't think the junior officers saw my taking notes as intimidating, because they didn't know any different. Some had a chance to write a report right away. Some would take two or three days to produce a draft. In two or three days, I might have had 10 or more other meetings. I needed notes just to keep my recollections fresh and bring out what I thought really happened.

Q: This you did consciously as a training tool.

BRAZEAL: Oh, absolutely, and it worked. In fact, I just received an e-mail from a young man who wants me to help him become a better writer and communicator, in part because he was telling me my reputation is that I'm fair, have high standards and am approachable. Anyway, I saved the e-mail just so I can remind myself in my old age how I was perceived.

This young man heard from someone who was in Addis, who took notes and wrote them up, that I sometimes would send drafts back with re-writes all over them. That Addis officer now thinks I helped make him a better Foreign Service officer.

Q: Just to be provocative, we've all met senior Foreign Service officers who have had the training and who still are not approachable. Can this be taught?

BRAZEAL: Yes, it can be taught. It's just a matter of how receptive people really want to be in moving some of these theoretical approaches and ways of being into their professional life. Some are better at change than others and, as I said, it's a generational thing. I divide officers who work for me into two types of people. I might have told you my theory before. If I have, please stop me.

There are officers who I call “custodians”: these are officers who when they take a job, they have to know the parameters, the job description, before they take it. They want to preserve the job as it is described, without having anything disrupted, and then leave it just as they found it.

There are officers who I call “activists”: these are officers who impact their job, who come up with ideas, who make changes and, of course, these are the kind of officers I prefer to have work for me. But they're more challenging to lead, because they will ask questions and they will push the envelope, thank goodness, because otherwise it is boring when everybody thinks the way you do. With custodians, it is very difficult to move forward on any policy issue because they just want to preserve what they find.

Q: Is there any place at all for custodians?

BRAZEAL: Not in the generalist area, in my view. I think people should safeguard any tendencies they have to be activists and not have those skills damped down. I think this is important, because there can be supervisors, as I tell junior officers, who are not receptive to being questioned or not receptive to exposing them to wider experiences. The junior officer has to find supervisors who are willing to have them be activists and use that assignment to make themselves better.

It takes a while, in any culture, a foreign culture particularly, to understand what you're being told. Time is needed to develop cross cultural understanding. If you're a junior officer, for example, you may not comprehend whether yes means yes or whether the yes means no, or whether the yes means maybe.

Q: This you did say in relation to the Asian culture.

BRAZEAL: With Asian culture for sure, but I was thinking about Micronesian culture.

Q: Have you dealt with, or do you have any opinion, about the dissent channel mechanism?

BRAZEAL: I love that the Foreign Service has a dissent channel. I refer to this fact when I am recruiting, because it shows the person interested in a Foreign Service career that the culture of the State Department tolerates a certain amount of dissent, as it should, in my view. And so I welcome the dissent channel as a manifestation of some flexibility, sometimes more than others under different administrations, but it's there, nonetheless.

Q: Do you believe that it has been used effectively? I'm not asking for anecdotes.

BRAZEAL: I cannot say. The channel is not very transparent, and perhaps it shouldn't be. But I do know that it is formalized, that people get replies or are supposed to get replies to their dissents -- all of that is good.

Q: Returning then to the type of training you developed, and in particular the senior seminar, the distinction sometimes made is that the U.S. military keeps, theoretically, 10 percent of its personnel available for training, but we don't. How are we going to get back to the senior seminar, lacking major funding and major hiring? How are we going to do that?

BRAZEAL: Well, I don't pretend to know the innards of our budget these days, but I don't think the senior seminar required major funding, per se. It wasn't that high-cost a program, in my view, and other agencies paid tuition, so those payments helped offset the cost to State. And for any training you still are paying for the officers' salary. But the speakers usually were free; the cost of trips were not…

Q: Actually, I was thinking of the cost of keeping an adequate number of people...

BRAZEAL: A float? Well, we have people in training now. I don't see having a large float as something that has to pre-exist before you start up a seminar again.

Secretary Powell was successful in getting more positions and we had a training float. Those float positions, however, were used to staff increased needs in Iraq and Afghanistan; once those situations become more normal over time, you should not need such large numbers of people running through one-year assignments. Such short assignment patterns skew the float. A return to normal assignment patterns, hopefully, would free up more people to fill training slots and get back to a situation where you have more tolerance for that kind of float. In any event, for the senior seminar we only had 15 State Department officers.

Q: You said earlier these were either seniors or people apparently about to become seniors, I think. Was it available to FSO-1s (Foreign Service officers)?

BRAZEAL: Yes, you could be selected for the senior seminar as an O-1. I was selected as an O-1 for the seminar.

Q: I'm just curious, because I don't know how are the people selected? Do they bid on this?

BRAZEAL: No, an officer could not bid on the senior seminar. You had to be invited to attend the senior seminar; a human resources committee reviewed the files of those officers who were eligible for training. As I recall, to be selected for the senior seminar, an officer had to have reached a certain grade and to have demonstrated ability to work at more senior levels. H.R. (human resources) segregated officers who were eligible and those officers were reviewed by a panel and 15 Foreign Service officers were selected. State civil service officers were selected via a different process that I do not recall.

Q: So you created a leadership and management school and that was a two-year experience. Any other reflections of that two-year period?

BRAZEAL: I think the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) is the jewel in the crown of the State Department. FSI has excellent people doing diplomatic statecraft training. Increasingly FSI is at capacity. It needs additional support. I think Secretary Shultz was farsighted for getting that campus in Arlington.

Q: And having it named after him.

BRAZEAL: The naming came later. Subsequent Secretaries of State preserved the campus. I think FSI is a resource that officers increasingly are utilizing, not only because of mandatory training requirements but also because they want to be there. FSI has a good atmosphere. When I go out there, people smile and speak and it's more relaxed, as

people are doing things that they know are going to add to their toolkit. I enjoyed my time there very much.

Q: On advertisements for language tapes, they say, "Speak like a diplomat," and I think that they're thinking of FSI.

BRAZEAL: That is the Rosetta Stone advertisement, yes, Rosetta Stone.

Q: They're thinking of FSI when they say that, I think. It is a very relaxed atmosphere. People think they've gone to heaven when they're assigned to anything at FSI.

BRAZEAL: Yes, I tell people, when you plan to retire, there's a retirement course. So the State Department trains people from the beginning, when they enter, all the way to train how to be a retiree and beyond. It is great.

Q: Now, you are an educator now. We can get to that much later, but do you ever think of some kind of activities at FSI for you?

BRAZEAL: I have lectured at FSI on Africa and on other subjects. I also have met officers in the cafeteria, just one on one, to talk about their career and make suggestions from the sidelines here and there.

Q: Well, we're now at the year 2000, I think. Is that right?

BRAZEAL: Well, actually, I was at FSI from '98 to 2002 at FSI, so four years.

Q: OK, well, then I won't let you go quite so quickly. You've created the Leadership Management School.

BRAZEAL: Well, I was Dean of The Senior Seminar for two years and then kept seminar responsibilities and added responsibility for the creation of the Leadership and Management School.

Q: Partly because it happened that Colin Powell became Secretary of State and was receptive to management training.

BRAZEAL: Correct, with some ground having been prepared for leadership training.

Q: So that must be quite exhilarating. You had two years and you were thinking of the ideal type of endeavor, and you then got to implement it. That's great.

BRAZEAL: Yes, but I can't say LMS was created solely because of my efforts. Collective efforts brought success.

Q: And Ruth Davis supported this and Ruth Whiteside supported it.

BRAZEAL: Oh, absolutely.

Q: And the others you were working with.

BRAZEAL: Cathy Russell, who was in charge of managing all of FSI.

Q: Yes, Cathy Russell. I have a story about her later.

BRAZEAL: OK.

Q: She's still there. Any parting reflections about the four years at FSI? Nostalgia perhaps?

BRAZEAL: No nostalgia. As I said, when I left, the senior seminar still existed, so I think we had in place a continuum of leadership and management training that officers could see themselves moving up, adding to their toolkits and learning how to lead and manage better. I hope such training has helped employees who've gone through FSI, both civil service and Foreign Service.

Q: OK, we're now at 2002.

BRAZEAL: I had been approached by the Assistant Secretary for Africa to think about becoming a deputy assistant secretary (DAS) in the Africa Bureau. The DAS position didn't work out, but he offered me the ambassadorship to Ethiopia, which I accepted. It was time to go overseas, in my view, just to change perspectives, and so I went to Ethiopia in 2002 and left in 2005. I didn't leave for Ethiopia until November, 2002, because I was among 14 or so ambassadors whose votes were held up by some Senators over an unrelated U.S.-Canada problem -- Devil's Lake issue, I think it was called. Devil’s Lake really had nothing to do with any of us; holding up our votes was a way to pressure the State Department to resolve this U.S.-Canadian issue. In any event, I arrived in November, 2002, in Ethiopia.

I've probably mentioned to you before, but I found the Ethiopians very much like Japanese, and so I found myself contented, comfortable, in Ethiopia from the beginning. Now, why are they like Japanese?

Q: Right.

BRAZEAL: Because Japan and Ethiopia are both organically formed countries, if you will, naturally formed countries. They both had emperor systems. They both closed themselves to the outside world for long periods of time. And, as a result, I felt they had developed similarities in how they communicated with each other and with strangers, that I saw in Japan and then in Ethiopia.

One similarity between Japan and Ethiopia is something the Japanese call *nemawashi,* which is the process of building consensus. It takes a relatively long time to build

consensus, compared to our practice. Any person at any level involved in the process could stop the consensus by objecting, and then the process would just have to start again. A similar approach was used in Ethiopia, so decision making moved slowly.

Q: Meaning consensus is a requirement for doing something, but it's not easy to get to consensus. Is that what you're saying?

BRAZEAL: That's right, on policy issues, on almost anything. Of course, once you reach consensus, implementation can be lightning fast because you have the consensus at all levels and can move.

They also have something in Japan called *Tatemi Hone*. Roughly, it means speaking from your head and speaking from your gut. When you speak from your gut, you're really saying what you believe. When you speak you’re your head you are saying what you think the other person wants to hear.

Q: Cerebral?

BRAZEAL: Yes. In Ethiopia, they call the equivalent of *Tatemi Hone,* wax and gold. Wax on the surface, and then you melt the wax and have the gold underneath. For me, there were similarities between Japan and Ethiopia. People are rather reticent, quiet, elegant, great hospitality, and once you get to know them, friends for life. The Japanese Ambassador to Ethiopia agreed with me, so we would occasionally talk about similarities. I would encourage officers who enjoyed serving in Ethiopia to bid on Japan because they would not get frustrated by the pace of things, because they enjoyed their time in Ethiopia.

Q: Did you have instances where that actually happened, where you had officers like yourself go from one to the other?

BRAZEAL: Not while I was there, no, but I hopefully planted the seeds.

Q: Japanese, the stereotype of Japanese is that they're very efficient. Is that the case in Ethiopia?

BRAZEAL: Yes. Ethiopians can be very efficient. They're on-time people, as well. Meetings start on time and things can happen quickly once consensus is reached. I was trained by the Japanese and so I am very much an on time, if not early arriving, person.

Q: Not to denigrate the people of Micronesia, but this really is the sort of polar opposite of what you were explaining.

BRAZEAL: Yes, different cultures.

Q: Interesting. So you were among those who have been captivated by Ethiopia. Most people who live there and serve there find it captivating.

BRAZEAL: Yes. I traveled to every part of Ethiopia, every region, and there wasn't any part that I felt a human foot had not touched at some point in history. It's a very old land and people with an old culture, a culture of 2,000, 3,000 years. To get back on my hobbyhorse a bit, because you opened the door, I would tell my country team, it's very important when you report nowadays to emphasize "Time", because Americans have such a short timeline. I blame our short timeline on technology and the use thereof, but – I always get startled when I come back to this country – Americans think a year is long term. We think six months is medium term; I haven't figured out how long short term is supposed to be.

But, in Ethiopia, short term can be several decades, medium term can be 50 years or more, and long term, well you're talking about a culture 2,000 or 3,000 years old. You have to report information in a way that Washington can digest this timeframe difference, and then, of course, to be fair to the Ethiopians, you have to tell them about how pushy we are in terms of time because you immediately can set up for a misunderstanding, simply based on the timeline difference. I think Americans need to stretch out our timeline.

Q: You mentioned technology as the pivotal thing making us this way. If you read stuff from the 18th and 19th century, it seems that there is something in American culture which is maybe, technology apart, there is something that makes us have a short attention span.

BRAZEAL: Well, I don't know about short attention span, but there is something that makes us look to the future, to not drag history with us, so to speak, but to continually look forward. In terms of time, today Americans say "what, you haven't done this yet? I sent you an e-mail an hour ago." An awareness of how time is used in other countries is very important for a diplomat. In diplomacy you are talking about changing and moving societies and that means changing and moving people, and people don't move very fast, particularly in cultures that are old.

Q: History, looking forward, looking backward, free association, Balkans keeping grudges for many centuries, a possible negative, maybe, effect of a sense of one's history. I guess for every positive there's a negative. Having a sense of the last 2,000 or 3,000 years must also give – I've never been to Ethiopia – a tremendous sense of identity and cultural cohesiveness, perhaps?

BRAZEAL: Yes and no. Keeping your history with you is like having a 10,000-pound weight on your leg that you're dragging with you, in a sense, but, yes, history gives you a sense of place and time but it can stymie change. People forget Ethiopia is really comprised of people who don't look like most of the new Ethiopian-Americans. There are Ethiopians who look like they could be from every part of Africa, and, for some of them, their group has been colonized internally by Ethiopians who came out of the highlands. This history is why you have, for example, different views in different parts of Ethiopia about using Amharic as a national language.

Some groups see Amharic as a language of the colonizer and they prefer to use their own languages. Some people have criticized this Ethiopian government for creating “states” that follow ethnic lines in different regions of the country. I think such groupings might have been necessary, to keep the country together, because they reflected the reality on the ground.

Q: If you've read the "The Emperor" of Ryszard Kapuscinski, it sets this incredible formality of every aspect of life. It's a fictional book, but do you feel that he's getting to something?

BRAZEAL: Ethiopian people are formal. I mean they're not as ebullient and as free flowing as in other parts of the world.

Q: Not as ebullient, but very hospitable.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely hospitable, yes, extremely hospitable.

Q: OK, what about some of the political events that occurred during your three-plus years there.

BRAZEAL: Well, I arrived in 2002 and found a drought/famine situation. There were 13 million people who we needed to feed or most of them could die. So, for me, I faced a steep learning curve -- learning the difference between a drought and a famine and what to do. But, happily, I had an excellent team in place, particularly at USAID, and we were able to lay the informational foundation needed for the Ethiopian and U.S. governments, as well as for other donors, to understand what was happening out in the countryside. Because, contrary to the stereotype of diplomats only staying in the capital city and going to cocktail parties, American diplomats traveled all over Ethiopia all of the time, so my people were out and about, and we could speak from “eyes on” reality.

Q: I think you referred to donors. There was cooperation, perhaps, with the E.U., perhaps, or the U.N.? What was there to feed the 13 million?

BRAZEAL: Well, there's a structure in Addis that I certainly came to appreciate. The donors meet both at the level of the heads of our development agencies in country, as well as at the ambassadorial level, to compare notes and clarify efforts to make our monies go further.

Q: Is that a tradition?

BRAZEAL: It is an organized donors group. The donors are the U.S., of course, and the E.U. countries individually, and the E.U. itself, the U.N. and some of its components and, of course, you have some nontraditional donors capability. What I mean by nontraditional donors might be countries that might not have food to send, but they can contribute money to cover costs of ships that could bring the food to Ethiopia, et cetera.

Q: Did you feel that this mechanism worked in this crisis?

BRAZEAL: Wonderfully, once donors were convinced of the severity of the situation. Convincing the donor community writ large became a matter of laying an informational foundation, which the U.S. was able to do by bringing American drought/famine experts who could travel around Ethiopia, look at some of the same things Embassy officials had seen, and then write reports which we could share with other donors and the local government.

Q: There was something called the early warning. Is that familiar? It was a satellite imagery thing or something?

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes, there is the FEWS (Future Early Warning System).

Q: FEWS, right.

BRAZEAL: F-E-W-S. There is that, but we also were able to help the Ethiopians over time improve and establish more of a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) type mechanism. I want to stress that the Ethiopian government was not trying to hide what was happening. It asked for helped. But, anyway, I'm happy to say the U.S. led this incredible effort and we were able to feed 13 million needy people and minimize the numbers of deaths.

Q: Did you have any idea before you were assigned to this post that that was going to happen?

BRAZEAL: That magnitude, no. The drought cycles are coming faster because of, dare I say, global warming. The cycles are coming more frequently. I talked to the Ethiopian President when I presented my credentials, and he had been in their air force as a young man and used to fly over Ethiopia, and at that time, maybe 40 or so years earlier, it was green with trees. Most of the trees are gone now because people have cut them for fuel, internal wars destroyed them, drought destroyed them; moreover, population pressures combined with overuse of land, et cetera, has led to more frequent droughts.

After we responded to the needs of 13 million Ethiopians, Embassy officials went to the Ethiopian government and essentially said, in a non-confrontational private way: “we hope you will look at your agricultural policies, because we can't keep feeding millions of people year after year. The next cycle, maybe 15 million people would need food and the next would see even more people in need. There just isn't that much food and that much money that donors can mobilize. The successful donor response this time was just luck.”

It was part luck that the U.S. and other donors were able to get all of that food and get it in time and preposition it and get it shipped upcountry; it was a massive logistical undertaking led by the U.S. I'm very proud of our efforts, because we were not cynical like some other donors who will remain unnamed, who took some convincing because

they said: “well, Ethiopians die all the time, every year, so what's different?” And I responded these deaths are not something the U.S. would find acceptable.

Q: At the time, there's always a discussion of who's the poorest country in the world and, at times, people have claimed that it was Ethiopia, but I think that shifts constantly.

BRAZEAL: It does shift. Anyway, the Ethiopian government did review and change agricultural policies. We suggested that the government then hold a donor conference to discuss their changes with donors and other stakeholders, which it did. My USAID mission was brilliant in its ability to rewrite our strategic development plan for Ethiopia in six weeks and then sell the new plan in Washington, so that we had buy-in back here. This buy-in produced Washington commitments to fund some strategic programs to create markets in parts of Ethiopia and to help FEMA-type operations determine whether Ethiopians were chronically food insecure or not; depending on this designation, different development programs were available.

I'm pleased that today, at least trying to watch Ethiopia out of the side of my eye since I left, the numbers of Ethiopians needing emergency food aid have decreased. Nonetheless, things are dicey in that part of the world in general these days. Leading the international community’s response to the 2002/3 drought was one of the larger things we did. Of course, for HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) the Embassy started the PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) program. My CDC (Centers for Disease Control) team did foundational work on PEPFAR and we made a difference. Ethiopia’s first lady and I were publicly tested for HIV/AIDS, seen on national TV, because we wanted women (and men) to know their status.

There was a national election in Ethiopia in May, 2005, and we worked with the government to get international observers and to press for free and fair elections. At that time I was head of the Ambassadors' Donors Group (there had a rotating presidency); we worked with the opposition and the government to try to minimize the violence/friction that occurred before, but especially, after the election. Election day was wonderful and voting proceeded relatively smoothly. My Embassy and other embassies had observers scattered around the country as did international observer groups. The day after the election, however, the opposition and the government had the same strategy, which was to declare victory and not budge from that position. The atmosphere became very fraught.

Before and after the election, I met constantly with government officials, the prime minister, other donors, members of the opposition; I worked with other ambassadors as a troika, with other ambassadors and with the African Union. The Ambassadors Donor Group issued statements. We called on the opposition to take seats it had won but the opposition did not want to do so fearing, it said, the government undercutting its ability to succeed. There were some deaths of opposition demonstrators after the elections. I believe, however, the collective efforts of the donors helped minimize violence and, perhaps, saved some lives.

Of course, you know the African Union (AU) is headquartered in Addis; I also worked closely with the AU, including on Darfur. Since this interview will be published after I retire next year, I can confess that I ignored my Washington instructions regarding the African Union when I went to Ethiopia. I was instructed to keep the AU "at arm's length" because the U.S. was not sure how the AU would evolve; was the AU going to be different from the Organization of African Unity? My position was that you have to get to know AU officials in order to know where they're headed so, of course, I got to know the head of the AU and most other officials. In addition, I carved out one officer in the political/ econ section to report on just the AU; the Embassy's AU team was myself and one officer. Our reporting on what the AU was doing and thinking helped Washington understand how it was evolving, so by the time Darfur broke and the U.S. wanted to work with the AU, we had already established contacts up and down the AU operation.

Q: the policy now, I hope not to misstate it, is cooperation, not paternalism, with the A.U., and I think it's a real policy. Certainly, the present assistant secretary I think really believes that. So you actually saw the very beginnings of that. The previous instruction was just wait and see, is that what you're saying?

BRAZEAL: Arm's length, arm's length.

Q: Arm's length.

BRAZEAL: I didn't keep the AU officials at arm's length. I embraced them all.

Q: When did the OAU (Organization of African Unity) become the AU? There was the Organization of African Unity, which was never taken seriously, I think.

BRAZEAL: The AU came into being in 2002. Well, the OAU was seen as more of a political club, a club that would not criticize its members and a club essentially founded to rid Africa of colonial rule. It was established in part to fight against apartheid in South Africa, so there was a political agenda, but it wasn't an agenda the U.S. supported at the time. And the AU had a lot of new initiatives and admirable initiatives and it needed support.

I know that by reporting on how the AU was evolving, we helped ease Washington's concerns.

Q: Now, some paragraphs ago, you used the word "dicey." There were frictions with Eritrea.

BRAZEAL: Yes.

Q: What occurred during the time you were there, with Eritrea?

BRAZEAL: Well, we had the UNMEE (United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea), the U.N. peacekeeping entity, both in Eritrea and in Ethiopia, on both sides of the border.

And the issue was the demarcation of the border, as opposed to the delineation. Again, kissing cousins as the Eritreans and the Ethiopians are, they can be very stubborn. The Eritreans' position was: “Demarcate and then we'll talk about everything else and normalize relations.” And the Ethiopians were saying, “Well, we need to talk as we demarcate because there are some areas where it doesn't make sense to put the border.”

Q: I'm sorry, I don't know the distinction. Demarcate is the process that leads to delineation later?

BRAZEAL: No, delineation is the process of drawing lines on maps. Demarcation is the actual placement of pillars and border crossings and physically establishing the line that has been delineated. But if you haven't been to that part of the world, it is a challenge. By drawing straight lines on maps, you may discover that on a practical level on the ground you have separated a village from its grazing land for its herd – the village would be in one country and the grazing land would be in the other country. Another example of the need for both countries to talk as they demarcated the border would be a village located on an escarpment would be in one country and everything around the escarpment would be in the other country.

So you need, in my view, a practical ability to talk about these practical issues as you went along, to make some changes and some adjustments.

Q: You said that both sides tended to be stubborn. During the period that you were there, I guess you were an observer, not a party, in these negotiations.

BRAZEAL: Well, the U.S. is a witness to the Algiers agreement, so we had an interest in seeing a peaceful resolution to demarcation, an ongoing interest, and we talked to the Ethiopian government about the issue a lot, as well as to the U.N. and to other interested parties.

Q: It could only have been frustrating to see stubbornness in such a poor part of the world, and I think an American would normally say, please, just settle it. Was that your feeling?

BRAZEAL: Most Americans come with that feeling to simply resolve the dispute, I think. Views change, however, when you visit the border area and talk to the people living there. It is important for diplomats to understand the emotional content of the war for the people. Yes, for most Americans, Badme, the small town where the fighting started that launched the war...

Q: Badme?

BRAZEAL: Badme, B-A-D-M-E, is now a pile of rocks, essentially. And people say, well, why are people fighting over a pile of rocks? Why is this? To try to get people to understand, I would say having Badme wind up in Eritrea had the same type of emotional reaction as if an international commission after World War II gave Pearl Harbor to the

Japanese, just to try to get people to understand the level of feeling over those piles of rocks. And so, yes, we could say build another Badme, which we frequently would suggest. What difference?

But going to Badme and seeing the area and talking to people who live on the border, they know what's in Eritrea and they know what's in Ethiopia. They seem to know. The people there seem to know, because you'd ask, "Well, why aren't you plowing that field over there?" "Well, that's Eritrea."

So if they know enough of the history, then it seems to me that it would be helpful to have them in communication with each other and help ease the pressures on the government, but there is more going on than just that dispute between the two countries.

Q: Are you saying that in Asmara and in Addis, the governments were riding roughshod over the people who actually occupied that part of the world?

BRAZEAL: No, I can only speak for the Ethiopian side and the government represented the views of their people living along the border.

Q: At least in the abstract. Well, you were saying that to actually understand or to live with the frustration, best to talk to the people directly affected. Did you feel that the governments conducting the negotiation.

BRAZEAL: No, no, the governments agreed that an international boundary commission would make the decision of where the delineation went.

Q: Did those people lack understanding?

BRAZEAL: Yes. The boundary commission never visited the area. They never went to see the terrain, the difficulty. They simply tried to use old colonial maps, very imprecise things, and drew a line on a map.

Q: It sounds like Europe, 1815. Now, some people were very surprised – I think this goes back before this period when Eritrea became a country. Some people were surprised that the AU accepted and even supported that, since their policy had been go by the old colonial maps.

BRAZEAL: It still is the policy.

Q: This goes quite a bit before when you were there, but did this surprise us? Did this make us wonder about the AU, that they would make an exception to such a strong...

BRAZEAL: No, the issue of Eritrean independence did not make the US wonder about the AU. I mean, holding to historical colonial boundaries still is a strong policy position vis-à-vis all of Africa, but in terms of Ethiopia, Ethiopia had a constitution that permits secession and the Eritreans voted to secede and they were allowed to do that peacefully.

Some other Ethiopians still feel that Eritrea is very much an integral part of Ethiopia. You can blame the Italians for all of the difficulties way back when for creating even a sensibility in the Eritrean region that they were somehow different from and separate from Ethiopia, but it depends on how far back in history you want to go.

Q: the Italians were in Addis for just a relatively brief time, right?

BRAZEAL: Yes, a relatively brief time but they thought they were going to stay.

Q: It was like Napoleon in Egypt, but a little longer, I think, about 15 or 20 years? Not more than 15 or 20 years.

BRAZEAL: Yes, not very long.

Q: And yet long enough to make trouble.

BRAZEAL: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Well, it's a very complex thing. You had a drought or a famine, and since you raised the distinction, I don't think I would be able to define it.

BRAZEAL: Well, a drought is a temporary situation, whereas a famine develops over time and takes longer to work out of, in terms of needing longer periods of rain to replenish the land, longer periods of time to help the soil recover, that kind of distinction.

Q: So you had real obstacles and challenges, plus political frictions, plus an election that was contested. This was a lot to deal with.

BRAZEAL: Oh, yes, it was very busy. I enjoyed it.

Q: and the election, was this not the election when there was violence in the aftermath?

BRAZEAL: In the aftermath, yes.

Q: Can you describe what you think happened that day, when people were killed?

BRAZEAL: Most Americans would think, let people demonstrate, get it out of their systems and then emotions might die down. The Ethiopian approach seemed counterintuitive to Americans; the Ethiopian approach was that you don't let people demonstrate because they get out of hand and then you can't get them back into control.

I usually defer to local people knowing themselves better than I would ever know them, so if Ethiopians believe demonstrations should not be allowed, then their approach had been fairly clear. The government had indicated what it would do if there was a demonstration and the opposition, egged on by the diaspora which was in part funding the opposition, had said there would be demonstrations against the election results. I have

feelings about the diaspora, at least that part of it that supported the opposition; the diaspora was safe overseas, not needing to be at risk physically themselves, urging opposition supporters to do this, that, or the other. The diaspora appeared willing to let opposition supporters die or be injured in hopes that the “international community” would somehow reverse the election results and put the opposition in power.

What the U.S. and the other donors wanted, and I told both the opposition and the government, was to support a democratic process and the institutions of democracy. The U.S. would not support one candidate over another candidate. We want to help strengthen the electoral commission, we want to help strengthen the parliament, but we would not crown someone and put him in power. This message is an abbreviation of what was said and certainly baldly put, but it is essentially what the donor community was saying at the time. As I said, I was head of the Ambassadors' Donors Group, so we would speak collectively; we wanted to try to help improve the process, very imperfect as it was. But so was Florida and Ohio in our own election, so I don't look for perfection, especially in a country that has no history of democracy. It was feudalistic with an emperor, and then a dictator. And so Ethiopia was undergoing an evolution toward democracy and to help the evolution, to me, you have to help the institutions survive and strengthen and prompt loyalty by the people to the institutions. The U.S. and other donors wanted the opposition to take their seats. We wanted them to fill the positions they had won, and then the donors could help train them, help do any number of things within that context of learning.

But Ethiopians are different. They have a different approach to things. For the first six months I was in country, to everyone I met, regular Ethiopians, Ethiopian officials, foreigners, Americans, my first question for the first six months was “how do you put pressure on an Ethiopian?” I wanted to know. I wanted to hear different answers and come up with my conclusions.

I concluded that basically you don't easily pressure an Ethiopian, or if you do, you only expect it to work once and then perhaps never again. What this conclusion meant to me was that you have to pick and choose your battles. But, that said, the government allowed more pre-election activity than it had allowed ever before: they had a more open press, they had televised political debates, they permitted international election observers, etc. The opposition was able to contest seats in a wide swath of the country. In fact, the opposition won a lot of seats. I'm really happy for those opposition people who chose to take their seats in parliament.

And then the opposition politicians objected to some of the rules being changed in parliament on how to introduce legislation. What could I say? We had a political party in our Congress that wouldn't allow the other party to introduce legislation, so could I be sympathetic? Yes. Could I say change your rule? Maybe. But could I say that they had no right to change the rule? I'm not sure.

Q: As I listen to your description of their culture, I imagine them listening politely but not, maybe, really listening to advice from the outside. You say that they have turned inside traditionally. I can't think of a better word than stubborn.

BRAZEAL: It depends on how you couch the advice, I think, and that goes for every country in the world. People don't like common scolds; to be a common scold is to have lifetime employment because no one is perfect. I could go in to say, well, we had Florida in the U.S. and we learned from that experience; you too need to count ballots a little better, or you need to have observers, or you need to strengthen the process, the institutions, the electoral commission, then that's better than saying, "This election was not perfect and you need to change."

Q: And do you feel that they sought or appreciated that advice?

BRAZEAL: They sought and appreciated some advice. They wanted to hear from people who they felt had an interest in what was happening in Ethiopia but not hear from those they believed were just dabbling around because of global politics.

Q: OK, and you said that some opposition people who won seats took them and some didn't. Did I understand that correctly?

BRAZEAL: That's correct.

Q: And you also said that you were hoping that those who won would take their seats. I guess this was a winner-take-all mentality?

BRAZEAL: It's the same system we have, yes, winner take all.

Q: So those who didn't take their seats did so out of protest over the whole process? Is that right? Why would they not take their seats?

BRAZEAL: Seats were not filled by some opposition officials because they thought the opposition had won the overall election. Their view was that "We were robbed," and, therefore, we're not going to participate.

Q: Well, was there friction between opposition who took their seats and opposition who didn't take their seats? There must have been.

BRAZEAL: Yes, some of the opposition has fallen apart subsequently.

Q: What does this imply for the Ethiopian body politic?

BRAZEAL: Just that they will continue. That election was a learning process. There will still be opposition. There will still be this government.

Q: OK. You talked about open press and debates and free discussions. Just, again, never having been there, I read reports about suppression of the press at this time.

BRAZEAL: Most of the time there was strict overseeing of the press, yes, but before the lead up to the election, there was a lot of loosening up.

Q: What happened?

BRAZEAL: The government felt that some of the press was fomenting any color revolution you want -- green, red, white, rose -- and such a revolution was not going to happen in Ethiopia from their point of view. And so they thought the press was part and parcel of trying to get people to overthrow the government, which was against the constitution.

Q: You haven't said this, but I think you're implying that we can be most effective as the superpower not by leading them or pushing them or imposing our own values, but rather by seeing what it is they're doing and see if we can pragmatically give them some ideas.

BRAZEAL: I agree. I don't think you can impose a democracy from the outside. I think you have to see what is organically developing and encourage such developments in a direction toward democracy. I do think democracy is the best system for most people, but you have to assess people where they are and in their stage of existence.

Q: What's your feeling about how they perceived you?

BRAZEAL: Well, I was the first female ambassador from the United States It took us 100 years. By the way, I also was there at the 100-year anniversary of diplomatic relations, which I thought was special.

Q: Well, OK, you encouraged the opposition to be part of the process. You encouraged the government, I think, to be maybe a bit more flexible.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely.

Q: So were you perceived as everybody's friend or everybody's gadfly?

BRAZEAL: I'm sure there were people who didn't like me on both sides, but that's OK. I'm not there to be liked. I'm there to represent my country.

Q: What do you believe that you were able to achieve, and, if you had it to do again, do you think you would have done it the same way?

BRAZEAL: I think I would have done things the same way. I already talked about feeding millions of Ethiopians during the famine, about the election, about the border dispute with Eritrea, about HIV/AIDS and PEPFAR, etc. I think Ethiopians also were impressed that I, as a woman, traveled all over the country into some of the areas that

were not built up, and I was happy to do so. I believe as a diplomat you have to get out and talk to people. I think my stamina and my interest in the Ethiopian people impressed them. People tell me that I am still remembered in various locales.

Q: As the one who traveled?

BRAZEAL: Well, no, not as a traveler but as a person who is interested in the Ethiopians. I have a citation given to me by the foreign minister, which was very meaningful, for appreciating the Ethiopian people. People respond to those who are sincerely interested in them. They have a culture, they have a history. I don't have to validate it for that history and culture to exist. I am always interested in why people do things, and frequently, that interest is enough to give people a reason to listen to you.

Was I successful all the time? No. Sometimes, I think I made a difference, quietly perhaps. You don't have to toot diplomacy in the public and take credit for this, that and the other thing, but people knew what the U.S. agenda was. It was very clear to everybody.

It didn't make some people happy in Kenya that I wasn't leading the opposition, although as I indicated my predecessor seemed to feel that he did. It didn't make the opposition in Ethiopia happy that the U.S. wasn't making a determination that it won the election. Actually, I think the Ethiopian government party ultimately did win, because the Oromo vote was split and they're one of the largest groups, if not the largest.

I knew the Ethiopian government would never give up power willingly to the opposition, because each had a vision based on their history of how to organize themselves to run the country. The Amharas, many in the opposition, traditionally wanted to rule Ethiopia with a strong central hand from Addis. And the Tigrinyans, who are now mostly included in the government, prefer a decentralized model of running the country.

Q: It can be embargoed to whatever extent you want.

BRAZEAL: Good. But the Ethiopian government believed, if the opposition took over national power, the opposition would undo everything they had spent their lives fighting for and they simply were not going to allow that to happen. So I don't believe, no matter who was telling them that they lost the election and to give up power, that the current government would agree. After the next five-year national election cycle, maybe more progress toward democracy will have been made, and opposition and government parties might agree to work together. I will say that having traveled around Ethiopia to those areas of the country that had been ignored historically, I can tell you that those parts of the country will not willingly go back to a strong central dictate out of Addis, because they feel they have gotten their voice. They receive funds from the national treasury, just like our states. They can fund what they think is important. They finally have that voice. They are not going to willingly go back to a centralized political system.

Q: It sounds like great progress for the country, outside of the capital city.

BRAZEAL: And in the capital city. The opposition won the mayor position in Addis and the government would have turned power over to them, but they didn't take their seats. Go figure.

Q: It must have been very frustrating.

BRAZEAL: Yes, and the opposition was in a sense defeating themselves – they were thinking, if we take the Addis positions, the national government is going to squeeze the Addis budget. They're going to make sure we fail. Donors were saying, "Hey, we're going to be around, we're going to try to help. We want to see the process succeed."

Q: So they must have vacillated between being very focused on their own internal conflict and being receptive to ideas from the outside, maybe, I'm guessing.

BRAZEAL: The Ethiopian prime minister was the smartest man I've ever met in my life. Prime Minister Meles likes to read. I'd suggest to U.S. officials when they visited to bring books for him, and he'd read them. Prime Minister Meles would know the books better than the visitor. He's a very smart person.

Q: No doubt.

BRAZEAL: So, in a sense, what developing countries need is intellectual capital. The aid money is nice, because the country poor, but it is intellectual capital that people really covet around the world and that's where the U.S. can make a difference, when we're true to our values and our principles. When we are not, people stop listening.

Q: Do you feel your public affairs section adequately assisted in providing intellectual capital?

BRAZEAL: Yes and no. I wanted to get Lani Guinier, for example, to Ethiopia, and I believe “the thought police” back in the U.S. were a little suspicious of this idea because she was...

Q: “The thought police”?.

BRAZEAL: The “thought police” is what I label political folk in any administration who want to impose their political party’s philosophies onto the apolitical bureaucracy. In the case of Lani Guinier, she was nominated to head the civil rights division of the Justice Department under President Clinton but after Republicans and some Democratic Senators and hatchet people distorted and caricatured her academic philosophies, President Clinton withdrew her nomination. But I wanted her in particular, either by videoconference or in person, because of her writings about how people share power in minority and majority winner-take-all systems. She had a lot to say. I'm still disappointed that we couldn't get her and I think, from what I gather from my public diplomacy section, it was Washington that had a tin ear and wasn't trying hard and all that. I think it was a missed opportunity. I

think those kinds of intellectual exchanges are very valuable to Ethiopians who can make up their own mind, thank you very much, after they digest the information.

Q: Well, as a P.D. (public diplomacy) officer myself, I have to ask, Ambassador, your perception of how open we've been since 1999, since the elimination of USIA (United States Information Agency)? Do you feel that there has been more policy pushing, is this a perception you have? Do you think we've lost something by giving up USIA?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I do, and I think that it's unfortunate that we've had people who confuse public diplomacy with public relations.

Q: Please explain, for the listener.

BRAZEAL: I think public diplomacy is not a matter of dialing up our explanations about U.S. policy. In this case, "it is the policy, stupid". If foreign governments and people can't agree with the policy, I don't care how nice you package it up and put it out there, people aren't going to open it and accept it. It's as simple as that.

So to the extent that different administrations see public diplomacy as a public relations business and think, let me package a policy/position a different way or make it prettier somehow, but not change it, people don't buy it.

Q: Do you define public diplomacy, as I do, as dialogue rather than monologue?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely.

Q: Leaded question. Do you feel we've lost that to some extent?

BRAZEAL: Yes. I think the unilateralist approach to issues harms friends of the U.S., because they can't necessarily say that they're on board unless their voice is listened to; our enemies relish this isolation on our part, self isolation. So, yes, it's a hell of a mess.

Q: I'm stumped.

BRAZEAL: I'm sorry. I shouldn't agree with you?

Q: No, I love being agreed with, but it just makes me very sad to think that my worst fears are shared by other people.

BRAZEAL: But I think we have a very sharp, professional cadre of Foreign Service nationals still working for the public diplomacy sections and we don't listen to them to our peril. I think that we have bright young American officers in that career path, who want to make a difference, and that we shouldn't skirt too close to the you're-just-a-deliverer-of-mail job description. We have to come back with the dialogue. Happily, as I said, I was in Ethiopia during the 100-year anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations,

which was 2003, and we set it up for a whole year, of course, because you milk something like that forever and a day.

My message, publicly, was that after 100 years there should be nothing the U.S. and Ethiopia can't talk about. This formulation allowed us to talk about human rights, publicly, privately, with every group. This message allowed us to raise any issue, because we've had diplomatic relations for 100 years, not always happily, not always productively, but we were there. And so this longevity allows us to say certain things. The U.S. was one of the first countries to reach this milestone. And so, to me, I pushed the 100-year anniversary as far as I could push with everybody to talk, and that's the kind of dialogue we should have.

Q: Powerful message.

BRAZEAL: For both sides. Diplomacy, to me, means the U.S. side should listen, and I've always listened. In Kenya when I first arrived and was making courtesy calls, I carried a book with me called *Good Graft and Bad Graft*, written about the U.S. I had lots of these books, and I would carry one to every meeting I had with a cabinet official and I'd say, "Oh, I'm reading this book. Here, take my copy," and give it to them and explain that the U.S. had periods where we've had terrible corruption but such problems could be overcome, without condemning them as bad people for having corruption. I wanted to make the U.S. experience relevant to Kenya's experience with corruption and I did not want to condemn or scold. You can't do that to people and expect them to listen to you.

I found some Kenyans officials then wanted to talk about corruption and we'd exchange ideas and even get into details. I recall talking to one official about roads. He'd say that even if some money was siphoned off and materials used that were not up to spec, at the end of the day there was a road. I'd reply that because materials were used that didn't meet requirements, that road would deteriorate rapidly just like the Nairobi to Mombasa road and cost the country even more money to fix the problem, if the additional money wasn't stolen outright. My point was that making the U.S. experience relevant to the Kenyan experience, you could have dialogue that might create positive change.

Q: You mentioned your respect and admiration for Prime Minister Meles. Can you say something else about your meetings with him or his evolution?

BRAZEAL: Well, at the end of my tour he mentioned that I had come close to changing his mind about some issues. Please note that he said "come close", because he was not one to change direction easily. I told him I felt I'd had a master's class in what it was to be an Ethiopian, how he was and how he could describe the history.

Q: Did you see him very often?

BRAZEAL: In three years, I saw him maybe over 100 times, and that's either with people or alone or with note-takers, in a variety of ways. I never counted, but it was quite a lot.

Q: That's unusual. Do you feel that he was the best person to be there at that time, for Ethiopia?

BRAZEAL: Well, I think yes, yes and no. The EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) does not run the country with one man. They run it as a group. There is a group of people that you need to know and try to influence. Prime Minister Meles is the public face, but there are other people. And Ethiopians and foreigners would make a mistake -- it's that emperor mentality they get -- that if Meles says something, then it will happen. It's that emperor mentality and it's that centralized power in Addis model, not realizing that the EPRDF is trying to push power down to local levels. That said, Meles did have influence within the group.

Q: You mean Ethiopians and also the international community?

BRAZEAL: Yes. The international community is disinterested in the nuances of things in Africa, by and large.

Q: Yes.

BRAZEAL: Just give me the bumper sticker version and the stereotype, please. Don't bother me with the facts or the nuance.

Q: I think that's the case in other continents, also.

BRAZEAL: But it is our job as a diplomat to give the best advice we can to our government, as I tell my team.

Q: Oh, and I meant to ask, apropos that, you say that U.S. policy towards Ethiopia was very clear to Ethiopia. Was it very clear in between Washington and the embassy? I'm not asking you to reveal bumps along the way, but was there a harmonious agreement between the African Bureau and what you were doing?

BRAZEAL: Yes, and I think the Bureau appreciated our reporting. We always tried to report in a way that gave suggestions/recommendations of what the U.S. should do, so that gave State Department officials something to take to the interagency process. And so I worked very closely with the current ambassador to Ethiopia, Don Yamamoto, who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the African Bureau when I was in Addis, and with other people. I think they listened.

I believe there was a sense in some offices in the Department that the Embassy was not publicly as hard on Ethiopia on human rights as we could have been, but for me that's just Washington's tin ear to a certain extent. If you are not being a public common scold, you're not doing your job is the default setting in some offices in Washington. But I don't see running around the globe scolding people and telling them do this and do that as our job. That's not what diplomacy is, in my view.

Q: Not referring to Yamamoto personally, do you feel that what you did at that time has been continued?

BRAZEAL: I think so. We had an interim acting ambassador for a while, and then Don. Everybody's got their hands full when you're out there; I don't second guess my successors. I know what's on their plate and I applaud them for getting up every morning and doing it, and doing it well. It does make a difference, what the U.S. says and does, and it doesn't mean the Ethiopians always have to like it. Sometimes they didn't like what we said. Sometimes I would get a little emotional, as well, with them, but that's OK, as long as you've established that platform off of which after 100 years we can do these things, and talk.

So, yes, there is continuity, but in a different way. I did a lot of things, I think, to bring the Ethiopians, the Embassy and the Americans closer together. Another thought, I think most American Foreign Service officers miss utilizing the talents in our FSN corps. They will ignore FSNs. They will see themselves in competition with FSNs. Particularly the junior officers see themselves in competition with the FSN, because the junior officers do not distinguish his/her job from the FSNs job quite yet.

People would complain, Ethiopia is a two-year post. I argued it should be a three year post and that we ought to have some Amharic speakers. But, that said, I helped establish an FSN sponsor program. A committee talked to some of our FSNs and they said they'd be happy to share their culture, which the Americans assigned to Addis said was too impenetrable.

The FSNs said, "Well, yes, we'll be a volunteer sponsor, only if American officers request a sponsor. We don't want to be assigned to every American who comes here, because maybe they're not interested." So we told the Americans, "OK, this program is voluntary, but if you want to have a FSN sponsor, you can have one." Some sponsorships worked out beautifully; some meetings were just a cup of tea, maybe once or twice, but lasting friendships developed. I told the newcomers to ask their FSN sponsors anything -- where to shop, where to sightsee, why do people walk out in front of your car without any indication they're going to do so, etc. Just ask anything. Ethiopians are happy to share their culture and they have 2,000 years of it.

The FSN sponsorship program worked. I'm hoping those kinds of programs continue. I included the FSNs in our community Christmas party and our Easter party and our other parties. Why not? I mean, I couldn't understand why we hadn't included them before. I hope programs that bring Americans and Ethiopians together as a community will continue.

We held the annual Embassy picnic at the international school so the FSNs could bring their children, and they had access to the track and other recreational facilities for a day. If those things have stopped, I would be very disappointed.

Q: Here's my only Mike Wallace-type question. At FSI, they tell junior officers over and over and over again to listen to their FSNs, to respect them and to honor them as colleagues. Very few of them do so. What's going wrong?

BRAZEAL: I think it is the junior officer not being able to articulate the difference between what the junior officer does and what the FSN does. And, of course, we're in an up-or-out system that makes FSOs competitive, usually not aggressively so against one another because you might wind up working for the other person, but the junior officer can be competitive with the FSNs. To the extent an officer sees the FSN being listened to or guiding an American, the "I know everything" junior officer does not want to honor them. So I think maybe helping delineate the roles and the jobs and how they differ might give more comfort to the junior officer, enough that they can then utilize that FSN expertise.

Q: So you feel like they go out, they sort of feel challenged or even threatened a bit by the greater knowledge possessed by the FSN.

BRAZEAL: Right, which puts you in a different position, mentally, and a lot of Americans can't tolerate that difference.

Q: Yes, yes, not just junior officers, too.

BRAZEAL: That's true.

Q: We almost start abusing your time here. Let's put the book end on Ethiopia and I have asked you some general questions, like what you think you were able to achieve. You have answered that question. Do you have any other reflections about your time in Ethiopia?

BRAZEAL: Marvelous country. People ought to go see it.

Q: Going to go back soon?

BRAZEAL: Maybe. I was thinking about visiting before I retire, or soon after.

Q: Fantastic. Well, this concludes.

(End File)

Q: This is Dan Whitman, interviewing Ambassador Rea Brazeal. It's now January 12th, I think, 2008. And when we last spoke, Ambassador, we were discussing in general diplomacy as a career and what type of diplomacy seems to be most effective. And we were also talking about Ethiopia, where you were ambassador.

Might you have any other reflections about your time in Ethiopia or the region, given the convulsions that are happening there right now?

BRAZEAL: I do have some observations. I'll start with Kenya because I knew Kibaki and Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka and many of the other people who are still in the power structure of Kenya. I'm hoping Kenya comes out of its current political turmoil in a way that strengthens the democratic institutions of the state, but one never knows.

But in terms of personalities, when I was there, President Moi was still in power; I came to appreciate what I believed he and the government were doing, despite the fact President Moi was no respecter of human rights and was heavy handed, and that was to redistribute the benefits of the system to tribes other than the Kikuyu.

It was the British who elevated the Kikuyu during colonial times, perhaps not intentionally, but they took land from the Kikuyu and in a somewhat compensatory process, they then educated the Kikuyu and placed them in the fledgling civil service and in other professions around the country. The British did not undertake such programs for other tribes.

As a consequence, it was the Kikuyu, both through education and practical experience, who were ready to lead the country at independence. The first President, Kenyatta, was a Kikuyu. Moi was Kenyatta's Vice President. Moi came from the smallest of the smaller tribes. He's a Tugen, which is part of the Kalenjin group, but the grouping is comprised of smaller tribes...

Conventional history said that Moi was Kenyatta's faithful vice president for many years; after Kenyatta died, Moi was elected president, because the Kikuyu thought they could control him. Moi expected loyalty from the Kikuyu, the same as he had given Kenyatta over the years. The Kikuyu attempted a coup, which failed, when they realized that they could not control Moi, after which Moi started to suppress any opposition. Moi continued with programs to redistribute the spoils of the system to many non-Kikuyu and other tribes.

One wonders what Moi would have been like as a leader if a coup attempt had not happened. But, in any event, events happened. Now you have Kibaki back in power, and even before the election I would hear from my friends in Kenya that he was putting other Kikuyu into positions of power, noticeably. Ordinary Kenyans — I always try to stay in touch with ordinary people — believe that the Kikuyu will not sell land to people who were not Kikuyu. It is very difficult to buy land and it is very difficult to get a business license. It is very difficult to get established, if you will—to get a leg up – if you are not a Kikuyu.

Q: Under Kibaki.

BRAZEAL: Under Kibaki. Such repeated "facts" are behind what people mean when you hear Kenyans say the Kikuyu are arrogant, that they aren't letting other people into the process enough. So my point is that elections, by themselves, are not sufficient to fix ongoing structural imbalances in the distribution of power. There have to be steps that re-

balance power sharing or redistribute benefits, including money, political influence and economic influence and access to education, to bring groups in any country together. This would include the United States.

Q: Maybe it's cheating to look at it in hindsight, because it looks as if this was a cauldron simmering, and then a spark, but if you could look back, does it seem to you as if the prestige or the advantages that the one group had, the Kikuyu, was this indeed an inevitable conflict?

BRAZEAL: No. I would not say that all of ethnic clashes were inevitable or were spontaneous, either. I'm sure political leaders on both the Luo and Kikuyu sides have instigated some of these clashes as part of their power seeking or power retaining strategy. So I would not say that all of the violence is spontaneous. I also am saying that there was pent-up and increasing resentment, partly because of historic structural imbalances, population growth, people moving into the urban centers and trying to get established, and partly over climate change, where the water resources and grazing resources were drying up and groups were competing for those resources.

Even when I was in Kenya, there were ethnic clashes, some spontaneous, some not. Even then the Luo, being the second-largest tribe, always said it was their time to “eat”, which meant it was their time to share the spoils of the system.

So, in my view, neither Kibaki nor Odinga particularly want to revamp the political system and get rid of the patronage that it takes to run it. They simply wanted to be in charge of it. I used to think of Raila as a weathervane, because he would put his finger in the air to see which way the wind was blowing, and then be happy to turn that way. He's been an ally of Kibaki and he's also not been an ally of Kibaki. The saying that politics makes for strange bedfellows really is true in Kenya.

Kalonzo Musyoka was foreign minister when I was there, and I knew at that point he really wanted to be president of the country. He's from the Kamba tribe, and, again, he wants power, in my view.

When I was in Kenya, someone in the Moi government telephoned me, saying he was Raila and he needed to borrow money from me to give to a relative who had to travel to the U.S. that night, but because he was up-country he, Raila, could not get to a bank to provide the money and wanted to borrow it from me.

I thought this was passing strange, since I was not in the habit of lending money. I agreed to meet Raila’s representative, and then called in my security officer and a political section FSN and asked them to meet whoever came to the embassy so that we could get their identification and see if the person was a Luo. Somebody came, but didn't stay.

I concluded this episode was the Moi government’s crude attempt to see if it could get the U.S. Ambassador to give money to the opposition. Raila, at that time, was in the

opposition. If I had given money, then the Moi government could say the U.S. Embassy was supporting the opposition and was trying to undermine the government.

Q: Is it possible that that was the case?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely; this was something the Kenyan government would attempt. That was my conclusion. It was my conclusion even while I was talking to the person on the phone, but all kinds of strange things can happen in Kenya. What was not known apparently, was that Raila and I were never close enough that he would ask to borrow money from me.

During Moi's time he was able to keep enough of the peace, albeit with a very heavy hand. He did try to redistribute benefits, education and other benefits, to different tribes that had been marginalized by the British and then, in turn, by the Kikuyu.

In my view, Kenya has to redo its social contract, in essence, to find a way forward that's going to be stable. It's not simply a matter of the Luo having their turn in power. I also believe that once the Kikuyu get out of office, I don't think Kenyans will vote them back in very easily, if ever.

Q: Ethnicity and politics being so interwoven in Africa, let's dwell on this for a moment. Is it reductionist or simplistic to say that if an economy is sort of working, more or less, and if people are not desperate for resources, the ethnic tensions will lower in general? Or are the rivalries so deep rooted that the bad feelings will persist regardless of whether people are relatively well off or relatively bad off?

BRAZEAL: I think that unless the political and economic systems are more inclusive, and transparent, for all groups, then you'll continue to have tension. It is the haves versus the have-nots. There are poor Kikuyu. There are Kikuyu who have not benefited from the system, who might have voted for leaders other than Kikuyu. That said, ethnic identity remains strong. There was violence in Eldoret, which is Nandi territory, not a Luo stronghold.

Q: This is in the west, I think.

BRAZEAL: Northwest Kenya, yes. But, in any event, my description of ethnic clashes in Kenya underscores a real fear and concern I have about the United States. In the U.S. we have the blue states and the red states and we've got people who have polarized themselves into identity groups, so I suppose I would call what we have “identity politics” as opposed to ethnic politics.

I see the need in the U.S. of re-doing our own social compact as well, because increasingly you have the rich who benefit and get richer and then the rest of us who are slipping backwards, even from middle class. This kind of tension cannot remain unaddressed if we are going to maintain the kind of democracy that our founding fathers

envisioned. You've got to redistribute the benefits of our system through the tax codes or other budget priorities.

I could envision divisive tension in the U.S. if our next election is so close that it turns on one state like Florida or, in the last national election, Ohio, and there's suspicion of hanky-panky; this would not be good for the confidence people have in the institutions of democracy in America. I don't know what could happen. We could have an event here where both parties claim victory for the presidency, and then what would we do?

Q: Well, we did have that.

BRAZEAL: Yes, we did, and it went to the Supreme Court.

Q: And the State Department statement issued 10 days ago said, implying that if we could do it with our Supreme Court, then Kenya could do it with its Supreme Court. I'm paraphrasing what the State Department said. It seemed a little bit unrealistic to some of us.

BRAZEAL: Well, the judicial system in Kenya is not independent and is not strong enough to withstand influence. One wonders whether the judicial system in the U.S. is now that independent, as well.

Q: Well, you've compared identity politics in Kenya and identity politics in the U.S. And you've also said what does this mean for us in the U.S.? We have seen an example of how this can go terribly wrong, in Kenya. How close of a parallel is it?

BRAZEAL: Well, I don't want to overdraw too strong a parallel, because I haven't really looked at statistics recently for the U.S. I don't know how many people are in our younger generations. The people who are new entrants into our political system for this election, who are coming in because they are enthusiastic about a particular candidate, might see the system not working as well as it should and they could become disillusioned.

The older generations of Americans seem to be reconciled. It might be me speaking because I'm a child of the '60s, where you would get in the streets to demonstrate and you would have some passion behind you. I don't see the passion in America today that I saw back in the '60s and '70s, because, to me, signing an online petition leeches the emotion from an issue in a way that leaves one either lethargic or apathetic or uncaring. So I don't see the older generations revolting, but I do think younger Americans might call into question some processes.

Even Dennis Kucinich called for a recount in New Hampshire, because of the closeness of the election. I think he was doing so out of a desire for full transparency, so that people would see that the system is working.

Q: Well, we're off the subject, but this is too intriguing not to continue. It's commonly said that – I, too, am a child of the '60s – that the people who are now 20 years old, we're now in 2008, are apathetic and are more interested in their atomized worlds of gadgets, computers and consumerism. The strike of writers of comedy in New York, it is said that they're much more affected by that than they are by the election. Disillusioned? I wonder if children of the '60s are really the disillusioned ones.

BRAZEAL: We could be disillusioned. But to see the kinds of crowds that come out for certain candidates, that include people who have never really been engaged in the political system before, at least as reported, that harkens to the ability of some politicians to tap into a youth market, a youth niche or segment that is good, because we need citizens involved in politics in America.

Q: Absolutely. OK, then if there's an analogy between that and the youth in Kenya or in the heart of Africa, in general, who are the majority, I think you've mentioned under 15 is more than half of the population. Is there an analogy? The youth there, what do you think that they're facing. Do they have the information they need to direct their passions in a constructive way?

BRAZEAL: No, not necessarily, youth in other countries do not have the information they need to direct their passions in a constructive way, which is why I think some of the violence has been orchestrated in Kenya, because people are willing to do what they're told, to a certain extent. So more information is needed. Let me skip to Ethiopia, because in Ethiopia they have a constitution that does allow for succession. They have a constitution that does decentralize power, push it down to the regional and local levels. I think that in the long run, as power is pushed down, and as local people begin to take the group's responsibility for themselves, then that should be a bulwark against people who want to play divisive politics with them in the long term. And I'm speaking long term, and in Ethiopia, as a 3,000-year-old culture, they think decades and decades ahead, so maybe another couple of generations and theirs should really be a strong system.

Kenya is more of a centralized governing system, and people are still accustomed to waiting for the government to do things for them, although there is the Kenyan cultural habit of Harambee, which is self-help and helping each other, but there is an overlay of an expectation that the government has to come in and do things before anything big really happens.

Q: Would you generalize and say that a decentralized system might be beneficial for any country? Do you think that there's a cultural element in Ethiopia and Kenya, or historic, because of the U.K. in the case of Kenya, more centralized in Kenya, more decentralized in Ethiopia? I think you're saying that it's to Ethiopia's benefit that it is decentralized. Do you think that would be the case in most countries?

BRAZEAL: Not necessarily, no. I think it's each country's unique history, and I think one of the strengths of Kenya I felt when I was there, and then subsequently, is the fact that

no one tribe is so large that it can truly dominate without cooperation from other groups, and I think that's helpful.

Q: So in one form or another, formally or culturally, some dispersal of power and influence might be a benefit?

BRAZEAL: Yes, I'm saying power sharing. I'm saying an inclusive system, as opposed to an exclusive system. And I would make these same points about my own system in the United States.

Q: A pundit would probably refuse to answer a question like "What's going to happen in Kenya?" But what do you think will happen? You've said that the political parties have manipulated the situation for political purposes, and that the people involved in the violence in Kenya may not even understand what they're doing, or the meaning of it. What type of resolution might there be in Kenya?

BRAZEAL: Well, it's tough to say. I think people were hoping for some kind of interim power-sharing solution, but with Kibaki naming Kikuyu as members of his cabinet to what are perceived to be the key cabinet positions, it leaves secondary positions more available for the opposition, which would not necessarily be attractive to the opposition. So it's hard to say how that kind of process could go forward. And it's difficult for me to see a way forward.

There should be one, and I'm sure Kofi Annan will find it. But power sharing is not something that is going to be permanent, so there has to be either a power sharing with a view to something else happening, another election perhaps, or a recount. But there is no confidence in the courts or the electoral commission.

Q: Is it logical that the opposition party would sweep the parliament but that the incumbent would be swept in as president? Is this a little fishy?

BRAZEAL: It would mean people would have split tickets, which usually doesn't happen.

Q: It seems fishy, the outcome. The U.S. government has said that there appear to be irregularities on both sides. They've been sort of impartial, but circumstantially it seems unlikely.

BRAZEAL: It seems unlikely. It could happen if some other tribes split their vote and voted for Kibaki, because Kibaki was promising the continuation of the economic growth that he was taking credit for and expanding free education, which is of interest to people. So it's not unheard of that some groups might have supported him, but the way it was done and the rapidity with which he was sworn in suggests that there was some hanky-panky. And then, of course, the head of the electoral commission says he doesn't know who won.

Q: OK, here we are. You're an ambassador and a diplomat. What's the proper thing for the United States to do, a country that seeks to be friendly with a country in such deep distress? Where is the dividing line between helpful advice and intrusion?

BRAZEAL: Well, if you're a friend, then I think you have to help. Intrusion may be if you tell people what the solution is going to be and somehow try to impose it, but that never works. But, in Ethiopia, the same thing happened after the 2005 election, which was both sides declaring victory. And I, along with other diplomatic colleagues, immediately jumped in with the government, uninstructed by our capitals, initially, to try to be a bridge between the opposition and the government.

What were we trying to do? I was head of the Ambassadors' Donors Group at the time, so we issued statements that the government and opposition, but mostly the government, credited with helping to lower the temperature and keep people off the streets.

Q: How do you feel it was possible to do that, through public statements, through private conversations?

BRAZEAL: Both.

Q: Both.

BRAZEAL: In the culture of Ethiopia, some of the newspapers had been shut down, but you could issue statements that were then echoed in our capitals. We were having shuttle meetings between the opposition and ourselves, and the government and ourselves, trying to get them to meet together. So we were doing many things, extremely active diplomacy that I hope ameliorated to some extent the pressures internally for retribution and street action and other things. Some people were killed, but fewer, we hope, than without our action.

Q: Those people were killed, I think, if I remember, very soon after the election.

BRAZEAL: In June, and then later, in November.

Q: So it could have been better.

BRAZEAL: I left in early September.

Q: So there was some success, or you can imagine it could have been much worse, I suppose.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely. It could have been another internal armed uprising of long duration and to a certain extent some groups are still fighting internally, but it could have been hundreds of people killed in the streets. But what we were trying to do is to get people to support their institutions, their democratic institutions, as weak as they are and were at the time, because if you don't support the institutions, then you have nothing left.

Q: That sounds like a long-term objective, supporting democratic institutions. In the middle of a crisis, now that we can almost say it's history, because it's three years ago, what types of pragmatic deals did you feel could be introduced that would get them talking?

BRAZEAL: Well, in terms of the institutions and the process, we got both sides to agree to recounts in some areas, with international observers, so we made sure that we had the international observers there, able to look at recounts. We urged people also to go to the courts, of course, if they were dissatisfied. But, in part, we had a process of recounting, and some people thought that was still very flawed, but it is the process to which they all agreed. As long as the opposition and the government had agreed to processes, we wanted the processes to work and to be followed.

Q: I don't know, but I'm hearing that many of the ballots in Kenya were just destroyed. Would a recount help? Again, we're very speculative, here.

BRAZEAL: If that's the case, then a recount won't help and, therefore, you might need another election, but I think you need some time before that election just to let people calm down a bit.

Q: I'd love to see a primer that you would write about what to do as a friendly major ambassador in a country going through a crisis of this sort. And I'm saying this partly in jest because I know that one situation is different from another. To what extend do you think that there could be instructions given to chiefs of mission, generically, that might work in any case?

BRAZEAL: If a generic primer existed, all you would have is a menu of possibilities to review at the time, but you're not alone. You can talk to your capitals; you talk to each other. Prime Minister Meles met with the diplomatic corps to answer questions, and then we could put some hard things to him, as a group. Such a group meeting was arranged twice, so that ambassadors who rarely ever got to see him could meet with him in a group.

Q: Was it easy to get him to do that?

BRAZEAL: Not necessarily, no.

Q: I think you may have been very persuasive, because you knew him very well.

BRAZEAL: I'm not going to take total credit. It was a group effort. The E.U. ambassador and other ambassadors were very active. The E.U., in a sense, had blotted its copybook because their observer mission basically came out saying the elections were flawed, were not free and fair, and so the Ethiopian government was not inclined to listen to them so that left us, not having taken such a position, leading the group in a way that had retained more influence. The Carter Center also had an observer mission for this election.

The concerned diplomatic community still worked together. That was the key, and, as I said, that means you really have to have established good relations with your colleagues ahead of time before these kinds of incidents happen.

Q: When Meles met with embassy representatives, was there an effort made to make him comfortable, or was there an effort made to confront him with harsh realities?

BRAZEAL: Well, there was an effort to ask questions, but politely, about what was going on, what options there may be, urging, certainly, the continued freedom of the press, the use of the process. We weren't trying to pick and choose winners, that was not our position – ever -- but our position was to support the process and the institutions of democracy that the Ethiopians themselves had agreed on, both the opposition and the government.

Q: Did it appear at any time that Meles actually welcomed this international attention and guidance? Did he resist it? Did he listen openly?

BRAZEAL: I'm sure he would never say it was guidance, certainly. But, yes, he was a good interlocutor with the people he met with in terms of answering questions. Most Ethiopians I met, and that's Ethiopians generally, say what they think. That was one of the beauties of being there. You could ask a question and then expect to get an answer and to have a dialogue, whereas in some other cultures you may not get that much.

Q: There have been tensions recently between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Is this saber rattling? Do you think something bad could possibly happen?

BRAZEAL: I think a mistake could happen, incidents on the border, and there have been shooting incidents recently. It could escalate, but I think both governments would not like a war. While I was in Ethiopia, we had suggested through UNMEE a hotline so that if there was some misunderstanding people could talk to each other, but this idea was never acceptable to either side. Even so there are many ways to try to figure out how to ease any misinformation or defuse any mishap on the border so that general war would not break out.

To a large extent UNMEE was located on territory that really belongs to Eritrea. It was not located in Ethiopia, except a bivouac or a base. But the territory, the DMZ (demilitarized zone) was land that was unusable for Eritreans. Moreover, looking at recent statistics that were announced on African growth rates, Eritrea is right down there at the bottom.

I noticed Eritrea recently signed an agreement for a goldmine to be developed, but Ethiopia is at the top for economic growth in Africa by a non-oil-exporting country. Eritrea is at the very bottom. I would have to say this lack of growth reflects Eritrean policy choices plus I don't believe Eritrea has ever demobilized, has ever stepped away from a war footing, has ever told its population that they are not at war and has

antagonized or fought with all of its neighbors and hasn't really come up with an economic vision that works for it, to enable it to grow, despite its people being smart.

Q: When it was created – was it the late '80s or early '90s? It seemed like such a bright spot. It seemed like the end of a terrible civil war and a solution. There was a euphoria that Eritrea existed. The honeymoon didn't last very long.

BRAZEAL: No, no long honeymoon.

Q: It's another intractable problem. The Horn of Africa, there's hardly an acre there that isn't contested, that isn't the source of some contention, now with Kenya part of it. In fact, sometimes, when you say the Horn, a few months ago you wouldn't even think of Kenya because it was a beacon of stability and such.

BRAZEAL: That's right, and Kenya will take some time to rebuild its reputation for stability. Somalia is not stable, and then of course you've got Puntland and Somaliland within that. You've got, of course, Sudan. Djibouti in that sense is the island of stability.

Q: The Switzerland.

BRAZEAL: Djibouti, to me, has decided on what kind of economic vision it wants to pursue. It's a service country – it intends to service the interior countries through its port, its transportation system, and the international telephone cable will anchor there, et cetera. Eritrea hasn't made up its mind what economic vision it seeks. Eritrea, I think, wanted to see itself more as a Hong Kong or a Singapore that punched above its weight, but without reconciling itself to what it is, which could be a service country to the interior, with its ports, with its access to the sea and its industrious people. You've got Djibouti building a newer port, further out in the deeper channels, and you've got the ports in Eritrea in relatively shallower waters losing any relative competitive position because the global maritime trade is moving toward larger ships that demand deeper drafts.

And so Eritrean ports, to a certain extent, will become economically difficult to revive, without major infrastructure changes. It is going to be interesting to see where the money comes for such a major revival. Of course, it could come from the Chinese, who need the raw materials out of Africa.

Q: Right, and very much present in the Horn, certainly in Sudan.

BRAZEAL: All over the continent.

Q: Yes, right.

BRAZEAL: We've talked about that.

Q: We spoke about Chinese presence and the possibility of working with them, instead of against them, and seeing common interests, without being naive, I guess.

BRAZEAL: But also the fact that the Chinese are using the continent to learn how to do business internationally, and therefore, to me, that's not doing good service for the people of Africa. It is irritating to me, because you don't get your money's worth and you certainly aren't doing a skills transfer or labor force development or anything like that.

Q: Well, we're about to leave the continent, but before we do, you've been ambassador in two major countries in east Africa, the Horn, with the cultural and political differences you've described. Do you have any other thoughts about the sub-region or about where Africa's going at this time?

BRAZEAL: Well, Africa, to me, is the continent of the future and it should be where every Foreign Service officer wants to be working over the next 20, 30 years. Its people are industrious, it's got wonderful riches, which they need to use for their own benefit and add value on the continent as opposed to having raw goods shipped out.

I think it's going to become more of a united states of Africa, the African Union concept, and we can help. We can help provide some intellectual ideas. We can help in the regulatory sense. I'm always dismayed at the relative lack of interest by American business and industry and even educational institutions in the continent.

If I could wave a magic wand in 2008, I would replicate the Kennedy airlift and try to educate the next generation of African leaders in the American system, because I think that would be a benefit to everybody. But money for that, certainly, and the vision for that, doesn't exist that I can tell especially in our Congress. American business isn't really looking to the continent, because they don't see the consumers yet that they need for all of our nifty little products, but the consumers are there.

In the short term, there will continue to be internal strife, and international terrorists will need to be expelled, and some strong men leaders will need to depart, but in this century – and the U.S. should always keep its eye on the long run – Africa will be the continent of the future.

Q: We were speaking before I turned on the microphone about the Kennedy airlift. Can you summarize for the reader about the importance of that event?

BRAZEAL: Absolutely. It was an idea that came from Tom Mboya, who was a Kenyan labor leader in the immediate pre-independence decade for Kenya, meaning the '60s, early '60s, and he wanted the next generation of African leaders who would lead their countries in independence to be educated in the United States and not in Great Britain.

The State Department, as I understand it, didn't have money for such an enterprise, but Tom Mboya met Senator John Kennedy and Senator Kennedy got the foundation that was established for his brother, the brother that was killed in World War II, to provide

money for the first several airlifts of Kenyans and people from other African countries. Eventually, there were Congolese and others who were brought into the United States and put into our colleges, educational institutions. And most of those people who were educated in the U.S. and returned to Africa became leaders of their country in politics and the economy and the cultural life of the countries. It made a tremendous impact, and it was called the Kennedy airlift.

I met Kenyans who said they had never worn a pair of shoes until they got on that airplane to fly to the United States to come here for college. So the experience transformed them, certainly, but transformed their countries, as well.

Q: So the various programs more recently, AFGRAD (African Graduate Fellowship Program), the AID AFGRAD program and the Fulbright program are a drop in the bucket to what is needed?

BRAZEAL: A drop in the bucket as to what is needed. You have to look at the demographics of the continent, as well as of the whole world. But the continent, especially, is a young continent. You can't have drops in the bucket. You've got to do massive scale ups. And now, can all of these people come to the United States and be educated? Perhaps, but we also should be exporting our education systems to the continent. Some of our universities have established ties on the continent, with universities or as separate programs, but not enough.

Q: USIA had a university linkage program, which no longer exists. I think AID, likewise, I think. It doesn't look so good, so this will require a major impetus from the U.S. government.

BRAZEAL: Not only a major impetus, but also a rethinking our time line -- the length of time we're willing to wait to have influence, because education takes time, and then you have to wait for people to return to their country and work their way up. Such foresight and patience pays off in the longer term, and the U.S. has to have a longer-term vision, which we currently don't seem to have.

Q: This will be a radical change from what we've got, where we seek to influence certain religious and ethnic groups.

BRAZEAL: Today, the U.S. has such a short term approach, and in a naive way. We do something for them and then we think they should love us. Why should they love us? These groups writ large think “I'll take your money, I'll let you do something for me, but it doesn't mean I'm going to love you”. You have to engage people and over time.

Q: Yes. I don't know what to say since I so totally agree.

BRAZEAL: I know.

Q: And it's lamentable.

BRAZEAL: It's lamentable to me that we don't have leaders in our country who see this and who can explain to the American people and help us lengthen our time line. We've got to, or we are going to continue to do short-term steps that have no long-term payoff.

Q: But it's in generation after generation, academic generations.

BRAZEAL: Absolutely. It's the thoughts that count, it's the intellectual exchanges. That's what works. Having an election doesn't bring democracy by itself. Reading one book doesn't bring a thoughtful person.

Q: And certainly not reading a single press statement. Well, that's it. Can we find a happier note? Well, the continent of the future, the resources, the energy, the human capital, not yet channeled, but there it is.

BRAZEAL: There it is. Kenyans and Ethiopians and Africans in general– because I worked with the African Union and met people from all over the continent -- have a wonderful way of accepting people as they are. You don't have to have a certain mind set or body image to be popular. You don't have to wear certain clothes to have an impact.

Q: Can we call this tolerance?

BRAZEAL: We can call it tolerance I can see a day when this acceptance on a human level might pass as they get divided into units of consumption, as we have been divided, but it's a wonderful trait, because you can feel an authenticity, an authenticity that sometimes I bemoan we've lost in the U.S.

Q: Again, it may be far from the subject, but the pragmatic sense that – this is Dan Whitman speaking, but it seems to me that Americans pride themselves on being pragmatists, but maybe this is more history. The people follow patterns and they follow rules and they follow what they're told, either by the production people who direct them towards certain activities, certain products. The lone individualist – I'm a child of the '60s – seems to be more and more rare in the U.S.

In Africa, where I've lived, while individualism is not a big, big value, on the other hand, people are extremely pragmatic and they don't just follow rules. They do things that in fact they can easily see when rules don't work, or patterns, it seems. This is a sweeping cultural generalization, but it's just a feeling.

BRAZEAL: I see what you mean, and I would add the following: I think of Americans as risk takers, but we are not, if compared to Africa. To me, – and this is a gross generalization and I apologize ahead of time, but Africans will – or say a Kenyan – Kenyans will get in a car to make a road trip, knowing that the car will break down.

Q: Yes.

BRAZEAL: But they'll get in it and go anyway, because they expect to get help when it breaks down from people around them, the community. I don't know of too many Americans who will take such a risk anymore, get in a car they know is going to break down and just start off on the trip to see what you find in the adventure and in the human interaction. Perhaps we do not trust the community anymore or see ourselves as part of a larger community.

Q: It's a great metaphor or example, I think.

BRAZEAL: Am I right?

Q: I can't remember ever seeing a car broken down on route 495 receiving the assistance of another private citizen. I can't remember ever seeing that. And I also have been broken down many times myself in Africa, and there's always a mechanic within 500 meters.

BRAZEAL: That's right, or people who will come and help push, or help in some other way, or stand around and look.

Q: The civility, which isn't sometimes very visible in the format, there is a sense of helping one another. It's one person's turn today, and it'll be someone else's tomorrow. It really is extremely different.

BRAZEAL: But getting in the car, knowing it's going to break down and still starting on that trip is the difference.

Q: Absolutely, done it myself. Right, it's not just a blind faith in fate or something. It's knowing that there are people distributed around – not everybody, but enough people who are going to be willing to help.

BRAZEAL: Something will happen that will make it possible to keep going.

Q: And in a funny way that is a great reliance on individuals than the country of individualism. I'm being pedantic here.

BRAZEAL: But you see what I'm saying.

Q: Yes.

BRAZEAL: And I just find those kinds of contrasts fascinating.

Q: Very refreshing, actually.

BRAZEAL: But yet I think I'm still, even at my age, willing to get in that car I know is going to break down and start on that trip. And that's what I hope Americans will continue to develop as part of our own risk taking.

Q: Which is the romance of the frontier, people helping one another, too often is history or fiction. It's still there. It's still there somewhere in the American soul, I think.

BRAZEAL: Yes, I think so.

Q: Well, let's get you from this hopeful continent back to Washington. Is that what happened? You went straight back?

BRAZEAL: From Ethiopia I came straight back to Washington and assumed the diplomat in residence position at Howard University. I had sought that position actively because I wanted to get reacquainted with the younger generations in my own country. I believe in succession planning and want to bring more diverse people into the Foreign Service. It's been a wonderful career for me. And I also wanted to decompress, because I didn't have any other country in the world that would make me pack my bags yet again, so I wanted to put down some roots here.

Q: You came back to Washington knowing that you thought you would stay here.

BRAZEAL: Yes. This time I painted the rooms in my house different colors other than Foreign Service white, which is a sure sign I intended to stay here.

Q: Well, I guess that's the sure sign. That's the sure sign.

BRAZEAL: That's the sure sign.

Q: So if I understand, you were the diplomat in residence at Howard, but then you remained there after that assignment.

BRAZEAL: I'm remaining there this year as a senior adviser or a distinguished visiting Ambassador or something like that, but senior adviser is fine with me.

Q: This year, '07-'08.

BRAZEAL: Yes, '07-'08.

Q: And so you were the diplomat in residence when?

BRAZEAL: In '05 to '06 and '06 to '07, so I was a diplomat in residence for two years.

Q: OK, let's think about pedagogy and succession, now that that's a whole other initiative. You had been at FSI. This was not a whole new realm for you, because you had worked on teaching people and on forming people. What was unique about the Howard experience?

BRAZEAL: Well, the diplomats in residence are circuit riders. We have geographic regions to cover, so I covered the mid-Atlantic, not just Howard, but a lot of other

colleges and universities. The diplomat in residence position is not necessarily a teaching portfolio, and actually at FSI I never taught, per se. I was an administrator.

Duties include going to career fairs, holding information sessions, conducting oral prep sessions for the oral assessment. You talk to professors, you talk to students, you make speeches. You really can be creative in what you do, because with some broad instructions, it's really up to you to go forth.

I ranged all the way from Hampton University and Norfolk State in the Virginia Tidewater area up to the University of Delaware, and even went out to Illinois to attend a conference that the African Bureau convinced me to attend to give a speech and talk to students. You can range wide, but I did try to do a lot at Howard, also, because I believe in getting a diverse foreign service that looks like America.

Q: I think the IRs (in residence) seek to raise the consciousness of students in general about foreign affairs and also to recruit for the Foreign Service. Do you see that as all one endeavor?

BRAZEAL: Yes, and some schools do have the diplomats in residence teach one course. Howard doesn't require teaching, so the job requirements vary. Each diplomat in residence has a different experience, but in this area you've got Howard, you've got Georgetown, SAIS, GW, American, Trinity, all sorts of schools, and then University of Maryland, George Mason and others. So visiting all of these schools, meeting with the students, trying to especially target honor roll students to get them interested in international affairs and careers has been great. I've enjoyed it.

Q: Going to keep doing it?

BRAZEAL: To some extent. I'm trying to decide what I want to do next. I do want to keep working and to keep intellectually stimulated. My parents were both in academic life, and I'm giving some thought to staying in it, maybe teaching something. One young man approached me to help improve his writing skills, because I guess my Foreign Service “corridor reputation” that he's plugged into suggested that I could help him. He's very impressive; he sent me a syllabus so I'm going to hold a one-person seminar. He wants to meet every two weeks; we meet this Monday to go over everything and see what he has in mind. I thought how fortuitous because this request might expose me to actually teaching.

Q: And might suggest a methodology, maybe. That's very exciting. So you're just really starting. It's been a long narrative, but in a sense we're just beginning here. So this is your third year, really, at Howard. What's your sense of the coming generation and how a seasoned senior diplomat can affect them?

BRAZEAL: Well, I find today's younger generations needier than my generation, certainly. When I say needy I mean they seek feedback. They like to have affirmation. They are very smart, but they like information in bite-sized units of what they really need

to know right this minute to do whatever the next thing is on their schedule. They are not interested in the context or the background, they just want me to tell then what they need to know.

Q: Isn't this how we all were when we were in high school?

BRAZEAL: I don't remember it being that way. Moreover, you have the helicopter parents who hover and take some of the actions that the students should be taking. The parents might call the professor to ask why did my child receive such and such a grade on the test, because the child called a parent on his cell phone as he was walking out of the classroom saying the professor only gave me a C on the exam and I don't know why. The next thing you know, the parents call the professor to ask these questions, as opposed to letting the child stand on his or her own feet.

Certainly the expectation of my parents was that at a certain age I was expected to get out of the house and not necessarily come back. Well, today, it's different.

Q: Does this imply that people are spoiled or that things are more competitive or there are diminishing resources in terms of prized jobs? What explains it, television, gadgets?

BRAZEAL: There is no one answer for today's circumstances. I also think prized jobs are still out there. Let me stress that I have found sufficient numbers of students still interested in public service and in helping other people and in working for their country overseas. It may be true that they expect to be an ambassador five years after they join, but there still is a good cadre of young people who have that public service spirit, as opposed to making money.

Q: If you could read their minds, what would you think – when they're representing their country overseas, what do they see that they're representing, aside from just economic interests? Are there cultural values and intellectual approaches, individualism, whatever, that young people seem to have espoused? When they represent their country, what do you think they're doing? What do you think they mean to do when they're representing the United States?

BRAZEAL: Well, it's difficult to say. These are people who want to join the Foreign Service to represent their country. Some have had overseas experience, some haven't. I think those who have, have been engaged by foreigners to explain America, what we're doing, what we're up to, explain the Bush administration, our current policies. And they find it hard and different to be in a position where America is not admired and isn't perceived to be a force for good in the world. I think to some extent these public service minded students want to do good so we can be seen as doing good.

Q: So you think their motivation goes beyond packaging a flawed product.

BRAZEAL: Oh, absolutely. In fact, one of the questions always asked is: how do you represent your country if you disagree with the policy?

Q: It's a question I've heard for at least 20 or 30 years, and so maybe that's a permanent question. It should be.

BRAZEAL: I think so, but I've certainly been asked it a lot.

Q: This has been an amazing series of dialogues, really.

BRAZEAL: Thank you.

Q: And it's been an amazing story. I am about to say thank you, but before I do, I want to just suggest that, thinking back to the beginning in Atlanta and those trips to Chicago when you couldn't stop along the way, the incredible life you've had, which is now just beginning again.

Any parting shots, any parting thoughts, any advice for young people, any articulation of what your accomplishments – how do they reflect how this nation has evolved in the past few decades?

BRAZEAL: Well, I certainly came in the Foreign Service through an affirmative action program to expand the numbers of African Americans – I think we were called blacks at that time – in the Foreign Service. I believe in affirmative action programs because, without them you lose sight of different populations that you want to have in the mix. People tend to replicate themselves; you have to constantly be vigilant to attain diversity.

I think the Foreign Service certainly gave me what I wanted, which was constant change and the ability to understand other cultures and to represent my country. I think that diplomacy is a science and an art. I think you can train people to be diplomats, but the art comes from doing and from observing senior diplomats and from on-the-job training. I think in the coming decades we will need people who are more artist than scientist in diplomacy to reestablish or maintain or even re-acquire the standing I think the United States should have in the world, and the influence. And our resurgence will come not through browbeating people or bullying them into doing what we want, but to enlist them in a joint enterprise.

So I hope that the future diplomats are more artists, and I wish them well, because I wish my country well.

Q: I can't think of a better way to conclude this remarkable series of stories about your life and career. Ambassador Brazeal, this is Dan Whitman. It's January 12th, 2008, and thank you.

End of interview