

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training  
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Foreign Assistance Series

**J. BRIAN ATWOOD**

*Interviewed by: Alex Shakow  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: My name is Alex Shakow and I have the pleasure on this day, which is February 11, 2022, to begin the oral history interview of J. Brian Atwood. It is a great honor for me to be able to be in the position of asking Brian a lot of questions about this life. There are many people who know pieces of it, but we've never had the opportunity of learning about the very beginnings of Brian Atwood and how he got to be in the various key positions he had.*

*So, Brian, welcome. I thank you very much. Sorry this has to be on Zoom for obvious reasons, but I am delighted that we actually get to see you and the conversation will begin. So, if you don't mind, I'm going to start very early on and ask you about when you were born, where you were born and a little bit about your parents, your grandparents. So, why don't you start off and I'll interrupt you when I decide that there's something I want to get into further detail on. So, Brian Atwood, the floor is yours.*

*Oh, by the way, why don't we start with your telling us what the J stands for.*

ATWOOD: It stands for John and actually, my son's name is John Brian Atwood, and we call him John. So, I have nothing against the name John. It's just that, well, my mother in particular preferred to call me Brian and I've been saddled with the need to use a middle name. When I write my name as J. Brian Atwood it sounds like I'm trying to be fancy, but it's just confusing to have a middle name that people know you by.

*Q: Okay. Good. So, that's the answer as to why your email is jbatwood, which is—*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: —always easy to remember.*

*Okay, Brian, when were you born, where were you born, and what was your childhood like?*

ATWOOD: I was born July 25, 1942, in Wareham, Massachusetts, which is called the Gateway to Cape Cod. Southeastern Massachusetts. It's a small blue-collar town, which was at the time about 14,000 strong, but every summer it would go up to about 40,000. We have fifty-two miles of seashore and a lot of people would come down and rent cottages in the summer. So, it was a more exciting place in the summertime.

I went to all of the public schools in Wareham, through to Wareham High School. It was a great place to grow up. My father had a multitude of jobs. Both my father and mother grew up during the Depression and were not able to go to college. My father ended up as a dispatcher at the fire station in Wareham, Massachusetts. That gave him health insurance and other kinds of insurance that benefitted my mother after he died.

My father's parents, my grandparents, were of the Protestant faith. They went to the Congregational Church. My mother was a very devout Catholic and so, I learned early on how to be ecumenical about religion. My mother's family came from France originally, through Quebec and then down to Fall River, Massachusetts, where her great-grandfather was a baker. My grandmother on my mother's side used to read in French, so that was that side of the family. I'm not sure where my mother got her stories, and I've never been able to verify them, but she made me feel good about myself by saying that we came from an aristocratic family in France and that on her father's side we were the ancestors of Miles Standish, who came over on the Mayflower. And there's absolutely no proof of that.

*Q: Did you ever try to trace it down and see?*

ATWOOD: No. I did one DNA search, and it didn't go deeply enough, and I don't ever expect to be on the *Roots* program with Henry Louis Gates. I did look up the Bazinet clan in France and there was some royal aspect there, but who knows. I think it's a myth, but it was a myth that had something to do with giving me a little more confidence about who I was.

*Q: When did she start telling you these stories or myths as you describe them?*

ATWOOD: Oh, very young, very young. I don't remember. It's just something we grew up with, my brother and myself. But it helped, I guess. I mean, I was president of my class for four years and when I go back to class reunions, I say, "You think because I live in Washington that I'm a politician, but the only office I've ever run for was class president, and I never had an opponent." (Laughs)

*Q: And how many siblings did you have? You mentioned a brother; did you have others?*

ATWOOD: Just a brother.

*Q: Was he older than you or—?*

ATWOOD: Younger brother, three years younger than me. He has been very successful in business.

*Q: And did you go with your father to his place of work and were you—*

ATWOOD: Sure.

*Q: —attracted by—it was the firehouse, right, that you—?*

ATWOOD: Yes that's right. His earlier job when I was growing up was with a grain company. He was the accountant. So, I'd go over and sometimes help one of the workers deliver grain to farmers and carry the one hundred-pound bags and that sort of thing. But my father had been a great athlete in town, and everyone knew him and liked him. His name was Ellsworth, but everybody called him Al. He had no trouble getting jobs in Wareham. He had so many jobs that when I go through the town, I'll say, "My father worked here, there, there, everywhere." He was always a volunteer fireman. And we had a huge hurricane in Wareham, Hurricane Carol in 1954 that flooded the street, the main street of Wareham. The biggest department store went up in flames so the firemen had to fight the fire from boats. So he knew everyone at the fire station and eventually became a full-time employee there, which meant working nights on occasion, sleeping there once a week.

. After we grew up, my mother became a dental assistant to the dentist in town. So, they worked very hard and were respected in the town.

*Q: But you were born during the war—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: I know that a lot of women were called into action during the war period to work in various jobs as the men had gone off to fight; your father did not go into the military during the war?*

ATWOOD: No, he didn't, and I think he was a little too old for that at the time. He must have been over thirty when I was born, so he was a little too old to go to war. But he used to drive a bus down to Otis Air Force Base, which was then called Camp Edwards. There were actually POWs (Prisoners of War) at Camp Edwards, German POWs.

*Q: Ah.*

ATWOOD: I remember driving down there a few times with him. My mother, on the other hand, was a nurse's aid during the war, so she helped out in that way.

*Q: Do you remember the war at all? I mean, you were only three at the time it ended, so—*

*Q: —but it was not a significant element in your future career choices, I take it.*

ATWOOD: No, it wasn't, but I did read a book when I was in high school about a famous aviator that graduated from the Naval Academy, and so for a while there I wanted to do nothing else but go to the Naval Academy. My grandfather was quite close to the Republican congressman from the town and when I was a senior in high school I applied to the Naval Academy, and the Congressman named me a first alternate for the appointment. By that time the congressman who was close to my grandfather had retired. A new person, another Republican, was elected and he was from another town.

*Q: Look, this is your time to tell the facts of it.*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) Yes, right.

*Q: We don't consider this bragging. We just want to know, right? So?*

ATWOOD: Well, the Naval Academy found out too late that I had been an all-state football player—they wanted me to play football for them. However, the new congressman failed to send my papers down to the Naval Academy. And by the time they decided to recruit me, I'd been offered a full football scholarship to Boston University, which was then a Division I school. So I ended up going to Boston University. That was the only way I could afford college and it wasn't an easy way to go. I hope people appreciate how difficult it is to go to school on a football scholarship because it's a lot of work.

In my case, I was very fortunate to have great teachers at Wareham High School. In those days, women had a hard time getting a job, a professional job. I don't know whether you had this experience, but we had some great women teachers, and I was lucky enough to have had those at the high school. So, my SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores were very high. When I went to BU, they put me in a very unique part of the college of liberal arts where all the best students were. So, I was competing there against kids that had gone to prep school, kids that had probably already read the books that we were reading at the time.

And of course, I was also playing football. That was almost like boot camp. You go up to a place called Peterborough, New Hampshire, where BU had a camp, and you'd go through three or four weeks of training in the summer, in the hot summer, and then come back and go to school. I've been in academia for a while now, so I'm close to this, but as is the case for many freshmen, I was pretty depressed. I came from a relatively small town, I'm now in Boston, Massachusetts, which to me was a huge place, and playing football and trying to keep up with the grades and I just couldn't keep up. My freshman

year was almost a loss grade wise. I learned a lot in the integrated liberal arts courses. It was a wonderful program with great professors.

*Q: Brian, let's come back to that because I don't want to get out of your high school years yet.*

*Because I mean, if you were elected class president, which required you to run for office, obviously you were an outgoing kind of guy. You played football, which I suppose didn't harm your popularity there. You probably had the girls just falling all over themselves, wanting to see this John Brian Atwood guy. What were the things that you most were excited about, other than football in high school, and how did you happen to run for class office?*

ATWOOD: I don't know how else to say this, but I was very religious. In fact, the priest in town tried very hard to recruit me to be a priest.

*Q: Why did you not succumb?*

ATWOOD: I liked girls. (Both laugh) I didn't figure I could live a life of celibacy. One person who tried to recruit me was in the seminary at the time to become a Maryknoll priest. That attracted me quite a bit because it meant going overseas. I got that international bug early as I had been selected to be an American Field Service exchange student. I went to Luxembourg in the summer between my junior and senior years.

*Q: And how were you selected for that? I mean, did you apply, or did somebody say to you, "You are the perfect candidate for this?" And please tell everyone what the American Field Service program is all about.*

ATWOOD: Right. Well, AFS is the largest high school-age exchange program in the world. Former ambulance drivers started it after World War II. They were either pacifists or disabled to the extent that they couldn't fight in the war, so they went over and drove ambulances. When they came back, a man named Stephen Galatti and a number of AFS drivers decided they wanted to start something that would end war by creating a youth exchange program. The focus in the fifties was Germany and Japan, our enemies during the war. They had huge programs. I was sent to Luxembourg, a very small country in the middle of Europe that had been victimized by Germany. It was 1959, and you could still feel the effects of war.

I'll never forget walking down the street with a couple of Luxembourgers who had just come back from the United States. They saw a couple of Germans walking down the street with lederhosen on and they started shouting at them, "Get out of our town." So, the emotions were still running high, and it gave me a feel for why Germany even today is very reluctant to get out in front, even though they play a predominant role in Europe.

*Q: How was it that you were selected of all the possible candidates for this?*



ATWOOD: Well, Wareham had a very active AFS program, former students that had come back and their parents who supported the program. They formed a committee and consulted with teachers. I applied, and I was selected. It really changed my perspective on life. I was fairly parochial at the time. I was certainly a proud American and didn't think much about the outside world. And then I went over there and had some experiences living in a very small country that really changed my view of the world, my view of what it was like to be an American in the world.

*Q: In what ways?*

ATWOOD: One day after I had bragged, apparently too much, about America, pointing out every Coca-Cola sign and everything else that the U.S. was doing well, my AFS brother, Alex Lutgen said to me, "You know, you and the Soviets are just the same." I was taken aback, I was very upset.

*Q: I can imagine.*

ATWOOD: I said, "You know, we're a democracy, they're not. How can you say a thing like that?" And he answered, "Well, you both want to dominate us." I couldn't argue with that, I guess. This is a small country and it was a reflection of someone who had pride in his own country, but who felt the kind of pressures that two superpowers coming at them from two sides imposed on them. So, it was very revealing. I repeat that story often when I talk about diplomacy and why it's important to talk softly and listen and be empathetic to people from other countries. That sort of changed my outlook. It is also another culture altogether. Everything that I did for those four months exposed me to a different way of thinking. I later became chair of the AFS international board. The organization is formally called AFS Intercultural Programs.

*Q: Did you go to school there during that period? Was this a—*

ATWOOD: No, it was a summer program. It was from the end of May to the end of August. But it's amazing how it changes your life, and it changed mine. And from that point on I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to get involved internationally in some way or another.

*Q: But before you had even applied for this, you obviously had some interest in the international because you wanted to go abroad for that purpose, but—*

ATWOOD: Well, you know, I think it was more the honor of being selected for something that was unique and something to be proud of. And I think that my mother might have inculcated in me an appreciation for that. I don't know. I wasn't sure what I was getting into, but I know that it was an honor to be selected and so therefore I didn't think much more about it than that.

*Q: In this piece—*

ATWOOD: I didn't think much more about it until I got on an airplane. We flew on Iceland Air with stops in Labrador and Iceland and then Holland in the middle of the night, though it was the early morning light in Amsterdam. Then we took a train to Luxembourg.

*Q: This letter to yourself that has not yet been published but which would be an interesting read for people interested in your career, you talk about this friend of yours in Luxembourg who had this great impact on you, you talk about an idealistic boy overcoming his insecurities. Did you think you had more insecurities than the average teenage boy? It doesn't sound like you were an insecure child, given the fact that you asserted yourself in leadership positions in high school, you applied for these things, you won them, you were successful both academically and on the field during high school. I don't know, this is not meant to be psychological—*

ATWOOD: You know, in a sense I was. I mean, when I got back from Luxembourg I would have to do things like stand up in front of audiences and speak and things like that. I had to go around in the local area giving speeches and even showing slides related to my experience. AFS arranged that. I would get very nervous doing that, and so—then managed to overcome it. But it was, I guess, helpful in my development. I certainly wasn't that much of an outgoing person. I was born in July and I'm a Leo, and there's some theory that Leos are supposed to be leaders and maybe I felt a little bit of that, but I did have insecurities. I grew up in an apartment. My parents were struggling for a while. Then we moved to another apartment. And finally, they managed to get enough money to buy a house for about \$15,000, and I lived in that house for the rest of the time I was there. So, I don't know, when you're not raised by rich parents, you don't feel as though you own the world. You don't feel that way. I certainly had plenty of empathy for other people, and I think that's a real asset. But I wasn't the most secure person in the world.

*Q: But your friends at this public high school in Wareham, presumably most of your friends were from not dissimilar backgrounds, right?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: So, your friendships were with people who—*

ATWOOD: Yes, that's right.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: And a huge—I don't know, this is something I haven't really said to many people, but I went to the Catholic Church in town. Most of my friends went to the Congregational Church, my white friends. But there was a very large population in town from Cape Verde. They went to the Catholic Church with me and they became my teammates, classmates and friends. Cape Verdeans had come over mainly to work in the cranberry industry. Ocean Spray was the big employer in town and a lot of them came over for that purpose. They were very poor, but they were an immigrant community that

really became successful. The valedictorian in my class in high school was a Cape Verdean woman who became superintendent of schools in Philadelphia. And the salutatorian, the number two in terms of grade point average, was a Cape Verdean young woman who became a teacher in New York. And in the class ahead of me, the president of that class was a Cape Verdean who was a neighbor and teammate of mine playing football, basketball; he became a high school principal in Oakland, California. They really did well as an immigrant community.

A lot of people don't know this, but the first, if you will, African-American NFL (National Football League) football coach was a guy named Wayne Fontes, who came from Wareham. He was the coach of the Detroit Lions. The irony is, of course, that a lot of the Cape Verdeans were mixed blood. They were Portuguese -African. Wayne was very light-skinned, and he never claimed to have been an African American, so he never got credit for being the first African American coach in the NFL.

*Q: It's still an issue today.*

ATWOOD: If you mean race, yes, it is still an issue today, absolutely.

*Q: But meanwhile, the priest was not successful in getting you to join the priesthood; was your religious training influential in your views of the world and of the people around you? I mean, how important to you was religion and is that continued today?*

ATWOOD: Yes, it is. I'm dismayed by some of the things that have happened within the Catholic Church. I always try to rationalize that human beings run institutions and they don't always live up to the highest moral standards, and they haven't. Even the former pope has just admitted that he made mistakes.

Yes, that continues, mainly the social justice part of the Catholic religion is very strong in me. And—

*Q: Just like the Maryknolls have that view too, of course, and you mentioned Maryknolls earlier.*

ATWOOD: Yes. My friend, the one that tried to recruit me into the Maryknoll priesthood, went off to Guatemala and started seeing what the indigenous people of Guatemala were experiencing and became very radicalized. He and his brother were pulled out of Guatemala by the Maryknoll hierarchy, and ended up quitting the priesthood. Art Melville got on a plane, left Guatemala, went back to Miami to get on another plane and went to Mexico to be on the border of Mexico and Guatemala where he could still be close to the people that he was helping in the villages in northern Guatemala. They were also very big opponents of the Vietnam War.

*Q: Well, the Maryknoll nuns are famous for that, too, I think.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And real activists.*

ATWOOD: Yes. The other brother, Tom, married a nun.

*Q: Well, I mean, this is all fascinating and it does seem to have some lasting influence on the way in which your career followed from this. I mean, you're coming from very—you were not entitled, you did not have an entitled background, but you managed to find these interesting and important elements in your life as you went along from this kind of background.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: So, Boston University. Unless there's something more about high school and some great impact that you want to talk about.*

ATWOOD: Only that there was a contrast that was very important. Next door, in Marion, Massachusetts was Tabor Academy, which was a very elite prep school. They wore uniforms. And we used to go to parties with them. So, I was exposed to kids from elite families. We, of course, didn't like them very much, but it was enough exposure to understand the way the other half lived.

*Q: Interesting. How did those parties develop? If you really didn't like these people, whose idea was it to bring you together with them?*

ATWOOD: Because the kids from Marion who didn't go to Tabor Academy went to Wareham High School, and this was only five miles away, so we would go to parties there with the kids that went to Wareham—and the Tabor kids would come to those parties as well.

*Q: But you weren't impressed with these people. You were—it was—*

ATWOOD: You know, I tried hard not to be biased against them. We sometimes called them Tabor lilies, that kind of thing. I think things have changed over the years, but in those days, you had to be pretty elite to go to Tabor Academy. Interestingly my Aunt worked at Tabor and my uncle was the caretaker for a huge estate in Marion. Then I ended up at Boston University with a lot of kids who came from that background.

Interestingly, when I was Assistant secretary of State for Congressional Relations, the son of the family that owned the estate where my uncle worked, Galen Stone, was nominated to be ambassador to India. I had to help prepare him for his confirmation hearing and I told him about my uncle, Uncle Mac. He was very nice. The family loved my Aunt and Uncle who lived in an apartment on the Stone's Estate.

*Q: You were in college with the Tabor kids?*

ATWOOD: Well, they were prep school kids—

*Q: Oh, yes.*

ATWOOD: —and some of them were Tabor kids, but they ended up in this special two-year program as part of the college of liberal arts with me. And I had to compete with them and given all that was on my plate, I wasn't very competitive.

*Q: By that time, were both of your parents still alive?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: You talked about your father dying, but he did not—when did your father die?*

ATWOOD: He died when I was administrator of USAID, in 1995.

*Q: Okay. So, your parents were able to see this progress that you achieved.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: You mentioned before that the Naval Academy didn't pan out because of a congressman's failure to pass the papers along. Do you remember the name of the congressman?*

ATWOOD: Hastings Keith.

*Q: He doesn't sound like a representative of the Portuguese—*

ATWOOD: No, Wareham and the district were strongly Republican. I can remember growing up and hearing people disparage Truman. My father wasn't political at all. Every time someone would raise something political, he'd say, "How about those Red Sox?" (Both laugh) He just didn't like it. He didn't want to talk about religion or politics. But my mother, who was very Catholic, absolutely fell in love with John F. Kennedy and so did I. If there was one person that motivated me to get into government, it was Kennedy.

*Q: Did this happen before he became president?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: And your mother was enamored from the time that he first appeared on the Massachusetts scene?*

ATWOOD: Well, no, when he first started running for president. I don't think we knew a lot about him when he was a senator or congressman from Massachusetts. He wasn't from our district. But when he started running, I think that the idea for someone like my mother, just to have a Catholic president was—

*Q: Yeah, well.*

ATWOOD: —that was enough. It didn't really matter what he stood for, you know. (Both laugh)

*Q: Well, she wasn't alone, I know that for sure. I mean, that was a great breakthrough—*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: —in that case.*

*Okay, so you arrive at BU with a full athletic scholarship?*

ATWOOD: Yes, in the summer of 1960.

*Q: Everything covered?*

ATWOOD: Books and everything, yes. Room, board, and the whole nine yards. And I was among some thirty people on the freshman team, including six high school All-Americans. Every one of the All-Americans either flunked out or left for one reason or the other. One of the All-Americans was my college roommate, who later became mayor in Taunton, Massachusetts. But two or three of my other teammates made the pros. Another roommate, a guy named Bill Budness played for about six years for Oakland, the Oakland Raiders, and George "Butch" Byrd was an all-pro for Buffalo.

We had, really, outstanding teams at one level. Those were the days when you had to play both ways and you had to have platoons. If you didn't have a good second and third team you couldn't keep up with the teams that we played against, teams like Syracuse, which had been number one in the nation, Army, Navy, West Virginia. My real claim to fame was playing against Gale Sayers of Kansas and actually tackling him—along with 7 other guys.

*Q: What position did you play?*

ATWOOD: I was an end, and I played on defense as an outside linebacker, a standup end. And on offense in my junior year I was a wide-out end. I was a lot thinner than I am now and I was relatively quick. I played tight end in my senior year. I wasn't drafted but was invited to two pro camps, Buffalo and Dallas. I was smart enough to know that I wasn't good enough!

*Q: But you played both offense and defense, is that what—*

ATWOOD: Played offense and defense, that's right.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: You remember the days when the Army and, I guess, Louisiana State first had the Chinese bandits, and they would have three or four teams that would come in and spell the first team. And we only had one good first team, and there were a lot of good players on it, but not good enough to play those teams. I mean, we lost to Kansas by fourteen to nothing, but we had twice as many first downs and twice as many offensive yards as they did. Just couldn't get it over the goal line. It was really amazing to play that well against a top-20 team.

*Q: Did the four years of playing college ball and your years in high school, working together with a team of people provide you with a form of guidance for your—rest of your life? I mean, I'm not saying that very well, but—*

ATWOOD: I understand what you're saying. I believe very strongly in teamwork and yes, having a feel for bringing a community together to perform, which was important. I'm going to jump way ahead, but I'm very proud of the team we had at AID (United States Agency for International Development) when I was there because I think we had the best political appointees and blend of career people as ever existed at AID. In fact, I can remember a Georgetown professor at the time writing that AID's team was stronger than the team Christopher put together at the State Department. That may be why we prevailed in the end! (Laughs)

*Q: (Laughs) I look forward to that part of our conversation as well.*

ATWOOD: Right, yes.

*Q: But that is interesting, I mean, that I don't think too many of the AID administrators or chairs of the development assistance committee at the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) have such a long record of athletic ability.*

*Now, you mentioned that your first year was pretty tough because you were competing against people who had had a very different, stronger—*

ATWOOD: Liberal arts background.

*Q: —academic background, right.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Did that persist through your four years, or did you overcome that?*

ATWOOD: No, I had to overcome it. I mean, I was not able to play football in my sophomore year, to be clear, because of the grades I had in my freshman year. That was a godsend in a way because academically I came back.

*Q: And they didn't pull your scholarship?*

ATWOOD: Yes, they did, for my Sophomore year.

*Q: But you didn't play.*

ATWOOD: I had to earn it back. I went to spring training that year and really got myself into shape and earned the scholarship back in my junior and senior year. Losing a year of that scholarship put a lot of pressure on my parents because they weren't rich and I felt very badly about that. But I then started to feel more at home at BU. When I was a freshman, I used to take walks alone along the Charles River and walk down into Boston and was just totally down. I wasn't enjoying playing football very well and wasn't studying much. I've never had a problem with depression, but I do remember feeling kind of down and out. And I'd walk into a Catholic church down in the middle of Boston and sit there and pray and think it over. But I then got my act together in my second year, academically, and then went back to the spring practice—they do about two or three weeks of spring training if you're in Division I. And I got myself into great shape and demonstrated what I could do, and they gave me my scholarship back.

*Q: And what did you major in in college?*

ATWOOD: Well, history/government. I mean, there was no question about what I wanted to do in my life. I actually told one interviewer, "I don't want to dedicate my life to Colgate dental cream or some such product. I want to be a public servant." That's what I've always wanted to do, and I was inspired to some extent by Kennedy. I also had interests in being in politics. Once I moved to Washington, I sort of lost any kind of base. If I had stayed around, I might have run for something, but I never had the chance to do that. I do think that my political instincts helped me in the jobs I had in Washington.

*Q: All these things having been learned in high school when you were in your elected position right?*

ATWOOD: I guess so, right. You're right, Alex.

*Q: Listen, that's not today's subject, so—*

ATWOOD: Okay, all right.

*Q: (Laughs) But to recover from a very tough first year is a major accomplishment. And did you have faculty members who were helping you along? Did you have other people you could turn to? This was self-discipline of an extraordinary sort?*

ATWOOD: Well, Boston University was a very large university, one of the largest, and so I had a couple of faculty members that took a liking to me, and they helped me, but not as much as I feel I help students now. I'm teaching at Brown, and Brown seems to be much more oriented toward the undergraduate student. Boston University was not. The classes—once I left that prestigious program I was in initially-- the classes were like 100



or more. They didn't even know whether you were there. I mean, it was really—I learned more in the first two years, even despite the grades being lower, than I did in the second two years at Boston University. But I learned how to think, I learned how to be a public policy intellectual, if I could use that word, because that's where my interests were.

*Q: But when you say you learned that, was that done solely in the academic setting, or did you have public policy summer jobs? It is not easy to move from an academic setting to public policy work.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q Now that you've been a master of that over the last several decades, you know that, but at that time?*

ATWOOD: No, I didn't have that kind of summer job. One summer, because of my freshman year, I had to go to school to get my grades back up, and I went to a school near my hometown of Wareham, at Bridgewater State College, which was mainly a teachers' college. I took courses and found out how much easier those courses were. I mean, I got all A's there. I wasn't competing with the same type of people or against the same standards as at Boston University.

But then, because of the fact that I didn't have any money and I was now no longer on scholarship in my sophomore year, I worked at night at Sylvania, putting together radar boards. I'd have to go way out to the suburbs of Boston, Route 128, and to this company where I'd sit there all night and put little screws in things that I didn't even know what they were or how they were going to be used. But I was earning money. The next summer I worked for Kraft Foods, unloading freight cars. I couldn't, as many of my students today do, go off and get a job at the State Department, at an embassy. Some of them have wonderful internships that I think really help them. Even my own kids have had that kind of experience, but I couldn't do that.

*Q: Did you have to write a thesis before you graduated from BU?*

ATWOOD: No, there was no requirement to do that. It's at the master's level, I think, that you start writing those kinds of things. I can't remember writing anything ingenious in school. (Both laugh)

*Q: Okay, so—*

ATWOOD: I became very interested in politics because of Kennedy, and one story I should tell you, which is historically significant, relates to my last football game at Boston University. We were to play against Boston College at Fenway Park. It was going to be the last game in the series. On the day before the Saturday game, Kennedy was killed. That was just devastating. I remember we had to go that night to a final practice. Everyone felt like their own father had died. Well, that final game was canceled. There had been all sorts of publicity in the *Boston Globe*. It was a big build-up. There were

photos of the starting players and everything. But I never did get to play that final game. That was regrettable, but I'm not sure that anyone really wanted to. And I thought maybe it would be rescheduled a week or two later, but it wasn't. When I was dean of the Humphrey School, we had the football coach over to talk to some of our advisory committee members. I introduced him and said, "Coach, I've still got one game of eligibility left." (Both laugh)

*Q: Well, I'm sure that he would have been very happy to take you up on that offer.*

ATWOOD: Yes, sure, at the age of sixty, or whatever.

*Q: (Laughs) Right.*

*Well, so, is there anything else about that college experience, which you've already described in good detail, that was influential, you think, in terms of choices you made? I mean, you were already thinking about a life in policy and the government and so on, but anything else there, any incidents that—?*

ATWOOD: Yes, you just reminded me of something I did one summer, I don't know which summer it was, but I worked in the dormitories taking out old mattresses and putting new ones in and doing various things to prepare the dormitory for the next school year. I worked with an African American from Atlanta, Georgia, who came to Boston University because Martin Luther King graduated from the theological school at BU, and I got to know him really well. I don't know what happened to him, but he wanted to get into theological school. And just to get to know him and know the kinds of things he experienced growing up in Georgia was fascinating to me, and revealing; he gave me a real appreciation for racial relations in the United States.

*Q: Had you ever traveled in the South? Had you ever been very far out of Wareham or Boston?*

ATWOOD: No, I hadn't. And I have to say that maybe because of meeting him I developed a kind of a bias against southerners for a while. Then I got into the Carter Administration and realized that there are really good people in the South, people like Jimmy Carter and all of the people who worked with him.

*Q: So, other than your trip on Icelandic Airlines to Luxembourg, you really hadn't traveled very much in the United States, let alone—*

ATWOOD: Well, except to play football in Morgantown, West Virginia, or other places like that. We went on trips to play games, but you didn't get much exposure there. You were sent to a hotel and then you'd go to practice and then the next day would be the game and then you'd get on a bus or an airplane and go home. I did get to Washington for the first time. We played George Washington University in the new RFK stadium in 1963. We stayed at the Dupont Hotel where the Cleveland Browns were also staying. I was very impressed by our nation's capital.

*Q: So, you had these interests, but you had not had direct exposure and that's why this fellow you worked with during the summer was very helpful, in a way, of increasing your understanding. So even if you had never been in the South, you heard it firsthand.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: Had he had a very difficult experience himself or was he—*

ATWOOD: Oh, yes. He would talk in great detail about his experiences with racism and I felt it. It was not an easy thing for him to talk about, but he did with me, and I appreciated that.

We had another guy that worked that same summer who taught me the opposite. He was a Texan, a Texan who had this attitude that you could make all kinds of money and do this and that, and, oh my god, it exposed me to two cultures that were very different. And again, I have met other Texans that are nothing like that, so one can't generalize.

*Q: His problem was he hadn't been to Luxembourg to meet your friend Alex there, right?*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Who could bring him up short on—(laughs).*

ATWOOD: Yeah, that's right.

*Q: Okay. So, you graduate, and I see from your CV that your first job took you to, of all places, the National Security Agency.*

ATWOOD: Yes, correct.

*Q: Now, you've been inspired to think about Washington by President Kennedy, but how did this opportunity arise?*

ATWOOD: Well, they had recruiters that came through, fortunately. The State Department was something that was very interesting to me but I didn't quite know how to go about that. I wanted to get a job overseas and the National Security Agency guy came through, interviewed me, and then offered me a job. This all happened very quickly in my senior year. I graduated one day and got married the next to my high school girlfriend. I was twenty-one, and then we got in a car a week or so later full of our personal effects and went on a honeymoon/trip to find a place to live somewhere near the National Security Agency.

*Q: That happened fast.*

ATWOOD: So, I went to work at NSA, and I took the class in cryptography and got some exposure to the Russian language and began thinking immediately about how I could get overseas. I mean this isn't very much fun working in Fort Meade, Maryland. I lived in Annapolis, which was nicer. But then I was assigned as kind of a management intern in the research and development bureau. They were doing futuristic work there. A lot of the technical breakthroughs that we take for granted today actually came out of there and then were commercialized. There was even a patent lawyer there because some of the scientists got patents for their inventions. There was an R&D (Research and Development) unit there that was actually studying mental telepathy to see whether or not they could model it in software or in some way so that they could read minds. But I wasn't a scientist and I was a bit bored.

*Q: They didn't teach you how to do that?*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) Would have been helpful, I can tell you, as my career progressed.

*Q: (Laughs) For us all, for us all.*

ATWOOD: Indeed. But I was doing pretty boring stuff, mostly administrative. I guess I'll never forget one day coming into work and my immediate boss, who I shared an office with, said he was very pleased that he found a cemetery lot for himself and his wife. He was probably in his thirties, thirty-five. I said, "Oh my god. Why?" He said he got a great deal, and you have to understand he said, "it's going to be very difficult later to find a lot." I said to myself, "I've got to get out of here." I got to know the patent lawyer who worked in an office fairly close to mine. He knew someone at the State Department. So, he arranged to have me meet with this person and I eventually ended up getting a job in the security office of the State Department.

*Q: As a GS (General Services) employee?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: And so, I ended up in the Washington field office in Roslyn, Virginia, doing background checks.

*Q: And these were State Department jobs?*

ATWOOD: Yes, it was a State Department job.

*Q: But the security side of things.*

ATWOOD: Right. My best friend there and counterpart was Colby King, who you may know. He was doing the same thing I was. He now—writes for the *Washington Post*.

*Q: In fact, Colby and my wife were both together on the editorial board of the Washington Post, so—*

ATWOOD: Interesting.

*Q: —that goes back a long way. Well, that's fascinating. So, Colby was doing that kind of work, too?*

ATWOOD: Yes, he was. In fact, a few years ago he wrote a column basically saying that Donald Trump would never have been given a security clearance given what we know about him. And he wrote, "I know that because I did that work." He had courage to admit that. I told him that I never talk about that experience, as my liberal friends wouldn't understand.

I recall having to interview Averill Harriman about a case in his office at State. I ended up asking him for his autograph, which wasn't too professional. I still have it. He wished me luck in my career.

*Q: I notice you don't put it on your resumé.*

ATWOOD: No, I don't. It might make people wonder why I did that. But I then found a way to get overseas. I became a regional security officer in West Africa in 1967, and I was about twenty-three years old at the time. There were only two of us. The other guy was much older, a former marine, a really nice guy. The two of us covered all of those countries from Chad to Senegal and everything in-between. And what that meant was we would do surveys in each country. You'd go to the embassy and look at the physical structure of the embassy to make sure it was safe, look at vulnerabilities and whatever.

But what was fascinating to me was the need to assess the threat situation, which meant getting into the politics of the country. You would describe the political situation in the country in terms of whether or not there was a threat. That was really interesting. I had friends who were junior Foreign Service officers at the embassy at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, that had no opportunity to do that kind of work. They were doing consular work. And here I was writing political reports.

I would go to places like Conakry, Guinea, or Niamey, Niger, Burkina-Faso, Ouagadougou. The ambassadors to these places didn't get very many visitors and here I was doing something that was important to them. They would sit down, have me to dinner, and we would talk about the political situation in the country. I was just a kid, but to them I was like a big shot coming in from outside. So, I met a lot of really great foreign service officers and ambassadors by this time and got to share thoughts with them.

The most exciting thing that happened to me was getting a call saying that an electronic listening device, a bug, had been found in the chargé's office in Dakar, Senegal. My boss was away so I had to get up there right away.

I fly into Dakar and check into my hotel. As soon as I got there, I get a call on the phone. A person with a rather thick accent says, “Mr. Atwood?” I said, “Yes.” And then he hung up. It was clear that it was the Soviets trying to determine that I was in town. My cover was blown right away, and they must have known that we had found their bug.

The embassy at the time was in a business building, it wasn’t a separate embassy. The embassy right across the street was the Soviet embassy. So, they were obviously listening to everything that went on in that chargé’s office. I then had my technical people come up and examine it. But I then had to spend hours with the chargé, asking him everything that was said in that office over the last several months. So, it was exciting. It was the only exciting thing, really, other than doing these political surveys that were fascinating.

So, at the end of that tour in 1969—

*Q: Wait a minute. Before you leave that tour, which—so had you become a Foreign Service officer in that process?*

ATWOOD: No. I wasn’t a Foreign Service Officer at the time. I was not yet a full-fledged FSO (Foreign Service Officer). I think the designator was Foreign Service Staff Officer.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: Then I left, came back and decided to leave security and to try to get into the real Foreign Service, and so I took the exams. That was a challenge. I’m sure that some of the people that interviewed me in the orals stage were wondering, do we really want this security guy in the department with us?

*Q: (Laughs) Yeah, right.*

ATWOOD: The irony is that I was probably as liberal then as I am now, which is pretty liberal, and I probably surprised them a bit. But they initially approved my going. I was initially assigned to Panama. They changed that and assigned me to Madrid in the administrative section. So, I was the personnel officer at the embassy in Madrid. And my FSO appointment didn’t come through for about six months and then I became a full-fledged FSO. I integrated into the officer corps.

But it was fascinating. I became important to the political ambassador who was there. His name was Robert C. Hill, an old friend of Richard Nixon’s. He previously had been ambassador to Mexico and to Argentina. He owned a shipping company, was one of the really well off Republicans. And he began to realize that as the personnel officer I was important to him within the Embassy community. I was writing the weekly newspaper for the embassy and becoming pretty well known. His political instincts kicked in and he called me one day and said, “I want you upstairs to work with me. Be my special assistant.”

*Q: Oh.*

ATWOOD: So, I went up and now I'm working for a Republican ambassador. He was so political, but in a positive way. He was bigger than life, a real character. He had me write the efficiency ratings for the deputy chief of mission. He told me he didn't want me to write a good one. (Shakow laughs) So, imagine that. And then, another one for a person he liked. So I got a real view of his world and an understanding of embassy politics.

And then, in the second year I was there, I began to get antsy. I wasn't satisfied with being on a career ladder that might take me to a position where I could make decisions in twenty years' time or so.

*Q: Especially since you'd already been making a lot of decisions already in these junior jobs.*

*Let me interrupt for a moment and ask if your wife was with you on all these travels?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: And did you have children at that point?*

ATWOOD: Yes. Yes. My first wife, we divorced some thirty years ago now, but—

*Q: But she was with you on these trips?*

ATWOOD: She was the girl I met at Wareham High School that came with me and we had two kids. When in Abidjan she had to go back to Wareham because the hospital wasn't very good in Abidjan, so she flew back to have my daughter Debbie. My son John had already been born in the States.

I wanted to go back to be with her when she was having Debbie and there was a large coffee conference in Abidjan. The Ivory Coast was a big coffee exporter. I met two pilots who had flown a delegation from Brazil to Abidjan. I found out that they were heading back to the U.S. with an empty plane so I asked them if I could join them. We flew back through Morocco and then stopped a bit in London, then Iceland and then New York where I got a commercial flight to Boston. So I was able to be there for the birth of my daughter Debbie.

*Q: And what year would that have been?*

ATWOOD: 1968.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Yes. I then finished my tour in Abidjan and came back to Washington. I went through courses at the Foreign Service Institute, including a language course in Spanish, and then was assigned to Madrid, Spain to work for Robert C. Hill.

So, it was a good experience. I met and became friendly with Manolo Santana, Manuel Santana, who was a great tennis player who had won at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. He took me to a couple of bullfights. I met his friends, tennis players like Lew Hoad and others. It was really an interesting time to be in Spain because it was the end of the Franco era, and of course, the U.S. had interests there because we had an air base and a naval base, and that became very important later on in my story, as well. I'll get into that.

*Q: Okay.*

ATWOOD: But Hill treated me very well and treated me with great respect, and all of a sudden, I'm not just a personnel officer anymore, I'm the special assistant to the ambassador and all that goes with that.

Now every time a politician would come through Madrid, Ambassador Hill, who loved politics, would have the whole embassy staff go to the auditorium and listen to the politician. One day a senator came through and a friend of mine, Curt Cutter, who was in the political section, was assigned to be his control officer. The Senator was Tom Eagleton. He had just been elected, at the age of thirty-eight, as senator from Missouri, on a platform of opposition to the Vietnam War. He spoke to the whole staff, and I was thoroughly impressed.

This guy was as candid as any politician I'd ever met. He said he was against the war in Vietnam and he explained the reasons why, and he said, "You know, I also took a position on the side of gun control. Then he said, "My father called me in and he said, 'Are you crazy? You're going to be against the Vietnam War in Missouri and now you're going to be against guns too? You will never be elected.'" "So I went in the tank," he said. I had never met a politician so honest and here he is talking in front of a Republican ambassador who might have conveyed that back to Washington.

The next day, Curt Cutter had something else to do, and he asked me to take over as Eagleton's control officer. So, I went around with Tom and his wife, Barbara, for three days. He was very interested in the history of Spain and Franco, and I was able to brief him and really connect with him. And we got to the airport and his plane was late, so we spent another three hours talking. I told him that I really wanted to get into politics, and I wanted to get out of the Foreign Service, that I had actually tried to get into the Muskie presidential campaign. I knew that Tom had already supported Muskie. He was the first senator, he and Stuart Symington, to support Muskie. He asked me, "How did you do that?" I said, "Well, a friend of mine is the principal of the American School here and we play golf together. His name is Moe Blum. Moe is a personal friend of Sumner Redstone who was the finance director for the Muskie campaign. And he sent a letter to Sumner Redstone saying I've got this friend, Brian Atwood, who would like to join the Muskie



campaign.” Well, I had the letter with me, and I showed Eagleton. It was just one of those things that connected.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: He said, “Look. I don’t have any job openings, but when I get back, I’m going to check with some other senators and see if they’ve got job openings for you.” So, about two weeks later I get a note from him saying, “I’ve checked with Kennedy, and I’ve checked with Nelson,” Gaylord Nelson, and “right now there’s no room at the inn, but I’ll continue to follow up”.

I couldn’t believe that he would actually follow up, but he did. And maybe five months later I’m deathly ill at home with a fever, and it was the day of the Marine Corps ball, and my wife badly wanted to go to the Marine Corps ball, so I struggled and went into the office. Soon after, my phone rings and it’s Tom Eagleton on the phone saying I’d like you to come back and work for me. Well, all of a sudden, my fever disappeared. I was on the ceiling! And he said, “You’ve got to come back and check with my administrative assistant, Doug Bennet. Doug thinks he’s the one who has to hire you. (Laughs) But you know.” So, I said okay, and within a couple of weeks I was on a plane flying back. Had a wonderful lunch with Doug at his home, met Michael and James and his daughter and his wife.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Doug Bennet and I became close friends after that. Within months of the time I got back to work for Eagleton-- and I was the newest guy on the staff-- Tom became the vice- presidential candidate. I was in Japan at the time on a staff trip to Japan.

*Q: Staff—Eagleton’s staff, rather—? You had had some—*

ATWOOD: The Japanese had invited a number of key foreign policy staff on a trip to Japan just to help understand the country. It was a wonderful trip. While there people are speculating on who the VP would be. One of the staffers was with Wilbur Mills and there were rumors that he would be the nominee. The convention in Miami was going on and McGovern was trying to decide who should be his vice-presidential candidate. I get up one morning in Tokyo and turn on Armed Forces Radio, and it is announced. Tom Eagleton is going to be the vice-presidential candidate.

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: All of a sudden, I’m an important guy in Japan. The national security advisor to the Prime Minister wanted to meet with me, as did others at the foreign ministry. I then get on a plane and go back and go into the office and there’s the Secret Service. The world had changed overnight! And it was really an interesting two weeks, obviously. And I had new responsibilities. I remember the Egyptians had kicked the Russians out of

Egypt, and Senator Eagleton had to do a press conference. I had to prepare him on that issue.

*Q: So, you were the foreign policy expert on the Eagleton staff. Is that—*

ATWOOD: Yes, exactly. That was my job. I was his legislative assistant on foreign policy and defense.

*Q: And this was the case before all this vice-presidential stuff came up. So, when you were called back to work in the office, that was what your tasks were going to be, to be the foreign policy and defense—*

ATWOOD: Yes, I replaced the guy that had been his foreign affairs and defense LA, legislative assistant. I came in January of 1972, so the nomination took place in early summer, July I believe. I had been there for six months before he was nominated. In late June I was asked to go on the trip to Japan. I didn't think there was any reason I couldn't be away. It was the summer, and the Senate wasn't in session. And I end up in Japan when he's named vice-presidential nominee—

*Q: Okay, but what I'm getting at is that when you came back—when you left the State Department and came to work for him—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: —your task in the office, in the senatorial office, was foreign policy and defense.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And what was Doug Bennet doing?*

ATWOOD: He was the administrative assistant. He was the top—

*Q: Ah.*

ATWOOD: n—he was the—I don't know what they call them now, chief-of-staff. He was the—

*Q: Yeah. Okay, okay. But so—*

ATWOOD: And Doug was, of course, knowledgeable of a lot of the issues that I was working on too. He had a PhD in Russian history and was interested in foreign policy. There were some really fascinating things that I got involved in. I probably should tell you a few of them.

Obviously, the Vietnam War was the big issue, and he was elected on the basis that he was opposed to the war. And as a member of the Appropriations Committee, he had the amendment that ended the war.

It was after the POWs (Prisoners of War) were released and there was a lot of frustration and worry that we'd have more POWs, and so he goes to an Appropriations Committee meeting and puts in an amendment that he himself wrote. I didn't have anything to do with it. He wrote it on a yellow lined piece of paper. It said no money in this bill or any other bill may be used for combat activity in Indochina. Incredibly it passed overwhelmingly. Even Republicans voted for it. And then it passed in the Senate overwhelmingly.

People were frustrated with the war at this point and the POWs had been released and no one wanted to see more POWs. It then went to the House, and it passed there. Then Nixon vetoed it. And that's when Nixon and Kissinger started to negotiate. They got Church and Case involved, saying, "Can you give us more time? We need more time." I think in the end it was 45 more days to bomb in Cambodia because that's the threat, Kissinger said. Well, Eagleton, of course, opposed that, he opposed that compromise, and I think he was right. And people supported the Administration despite their qualms. In the end Church and Case, who had credibility on the war; they had always been opposed to the war, got the credit. But it was Eagleton's amendment that forced the Administration to give up.

*Q: Sure.*

ATWOOD: —Unfortunately, the bombing in Cambodia continued. And even though Kissinger promised not to escalate, they escalated; they bombed the hell out of Cambodia. And I'm absolutely convinced that's what helped Pol Pot and others gain power and do what they did in the killing fields of Cambodia.

The other really interesting thing I worked on was the War Powers Act. Eagleton was the chief author of the senate bill. He was the junior senator so he didn't get as much credit for it, but it was really his bill. Senators Javits and Stennis joined as co-sponsors. That was a pretty powerful triumvirate. And one day in 1973 the War Powers Resolution passed the Senate.

The House, meanwhile, didn't take the same view that—with the exception of certain emergency situations, like repelling an attack on the United States or our forces abroad, that the president would have to come to Congress for approval. The House side preferred to leave the situation as it was, basically saying, "If at all possible, consult with us" before going to war. In Eagleton's view that turned the war powers clause of the Constitution on its head. He ended up opposing the final war powers resolution, which took a lot of courage, in my opinion He was technically right. He knew the Constitution better than most of them. Most of his colleagues wanted to defeat Nixon on the issue. They wanted to defeat him because Watergate was going on at the time, and they just

wanted to slap him down. So, they weren't thinking about the substance. And they admitted that to Eagleton privately, some of his Democratic friends.

After that was passed, Nixon was going to veto it, right?

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: So, I get a call from a lawyer at the State Department who wanted to come and see me about the veto message because he knew Eagleton opposed the bill in the first place. So, I said okay. I was wondering why. Now this is 1975, the Turks had gone into Cyprus and the Cyprus crisis had started.

He told me that despite the fact that a legal opinion received by Kissinger had concluded that there was evidence to show that the Turks had been warned never to use American weapons on Cyprus and that that would constitute a violation of the condition under which Turkey had received US arms. A letter from Cyrus Vance when he was deputy secretary of defense constituted the first warning. Then President Lyndon Johnson sent the same warning to the Turkish Prime Minister. It said that if you use American weapons on Cyprus, we would have to cut off military assistance.

According to this young State lawyer, Kissinger tried to ignore that legal opinion. Some wise reporter had asked that question about it at one of the press briefings and got no answer. So, this lawyer was now telling me that he had written the opinion and Kissinger ignored it. Kissinger had tried to deep-six it by sending it to the State Department Counselor, Carlyle Maw, his former private lawyer whom he had brought into State.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

ATWOOD: I then wrote a speech for Eagleton saying that despite all that's gone on in Watergate—by this time Nixon had resigned and Ford was president and Kissinger was riding high—“people at the State Department were not informing the president of his legal obligations.” We then went through all the reasons why, including the letters warning the Turks of the consequences. This State lawyer had given me the whole nine yards.

Well, that was front page in the *Post* and the *New York Times* because the reporters had already been asking about it. And that created a real crisis. Kissinger came down to explain his position to the Democratic and Republican caucuses, but by now the Greek lobby was in full flight.

I was concerned because cutting off aid to a NATO ally would have its own consequences. So, with Eagleton's approval, I went down to State and met with Carlyle Maw. I said, “Look. I understand the difficulty here but let me give you a possible out. If you start a negotiation to get the Turks to leave Cyprus, whether it's through the UN or with whomever, you might freeze the Congress in place, and they might hold back to see what happens in the negotiation. But if you just ignore this and fight it, I can tell you,

given the Greek lobby and concerns about the rule of law, you will lose.” So, I warned them. This is all written up in the book by Ed Weisband and Tom Franck called *Foreign Policy by Congress*.

So, we come back and, according to the book, Kissinger calls Mansfield and Mansfield told him not to worry. Well then a week later Kissinger comes to the Senate to talk to the Democratic and Republican caucuses. By this time we’ve also got the Allende issue in Chile and Senator Mondale took him on on our involvement in that. Then Eagleton takes him on on this issue and Kissinger basically says, “You know, you’re not running foreign policy, I am, and this is important to the United States. This is a NATO ally. We can’t cut off aid.”

So, they get out of the caucus—this is all done privately—and there’s another bill on the floor that very day, and Eagleton puts in a nonbinding resolution saying that because the Turks violated their agreement with the United States, we will have to cut off aid to Turkey if they don’t withdraw. It passed overwhelmingly. There were seventy votes in support of it. Because of Watergate, people were sensitive about the rule of law at this point. The resolution was non-binding because we wanted to give the Administration some time to consider the diplomatic option.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Well, you know what happened then. I mean, Kissinger ignored it and it ended up that Congress cuts off aid to Turkey, and that wasn’t a very helpful end game. The irony, just to close that story off, was that I later became assistant secretary of state for congressional relations, and it was my job to reverse that.

*Q: Well, at least you knew all the facts, right, so—*

ATWOOD: I knew every fact. I tried to stay as much out of it as possible and I asked my deputy, Nelson Ledsky, who I had met earlier on, to handle it. We reversed the embargo, winning by just a few votes. This was about two years later. Ledsky, by the way, had been the Director of the Greece, Cyprus, Turkey regional office. That’s where I had met him.

To finish my Eagleton story, I ghost wrote his book on war powers. It was called “War and Presidential Power: A Chronicle of Congressional Surrender.” I used to work on it until 4 in the morning and then get to work by 8. You can do that when you’re young! The book was never a best seller, but it is an excellent account of the battle over war powers and has an historical analysis of the Framers’ intent. It certainly justifies Tom’s vote against the War Powers Resolution.

*Q: Maybe that’s a good spot to call a halt to our discussion today.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: You've been going through this fascinating set of stories, and you are not quite yet ready to move over to the State Department, so we'll have to pick it up at that point where you tell us about that. And there also are some Eagleton stories, I think, that you still have to tell—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: Including the time when he then left the candidacy for the vice-presidency and so on—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And you may have some interesting stories to tell us about what it was like to be on the staff at that time. But I do want to say that this whole set of stories about you starting your life in this small town in Massachusetts and reaching this stage only a few short years later is very inspiring and interesting. Let's see, only about thirty years later that you're involved in these kinds of international diplomatic - and not so diplomatic - incidents is fascinating. And this is just the beginning. So, Brian—*

ATWOOD: Just remind me of one thing. I want to tell you this story about Spain and the treaty on the bases agreement when we come back.

*Q: All right. And that one is while you were still working with Eagleton?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: Okay. Well, we'll pick it up with that story. And I can see I should be reading this Foreign Policy by Congress to get some of these inside stories that you're talking about too.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Okay. So, I want to bring to a close this first session of the oral history of Brian Atwood, and we will pick it up in the near future and we will pick it up with the Spanish treaty's discussion and much more to come. So, stay tuned, and we will be back. So, Brian, don't go away. Let me end this recording, I guess.*

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*Q: Well, this is now the twenty-fifty of February, and we are about to begin the second session of the oral history of Brian Atwood. And this is Alex Shakow and we're just resuming the discussion that we left off a few days ago.*

*Brian, we ended with an extensive discussion of the really remarkable series of issues that you dealt with when you were a legislative assistant to Senator Tom Eagleton. And that included various issues on which you were drawn in very deeply and we remarked on how much of a leap this was from where you started as a child in Massachusetts. But*

*there's another issue that you wanted to be sure that we covered that you dealt with for Senator Eagleton, and that is the discussion around the treaty on Spanish bases. So, why don't you tell us about that before we talk about the political experiences of Senator Eagleton as a vice-presidential candidate. So, Spanish bases, Brian. Go ahead.*

ATWOOD: OK. When I got to the Senate, and even before, I was impressed by reports that two staff people on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee did, Dick Moose and Jim Lowenstein. They would go out to countries and do in-depth interviews and come back and write a report, very long, analytical reports. These were available to all members of the Senate and to the public, and I was impressed. I wanted an opportunity to do that at one point. What made most sense was to use my own experience as a former diplomat in Spain. And a lot of things fell into place.

The first thing that happened was that Bob McCloskey was named assistant secretary of state for congressional relations. He had been the spokesperson for Kissinger and Henry trusted him. I worked with him on other issues, and then he was asked to be the negotiator for the new bases agreement with Spain. So, I went down to see him.

One of the big issues at the time related to the Senate's Constitutional treaty power. Many of the agreements that Kissinger negotiated were executive agreements, and he seemed almost willingly to ignore the treaty power in the Constitution. In some ways I didn't blame him. You need sixty-seven votes, two-thirds of those present and voting to pass a treaty, and that's quite a hill to climb for any Executive Branch official. So, I said to McCloskey, "It doesn't seem to me that there's a great deal of controversy about this, but it's certainly true that if you're going to put American forces on the ground in Spain, there are two constitutional provisions that come into play."

By this time, I had helped write Tom Eagleton's book on the war powers. We worked together on a war powers resolution. And so, the point I was making was that you're talking about a constitutional issue here. And I said, "Let me go over to Spain and do an assessment. There is, inevitably, a transition going to be taking place there." At the time of this conversation, Franco was still alive but fading.

ATWOOD: And by the time I got ready to travel to Spain Franco had died, so there was an ongoing transition, and it was a fascinating one because no one knew where it was going to come out. A lot of new political parties were forming. There was an assumption that the Christian Democrats would do best because it was a Catholic country with an agreement, a Concordat, with the Vatican. The military was still a factor. They didn't have an external mission and their internal mission was quite oppressive under Franco. So, I asked Senator Eagleton whether I could play this role and told him about the McCloskey conversation.

So, I did go in. I spent two weeks interviewing everyone. Before doing that, I had a friend who had been with me in the embassy in Spain and he was now in Rome. So, I got hold of him, and I said, "I'll come through Rome. Would you take all the embassy cables you

see coming out of Spain and let me see them?" I told him that I had the approval of the State Department, which I did. I also had a top-secret clearance, so that wasn't an issue.

So, I went to Rome first and read everything the embassy had written. When I got to Spain, I met with the ambassador and the political section and began letting them know that I knew what they had been reporting. They had assumed, probably, that McCloskey had given me all these cables. That wasn't true. But the embassy was very, very helpful, and I set up maybe thirty interviews with every political party leader, key people in the Catholic Church-- a very important institution-- a few people in the military, even the head of the Communist Party, which was then illegal. The Communist Party wasn't recognized.

*Q:* Did the embassy arrange all these interviews?

*ATWOOD:* Not with the Communist Party. But they did help me with the other interviews, most of the other interviews.

The Communist Party person picked me up at my hotel on a Sunday morning when not very many people were around and they whisked me through the streets. I had no idea where I was going. And took me up to an apartment where I met the head of the Communist Party. He said to me, "Look, we're a Euro communist party. We're not here to storm the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg." I quoted him in my report. We talked for an hour or two. I came away convinced that this party wasn't interested in overthrowing democratic institutions. They were a reactionary workers' party organized to oppose Franco.

Then I met with Manuel Fraga, who was the interior minister; he was very well known as being a really hardline guy close to Franco. But he turned out to be one of the key Spanish officials that were negotiating the details of the new democracy. I happened to be in his office when Crown Prince Juan Carlos called. One of the issues that they were considering was whether or not there would be a monarch, a royal family. There would be a plebiscite to determine that. Needless to say, Juan Carlos was very nervous as to how this would come out, and Fraga told him—he didn't make me leave the office, I just listened to his entire conversation-- "Don't worry, Juan Carlos. We're not going to put the crown in the ballot box and hope it comes out." I quoted him in my report.

My report got a lot of publicity in Spain. It was called *El Informe Atwood* (The Atwood Report). There were still some controls over the press, but there were five or six Spanish reporters in Washington, so they reported on it in detail. It was now a part of the public record, published in the Congressional Record. So, it made headlines in Spain. For the first time, a lot of people in Spain saw their country and the realities of the transition. My report was like a mirror of what was going on. I mean, they were able to look at themselves from an institutional point of view and to see which direction they were going. Several years later, when I was the DAC Chair at the OECD, the Spanish Ambassador asked to see me. He came to thank me for playing what he called an historic role in his country's transition to democracy.



*Q: The ostensible reason for all of this, for your interviewing all these people and so on, was that there was a prospective treaty—*

ATWOOD: Right. The question was whether Kissinger would actually submit it to the Senate for ratification as a treaty.

*Q: —that was to involve the placement of American troops in bases in Spain. Is that right?*

ATWOOD: To be precise, the continuation of American troops at Torrejón and the naval base in the south called Rota.

*Q: Right, okay, sorry.*

ATWOOD: So it was the continuation of these bases under new terms. But, remember, at the time no European country had an embassy in Spain. Franco had been an ally of Hitler. They had cut off diplomatic relations with him. And they were not going to restore diplomatic relations until they saw the final outcome.

So, what Senator Eagleton said, and I had put in my report, was that we thought the trends were moving in the right direction and that we should move forward with this as a vote of confidence that Spain was going to become a democratic country. That was quite a step forward in those days. But the important effect of it in the Senate was that a liberal senator who had been an anti-Vietnam War senator was saying it's okay to go ahead with the treaty. This would confirm our confidence that Spain was moving in the right direction. And indeed, the agreement was submitted as a treaty—McCloskey kept his word. It was submitted and approved as a treaty.

*Q: What was the final vote on that?*

ATWOOD: I don't think there were too many people who voted against it, but I'll have to look that up.

*Q: Well, it doesn't matter, but the basic point was that it did receive enough votes for approval—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: —as a treaty.*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: Rather than simply an executive action or something of that sort.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: That is very impressive. And your understanding is that this report of yours contributed to that sense of confidence, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes. And I would add that both in the U.S. Senate, and also in Spain where it got a lot of attention, it was seen as a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. That is a concept and a phrase I like a lot. I am a big admirer of positive self-fulfilling prophecies!

The war powers legislation was the most important issue. The issue I mentioned before, the Cyprus-Turkey issue, was exciting to work on. But I think the thing I was most proud of, because I pretty much did it myself, was this report on Spain.

*Q: That's really interesting. Your experience in working with Eagleton on all these issues, including this one that you've just described, is quite remarkable. Most people who work as legislative assistants on the Hill don't have quite that many opportunities to make a real difference. Obviously it did not harm you as you went ahead with the rest of your career to have these kinds of experiences. I assume that's your sense, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes. I have to just say one thing. It was such a different culture, moving from the Foreign Service to the Senate. All of a sudden, everyone's talking politics all the time, looking at the politics of foreign policy issues rather than just the sort of theories and the various strategic moves and tactical moves one might take. And you're sitting around a table—we used to go to lunch with Eagleton almost every day with his staff, and of course, there's a lot of joking and trash talking and everything else that goes on, very different from going to lunch with people at the embassy in Spain or in Abidjan.

So, it was a different culture. I was not initially at ease in that culture, I was not feeling entirely comfortable, but eventually I became quite comfortable. I guess I then felt comfortable in both cultures. So, I was able, I think, in my next job as Doug Bennet's deputy—senior deputy assistant secretary for congressional relations-- to bridge the two cultures.

I actually had to convince Doug to take the job. Cyrus Vance had offered him the job, and he called me on a Saturday morning and said, "I'm not sure this is for me." I said, "Well, look at the historic opportunity you have. We've been at the barricades with the Executive Branch for how many years under Nixon. This is an opportunity to bring the barricades down and to have a relationship between the Executive and the Congress that is workable in our system." And so, I think those words and what we did later really did build that bridge between the Congress and the Executive on foreign policy.

It certainly helped my standing at State. There's a certain mystique if you come from the Hill and you're working in the Executive Branch. There's a feeling down there that you know something they don't know. (Both laugh) And that you're somewhat protected from some of the bureaucratic politics that goes on. So, that was very helpful too.

*Q: Obviously, I want to get right back to that. But I can't let you leave Eagleton without telling me if you have any insights into the experience that he went through and that others went through during this vice-presidential nomination and ultimately his withdrawal from that. Do you have any comments on that? Were you affected by that? Just let me know what you have on that subject, if you care to.*

ATWOOD: Yes. I was only there for six months before all of a sudden being thrown into a national campaign. I remember the first meeting we had with McGovern's policy person, Ted Van Dyke, and how a number of issues came up that I had to prepare the vice-presidential candidate to discuss, including when the Egyptians kicked the Russians out of Egypt. I remember that very distinctly. But then, he went off on this trip out West.

People might remember that at the convention itself there were several other people who were offered the vice-presidential nomination that apparently refused it, and so the phone call came to Tom very late in the day when he was in his suite with a lot of people from Missouri, including a KMOX radio reporter who recorded the call from McGovern. I have heard that recording. After McGovern asked him to accept the nomination, McGovern's aide, Frank Mankiewicz, got on the phone. There was a microphone in Eagleton's face. So, when, theoretically, Mankiewicz claimed to have asked the question about "any skeletons in the closet." Listening to the tape, you only hear one side, but it doesn't appear that that question was really asked.

*Q: Oh.*

ATWOOD: Yes I've heard the tape and it's available. Now, Eagleton never wanted to get Mankiewicz in trouble, so he never challenged Mankiewicz's story. But then, Eagleton took this trip a week later, stopped in the Black Hills where McGovern was, and that's when they had their meeting, and that's where Eagleton told him the whole story. The two then came out and faced the press, and that's when McGovern said he supported Tom 1,000 percent. Tom thought he was well over this issue. I mean, he had been treated for depression, there was no question about it, and treated in a way, unfortunately, that caused people to hesitate when they hear that he went through shock treatment.

Tom Eagleton, in my view, was the sanest guy in the U.S. Senate, the most stable guy, the most—well, I loved the guy and never thought that he had any mental issues whatsoever. He then went on a West Coast campaign trip. I'm back in the office and I get this call from Paul Duke—the NBC reporter. I was the only senior person left in the office, the rest of them, including Doug, had traveled with Tom. Duke tells me that he has "a report here that your senator was arrested for drunken driving in Missouri." And I said, "I don't know anything about that." And he said, "Are you denying that?" I said, "That's not very good journalism if you quote me as saying that I'm denying it when I say that I don't know anything about it." He never used the story.

What happened was that the person who had run against Eagleton in the primary, whose son ironically was then working in Eagleton's office as an intern, had leaked these dozen or so traffic tickets, DUIs, drunken driving tickets. Jack Anderson jumped all over it and

wrote the story without really checking. That seemed to me to be the straw that broke the camel's back. I mean, the money people that were supporting McGovern just said, "this is too much, we can't do this."

*Q: Uh-huh.*

ATWOOD: After Tom resigned from the ticket; Jack Anderson came in to see him. The press is outside waiting to hear what happened. And Jack Anderson comes out and apologizes, saying he was wrong. And he was wrong. But most people don't know the full story. The full story is that the traffic tickets were doctored. They were Eagleton's brother's tickets. He was a doctor, a medical doctor in Missouri, and I guess he liked to party. They were his DUI tickets and they were doctored to read as if they were Tom's tickets.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

ATWOOD: And Tom, however, told Jack Anderson—I really don't know what he told him. They met privately and he convinced Jack that it wasn't him. Jack Anderson never revealed that it was his brother. I believe that Tom never wanted it revealed that it was his brother, who was then alive; he didn't want to embarrass his family.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: Anyway that's—

*Q: Okay, well, you know—*

ATWOOD: But after that, Eagleton became a national figure. I traveled with him on a trip to New England to go back to his old college, Amherst, and a number of other schools in the New England area. He was now a national hero. We went to a ballgame together at RFK Stadium, and they announced that he was there, and people just stood up and cheered. I mean, there was a great deal of empathy in the country for him and what he had gone through and the way he handled it. He handled it really well.

*Q: That must have been very pleasing for him, to find that kind of public support and reinforcement after that kind of terrible public humiliation for all the wrong reasons and so on.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Well, okay. Thank you very much for that.*

*So. The administration changes and Ford loses to Carter, so you convince Doug Bennet that you're going to be able to bring the barricades down, to use your words. How did that happen? I mean, he was asked by Cyrus Vance and then Doug said to you, if I'm going, you're going. Is that—?*

ATWOOD: Yes, I didn't really expect that to happen. I hadn't been there that long; I was still rather young. I was about thirty years old at the time and obviously, thrilled that Doug would want me to go back down to the State Department, a place I knew fairly well. I took the assignment and of course, we had a great working relationship and had a number of career people that were helping us as well.

We changed the whole culture there, I think. We had weekly meetings with representatives from all of the bureaus, the State Department bureaus, to let them know what was happening on the Hill and to hear what they were saying, encouraging people to go up to the Hill and meet with people and talk to them about the big issues. It was all done in secrecy under Kissinger. He didn't want anyone talking to people on the Hill. So, it changed the culture in terms of how we related. And of course, we had good relationships with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Frank Church, and Bill Bader, his chief-of-staff. And a wonderful relationship with the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Clem Zablocki and his staff. So, we were able to alert them anytime something was going to break.

There was one issue that broke during the summer when I was on a trip with a congressional delegation in Germany at the time. I got a call from the acting secretary, David Newsome, who was the undersecretary for political affairs, and he said, "They've just come out and revealed a brigade of Russians, Soviets in Cuba. And Frank Church is blasting the administration. What should I do?" I told him to call Bill Bader. I didn't know how else to do it. I mean, it didn't help—Church was out on the campaign trail in Idaho, running for office. He felt very vulnerable. It didn't matter that this small brigade had been there for years. So, that was one issue that I recall very vividly.

But the most important one was the Panama Canal Treaty. I was working with Doug and others on the Senate side, but more importantly, I was given the full responsibility for getting the House to agree to the so-called implementing legislation. It was one thing to get the treaty passed, which was really quite a hill to climb, and we managed to do it. Now, all of a sudden, people were gun shy on the House side. They didn't want to pass the implementing legislation. I then had what you might call my fifteen minutes of fame. The maritime committee, which was run by Congressman Murphy, a conservative Democrat who was later convicted in the ABSCAM scandal for taking money from Arab fixers.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

ATWOOD: Actually, his wife later came to work for me at AID. She was a wonderful person. She was by then divorced from him.

*Q: The circles within circles and I mean, all the—it's a very short amount of connections here.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: Yes, go ahead. It's Washington.*

ATWOOD: Well, they were going to embarrass the administration, Murphy and the Republicans, because they found out that weapons had been transferred from the Panamanians, from Torrijos's administration to the Sandinistas. And they had now traced these weapons and found that they'd come from the United States. So they then called to testify civil servants from the munitions control office at the State Department who had to approve the licenses for these things. They were GS twelves and thirteens, and I said, "I'll go down with you."

Just before we testified, the committee had the Nicaraguan vice president, Somoza's vice president, testify. He blasted the administration for allowing this to happen.

Then I go up to testify and I say, "This is terribly inappropriate that you would ask a foreign vice president to testify against our government. If he has a complaint about the administration, he should go down the street to the Organization of American States and offer his complaint, not come to the U.S. Congress to complain about our country." I went on in that vein, quite aggressively turning the tables on Murphy and Bob Bauman, who was the senior Republican.

They didn't know quite how to handle it, so they called a recess. I was on the CBS evening news with Walter Cronkite that night, pointing to one of the anti-treaty Republicans, saying, "If you really want to help communism in Central America, you'll defeat the Panama Canal Treaty implementing legislation." I was pointing at him accusingly. (Both laugh) The White House was very pleased with all of that.

*Q: But OAS line, was that something that you had been thinking about or did it just come up spontaneously?*

ATWOOD: No, when I heard that they had invited the vice president of Nicaragua to complain about this, I thought that was beyond the bounds.

*Q: Well, good for you.*

ATWOOD: Yes, but you know, when you've worked on the Hill you kind of get a little more courage to confront these guys and know what they're all about.

*Q: I'm trying to assess whether you had more trouble with people in various parts of the State Department than you did with most of the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Were your relationships quite good generally across the board, or did you have—*

ATWOOD: I think so. I mean, they knew my history. I was only five years out of the State Department where I was a middle grade Foreign Service officer, and now I'm a deputy assistant secretary. So, dealing with some of my counterparts in other regional

bureaus was interesting. On occasion, you had to go around to get a clearance on a memo. They would ask you for a clearance on a memo that had something to do with the Hill. There were a few cases of some tension, but no more than normal. I'm sure that a few of the senior FSOs wondered what this young guy was doing here!

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: The Congressional Relations Bureau is on the seventh floor. You become very close to the secretary of state because he testifies four times a year, and of course, the Hill is a very important part of his responsibilities. We would invite Members of Congress down for breakfasts and lunches in the fancy conference room on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. I recall many times standing with Cy Vance on the balcony overlooking the Lincoln Memorial, waiting for the Members to arrive. One very interesting breakfast was with Ron Dellums and other Black Caucus members who had just visited Cuba and had spent hours with Fidel Castro.

We had a weekly lunch with Warren Christopher, who was then deputy secretary. I got to know Tony Lake and Sandy Berger really well because they were in the policy bureau, and they would write the testimony and I would then have to clear it or edit it or whatever. So, we all became very close there. And you had more—I mean, you had more power than perhaps you even realized because you were interpreting the motives of 535 people.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And you had to be fair about how you assessed their point of view and whether some particular policy approach would fly or not politically. So, you had a good deal of clout in the department.

*Q: One of the major themes of the Carter Administration was, indeed, the introduction of human rights and its role in foreign policy, foreign aid and so on. Did you find that you were going up on the Hill to explain, defend the human rights policy, or did that not come up as a major problem for you?*

ATWOOD: No, we did a lot of work on that. And of course, it was an initiative of the Hill. I mean, Tom Harkin, who was in the House at the time, passed the law, for example, saying that the administration had to decide on World Bank votes, whether or not human rights violations should be considered. I sat on the committee to decide these issues. Christopher chaired the committee.

*Q: So did I.*

ATWOOD: Oh, did you? Well, you know what that was like. And so, one day we had to make a decision about Nicaragua and Somoza, and we decided that we would vote against a World Bank loan for Nicaragua. We got a letter that you wouldn't believe from Charlie Wilson. Well, if you know him, maybe you would believe.

*Q: I would believe it.*

ATWOOD: If you watched *Charlie Wilson's War*, you'd know what a character he was. Anyway, it was terribly insulting of Christopher; it called him a jackass and other names even worse. And so, Christopher turns to me, and he said, "This guy's on the appropriations committee. What are we going to do about this?" So, I said, "I'll handle it."

And I took the letter and I asked to see Charlie. I didn't know him. I had never met him before. But I was kind of calculating who he must be as I walked in his office and saw this staff of beautiful women all around him. I came in, sat down in front of his desk, and said, "Charlie, someone has been signing your name to this awful letter," and then I threw the letter down and he looked at me, initially in shock, and then he just burst out laughing.

I must say, it was a risky proposition from my point of view, but he took it well, and then we had a conversation. I said, "Look. You guys in the House passed this bill. I mean, this is something that is now law. What do you expect us to do?" Anyway, he then went on to talk about his long-term relationship with Somoza and how wonderful a guy he really was. I just said, "Look. We have to look at objective facts here. We can't just base it on other things." It turned out alright. Charlie was an interesting guy.

*Q: Well, good for you.*

*Did you get involved at all? You were responsible for managing from the State side the AID legislation. Is that right?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: So, Jack Gilligan was the AID administrator and he ultimately, of course, came afoul of Cyrus Vance. But what was your relationship with Gilligan and what was your impression of him in this role as—dealing with congressional issues?*

ATWOOD: To be fair, I think Doug had the relationship with Gilligan in those first few years. I didn't really have much of a relationship with him. I worked with Doug on the legislation and when I took over from Doug I was much more directly involved in it. But by that time IDCA (International Development Cooperation Agency) had come into play, and that was terribly confusing for the Hill and for everybody.

*Q: Well, just so that the record is clear, IDCA is the International Development Cooperation Agency.*

ATWOOD: That's right.



*Q: Which was set in as a level between the AID administrator and the secretary of state. But anyway, I mean, you can describe more of it, but that's just the simple way to see it.*

ATWOOD: In those days and probably later in my days, as well as USAID Administrator, there was a zero-sum game going on. IDCA was supposed to be the umbrella over not only AID, but the Peace Corps and OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation) and other development agencies.

*Q: Well, and the Treasury Department and Agriculture—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: —originally that was the intent, you know.*

ATWOOD: Well, that's right. Tom Ehrlich was the first head of IDCA.

*Q: Yeah. I'll get to it.*

ATWOOD: He was a college dean and very professorial in his approach to things. And interestingly, Carol Lancaster worked for IDCA at the time. She later became my deputy at AID.

IDCA caused a lot of confusion. I mean, no one knew how to handle it on the Hill. I remember confronting him at a secretary's staff meeting—feeling encouraged by Vance and Christopher because they didn't like losing control either. IDCA Director Tom Ehrlich was reporting directly to the White House. And that became a real issue later when I became administrator because when there is no IDCA director, the Administrator then becomes the acting head of IDCA. And that gave me a direct line to the White House—at least the perception was that I reported directly to the White House. Christopher never understood that I wouldn't ever presume to use that line, and he never understood that he had some authority to tell me what to do. So, he never did tell me what to do. But he seemed to resent the fact that I reported directly to the White House. I did have good relations with the White House, with the President, the First Lady, VP Gore, Tony Lake and Sandy Berger.

In any case, Ehrlich really was a very nice guy and I feel very sorry for him to be put into that jungle of political to-ing and fro-ing of who'd get what. The head of the Peace Corps at the time was Doug's old friend, the former governor of Ohio—

*Q: Celeste, Dick Celeste.*

ATWOOD: Dick Celeste. And you weren't going to tell Dick Celeste that he couldn't go up to the Hill and lobby for the Peace Corps. So, everybody was doing their own thing, despite the fact that IDCA had the legal authority. IDCA was a good concept in theory. I mean, I believe that there ought to be more coordination among all of the agencies that do

foreign aid work, but I think the focus ought to be on what they're doing overseas, not what they're doing on the Hill.

*Q: By the way, I mean, this all emanated from Hubert Humphrey and others on the Hill.*

ATWOOD: Right. Yes.

*Q: This was not an initiative of the administration.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: It was—and it was passed, but in effect, the big agencies that had the opportunity, Treasury, Agriculture, and others, simply did not find themselves under the jurisdiction of IDCA. The only agency that was under the jurisdiction of IDCA was AID.*

ATWOOD: Yes, exactly.

*Q: Which has led to this difficult confusion and everything else.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: But yeah, I mean, that—I was in the middle of that too because I was head of policy at AID at that point, so a lot of these people that worked for IDCA had also worked in policy for AID at one stage or another. So, you had all this business of running—I mean, that was—I've always felt very sorry that Doug had to suffer through that—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: —when he became head of AID.*

*Okay, so you then became the assistant secretary, having been the deputy assistant secretary, became the assistant secretary when Doug was nominated to be head of or selected for the position as AID administrator when Jack Gilligan was essentially fired by Secretary Vance. Right?*

ATWOOD: Right. Exactly. Yes.

*Q: Okay.*

ATWOOD: And it was not easy—the White House supported me. I don't think Christopher did. I think Christopher wanted Bob Beckel, who, by the way, recently died.

*Q: Yeah. No. Boy, that would have been very different—(laughs).*

ATWOOD: Yes, it would have been. But Beckel then went over to the White House. And one of the big issues that I had to handle then as assistant secretary was the issue of arms

sales to Saudi Arabia and to Egypt and Israel. That was something that the previous administration had promised the Saudis. The Saudis desperately wanted these F-15s. And so, they put together a package where Israel would get a few less F-15s than the Saudis, which was obviously one of the ways in which we would ultimately find a compromise. And then, F-4s and other equipment for Egypt.

The proposal went forward at the time when the Congress could veto an arms sale. All it took was a veto by both houses so we could prevent that by winning in one house. That, of course, was later found unconstitutional. The Supreme Court found congressional vetoes unconstitutional, but at that time all you needed was approval in the House and Senate to veto an arms sale. And so, this, of course, got AIPAC very much involved, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. It was clear to us that the House was a lost cause and that we had to convince the Senate to vote against the veto motion.

When the whole thing started, I got together with Morrie Amitay, the head of AIPAC, and Ken Wollack, his deputy and his congressional relations person. I said, "Look. You're going to be facing all the big oil companies, you're going to be facing all of the lobbying that these countries can put together on Capitol Hill so," I said, "I want you to know that I understand your position, and I think what we need to do is to try to figure how to climb down if it gets to that." Then I said, "Look, if it looks like we're going to win and you guys want to find a face saving way out of this, I'll give you a code word, Tastycake." It just came out of nowhere. I said, "I'll call you on the phone, and if I say 'Tastycake,' that's the time when you should find a fallback."

They laughed a bit, but Morrie was a very serious guy, and they certainly didn't want to lose on this one. Their problem was that Sadat, by this time, had gone to Jerusalem. And to then undercut the United States' evenhanded, balanced approach to the Middle East would have really sabotaged Sadat and any possibility of peace. I personally didn't like arms sales, but the case for peace was a strong one on the Hill.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: So, we got down to the end game and by this time we were counting that we had the votes, but barely. Abe Ribicoff had come onboard. I convinced Danforth from Missouri that Eagleton was going to vote with the Administration. I knew that the two of them looked at each other's voting records and tried to not embarrass one another.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Danforth came onboard. But we had maybe a spare vote or two, and so it was always the plan to add more planes for Israel, and to state that the Saudi F-15s would be equipped only with defensive systems, however one defines that, but defensive, not offensive systems. We managed to get Defense Secretary Harold Brown and the defense minister of Saudi Arabia to sign a letter saying that the F-15s would only have defensive systems. And then we added planes for Israel so they received as many as did the Saudis.

Well, by this time, knowing that they didn't have the votes in the Senate, Dante Fascell and others were coming up with their own compromise, which would have given fewer planes to Saudi Arabia, many more to Israel, and a lot of other things that the administration couldn't live with. And so, we have this meeting in the cabinet room with President Carter. The first thing he's handed is the letter that Harold Brown had already signed with the Saudi Defense Minister, agreeing that there will only be defensive systems. And the first words from President Carter were, "If someone asked me to sign a letter like this, I would tell them to kiss my ass."

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: Jimmy Carter, that's what he said. It surprised me. I mean, it's not just that he was president, but he was tougher than most people realize. That seems to contradict his wonderful humanitarian work, but not really. He was a tough-minded, smart and caring guy. But he could be tough as nails.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: So, anyway, the deal with the Saudis was done, so there wasn't anything you could do.

The cabinet room was full of the Administration's heavyweights. It's Cyrus Vance sitting next to the President, and Brzezinski sitting on the other side. Then there is Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Frank Moore, who was the White House congressional relations person, and I'm at the end of the table, I'm the junior guy in the room.

The next thing Brzezinski says is, "Mr. President, you can't agree to this compromise. This will make you look weak." And I'm thinking, here's a whole year of work going down the drain. So I have an out of body experience and I say, "Mr. President, on the contrary. It will make you look magnanimous, and if we don't do this with the narrow vote count we have now, we're going to lose to a compromise you really can't live with." And then Vance supported me and that was the end of that.

*Q: Yeah, well, that's, you know, power politics internationally, yeah.*

ATWOOD: Anyway.

*Q: Well, terrific.*

ATWOOD: Yes. So, we made the compromise, and we were the ones that looked reasonable at that point, and it went through, and we won the vote in the Senate.

Then Bob Beckel starts crowing that he beat AIPAC. I was very unhappy because just after the vote, I had called Morrie Amitay and Ken Wollack, and invited them in to meet the Secretary of State in the Vice President's office just off the Senate floor. I had told

Vance that we really needed to mend these relationships. So, that was a really good meeting. In the meantime, Beckel is quoted in the newspapers as saying, “We beat AIPAC.” In any case, he had had little to do with it, but he was being triumphal. He had come in after the vote was decided. The lesson is that one has to be very careful about triumphalism in Washington. (Both laugh) It’ll come back and bite you in so many ways.

So, that’s that story, I mean, that was that. The Panama Canal implementing legislation, and the Middle East arms sales, those were the big issues. The Camp David peace accords probably never would have happened if we had lost that vote. And then the foreign aid bill was always complicated and I got into it in great detail, the different aspects of it. I met people that cared deeply about population issues, family planning, the environment and child health care. I already knew the democracy-governance agenda. That prepared me for the future.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: That set of issues that were part of the development agenda.

*Q: On the foreign aid side you had the supporting assistance funding that was pretty much on the State side in terms of responsibility and on the other side you had the development assistance—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: —funds that reflected the new directions that had been introduced during five, six, seven years before and were being implemented under the—during the Carter Administration. And so, now the main responsibility was on the legislative staff in AID, but clearly, you had the responsibility of making sure this worked both within State and on the Hill. I mean, any thoughts about that and how you were able to balance these forces and how much you had to do as compared to the AID staff, which was quite a good staff in those days. I worked with them quite a lot, so.*

ATWOOD: Right. No, they were excellent. And one great benefit we had when Doug went over, he took Genta Hawkins, who was with us on the H staff at State. She went over with him, and ran the congressional relations staff under Doug. So, it was a very good working relationship and I don’t remember any conflict.

I do remember Christopher having meetings, trying to decide what the allocation of ESF (Economic Support Fund) would be. Of course, most of it was transferred to AID. The big one was Egypt after the Camp David Accords, but also, they would look at the distribution of that money and at the time I was just overseeing it all and getting an understanding of the process. The State Department would make decisions based on diplomacy and foreign policy, rather than on development. And so, I gained an understanding of it. I can’t say that I participated in pushing it in one direction or the other. I was not going to be opposing my friend Doug Bennet’s point of view on the Hill at all. Once the decisions had been made as to what that allocation would be and once

OMB (Office of Management and Budget) approved the budget my job was to get the budget approved as a whole.

*Q: Well, it certainly must have been, in terms of your responsibilities later on when you became AID administrator, useful to have been through this period of looking at this from that standpoint.*

ATWOOD: Well, later when I was Administrator we did reduce and reconfigure the Egyptian grant. I was in Egypt and had to sit down with their foreign minister and others to explain to them what we were doing and why. And they didn't like the fact that the grant to them was all projectized, whereas the Israelis just got a check.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: So, they kept pushing for that. That's another issue altogether.

*Q: When I was head of policy at AID and Tony Lake was the head of policy planning at State, one of the steps that was talked about was the possibility that there would be a reduction in the number of AID missions in a country.*

ATWOOD: Right. I took it up and had real confrontations with the assistant secretaries of state over this. Our budget had been cut so severely I said, "I don't think it's fair to us to ask us to measure results when we're spread so thin that we really can't staff these missions."

*Q: Yeah, but you succeeded, ultimately, right?*

ATWOOD: Right, succeeded because I got Christopher to agree, before I actually met with the group, and I'll never forget that day where all of the assistant secretaries were in a room with me, every one of them badgering me because I was pulling missions in their area.

*Q: Which were important to them because it was their one opportunity to give away money, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: I mean, that's what these—that's what they like about these. (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: That's right, exactly.

*Q: All right, we'll come back to that, we'll come back to that.*

*So, 1980, there's an election, and Jimmy Carter loses to Ronald Reagan.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And so, the writing is on the wall that you are not going to be able to continue to be in charge of congressional relations.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And had you anticipated this and begun to look around for what opportunities might exist for you?*

ATWOOD: Yes. First, I remember meeting with the guy who took my place as assistant secretary, and I wanted to give him a full briefing and tell him about the way the office operated and everything else. Well, he kept looking at his watch and—

*Q: Who was this? Who was that?*

ATWOOD: I can't remember his name.

*Q: Well, never mind.*

ATWOOD: I think I purposely put some people's names out of my head....

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: And he later became quite involved with the Reagan Administration in the Middle East. Anyway, he only wanted to know whether or not it was possible when he met with foreign leaders to have pictures taken with him. I mean, it was unbelievable. And then he just left, I mean, after fifteen minutes of discussion when I was just getting into it, he said he had another meeting and he left and never contacted me again.

*Q: I see.*

ATWOOD: But yes, I was looking; of course, everyone then knew they were short timers. Interesting thing happened to me. When I was in Spain, I think I may have mentioned this in the previous conversation; my personnel officer was Harry Barnes.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And Harry would come to Spain and meet with the people that he had on his list, and I was one of them, and we hit it off. And then in the Carter Administration, he became director general of the Foreign Service. So, one day after the election he called me and he said, "You know, I made a huge mistake with you." He had transferred me back to go on leave without pay to work for Eagleton. I didn't think I would have to leave the Foreign Service. I reported for duty in the Senate, and they said there was a Senate rule that said you can't work for another government agency. So, I was forced to call Harry and say, "This didn't work out. I have to resign." By this time, he had shipped all

of my household effects back and everything else. I later received a letter from the then-director general—I kept that letter—because that director general later became ambassador to Sudan and was one of those who was killed.

*Q: Ah, yeah.*

ATWOOD: He was assassinated. The letter was very nice, saying someday maybe you can come back to the Foreign Service or whatever, we're sorry we made this mistake.

So, Harry then calls me and says, "By the way, in the interim there's a new Civil Service law passed creating a Senior Executive Service. And I found out that I have authority to hire back people who were career people in the State Department as a Senior Executive Service appointment, so I can make up for my mistake." And he said, "What kind of a job would you like?" I said, "Well, I'm kind of high profile here, having been congressional relations assistant secretary for a Democratic administration." I said, "I think I'd feel uncomfortable being here in the building." So, we then agreed that I'd go over to the Foreign Service Institute. Paul Boeker, a career former ambassador, was the director of the Foreign Service Institute. He became a really good friend. He sadly died young of a brain tumor. But he said, "Why don't you do a study of the Senior Seminar, because I'm not happy with the way it's working."

Well, that was a fascinating thing to do. And it started on the day that the administration ended. That was January 20, 1981. I had become part of Muskie's inner circle. We were all sitting in Muskie's office all night long and waiting to hear word that the Iranian hostages had been released. One of the hostages was on my staff in H, Ann Swift.

*Q: Oh, yes. Ann Swift was a very good friend of ours.*

ATWOOD: She was a great person. She was going to be released along with all the others. And of course, they waited until Reagan was sworn in before they released the hostages. At five minutes to noon Muskie said we have to leave. "We are about to turn into pumpkins," he said. He'd already asked Haig whether he could use the State Department pressroom to explain that we hadn't given up anything for the hostages, we hadn't paid a ransom.

*Q: Right, right.*

ATWOOD: And Haig refused to let him use the room. So, we all kind of embraced one another and said goodbye. I went down to get in my car. By the time I got out of the tunnel of the State Department building Reagan was giving his inaugural speech. I then rushed home, packed a suitcase, got on a plane to join the Senior Seminar that was on its tour down south. They took the Senior Seminar down to meet with local officials and the like. So, I joined them in Atlanta, Georgia.

I was on the plane, sitting in a middle seat—I was very late getting a reservation—and the pilot comes on and he says, "I have good news. The American hostages have cleared



Iranian airspace.” And everybody was applauding, and I was sitting there with tears in my eyes. Still to this day, thinking about it, it’s just amazing how much I have been through. I mean, I wanted to say to the two people sitting next to me, I was with the secretary of state a few hours ago. I didn’t say anything, but it was very emotional and I was exhausted.

I joined the Senior Seminar and wrote a very long report on how to change the Senior Seminar. And then, Paul Boeker asked me to be the dean of professional studies. That is the department that does the junior officer-training program, the economics program and other training courses for FSOs. I created a few new programs, including a new mid-level program, a five-month program. We brought in academics from different universities in the area, and they helped me structure the program. It was a very successful program. I actually got an award for it from the new Administration.

*Q: From whom? From whom did you get that award?*

ATWOOD: From the undersecretary for management who was one of General Haig’s military friends. It was a Senior Executive Service monetary award.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Paul had recommended it.

*Q: Go ahead.*

ATWOOD: That was a very important part of what happened next, of course. I was in that job for maybe a year and a half or two years, and Paul went off to be a vice president of a new private venture called International Reporting Information Services. It was built around a computer scientist who had created the computer systems for the Defense Intelligence Agency. He asked me to come over to be the vice president for information and analysis. So, I ran the office that had a number of former Foreign Service officers, like Pete Vaky, who had been the Assistant Secretary for Latin America.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: There were several prominent journalists and former government analysts. I ran that department and I was paid more than I’d ever been paid before. So, I left the Foreign Service Institute and, within a year, IRIS went bankrupt. They sent me on a trip to try to sell the idea. The idea was to give information and analysis to whichever corporations or foreign governments wanted it. The computer system was well in advance of those that just did code word analysis. In other words, it could do contextual analysis. So, if an aluminum company wanted to know whether or not there’d been a new discovery in the Congo, this thing would pick up any information that was programmed to serve that company’s interest.

The staff was broken down into regional experts that would then do the analysis and then send it on to the client. I went to the Middle East to meet with the head of the United Arab Emirates and to Qatar and Jordan.

The companies that were behind this enterprise were some of the most successful in the world. A big Swedish insurance company, the Bank of Bilbao, the Bulova watch company. It looked to me that this was not a very risky proposition to get involved in given all these big investors. But there was a worldwide recession.

So, I get back from this big trip to the Middle East, where I, by the way, had met King Hussein's brother Prince Hassan. I met the guy that later became very infamous because he had owned a bank in Jordan, but he was Iraqi, and he became the guy that the neocons thought was going to be the right person to take over in Iraq after Saddam Hussein was deposed. Anyway, I met all these people and came back and came into the office and about a week later they announced they were going to go bankrupt. They said that you better get over to the bank and cash your last check before they close the account.

*Q: That was a new experience for you.*

ATWOOD: Yes, it sure was. For the first time and only time in my career I was on the street, basically. There was some hope that maybe they would pay us later because it was a Chapter 11 bankruptcy, but that never happened. And so, in the meantime, I'm looking around, trying to figure out what to do. A lot of people were very angry that they had lost their job. The *Washington Post* decided it was such an interesting story they did a four-part series on IRIS and all the prominent people that were involved in it.

*Q: So, it had existed only for a couple of years, is that right?*

ATWOOD: Right, exactly.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: It existed for only a couple of years. It was a great idea. The technology has surpassed what existed then, but it was quite well advanced in those years.

*Q: But it could—I mean, that was my question, whether the technology and the computer capacity could really live up to what was being advertised.*

ATWOOD: I think—it had been developed initially for the intelligence agencies. And so, the system had the capacity to do it. They had programmed it to read in seven different languages. And it did contextual analysis to assure that the analyst had the best information available. Then the analysts were top notch.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: So, it was quite something at the time, but it just couldn't sustain itself because we couldn't get clients. They weren't willing to invest in research and analysis during a recession.

*Q: And did any of that, I mean, this is a separate question, but did any of that linger on after the company failed? I mean, was it picked up by anybody else as far as you know or did it just drop out of sight?*

ATWOOD: I think it did. I mean, I think parts of it were picked up. And I know that enterprises like *The Economist* and *Foreign Policy Magazine* make part of their money not just by—by serving clients with information analysis as well.

*Q: Was this—this is a kind of a deviation from what you had been doing, did this experience help you in any way in terms of the future? Did you see this as being a valuable byway as you were heading on towards greater and greater responsibility, knowing about this?*

ATWOOD: Yes. For the first time in my life I was working with journalists. I learned a lot about their expectations and the way they covered things. I worked with former assistant secretaries and journalists like Juan De Onis of the NY Times and people that were very talented. It didn't last long enough to help as much as it could have if I'd spent five years there, but it also taught me that the private sector was not where I was supposed to be in life. It's the only time I ventured into that realm.

*Q: Was that because of the substance of the work or because you were out on the street?*

ATWOOD: It was more because if you didn't make money, you were on the street. I mean that was the main thing. The place operated more like a government agency in substantive terms, but it needed high-paying clients.

*Q: Okay, so there you were, out on the street, and I see from your vitae that you became executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and you did that for a couple of years beginning in March of '83. So, how did that come about?*

ATWOOD: Well, Leon Billings, who had been chief-of-staff to Muskie in the State Department, called me one day and said he was at the Senate Campaign Committee on an acting basis, but he didn't want to stay in the job. He asked if I would be interested in taking over. I said, "Yes, I know a lot of the senators involved." He said that Lloyd Bentsen was going to become the new chair, and asked if I knew him? I said, "No, I don't really know him well." When I told an old Eagleton colleague about this, he asked, "Do you know what GOTV is?"

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: I said, “Isn’t it some kind of a cable television network?” I had no idea. It’s Get Out the Vote; of course, it’s the acronym for it. So he helped me prepare for the interview and helped me sound like I knew something about political campaigns, which I didn’t, really, and especially about raising money.

So, I joined just in time—

*Q: The interview was with Lloyd Bentsen?*

ATWOOD: With Lloyd Bentsen and his AA, yes, his administrative assistant.

They hired me. And I still strongly suspect to this day that Lloyd Bentsen wanted to hire me because he knew I was close to Mondale and to Eagleton and to that liberal group of senators. He was still hoping that he’d be the vice-presidential nominee of the party or whatever. That was before he did actually become a vice-presidential nominee.

I came to really like him. I traveled with him. I met Bill Clinton for the first time in Portland, Maine, where there was a governors’ conference. I found Bentsen to be, unlike my image of him as a Texas senator with a lot of money. He was a really nice, down to earth guy who had a great deal of integrity. And then, I met Bill Clinton. He’d come into the hotel from an early morning run and Ann Wexler (who had been in the Carter White House) introduced me to him. He was there in his sweatpants.

And we had a coffee with George Mitchell, who was then the Senator from Maine. I had known him because he had worked for Muskie on the Hill. He was first appointed senator and I was working in Secretary of State Muskie’s office. The whole staff would go down and have lunch with the new senator, George Mitchell, who at the time didn’t quite act like a senator. He hadn’t yet been elected, he was appointed by the governor to the position. He then was elected overwhelmingly and that gained him the respect of his peers. George Mitchell was in Maine at that time as well and took us to a diner where he was just George to his many friends. He later became a very effective Majority Leader.

*Q: Eighty-four—*

ATWOOD: The eighty-four election, yes. Mondale, of course, lost big. We had great hopes that Jim Hunt, the governor of North Carolina could beat Jesse Helms, but he failed. Jesse Helms won, and that became rather important later on in my life.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And so, I decided after that election in ‘84 that I really didn’t want to stay in that political position. I was turned off by the politics, mainly the people that wanted to give a lot of money to have a relationship with a senator. And I saw that up close and personal and it didn’t appeal to me to stay at all. I wanted to get back into international relations.

And then I get a call from Madeleine Albright, who was an old friend from the Hill, and from the Carter days, where she was the congressional relations person at the NSC (National Security Council) when I was at State. We had become good friends and used to collaborate a lot. And she said, “There’s an opening. We’d like you to consider taking over NDI, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

I looked into it and found that it was dominated by the DNC (Democratic National Committee). Chuck Manatt was the chair; a lot of his friends from the Democratic National Committee were on the board. But not only was Madeleine there, Cyrus Vance was there too.

And so, I get the offer from Manatt to be the new executive director. I then flew up to New York to meet with Cy Vance and Tony Lake. Tony happened to be in New York at the time as well. And I showed them both this long letter I’d written, basically rejecting the job, but saying that I would reconsider if you could do X, Y and Z, meaning that I wanted more authority. I wanted to be a member of the board. I made a number of demands. And Cy said he would push them to accept my conditions, which he did, and they did.

*Q: And this was—the NDI had just been created by Congress?*

ATWOOD: Created in 1984 when they created the National Endowment for Democracy, which was to have four core grantees, the Republican Institute, the Democratic Institute, the Labor Solidarity Center and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

It was an opportunity but a very risky one. Congress had already voted against funding the party institutes because they didn’t have a lot of confidence that these party institutes would be used for anything other than helping the parties domestically. And so, people like Senators Bumpers and Hollings and others voted against them. The appropriation came up and they said no money. So, all we had was about \$300,000 left from the previous year, just enough to pay for me and four other staff.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: I took the job and then, of course, went to see Senator Eagleton and a number of other people that I had helped get elected to the Senate the previous year. Al Gore, Paul Sarbanes, Paul Simon... and others.

*Q: In your previous—in your immediate previous job, yeah.*

ATWOOD: That’s right.

*Q: So, that paid off in some respect.*

ATWOOD: Well, yes, it did, but it was really dicey—I mean, we ended up winning by one vote when a senator from Idaho, a Republican, had voted the wrong way. The vote

was on a Thursday afternoon and a lot of the senators that had voted had already taken off. Then there was a motion to reconsider the previous vote. We would have lost. Then Senator Eagleton threatened to filibuster the reconsideration motion. A Republican senator from New Hampshire, Warren Rudman, was managing the bill. Eagleton asked his staff to go and get all these books and put them on his desk to show that he fully intended to keep talking. So, Eagleton threatened to filibuster and Rudman caved. He came up to Eagleton and asked him why he felt so strongly since the party institutes had been defeated the year before by some 70 votes. Eagleton just said that there was new management, or words to that effect.

That's how NDI survived, along with the Republican Institute. I'll never forget getting a framed letter from the Republican Institute staff thanking me for the work that we'd done to save them.

*Q: You stayed there for six years or something like that, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes, and we created an institution that really made a difference. The first thing we did was the election in the Philippines. We got something like \$40,000 of AID money, the first time we'd ever gotten AID money to do an election observer mission.

We went over with a smaller group, both the IRI and the NDI and with election experts to survey the scene to see whether or not it was possible to have a free and fair election. I met with Marcos and his first words to me were, "My staff tells me I shouldn't be meeting with you." Thank you, that was a nice greeting. And I said, "We're here just to make sure that this is a free and fair election, and you should welcome this because it's important that you have legitimacy." And we talked for a bit and that was the end of that. And we then talked to a number of other people and found that there were enough checks and balances in place to be able to say that we would be able to detect fraud if it happened.

I was asked to testify before the Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Kerry in particular was very skeptical. I said, "Well, I'm not doubting your concerns here, Senator, but I'm saying to you that there is enough in place that we would be able to detect fraud if it did take place." So, we put together this huge delegation. Our leader was John Hume, with whom we had worked in Northern Ireland and who later became a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

*Q: Wow.*

ATWOOD: And the Republicans chose the former president of Colombia, the elder Pastrana who brought along his son who later became president.

*Q: So, these were international observers that you put together.*

ATWOOD: That's right. From all over.

*Q: How did you relate to the Carter Center, which was also doing, obviously, quite a lot of election observation and work?*

ATWOOD: NDI was the first to put together international election observer missions. We asked President Carter to lead our mission to Panama a few years later. After that he and I co-led a delegation to the Zambian election—not that anyone paid much attention to me with him there! Carter loved doing these missions and eventually he and the Carter Center did them on their own.

*Q: I see. So, that the initiative started with you people and the Carter Center theme followed on from you and—*

ATWOOD: Followed on a few years later as did the UN and OSCE and the OAS. After the Philippines we did Chile. And we brought people from the Philippines into Chile, and brought the Chilean delegation to the Philippines to see their second election. We helped set up a local group that would monitor in Chile.

And most importantly, in the case of Chile, the opposition to Pinochet was divided. The conservative opposition wanted nothing to do with the socialists, and the Christian Democrats and the socialists were also divided, but they were closer together. We brought them all to Venezuela, where the president of Venezuela had lived in exile in Chile. And we brought in the Spanish; I brought in the former Franco Interior Minister Manuel Fraga whom I had met in the Spanish transition. We invited Spanish socialists, and party leaders from other countries that had recently gone through elections. Everyone urged the Chilean opposition to participate in a plebiscite and to participate together.

We had Andrés Alamand, who was a conservative who was going to support Pinochet in the plebiscite. But we had taken him to the Philippines so he could see what a parallel vote count was. We did a parallel vote count in Chile. We registered a lot of voters. The southwest Hispanic voter registration people that did a lot of work in the Southwest of the U.S., all Spanish speakers, were sent in to register people en masse. Pinochet didn't know what hit him. I mean, all of a sudden, all these people were registered to vote. He didn't think they would be able to vote.

We then brought in experts on communications to help the Chileans develop the right message. The Chilean plebiscite was structured so that those who were against Pinochet had to take the “no” side. The “yes” side would let Pinochet and his system stay in place for another several years.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: So, taking that message, which was a negative message, and turning it into a positive was very tricky. We had American pollsters that worked with their pollsters. We did the whole nine yards because to us, this wasn't a question of staying out of a partisan election; this was the small “d” democrats versus the dictator.

*Q: This all sounds very exciting.*

ATWOOD: Well, it was. It was very exciting. We asked the former president of Spain, whom I had met at Liberal International meetings, Adolfo Suárez, to lead our delegation. And that was really important because the Chileans respected him. He had been a minister under Franco and he had standing with the conservatives, but he was a liberal and he really cared about democracy.

The night of the election, the military, knowing that Pinochet had lost, didn't want to release the results. And Andrés Allemand, who'd come to our suite to meet with Suarez, saw the parallel vote count. He could see that Pinochet had lost. He went to the military and threatened to have his own press conference to announce the results, the parallel vote count results. The military caved in the early morning hours and Pinochet officially lost. A few months later, they had their first election for president and a Christian Democrat won in a coalition with the Socialists. The rest is history.

*Q: This is really remarkable. I hadn't realized that this is the way that some of these events began and that your NDI role was so central.*

ATWOOD: It was indeed.

*Q: Did you have this spirit in you from before? I'm wondering how this subject became such an important and significant part of your life story? Clearly you were accomplishing a great deal, but you didn't come at this with having spent your life working on electoral procedures.*

ATWOOD: No.

*Q: So, how do you explain this \_\_\_\_\_?*

ATWOOD: Well, the first thing that happened within the NED was that the labor people got themselves too involved in the Panamanian election, taking sides. So when I was first at NDI, I said we really have to be careful to avoid taking sides in partisan elections. I went up to the Hill to brief former staffers like John Ritch, who worked for Biden. I remember very vividly him saying, "If you're not involved in the Philippines, given what's going on there, then you might as well not be involved anywhere." So, I'm trying to figure out how do I get involved in the Philippines. And I don't want to get involved in elections. That seemed to me, after what the labor people had done, to be too risky.

I later met with a lawyer who worked for the Human Rights Law Group, Larry Garber. He had gone to Zimbabwe, for their first election over there, and did a one-person election observer mission and wrote a report on it. He knew a lot about elections, so I asked him to get involved with us. We'll go over to the Philippines and do this pre-election survey.



Larry gave me the idea that maybe we could do something that was non-partisan, observing an election. So we asked the Republicans to join us and they found their own election expert. We went over to do this survey and then organized the international delegation. By that time, as the representative of the Democratic Party of the United States, we had friends all over the world. We invited those friends to come with us and be part of the delegation. Then we gave very strict instructions as to what they should do. We gave them our pre-election report. We sent them to all corners of the Philippines, which is, of course, over 7,000 islands. Then they all came back, and we met and talked about what kind of a statement we should make. And of course, they had stories that were unbelievable. I mean, ghost precincts and people voting 100 to nothing, even though people said they voted for Cory Aquino. There was no doubt that the election had been fixed.

There was an American delegation there, an official delegation headed by Senator Dick Lugar. We had reports that they didn't want to criticize Marcos because we had an American military base there, a naval base, and they didn't want to rock the boat diplomatically. We held our press conference first. Hume was brilliant. The former president of Colombia was also very good, although his English was a bit shaky. There were 3,000 reporters from all over the world covering this thing. And we announced that it was a fraudulent election and we put out the evidence. That clearly influenced the American delegation. They were no longer going to give it a whitewash.

That evening we've finished our press briefing and we're sitting in the hotel restaurant relaxing after a tense day. Then someone comes by and says, "You've got to get over to the cathedral. The young women that are counting the votes in the COMELEC, the Commission on Elections, are going to reveal something." So, we go over to this cathedral and one by one, these young women come out and say they were asked to cheat. And that just blew it all open. The result of it, of course, was the People Power Revolution. The next day the official Lugar delegation confirmed that the election was fraudulent. I must say that a couple of days later, when I left the country, I was relieved to go because I wasn't sure what Marcos was going to do.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: But we got out and I went to Hawaii, met my wife there and sat there and wrote a report most of the time while she was on the beach. (Both laugh) But anyway, I mean, it was really dramatic. And then, after having gotten away with that, we go into Chile.

I went in and met with the Chilean interior minister, who was known as Pinochet's bad guy. I thought I was going to get assassinated. And I said, "If you're going to have a legitimate election, you really need foreign observers and we're here to help you do that." And damned if we didn't get away with all the things we did in Chile. And the opposition leaders actually gave us credit. They came to Washington for a celebratory luncheon and gave credit to NDI for what happened. Later they even made a movie or a documentary where they testified that NDI was why Chile had moved back into the democratic sphere.

*Q: How enormously satisfying that work must have been. As you look back on all the things that you've done, was this one of the great high points of your career thus far?*

ATWOOD: Yes, no question.

Then we moved into doing work with the Argentines, who had overthrown their military. We had a meeting in the Dominican Republic, and we brought in a couple of Israeli generals and Venezuelan generals to explain to the Argentines how the concept of citizens in uniform works, how a military can be subject to civilian control and how the parliaments needed to have information, had to be knowledgeable so that they could consider budget requests.

Then, of course, it all opened up in Central and Eastern Europe. All of a sudden, we're all over the place, in Central Europe working in Hungary, the first election there, working with people like Fidesz and Viktor Orbán, who we thought was going to be a liberal! And the other parties in Hungary and in Poland. And then, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, where we held a major conference. Joan Baez and Paul Simon were there to sing. I mean everyone wanted to be there, and so it was easy enough for NDI to recruit people to come with us on delegations.

*Q: Were you getting a lot of support from the Hill at that time? To run a program of this kind is not costless. Were you getting regular allocations of funding from the Hill?*

ATWOOD: Yes, through the National Endowment for Democracy, but by this time, USAID saw what we could be doing, and we eventually got a lot more money from USAID than we did from the National Endowment for Democracy. The NED was an important breakthrough for which President Reagan gets all the credit. But the idea came from Dante Fascell and Don Fraser. They tried to create it before, but the time became right after Reagan gave his speech on democracy at Westminster.

*Q: Dante Fascell was at that point chair of the House International Relations Committee?*

ATWOOD: That's right. This happened just before the crucial vote in the Senate that I just described.

*Q: Okay.*

ATWOOD: I received a call from Fascell's Chief of Staff, Spencer Oliver. He says you should come down here right away. The NED President and Chair have just been here to say that we should drop the party institutes because it doesn't look like they can win in the Senate. So, I went down to see Dante, and I said, "Look, Mr. Chairman, give us a chance to win. Don't drop this from your bill so that we don't even have a vehicle in the Senate"

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: So, he agreed, and that caused a good deal of tension with the NED leadership. In any case, they didn't drop us and then we went on to win by one vote in the Senate with Eagleton's help. So, NDI could have died an early death. We lived on to accomplish the things I have discussed. After the Philippines and Chile there was no question that we'd get support, and we got bigger and bigger allocations from the NED, but we were getting even more money from AID.

*Q: Was this Peter McPherson's AID at this point?*

ATWOOD: Yes, it was Peter McPherson.

*Q: That was Peter, but there was backing for this because it was support of democracy building and—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: And it was one project at a time. It wasn't what they have today, which is a big grant that all of the missions can plug in to—

*Q: Right. And these were high profile cases?*

ATWOOD: Yes, high profile. And of course, once the situation broke and the Soviet Union collapsed, and you had democracy all over central Europe—there was no question that there was a need to do democratic institution building in that region. I'll never forget thinking about NDI and wanting to have our own Foreign Service based overseas. I said, "We need to have our own people in place in countries around the world." Well, it never happened while I was there. When I left, we had some 40 staff. We had gone from five people when I first started at NDI, five people including me, to forty when I left. Now it's thirteen hundred and we have offices in some fifty countries around the world. I am now on the NDI board.

*Q: It's okay. But you can still identify with them, right?*

ATWOOD: Madeleine Albright, who just passed, was the chair and she's the one that asked me to be the president. Former Majority Leader of the Senate Tom Daschle is now the chair.

*Q: And this was the time when, as a result of your work and others, governments were becoming much more democratic around the world.*

ATWOOD: Yes, that's right.

*Q: Which unfortunately is no longer the case.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, why did you leave NDI?*

ATWOOD: I was asked by Sandy Berger to lead the State Department transition team. I didn't leave right away, but during that transition period I was the leader of the transition. And of course, that was very exciting—you're interviewing a lot of people, you're trying to figure out what policies we should continue, what policies we should change. It is a very intense period. Then, they named Warren Christopher to be the nominee as secretary. We had to brief him on different issues and prepare him for his confirmation hearing.

He initially asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I wanted undersecretary for political affairs. He had already decided that his old friend Peter Tarnoff was going to be in that position. I said, "Well, how about the new undersecretary for global affairs?" That looked like it was going to work for a while, but Tim Wirth, who wanted to be the interior secretary, got bounced out of that job, and he bounced into the global undersecretary job. Then I said I would like to be considered for USAID."

Christopher agreed. They sent my name over to the White House and White House personnel office came back and said we need diversity. We need you to give us more names. So, that stalled for a while, and by this time Christopher called me back in and said, "You can wait if you want AID and see what happens, but you might end up with nothing. So I'm offering you the job of undersecretary of state for management." Now, that's a very powerful job inside the State Department. I mean, it has a lot of clout. I remember the days when I was in the State Department there was a very powerful Under-secretary Bill Macomber. Then Ben Reid was undersecretary during the Carter years. I didn't really want a management job, but I told him a few days later that I would take it.

So, then the five undersecretaries are all named by this time, and the names are sent to the Hill. This is before January 20. And the hope was that they would be able to get not only the secretary confirmed, but also all of the five undersecretaries. Well, Mitch McConnell put a hold on them all because the Administration hadn't yet named an AID administrator.

*Q: Oh, I see.*

ATWOOD: He was the senior Republican on the Foreign Ops Committee, and so, I don't know whether he just cared about AID or whether he just cared about causing trouble for the administration.

*Q: If I had to choose (laughs).*

ATWOOD: I know.

So, this was a conundrum. And I'm still the transition leader and Christopher calls me in and says, "Ruth Harkin wants to be AID administrator." He said, "I can't have a senator's wife in that job. I've been through the Gilligan thing; I can't do this."

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: "He said, 'I don't want that. So, go and meet with her and offer her OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation).'" And so, I meet with her. It's a very tense meeting.

*Q: Did you know her?*

ATWOOD: No. I hadn't met her until then.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And I said, "Look, I don't know what's going to happen with this, but if you don't get the AID job would you consider taking OPIC?" And I then tried to make OPIC sound important. (Laughs) I found out later that it is, but I didn't know that at the time.

*Q: Well, as it was, of course. Yes, anyway.*

ATWOOD: Yes, right.

So, she left the meeting. No agreement, but I'd planted the notion in her mind. And then, the chairman of the appropriations committee was Congressman David Obey. His friend on the committee, Matt McHugh, wanted to be the AID administrator. He was a congressman from Binghamton, New York. They were both very good friends of AID. And he had just decided not to run for office and so he was a candidate as well.

*Q: Yes, sure.*

ATWOOD: I learned later that Ruth Harkin had called Obey, and said, "Look, Dave, I know you want your friend to be in the job, but if it happens to me then I really would appreciate your support." And Obey reportedly says, "I've got enough trouble trying to defend that liberal organization without having a woman in the job."

*Q: (Laughs) Oh, boy.*

ATWOOD: She was taken aback. She hangs up the phone and calls Hillary Clinton and tells her what Dave Obey just said. That apparently did in Matt. So they cancel each other out. McHugh ultimately gets the World Bank Executive Director position with Treasury and Ruth becomes the Executive Director of OPIC.

So, now no one is in AID and Mitch McConnell is putting a hold on all the undersecretaries, including me. Then the White House calls me and says, "Would you consider being the head of AID?" And I said, "Well, yes, it's the job I wanted in the first place." And so, it's February by this time and no undersecretaries are confirmed, and Christopher is testifying for the first time before the Foreign Ops subcommittee with Senators Leahy and McConnell. And he announces that the White House is going to nominate Brian Atwood to be the head of AID.

*Q: Were the undersecretaries appointed as acting or were they not able to do anything?*

ATWOOD: No, we couldn't do anything.

*Q: So, he announced—*

ATWOOD: He announces that I'm going to be nominated and Mitch McConnell removes his hold and that day or the day after the Senate confirmed all of the undersecretaries, including me. So, I'm now undersecretary for management. (Laughs) And then I start preparing for the confirmation hearings to be AID administrator. And that was the end of February until May or June when they finally held a hearing. I was doing the Under Secretary job for a couple of months. I ended smoking in the cafeteria and handled a few personnel issues.

It was fortunate because I had the best secretarial assistant at State, Jackie Stein, and she came with me to USAID. And a young woman who I had met at NDI and who had had Hill experience, Jennifer Windsor, was now at USAID and she coordinated the briefings I received. She became my Special Assistant and then ran our democracy office. And then I had my hearing to be AID administrator and that went very well, and I was confirmed by a unanimous vote; it was the third time I'd been confirmed unanimously.

*Q: Terrific. Okay. That is a perfect time to stop. We are at about the two-hour mark in any case.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And that means that at the next session we can begin on what it was like being administrator of AID with Mitch McConnell's support. (Laughs) And so, I'm going to end the formal recording of this at the moment, having been through an extraordinary set of different kinds of responsibilities, hearing about your different responsibilities. Fascinating to me and I'm sure to others who will read this and even maybe see it.*

*But Brian, thank you very, very much for this. I had not known about some of these aspects of your career and about the significant areas in which you were working, so I am much obliged to you for this session, and we will come back to it all in the next session, learning about AID.*

*So, I'm stopping the recording now.*

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*Q: So, I am delighted to be once again with Brian Atwood. This is the second of March 2022, and we are now on the third session of Brian Atwood's oral history. And Brian tells me that there is one story that he neglected to tell us about his stay at NDI, National Democratic Institute, so we'll start with that and then we will move into the history of Brian Atwood and USAID.*

*And so, Brian, welcome again. And why don't you go ahead with your NDI story.*

ATWOOD: Yes, thanks Alex. I just did an article yesterday on Ukraine and related a meeting that we sponsored in Russia with the newly elected mayors of Russia with U.S. mayors in the very early days. And Sobchak was the mayor of St. Petersburg. His daughter was just quoted as being very critical of what Putin has done in Ukraine. And I'll never forget the earlier meeting because Putin was chief-of-staff to Sobchak. He was sitting behind him doing his staff work. Later they had a falling out and at the age of sixty-two Sobchak, who was seen as the successor to Boris Yeltsin, mysteriously died. And there's been a lot of speculation about what happened. When Putin was on the rise Sobchak called him the new Stalin. So he wasn't a friend.

But the other story that I wanted to tell was related to China and Taiwan. I was on a post-Philippines visit to the Philippines with Madeleine Albright and several others that were members of the NDI board. While in the Philippines we met with President Cory Aquino and had a very nice meeting with old friends. It was nice to see democracy in place after we had helped inspire the People Power Revolution.

I got a message while I was there saying that the deputy foreign minister of Taiwan wanted to meet with me when I arrived. I said, "I wonder what that's all about?" Madeleine didn't go with me to Taiwan, but I went off with several other members of our delegation. I went in to see the deputy foreign minister, who was a Georgetown graduate, and he asked me not to give the lecture, the speech I was to give to the opposition. In the previous year, Congressman Steve Solarz spoke to the opposition. They were called the "dang wai," meaning "out of government;" they had no legal status.

*Q: Steve Solarz being a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: From New York State, New York City.*

ATWOOD: That's right. And he had given a speech in a hotel conference room with maybe 100 people the year before. I thought I was following up on that and going to give a lecture on the meaning of democracy. I was asked not to do it. The deputy foreign minister said that it would create a problem for the government. And I said, "Well, my understanding is that you gave the opposition a license to have this meeting." He said,

“Yes, we did.” And I said, “Well, if you don’t want me to speak, the most obvious thing would be to withdraw the license.” “Well, we couldn’t do that. That would create a lot of controversy and maybe even a demonstration.” I said, “All right, then I’m here to promote democracy. I’m not sure what I do. I believe I have to go ahead with the speech.” He said, “Fine, but don’t have the rest of your delegation on the stage with you.” I said, “Okay.”

So, I go back to the hotel and the person that was going to translate for me, interpret my speech, came over to see me to go over the speech. He was a doctor; I think he was a psychologist. And then, we drove downtown. All of a sudden there were mobs of people, and I said, “Where are these people going?” “They’re going to your speech,” he said.

As it turned out, it wasn’t in a hotel conference room; it was in a football arena, a soccer stadium. There were at least 25,000 to 30,000 people. The stadium was full, and there was a huge sign welcoming my delegation and me. I gave the speech, which was pretty straightforward, boring even. It was more philosophical, you know, quoting John Stuart Mill and other political philosophers. But this doctor that translated for me was shouting out the words in a revolutionary cadence. He would shout out every sentence and there would be screams; people were just going nuts.

All right, well that finished and we left Taiwan. A week later the dang wai declared themselves to be the Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan. That was illegal but the government didn’t object and multi-party democracy was born in Taiwan. It was inadvertent. I don’t claim to have gone there for that purpose. But sometimes it’s just, as Woody Allen says, showing up at the right time. (Laughs) When I was Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations I sent the letter to the Hill with the draft Taiwan Relations Act. So I was better known in Taiwan than I thought. I think that was part of it.

*Q: That’s fascinating. But you had no advance word that you were going to be doing this in a stadium as opposed to a hall; this was a complete surprise to you?*

ATWOOD: It was a complete surprise.

When I returned to Washington, interestingly enough, the president of the National Endowment for Democracy and a chair, and Herb Hansell, a former counsel to the secretary of state, invited me to a meeting with the People’s Republic ambassador, who was one of these old guys who’d been on the long march with Mao Zedong. So, we sat down at a table for lunch and I was just ripped from one side to the other by the ambassador for having interfered internally in Chinese politics.

It seemed a little odd to me that they invited these other people there to kind of intimidate me. I was a bit upset about that. And I said to the Chinese ambassador, “Look. Our position is that there is one China. I’m not contradicting that policy. But if we can see a democratization process take place not only in Taiwan but in your country, maybe you can resolve your differences peacefully and create what you want in a peaceful manner.” That was my position, and it didn’t make him very happy. He wasn’t about to buy off on



that, but it certainly put the president and the chairman of the NED in a particular bind. Herb Hansell was now obviously representing the Chinese, so he didn't say much in that meeting.

*Q: Well, that's terrific, so you can credit yourself with all this impact on elections in Taiwan.*

ATWOOD: Yes. I was a useful vehicle.

*Q: And the idea that this organization would not tell you in advance, it's kind of awesome when you think you're going to be talking to 100 people and you talk to 30,000.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: That shows a certain degree of flexibility, I would say, Brian, in your ability to speak to audiences. It's a good sign. You should have moved into politics in this country.*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) I don't think it showed anything whatsoever. I mean, it showed that my interpreter had more emotion in delivering my speech than I did. (Both laugh)

*Q: All right, well, well-chosen then.*

*Okay, well, I'm sure as you indicate there are many other NDI and other stories that we can't cover here. But I'd like to move on now to the AID experience. And where we left off, as I recall, was that you had indicated that you wanted to be the head of AID, but there were other candidates and that instead you were offered the position of undersecretary for management at the State Department. And then the opening at AID appeared again and then you were kind of doing both jobs for a while before you were confirmed in the AID job. Is that more or less correct?*

ATWOOD: Technically I was doing the undersecretary's job and then preparing for my confirmation hearing.

*Q: Okay. So, when was it that you were actually sworn in as AID administrator?*

ATWOOD: I believe it was May or June of—

*Q: Nineteen ninety-three.*

ATWOOD: Yes, 1993.

*Q: Okay. And what did you find when you appeared at AID at that time?*

ATWOOD: Well, I had, again, many briefings from people from AID in preparation for my confirmation hearing. So, I was fully aware of the Ferris Commission report that had been done for George H.W. Bush, which was highly critical of the management of the

AID under the previous Administrator. The more I looked into that, the more I found that Roskins had seemingly isolated himself from the decision-making process. He had pushed everything down, which I guess is a way of managing, but he wasn't taking responsibility for anything. And I think the one person—you may recall the name, he had been the head of the Africa bureau. He was a political appointee. He was very good and people liked him at AID. But I kept hearing about the problems.

The political challenge may be described more as a metaphor of the blind man looking at the elephant and touching parts and trying to describe what he was feeling. Because AID had so many strategic objectives, so many indicators, that it was impossible for a person who wasn't an expert on development to fully understand what AID did. And yet, if you were to break it down into the various sectors, whether it was education or environment or public health, there was no question that people would support those particular sectors.

In any case, I said, "We've got to really define this in a way that comes through," and I asked people in the policy bureau and others to write a white paper, if you will, a strategic—

*Q: I assume these were career people, or did you have, at that stage, any of the political appointees?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: So, these were career people.*

ATWOOD: They were career people. And you just remind me, that the first objective I had was to put together a team. I was very proud of the team we assembled. There's a professor at Georgetown, Robert Lieber, who commented publicly, saying that the team that we had put together at AID was stronger than the team that Christopher had at the State Department. I had people that not only had Hill background, but they had State background and development background.

Take Mark Schneider who worked for Kennedy for many years, had been deputy assistant secretary for human rights at the State Department. He had worked for the Pan American Health Organization, and had been a Peace Corps volunteer in El Salvador.

Tom Dine, who had been running AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) who had all kinds of Hill experience and eventually ended up being the head of Radio Free Europe. He knew Europe and he handled that.

Margaret Carpenter, who had worked for the Senate Intelligence Committee, but also worked at the State Department and was in White House personnel at the time. She did Asia and the Middle East.

I asked Dick McCall to be my chief-of-staff, who again, had been an assistant secretary of state for IO, for International Organizations, and had worked on the Hill for years.

Sally Shelton-Colby, who had been an ambassador and worked on the Hill for Senator Bentsen, was the head of our Global Bureau.

George Ingram from the House Foreign Affairs committee was deputy in the European Bureau.

Jill Buckley, a Democratic political consultant who knew many Senators and Congressmen, was the head of our public affairs bureau.

I asked a career person, John Hicks, to be the Assistant Administrator for Africa. After he went off to be an ambassador, my deputy at NDI, Vivian Derryck, became head of the Africa Bureau.

And I then asked Carol Lancaster to be my deputy. She had worked on the Hill, and at the State Department as a deputy assistant secretary for Africa. She was an academic at Georgetown who researched development issues. She was my deputy for the first three years and then Ambassador Hattie Babbitt came into the job. Hattie was on the NDI board and had been Ambassador to the Organization for American States (OAS). It was just a really strong team.

*Q: And did you have difficulty in getting those people cleared and into office, or were they fairly quickly approved and able to come to work?*

ATWOOD: They were very quickly approved. I had no trouble with the White House. The only person I didn't know was Larry Byrne. I interviewed a couple of people to be the head of management, and I was pushed a bit by the White House to hire Larry, whose wife was a congresswoman from Virginia. I listened to him, and I must say, the guy really knew management. He had consulted with several government agencies and understood bureaucratic structures. He was the only one I didn't really know personally. I hadn't worked with him before. And he became—he eventually became very controversial.

I'll say this, there wasn't anything we did in the early days to reform AID that I hadn't approved personally, and so I'll take responsibility for what we did. And there were some really good reforms. I mean, in particular the strategic objectives. The career staff played a very large role, people like Ann Van Dusen, Aaron Williams, Terry Brown, Kelly Kammerer, Bob Lester, Carol Peasley, Barbara Turner. There were so many others and I'm afraid I am leaving too many out.

*Q: Now, was that quite early in your tenure that you decided on these five?*

ATWOOD: Yeah.

*Q: You say you asked the policy people to come up with suggestions - had they recommended something like that, or did this come from some other source?*

ATWOOD: I received briefings from experts in every sector. And I soon began to feel that some of these sectors should be seen as mutually reinforcing. It was controversial, so I said, "Okay, if we decide on five, what would we merge?" You could say that agriculture and education ought not to be a part of economic growth, but in my view, workforce development was education and agriculture in most of these countries was the biggest source of economic growth. So, I merged those with some degree of controversy because the education community outside was very upset that education wasn't its own objective. I eventually compromised on that and added education as one, but that was a year or two later.

But I decided that the only way to really get people to understand what these strategic objectives were was to show the synergies among them. And it worked. I mean, I think it worked to the extent that people saw that there was real reform going on. We really wanted this strategic approach to be taken by the missions as well, and I urged each of the missions to organize themselves according to the needs of the country. First of all, to do real surveys as to what the needs were. Don't just assume that what you've been doing for all these years is the right thing, but rather do a political science-based survey on what people's needs are, both the government and the civil society.

And later on, by the way, Jim Wolfensohn tried to do the same thing at the World Bank, and he and I met once a month and we shared a lot of ideas and tried to put them in place at USAID and the World Bank.

But the other part of the reform program was to create strategic objective teams at the mission level, and I said, "A Foreign Service National might be a leader of one of those teams." I really wanted the FSNs to play a bigger role, and I'm delighted that Samantha Power is trying to do the same thing with FSNs, even giving them some degree of contract authority. So, that was important to me because of my NDI experience. I didn't know all of the ins and outs of sustainable development in these different sectors, but I knew that we needed in-country partners to succeed. Some of the sectors were technical, public health and education and the like. But I knew instinctively that the only thing that works is when the people of the country are really involved in the project.

And so, I then said, "Once you develop a strategic objective team, broaden it to your partner." And we really pushed the results framework; we wanted to measure results. Then get your partners to agree on what you think the results should be over a five- to ten-year period.

I kept hearing feedback saying, "Look, you can't measure results in every year. That's impossible. Development is a long-term process." I said, "Okay, I know you can't do that, but at least you can agree on benchmarks each year, what you want to accomplish in a particular year. And on that road, if you run into real problems, then change course." I was hoping that people would get enough authority to move money and say, okay, this isn't working, let's make adjustments and move in a different direction.

That wasn't as easy as one would think, unfortunately because of the legal constraints.

*Q: Well, I don't think anybody would think that would necessarily be easy. In fact, there's always the view that when you set up these categories that smart people find a way to include everything they've already been doing under those categories.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, how different in practice were the programs that evolved as a result of your structure and these other very sensible efforts?*

ATWOOD: It was very much a mixed bag, because the other aspect was not just that bureaucrats would rationalize doing what they've already been doing under the new guidelines. It was also the fact that we had earmarks from the Congress, so we couldn't do an awful lot. I mean, in some countries you had more family planning money than they needed, and in some places you had more infant mortality money than you needed. And so, it wasn't going to happen overnight. We had to evolve that thinking and involve the Congress in the process as well. But some countries did it really well.

The one that I was most pleased with was Senegal. The mission director was Ann Williams. She'd taken David Shear's place, someone I later got to know well. Anyway, she did a wonderful job. In fact, when I traveled there a few years later with President Clinton, and sat at a conference table with President Diouf and his cabinet and our delegation, the first thing he said was, "Your people over there at AID," pointing at me, "know more about my country than I do." Because they'd done this survey and had reconfigured their program to meet the needs of the people. He was very impressed and that was one of the most pleasing pieces of feedback that I'd gotten.

So, it worked in some places better than others. In India, for example, I was impressed to meet an FSN who had received the FSN of the year award. She was a medical doctor. She briefed us and was excellent. We later had a meeting with the minister of health, and lo and behold, she wasn't part of our group. I said, "Where's so and so?" "Oh, well, we didn't invite her." And I said, "Well, you've got the FSN of the year and she's clearly key to what we're trying to do and she's not in the meeting." I was not happy. And I think there's a general problem there and I hope that Sam Power can overcome that.

*Q: Were you short of Foreign Service officers, and were you concerned about the quality of the Foreign Service officers that you did have? In general, was this a major concern for you and maybe for Larry Byrne at this early stage?*

ATWOOD: Well, we can talk about Larry later, but I was concerned that we did not have sufficient operating funds, and the Congress had, I think knowingly, cut back our operating budget because they wanted to squeeze AID. Recall that this is the post-Cold War period when we had lost the "guns and butter" rationale for foreign aid. This is when conservatives were looking for a peace dividend. They basically squeezed the heck out of us. And I said, "Okay, if you're going to squeeze us in this way, I can't operate in that many countries and expect my staff to deliver."

I tried to change the personnel system so that people would be rewarded for results, but I said, “I can’t put that on the backs of our career people if we’re going to be people-short in our missions overseas.” We had expanded to take in all of Central and Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. So, I said, “We’re going to create some criteria for how we can eliminate missions overseas because we don’t have the people to man them, person them.” (Laughs)

And so, we came up with this system: either a country had graduated or should graduate within the next period of years based on criteria—nowadays you would hand that off to the MCC, I guess. Or, countries that were too small and those we could handle regionally. And third, countries whose governments really weren’t acting in a way conducive to development success, meaning that they were violating human rights or weren’t committed to development progress.

One of the great controversies was created when we wanted to close the mission in Nigeria. There was a military government in Nigeria, and I wanted to eliminate the mission because we weren’t getting anything done. And the State Department strongly objected. Peter Tarnoff and I ended up in Tony Lake’s office, arguing about what to do. And we ended up compromising. I said, “All right, I’ll keep the sign up on the door, but we’re not going to have people there unless we can work with NGOs.” And we did end up doing public health work with some NGOs in Nigeria, but that was it, until, of course, they eventually had a democratic government.

*Q: So, you, as I recall, you wanted to close, or did close, twenty-one AID missions. The State Department is not usually very happy with closing down opportunities for their ambassadors to spend small amounts of money in every country.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: How did you overcome the State Department resistance in this area?*

ATWOOD: Well, the first thing I did was to explain my position to Warren Christopher, the secretary of state, and then to Tony Lake as well.

*Q: What was Tony’s position at that time?*

ATWOOD: Well, I mean, it was sad. I wanted to find a way to get the resources necessary to keep some of these places open. I went to see OMB and their position was you don’t have support on the Hill to do this, so we’re not going to put it in the budget. So, I said, “Put it in the budget,” and I went to Tony, and I went to Chris—

*Q: My point was, what position in the State Department did Tony have at that time?*

ATWOOD: Tony was the national security advisor.

*Q: Ah, that's it. Okay. Right.*

ATWOOD: Tony was very sympathetic to my point of view, which is the only reason that we came up with the compromise we came up with on Nigeria. I talked to Tony later, after he left the NSC. He had been nominated to be the CIA director, and it didn't work out and he had to withdraw. But I said to him, "It seemed to me that the position you really wanted was to be the head of AID," and he said, "You're absolutely right."

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: He ended up as the head of UNICEF. I mean, that was his first love. So, I mean, he was very sympathetic with the case I was making.

*Q: And you actually succeeded, which is something—*

ATWOOD: Well, yes, I succeeded. The first thing that Warren Christopher said to me is, "I support you, but you've got to meet with my regional assistant secretaries and explain this to them." So, I have this meeting and all of these people are sitting around the room, every one of them was highly critical. And I finally said, "Well, you can object all you want. If you want to go to Chris on this, you can, but Chris has already agreed with me," so that was the end of the meeting. (Laughs) One of them said, "Well, why are we meeting?" I said, "Because Chris wanted me to brief you."

And then, of course, Dave Obey wasn't happy because, I don't know, when you show vulnerability, the critics just want more.

*Q: Was he chairman of the operations subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee at that point?*

ATWOOD: No, he was the full committee chair. He had been the chair of Foreign Ops so he knew the issues well.

*Q: Yes, okay.*

ATWOOD: He was one of the good guys and very supportive, but he doesn't hesitate to voice his gut feelings, and I heard them loud and clear!

*Q: Part of the initial effort that you made, you volunteered AID for Al Gore's government efficiency group. That was quite a dramatic step on your part and risky as hell, I might point out, given what the Ferris report, as you reported, said about the state of AID in the Roskens period. So, tell us about that initiative on your part.*

ATWOOD: Well, we started this reform process from the very beginning, and of course, I didn't want to just sort of impose it, I wanted the career people to buy into it, and I had a lot of career people working on it with me. A year later, we invited the Ferris Commission to come into AID for a briefing. One of them was the brother of the

congressman, Jack Kemp. There was Ferris himself, an old friend of George Bush. And then Ted Van Dyke—he was the only Democrat on that commission.

We spent a half-day with them and then lunch. Ferris issued a statement after that saying “this is the most dramatic transformation of a government agency I had ever seen.” And he then changed his recommendation that AID be merged into the State Department. About a year later he called me, asking about the position of Administrator, saying that if the Republicans won, he would like to consider taking the job. (Both laugh)

*Q: That is interesting..*

ATWOOD: But they were very, very impressed by what we had done at that point.

*Q: That was a year in, right?*

ATWOOD: A year in, and that’s about the time that the Gore initiative to reinvent government took place. And my feeling was that it wasn’t that risky because we’d already begun undertaking the reforms.

*Q: What—I mean, in a shorthand way, what was it that so impressed Ferris? What had you done, other than bringing in all these terrific people that you described earlier; what are the things that you told Ferris or showed Ferris that you’d been able to accomplish?*

ATWOOD: We’d become a much more strategically oriented agency. We had insisted that missions take a strategic approach based on surveys of what the needs were in those countries. We reduced the number of Washington bureaus and the number of overseas missions. We had streamlined the project development process. We had better defined the mission and the vision statement. We were doing more with less and doing it well.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: We had eliminated a couple of bureaus and merged a couple of bureaus. We merged the public affairs bureau with the congressional relations bureau. We created a bureau for Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, and merged the Middle East, where we weren’t doing much anyway, with Asia. And so, we eliminated a lot of overhead and we could demonstrate that through the budget process. We were measuring results and were recognized by an outside organization—I believe it was George Mason University-- for being one of the top agencies in complying with the Government Results and Performance Act. We had eliminated or were in the process of eliminating twenty-one missions overseas. I mean, all the things that we had done were very impressive to the Ferris Commission, to OMB and to Congress.

*Q: Cutting out twenty-one missions would have that impact but were you also able to cut out the number of projects? I do remember that there was a period when the commitments for the second, third, fourth years of projects far overwhelmed the amount of money available to start anything new. I think this is in the Africa region, that there just were so*



*many little projects everywhere that it all added up in a way that there was no flexibility left. Were you able to do something about that issue?*

ATWOOD: Well, I don't recall the specifics of that. Our pipelines did become a target for some members of Congress. I had to continually explain to Congress in my annual testimony before the appropriations committee the way pipelines are created and managed and what they really meant because they would always talk about the amount of money that was left unspent. If we can't make multi-year commitments, then we will have a hard time finding contractors who will want to work with us.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: We did a good job of getting contracts done before the end of fiscal year. That helped us a lot, not only—not to eliminate pipelines, but also to demonstrate that we were actually committing resources to projects. We did a number of management surveys where we would examine the process, from the conceptualization of the project—all the different steps, and we wrote those down on what looked like a long roll of paper, and then laid it out to show the career staff all these steps that are needed before you could get into the field. It was onerous in terms of the amount of time it took from the conceptualization to the actual implementation of a project in the field. The career people were amazed at what the bureaucracy had done to create such a convoluted process. So, we cut it down from something like eighteen months to something like eight months; we cut out a lot of the steps along the way that were unnecessary. But it was the career people themselves who came to the conclusion that these steps were unnecessary. So, that was very significant.

In any case, all of this added up to a very impressive presentation that we could make to either the Congress or the Ferris Commission or to the Gore people or to OMB..

*Q: Okay. So, then you said, Al Gore, take AID as an example, is that right?*

ATWOOD: Absolutely. And did that with enthusiasm. He later gave us an award. Most other departments designated an office or a bureau as a reinvention lab. We designated the entire agency.

*Q: I see. And how long of a process; was it an annual or was it a six-month check?*

ATWOOD: I think it was a year after we said that we would be a reinvention laboratory. We then were able to brief the Vice President's office on two years of reforms. We received the award at that point. It certainly helped. I mean, that and the Ferris Commission's reversal of their position, and then Gore's award. That became very significant later.

*Q: Did it result in increased appropriations for AID from the Congress?*

ATWOOD: Unfortunately, no because the first two years of my tenure we had a Democratic Congress, and then in 1994 a Republican Congress was elected. So, after they came in the ballgame changed. Jesse Helms became the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee and Mitch McConnell became chair of the Foreign Ops Committee. And it was tough. I mean, McConnell himself made a statement as soon as he took over, saying that AID is “a dinosaur” and that we ought to stop doing foreign aid in Africa. The first time I testified before him I decided to see if he had a sense of humor. The first hearing was actually held in the Grand Caucus Room of the Senate. You know that big room where a lot of people announce they’re going to run for president or whatever.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And of course, it’s interesting, there’s a huge constituency for AID in the audience, NGOs and others. The place was packed. And I walked in with a brown bag. (Laughs) I had asked one of my speechwriters if he could get me this material. And I started off the hearing by saying, “Mr., Chairman, thank you for inviting me today.” I said, “I certainly have taken note of some of the comments that you’ve made about my agency.”

*Q: Was he head of the appropriations committee or which committee was it?*

ATWOOD: No, he was the Chair of Foreign Ops at that time.

*Q: Ahh.*

ATWOOD: He was Foreign Ops chair and then Leahy was the senior Democrat.

I took out a dinosaur doll, a very large one, and I put it on the table. I said, “You know, when I took over AID, it looked like this, as you called it, a dinosaur.” Then I said, “You know, we’ve made a lot of progress.” And I went through some of the things we’ve done, and I then picked up a little one, a little dinosaur doll, and put it on the table. And I said, “We’re here now. And eventually, we’re going to eliminate these dinosaurs.” He actually seemed amused.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: His staff then called the Post’s gossip columnist to say that I had called the agency a dinosaur. I called the columnist, Al Kamen, and I said, “Why don’t you talk to me before you print something like that?” He put a retraction in and corrected the record.

*Q: I assume that the audience loved it, but McConnell’s not the sort of person who has a great sense of humor.*

ATWOOD: He doesn’t, but he laughed.

*Q: Oh, he did laugh? Good for you.*

ATWOOD: He laughed, and I might add also that I had one of the most creative press people in the world. His name was Jay Byrne. And he had—we had taken care of the *Louisville Courier* and a few newspapers in Kentucky that criticized McConnell for making those statements. So, he may have realized that this was a political issue that cut both ways.

I went around the country with Jay Byrne and went to editorial pages everywhere to describe the reforms that we'd done and to describe how important AID was and what it did, what it did on behalf of the American people, which was important. I created a program called Lessons Without Borders, and we took AID professionals from places like Nairobi, Kenya. We went to Baltimore; Al Gore went with me and introduced the program. And we talked about, in that case, public health and childhood vaccinations. We made the point that in Nairobi, Kenya, we had managed to inoculate 90 percent of the kids, whereas in the inner city of Baltimore it was only 40 percent. And it was a shock. Baltimore then sent a delegation from Baltimore to Nairobi to find out how we had done it. And lo and behold, we were using materials that were created for AID by Johns Hopkins University, right there in Baltimore.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: They weren't exactly appropriate for Baltimore. They were comic book pages that were messages that illiterate people could learn from.

Tom Friedman, who was then a reporter for the *New York Times*, not a columnist, wrote a front-page story on that Lessons Without Borders initiative.

We went to Boston to talk about small enterprise programs. We went to Seattle to talk about the environment. We went to Appalachia. We went all over the country explaining—collaborating with U.S. development people to explain what we were doing overseas.

Hillary Clinton came with us the second time we went to Baltimore and gave a speech at Johns Hopkins University. So, in the first three years, we had changed the image of AID dramatically. We had taken polls showing that the public thought we were spending 25% of the US budget on foreign aid. When we told them it was less than 1 percent, they supported doing even more. We had favorable editorials coming in from everywhere.

By the time Helms decided he wanted to merge AID into the State Department we had changed peoples' view of USAID in Washington and around the country. Warren Christopher then seemed to want to see a merger and this was awkward. His people had pushed him to do it. I don't think he was all that enthusiastic but he went along.

When that became public, Jay Byrne went back to those editorial writers and told them what was happening in Washington. And we had editorials all over the country saying

you shouldn't do this. That was the message that Congress was receiving as well, and then, of course, Warren Christopher, god bless him, he's no longer alive, but he called me one day and said, "The vice president wants to study whether or not to merge AID into the State Department." I said, "Well, you know, we're on our back feet here trying to protect ourselves against Jesse Helms. This is not very good timing for this." So, I hung up the phone and I called Leon Fuerth in Gore's office, and I said, "Leon, you know the fight that I'm in now, and if you guys decide to merge AID into the State Department, you can do it without me."

*Q: This is 1995, right?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: Can we hold that part for a second, which obviously needs a lot of attention, but talk about some of the country cases that you were involved in. First of all, the creation of OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives). And the expansion into Eastern Europe; that's a very dramatic step and that took place under your tenure. You also had other big foreign policy issues in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Rwanda. So there's plenty going on as you've got this Washington end of things. But let's talk substantively about some of these areas where you were creating new institutions or new relationships and it was a big test for the AID program.*

ATWOOD: Yes. Very early on I began to conceptualize based on briefings from various people the notion that we did long-term development very well and we did humanitarian relief very well. But there were so many of these post-conflict transitions going on in the world and we had little or nothing to offer.

Well, I'll tell you where the idea came from. When I was the leader of the transition team, I went up to see Larry Eagleburger, who had become secretary of state in the last few months of the Bush Administration. Larry raved about Andrew Natsios, the wonderful head of OFDA (the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance). He said, "If you can keep him, try." Well, I knew Andrew from before. He wasn't willing to stay. "The problem," Larry said, "is that you guys do all these studies. It takes you so long to get engaged. And we've got these transitions that are going on right now." So, I began to think about it in terms of my NDI experience. We'd been engaged in a lot of transitions as well, democratic transitions, and that included Eastern and Central Europe. Those were peaceful transitions, but we were also involved in post-conflict transitions.

So when I got to USAID, I said "We need an office that does transitional work, that does reconciliation work and brings sides together after a conflict." And about the same time, the White House says they want this former congressional candidate and former head of the Democratic Party in Maine by the name of Rick Barton, to work for you at AID. So, I met with Rick, and I said, "I know you probably want one of these fancy presidential appointments, but I want to ask you to start an office that I think you'd find really exciting." And he accepted the job as the first head of OTI. We had Joanna Mendelson

there as well, and Steve Morrison, he does public health now over at CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies),

*Q: Ah, yes.*

ATWOOD: I mean, we had really good people. And one of the first challenges was Haiti, and what do we do after the military had left. There were a lot of military people on the street who were still in uniform and with arms. How do we get them back to civilian life? We did training programs for them to help them with their transition to civilian life. Some of the training was on using computers and things like that. And we worked with the International Migration Office on that project.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: They did a lot of work with us on that. And then, the next thing that happened was Mozambique. A peace agreement was reached in Mozambique and we sent OTI out there to create the camps where the military would transition to civilian life. And that showed political relevance and it showed the State Department that AID was doing things that were really helpful to them in transitions. We sponsored Search for Common Ground to do radio stations that had messages of reconciliation in places like Rwanda and Burundi, places where radios had been used for all the wrong reasons. There were a whole variety of projects that related to reconciliation.

*Q: OTI, did they use regular AID staff to implement them? How did it work?*

ATWOOD: They did—they spent a lot of time—the idea was that they would only be engaged for six months as a rule of thumb, and then it would be turned over to the AID mission. So, they would hire people to go in and do that work for a brief period of time and then turn it over. There was one critique that was written by an evaluation unit—not in AID but a contractor-- that said that the handoff wasn't working very well. In other words, they were doing some really creative stuff, but the more mainstream AID people that did long-term development weren't turning these projects into longer-term initiatives. So, we worked on how to improve that.

But OTI then, I mean, what was really pleasing to me was to see that that concept was then embraced by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), and by other donors, so transition work became more mainstream in the international community.

*Q: Well, and so State Department itself established such an office that Rick Barton also led, right? I've forgotten exactly when that happened.*

ATWOOD: Yes, I think that happened in the Obama Administration. It didn't ever receive the support from the Congress that it perhaps warranted, and it was more of a coordination office. That bureau never convinced OMB or Congress to give it the resources, so OTI has grown into a \$100 million a year enterprise. They had a great person to run it in Rick Barton, but it never had the impact of OTI.

*Q: But how about opening up to Eastern Europe? When you came in, had there already been some move towards establishing offices in Russia and elsewhere? I mean, 1991 was the great change in the Soviet Union, so—*

ATWOOD: I was very much engaged because I was at NDI at the time. John Ritch was a friend of mine. John was working for Joe Biden in the Senate, on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And John, to be truthful, was in part trying to embarrass the Bush Administration for not having done enough, not reacting aggressively enough to the openings that were happening in Eastern and Central Europe. So he was looking for all kinds of ideas to put into his computer file to create the initiative. And Biden really should be given credit for taking a lot of that initiative. I think the mistake he made-- and this is controversial to say now because he's president-- he then created these coordinators at the State Department. And you talk about bad management. I mean, those coordinators came under tremendous pressure from other government agencies to have money to work in the region. So, the Energy Department wanted money to do energy work in Central and Eastern Europe. And of course, the threat was that if you don't give us the money, we're going to have our secretary call your secretary. And that's what happened a lot. And so 50 percent of the money went to AID, but the other 50 percent was distributed around government. And if you want to talk about the proliferation of AID programs in other government agencies, that is really the beginning of the most serious start of all that.

*Q: This was money that had been allocated under the, what is it, the 150 account, but designated for other agencies?*

ATWOOD: No, it wasn't designated; it was given to the coordinators to decide how to allocate it. And so, the problem was that these other agencies that were domestically oriented and didn't have people on the ground overseas, they were putting out tenders for contractors, many of the same contractors that work with AID. But they didn't quite know how to manage those contractors. And they didn't have anyone on the ground to oversee them.

*Q: Is this a situation you found on your arrival?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: So, that had already begun and had AID established an Eastern European or whatever bureau at that time, or was—?*

ATWOOD: No, we created that bureau. It was handled by, I think, the people that were handling the Middle East bureau. They became an office and I created the bureau and put Tom Dine and George Ingram in charge.

*Q: I see.*

ATWOOD: —made it into a bureau.

*Q: And that was the one you put Tom Dine in as*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: —the assistant administrator?*

ATWOOD: Exactly. George Ingram was the deputy and another career person who had been in Warsaw became the other deputy. It was a very well run bureau.

*Q: And was this development assistance money, or was this—was it supporting assistance or Economic Support Fund?*

ATWOOD: It was more like Economic Support Fund money but it came from those special accounts created for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It was skewed a bit because McConnell put a lot of money into Ukraine. This is kind of interesting in light of today. McConnell apparently had Ukrainian supporters in Kentucky, and he put a lot of money into Ukraine. But fine.

*Q: And if you compare at that stage the development assistance monies and the operating expenses you had with the kind of money that was being put into Eastern Europe, was there a mismatch? How did those numbers compare, just in rough terms?*

ATWOOD: Yes, my memory is that DA was something around \$3 billion at the time, and I'm sure that there was about the same amount that was put into those two bills. There were two separate programs and there were two separate coordinators at the State Department. We would have a senior mission director in a place like Moscow-- and they had a lot of money to manage and a lot of people to manage. And then because the coordinator would request it, the economic officer of the embassy would be told to oversee AID. I mean, it was mismanagement 101. They were receiving instructions from the State Department through the coordinator, and instructions through our regional bureau from AID. It was a management horror story.

*Q: Were you able to do anything about that during your time?*

ATWOOD: All I could do was complain and try to make the coordinators understand the problems that I had. And occasionally there would be problems that would flare up and you'd have to deal with it. I was quoted in Mike McFaul's book on this issue as saying that the then-coordinator, Dick Morningstar, who was a political appointee who later became ambassador to Azerbaijan in the Obama years. He was the only reasonable person that we dealt with. Some of the career people at State that took over those jobs initially just didn't know anything about development or program management. One exception was Bill Taylor who joined me on my first trip to the Former Soviet Union. He was a very sensible guy.

*Q: What was the focus of your mission directors or of AID as contrasted with the focus of the State Department and these coordinators? Was there a major substantive difference in addition to whatever the confusion was as to who was telling whom what they should do?*

ATWOOD: Mostly the coordinators wanted to make an immediate political impact, no matter whether the initiative was sustainable or not. The thinking was just all short-term--throw money at a problem. Reward certain people within the Russian government or whatever and—. Anyway, that was it. That was the main concern I had when they started talking about merging AID into State. And the reason I had that concern was because I came from State. I knew what the thinking was. Buying influence is what they do, and you can't change a professional orientation overnight and turn them into development professionals.

*Q: I think that in John Norris's book there's some talk about how you and your colleagues wanted to push the money down to, I don't know if grassroots is the proper term, but was that a major distinction, as you were trying to move away from—?*

ATWOOD: Our feeling was that developing a civil society that would hold governments accountable and would themselves be part of the fabric of a new democratic environment was really important, but that was not the view of the coordinators. And it's a shame. We missed opportunities. The big issue was privatization. And when we were able to do that work without interference, it worked well. We made great progress in Bosnia for example. We brought experts, bankers for example who were teaching people how to do banking and how to make investments and create stock markets. I think we did it really well in Bosnia, but we had less interference there. It was in Moscow where there were problems. We were trying to privatize all of these big parastatals, and we insisted that the stock certificates that we were handing out would be distributed widely. The Russians fought that and the State Department didn't really support us. The result was that the old state managers of the companies accumulated the stock certificates and became millionaires overnight. That is the oligarchy that Putin owns to this day.

*Q: I've heard from people who were assigned to work in Eastern Europe, and I think this was true at the World Bank too, that one of the problems was that people who've had long experience in Chad or in other countries around the world had never really confronted the kind of situation that existed in Moscow. And you were talking just now about the denationalization of Russian firms and industries and that kind of thing.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: How did you staff up for these programs? Did you use regular staff and just assign them to Moscow, or were you hiring outside people? Were you permitted to do so by State and by Congress?*

ATWOOD: For the most part when we actually acquired responsibility for the resources, we were able to do what needed to be done, and we did bring a lot of experts in that were, again, I mentioned before, people who knew how to set up a stock exchange. I'll never



forget setting up what was then called RASDAQ in Romania. Instead of NASDAQ it was called RASDAQ. The NASDAQ professionals helped the Romanians set it up.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: For the most part our development people in the missions had worked in the developing world, not in places like this. But it wasn't difficult. The challenge in the developing world is workforce. I mean, it's the fact that you don't have a lot of educated people. You had a lot of highly educated people in these former communist states. The challenge was to re-educate them, and that was often difficult. They didn't fully buy into the idea of how free markets work and that was a really big challenge.

*Q: Do you have some kind of overall sense of what did work in this area and what did not? I know it's difficult to generalize, but as you look back on that period do you have a sense about what was accomplished and what you were not able to accomplish, not just because of the State Department coordinators, but just in general from the standpoint of confronting this really different and difficult set of circumstances given the ideological base on which so much had taken place beforehand. Do you have a sense about that, just for history?*

ATWOOD: I do. I had people that wondered whether or not what we did was right in the early days given some of the current trends toward populism in places like Hungary and Poland. It seems to me that once you create the institutions and give voice to the people to create accountability systems, then you've done all you can. The three central European countries had a history of democratic behavior. They were enlightenment countries. The Eastern European countries further south experienced the Ottoman Empire, and so they didn't have that kind of more recent history with democracy and how it worked. So, in the early days, things worked very well in Central Europe. Solidarity basically took over in Poland and the Czech Republic had its wonderful leader Vaclav Havel. And in Hungary we thought that Fidesz was made up of enlightened liberals. Now we have Viktor Orbán. Power corrupts, and over time power did corrupt some of those people. Viktor Orbán was never a liberal. He was the privileged son of the Communist leaders and his instincts were always autocratic.

It was much rougher going in places like Romania, but it's settled down now and there's a multi-party system that works. They were not only influenced by us, but by the European Union. The EU invested a lot of money there in development.

The former Soviet Union countries were a little more difficult, and part of it is because of the nature of communism. The communist system runs counter to human nature, and it also encourages corruption. And those who have, have, and those who don't, don't. If you're a member of the Communist Party you do really very well. A reorientation was needed there. We see what's happened in Moscow today. It's a kleptocracy and the people around Putin have a lot of money and he operates like a Mafia boss. So, I think we did the best job we could. We left behind, in some countries where initially liquidity was a problem, enterprise funds to compensate for an absence of banking. In some cases like

Poland they worked really well. In other places they had a more mixed history, as in Hungary where we had to replace the entire board. But they provided investment funds in developing a private sector and that was really important.

We also created, and on my watch, created at AID a credit authority that John Wasielewski ran. He did a great job in making sure that it was development oriented. And now it's been taken over by the new international finance IFC (International Finance Corporation).

So, a lot of innovative stuff happened as a result of that experience, and I think a lot of progress was made. But you can't control the politics and now the impact of social media. There are grievances that come to the fore and especially in a democracy and clever politicians and messages of fear can manipulate people. And, after all, democracy is a journey, not a final destination. And no country, including the United States, has ever created the perfect democracy, so it's always a work in progress.

*Q: That's a good segue to asking you about how effective that priority that you placed on democratic governance or democracy worked during your period. One of the five areas of concentration or importance was democracy, right?*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And you, coming from your experience at NDI, obviously had a great deal of sensitivity to that issue, and coming into AID and making it a priority, how did you—how do you think that worked? And were you pleased with what you were able to do within AID on this subject? What were the ups and downs on that one?*

ATWOOD: Well, there was a lot of skepticism initially because it sounded awfully political to be working with political parties and parliaments and the like; it sounded a bit too political for many of the career people. But I think the selling point was the issue of sustainability. If you don't have accountability within a government, then you really can't sustain economic growth or other developmentally sound policies. All of the problems that were pointed out in the book called *Why Nations Fail* result from unaccountable governance. Governments have to be seen as responding to the people's will, but also to be providing for the people and their welfare. And if it's the other way around, people serving governments, then it won't work and it becomes a sustainability issue. And I think we were able to use the language of development to sell the idea that democratic governance is, as Churchill said, the best of the worst, if you will.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: It was also consistent with American values. Not that we wanted to promote the American system per se. It was the idea of promoting civil society that is active and interested in their own welfare, promoting institutions that provided a voice for civil society, and that functioned efficiently and well. And a court system that established the rule of law. Every country is different; it's a different context. But for the most part I

think people had bought into this. It's reflected in the UN charter, so it isn't something that should be a stretch for people, although countries like Russia and China have made it a real stretch.

*Q: When you—you said that initially there was some skepticism. You're talking about within the AID staff or—?*

ATWOOD: Yes, within the AID staff, not so much because they didn't embrace the notion of democracy, after all, they're Americans, but they were skeptical because they worried that it was too political. They were much more comfortable saying, Let's help develop civil society, because that was beneath government, that was the bottom rung of democracies. They were less comfortable working to make sure there was a multi-party system, that a parliament worked efficiently, that even an executive branch had institutions that allowed it to hear the people's voices, and that court systems should oversee constitutions.

*Q: Were you basically adding this function onto program officers and others, or were you creating new positions in these field missions in order to implement this program?*

ATWOOD: We created a new personnel category of democracy- governance officers, and that has been sustained over time. And I'll never forget Neil Levine asking me to come back to AID a couple of years ago and meet with the democracy officers. It was a room full of them. I asked how many people had worked for NDI or IRI, and a large number raised their hand. So, that helped a lot, making it part of the mainstream of what AID does.

*Q: Do you see in the initiatives that Samantha Power is talking about now evidence of their having learned from what you learned during the 1990s?*

ATWOOD: Yes, I do. When I mentioned this to her, she used the phrase, "I know there are a lot of evergreen issues." Evergreen issues, I thought that was an interesting phrase. There are a lot of evergreen facts that she's dealing with. The fact of the matter is that we successfully integrated democracy governance work into AID's mainstream and successfully established the OTI operation as a main part of what AID does. We started OTI with \$20 million, transferring money from the OFDA budget with Congress's approval. I had to convince the people on the Hill that we should take money out of the OFDA fund and put it into OTI as an experiment, and that experiment worked. It now has a \$100 million appropriation and it receives a lot of money transferred from other places in the government as well, including DOD. But yes, I think a lot of the things that we tried to do, being more strategic, being results oriented. The most significant thing I may have done globally was to push the idea of strategic objectives onto the DAC (Development Assistance Committee). I went to the DAC and was a little frustrated the first time I went there because all they talked about was volume and how they measured ODA (Official Development Assistance).

*Q: This is, by the way, for those who do not know, this is the Development Assistance Committee at the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) that Brian is talking about.*

*Go ahead.*

ATWOOD: And once a year they had a high-level meeting of the ministers of development and the administrator of AID is the de facto minister of development for the U.S. I sat there, and I listened to it and I, of course, had to try to describe why the United States was no longer the number one donor. We had fallen to number three in gross volume because of the “peace dividend” after the Cold War. So, the second time I went, by this time our own reforms and the strategic white paper had been done, and I started pushing people to say, “Look, why don’t we, as a collective, describe the key objectives of the development community, the donor community.” And immediately, Jan Pronk of the Netherlands jumped onboard with a few others. He said, let’s make this a political paper. They use the word “political” slightly differently in the European context than I do, but it’s basically a policy paper written by the ministers themselves rather than by the staff of the OECD. And fortunately, we had Jim Michel, who was a wonderful lawyer and writer. He organized a number of meetings, and we eventually came out—it took us about two years, but we finally came out with this major report that really shook the development world. And the short version of that story is that eventually it was adopted as the UN Millennium Development goals.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: It took some effort because two years later in 1998 the issue came up in connection with a G-7 Summit in Birmingham, UK. By this time Clare Short was the head of DFID (Department for International Development) in the UK and she badly wanted to have the summit leaders adopt this report from the DAC. The two Sherpa’s from Treasury and State didn’t want to do it. So I invited Clare to Washington, and she met with them and basically threatened them. She said that she’d go public and say that the U.S. has backed away from its word. Well, they caved. It was then adopted as part of that summit statement and then by the UN as part of the Millennium Declaration.

*Q: Clare Short was always a very formidable figure, especially if you’re on the wrong side of her.*

*All right, speaking about the wrong side or the right side, you started talking about Jesse Helms earlier on and I cut you off, but now I think it’s time for you to tell that story about how you managed to keep AID outside the State Department, linked to but outside. Please, go ahead, tell that story.*

ATWOOD: Well, let’s first establish the preface here. When I was transition leader at the State Department career people, including a few former ambassadors and Bill Baucus, who was PhD political scientist who later came to AID with me, did a study on the issue of merging the three agencies—USIA, ACDA and USAID—into State. They had written

a detailed report to the transition team and to the new secretary of state. The gist of it was that the Cold War's over and we should merge USIA (United States Information Agency) and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency into State. And they also seriously considered whether to do that with USAID, but they found that the management systems were too complex. So they recommended against merging USAID. They said that it would give responsibility and authority to people that didn't know what they were doing, in essence. And so, they strongly recommended against merging AID.

So now I'm USAID and I have all this background. Then, when the issue came up because Jesse Helms decided this was going to be his legacy initiative. He proposed legislation merging all three agencies into the State Department. I opposed it. I don't regret being aggressive about it. I remember giving a speech on Foreign Service Day when I said, "There's no question reform is needed. The post-Cold War period gives us new opportunities." I said, "But there's no reason why we should accept a plan written by Jesse Helms on the back of an envelope." (Laughs) I said, "We should be considering this a lot more seriously." So, I made it clear from the very beginning that I didn't think it was a good idea, and then, of course, we convinced the Ferris Commission that it wasn't a good idea. And we later convinced Al Gore that it wasn't a good idea.

Helms, of course, persisted. At one point Christopher called me and said that Al Gore wanted to study this issue. I called Fuerth, and told him, in essence, that I wouldn't be able to stay if, in fact, they made that decision. That evening, I'm at a dinner at the German ambassador's residence to host Otto Von Lamsdorf, who was the former finance minister, someone I had known. He'd been the head of Liberal International and I knew him there.

And I get a call from—which is a good way to do this, by the way, if you want to impress people: the Ambassador's staff announces: "Mr. Atwood, the vice president's on the line for you. (Both laugh) So, I stepped out and took a call from Al Gore, and he said, "Brian." He said, "Leon has told me about your discussion. Please don't say that you're going to resign. Trust me." So I told him that I was fighting to save the agency with the Republicans now in charge on the Hill, and this seems to be really bad timing." Gore said, "I'm going to study the issue and I don't think you're going to be unhappy with the result. So, don't put me in an impossible position by threatening to resign publicly." So, I said, "Fine. I understand. I won't say a word."

So, of course, a lot happened then. I mean, the State Department wrote a report to Gore's people. Elaine Kamarck was his point person on this. And it was just full of misrepresentations. The person who wrote it apparently didn't understand the system. He basically said that we were off the reservation making decisions on our own, said that, basically we paid no attention to what State's desires were. I mean, things like that.

It was so easy to refute it. We described the budget process starting with the embassies and the country team, and how that went back to the regional bureaus, and how the AID regional bureaus dealt with the State regional bureaus. We obviously had to integrate the congressional earmarks. That wasn't something we could debate. And then it went

through the budget process through OMB. It wasn't as if we were making our own decisions about a lot of these things. And then ESF money was transferred to AID, so that was all State. But the memo from State made it sound like we were a rogue elephant. It was just full of misinformation.

*Q: And did Elaine Kamarck endorse that?*

ATWOOD: She was great. We then wrote a rebuttal. It so happened that at the crucial meeting I wasn't even present. Al Gore was there with Elaine Kamarck and the State Department people were there and Carol Lancaster was my representative. My father had died and I went down to Florida to be with my mother. By all accounts Carol did a great job. The facts were the facts and OMB substantiated them. The State Department should have been thoroughly embarrassed. So it was an easy decision for Gore and he made it and we remained an independent agency.

One of the issues, though, that I was willing to compromise on was that IDCA was still on the books, and theoretically I was the head of IDCA and reporting to the president. Well, I never would have taken advantage of that to embarrass the secretary of state. However, a few times at NSC meetings I differed with Chris. The most dramatic one was when they wanted to sell F-15s to Chile. And the secretary of defense, the chairman of the joint chiefs, and the Commerce secretary all thought it was the right thing to do, as did Warren Christopher. All of them spoke before me, saying that we needed to sell F-15s to Chile. And I said, "You may all wonder why I'm here. Well, under the Foreign Assistance Act I'm supposed to comment on arms sales, so let me comment." I said, "This will be the first time you sell sophisticated aircraft to Latin America, and if you do this, there will be an arms race, and the French and the British and others will want to participate, and all of a sudden, you're going to have a lot of countries that can't afford it spending money on aircraft like this."

Well, I wasn't the last person to speak. It was then Leon Fuerth on behalf of the vice president, who took my side. And Tony Lake then said, "Well, we don't have consensus, so we can't forward a recommendation to the President."

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: And so, I stopped the sale for a while. Six months later they somehow rationalized it, said that they wouldn't sell offensive systems with the aircraft and they went ahead with the sale. I wasn't invited to that meeting. There were other occasions when I took on the secretary of state's position for reasons that related more to development. But the point is, I wasn't going to take advantage of my being the head of IDCA and assuming that I reported to the President. By that time IDCA was nothing more than a shell of what it was, there was no staff, there was nothing.

*Q: Sure.*

ATWOOD: I was willing to report to the secretary of state. All I wanted to avoid, however, was the notion that assistant secretaries of state could order AID to do X, Y or Z. I said, "I will report to the secretary, that's fine, but I'm running the agency here and I'm not going to have State Department interfering with the way I run it, because I want to be held responsible for what's happening here."

*Q: How did the relationship with State go during this period? Warren Christopher, at some point you've said, and I've read that he really favored this merger. He was very sympathetic to what Helms was trying to do.*

ATWOOD: He was, but he also didn't want to take on a big fight when he had other things on his plate. And he told his people—I was reminded by Ken Brill, who was one of those who were advocating for bringing AID into State that Christopher finally just threw his hands up and said, "I don't want to get into a big fight over this." So, he basically gave up. Then, of course, he left, and Madeleine, who was an old friend, took over.

Then when I thought the issue was behind me, I got a call one day from her chief of staff. I clearly knew I was on a speakerphone, and she said—and I knew this person really well—so she says to me in a very formal tone of voice "Brian, the secretary has decided that AID's budget will go through her in the future, and she expects you to go along with this. Will you?" And I said, "Elaine, the secretary knows that this is an issue that I have taken a stand on. I don't understand why my good friend would do this because it will force me to resign. This is not a question of not supporting Madeleine, because I know she would handle this authority well. What I worry about is a new secretary of state who doesn't give a damn about foreign aid coming in and basically using that authority to take the money and use it for short-term purposes." And I said it somewhat passionately. Then Wendy Sherman gets on the line and says, "Do I understand you correctly, Brian, that you won't go along with this?" And I said, "Madeleine is a friend of mine. Why would she force me to resign over something like this? This is too important." And I went through the whole thing again. "Fine, I understand." I don't know, but I have a suspicion that Madeleine was listening to that whole conversation.

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: So, the person that was assigned to handle the State Department's position on Helms's proposal was Pat Kennedy, who was then undersecretary for management. A few hours later, I get a call from Pat Kennedy, and Pat says to me, "Brian, I don't know where you got this information, but we never wanted to take AID's budget over."

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: And I said, "Fine. That's good." And I never mentioned to him the previous conversation and I'm not sure he knew that there was a previous conversation. But he was asked to call me to reassure me that it wasn't going to happen.

*Q: Meanwhile, Senator Helms has not given up, right?*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, he and—*

ATWOOD: Eventually he had to. I mean, eventually the administration took the position that AID shouldn't be merged.

*Q: But he and Madeleine had some sort of a deal? What was the—?*

ATWOOD: Well, they eventually agreed to integrate ACDA and USIA, but the deal was that they would eliminate IDCA and therefore I would no longer be reporting to the White House. And that was okay with me. I was fine with that.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: The other thing they did in order to exact a little bit of pain was to say that our public affairs office would have to report to the State Department's public affairs office. And the reason that they wanted to do that was because I was getting a bit too public on issues they thought were in State's policy area. I wrote a column in the Washington Post saying that we should be spending more time and resources on preventing crises. And I was meeting with editorial boards and giving speeches in different cities. The change never had any real effect. I still kept doing what I was doing as I felt it was part of my job and the White House never objected.

*Q: And did you actually send them to the public affairs office at the State Department before you—?*

ATWOOD: They weren't moved. They basically developed a relationship where they told State what they were doing. And State really in the end didn't care. They weren't interested in development issues. It didn't have any effect at all in the long run.

*Q: And did all this, I mean, Madeleine Albright came in before the end of the first term or—?*

ATWOOD: No, it was the beginning of the second term.

*Q: Okay. So, Christopher served out a full term, a full four years, and then Madeleine came in for the second four years of the Clinton Administration. Is that right?*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: So, these—and yet your fight with—if I can cast it that way—with Jesse Helms and State Department and others started really in 1993 or so. This went on for quite a long time, right?*



ATWOOD: Well, he wasn't chair in '93; he took over in '95, beginning of '95 as chair.

*Q: I see.*

ATWOOD: That was his legacy initiative, to create legislation to merge all three of these agencies into State.

*Q: So, how much of a burden for you, as you're trying to run an agency that is working in a hundred plus countries minus twenty-one and in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and everywhere else, how much of your time did you have to devote to this struggle over the structure of the relationship between AID and State?*

ATWOOD: I would say not as much time as it would appear. It's just that I made my position very clear. And of course, the suspicion of the State Department was that I had gone all over the country trying to sabotage them in terms of this merger. The fact is I had gone all over the country much earlier to describe what foreign aid was and why it was important to the American people, and then it was easy enough for people like Jay Byrne to trigger those editorial writers to write columns in support of AID vis-à-vis the merger.

The main thing that it caused was a good deal of stress. I didn't enjoy fighting with old friends. I didn't enjoy conversations that I would have with people like Tim Wirth, who came over to see me to tell me that he thought that AID should be merged into the State Department, or Dick Holbrooke, who thought the same thing. I didn't enjoy having to say no to Madeleine. Eventually Andrew Natsios yielded on that issue. So, there was really more of that kind of personal stress.

I still traveled; I still did a lot of the other things that came with the job. I'd go to meetings at the White House. I felt as though I could go to a place where there was a real crisis going on and come back, and go to an NSC meeting. I found that people listened to you if you had just been somewhere. And I got a lot of attention. Sandy Berger, who became the NSC Advisor after Tony Lake, was a really good friend., Tony as well. Then people had the impression that I was probably close to Al Gore. I remember a book that was written where Donna Shalala was asked why she didn't make a more aggressive effort vis-à-vis her position on the World Health Organization board to bring more AID money into HHS (United States Department of Health and Human Services). And her comment was, "Well, everyone knew that Brian Atwood was very close to the White House and Al Gore, and I couldn't have taken that on." Part of that was real and part perception. In any case, it worked to benefit the agency.

*So describe some of the "real" parts of that relationship.*

My relationship with the White House became very noticeable when the President asked me to lead presidential delegations representing him. Perhaps the most consequential initiative was the President's greater Horn of Africa Initiative. I brought a Famine Early Warning System (FEWS) report to the monthly breakfast I had with Vice President Gore.

FEWS was a USAID satellite and ground truthing system that in this case showed the devastating effects of a drought in East Africa. Some 20 million people were at risk of either dying in place or moving to better pastures and destabilizing the entire region.

I proposed a plan to bring emergency food into the region but also to encourage countries in the southern part of the region to increase agricultural production and make it available to countries in the north part of the Horn (hence the title “Greater” Horn of Africa Initiative). We also proposed to enhance communications among the regional nations by setting up an Internet network so leaders could consult with one another.

The Internet was new technology at the time so it represented a new opportunity for communication. Earlier in the year Vice President Gore and I introduced the Mickey Leland initiative to bring the Internet into Africa. Leland was a US Congressman who was killed in a plane crash while on a humanitarian mission to Ethiopia.

Gore liked the plan very much and we walked down the hall to NSC Advisor Tony Lake’s office and explained the plan to him. Tony arranged to put this on the calendar for the next NSC principals meeting where the President would attend. That happened the following week.

I presented the plan and emphasized how important it was to get out ahead of the impending disaster and said that solving the problem after people started to migrate could mean destabilizing the entire region. I pointed out that once a crisis got out of hand as in Bosnia, working it out became much more difficult. Tony spoke up and said that there was now a plan to solve the Bosnia crisis. In any case, the President was enthusiastic and asked me to lead a delegation to the area and to Europe to engage the World Food Program and other donors.

The delegation included a few members of Congress, including Representative Tony Hall, the Chair of the Hunger Caucus, Ambassador David Shinn, a DAS of the Africa Bureau at State, Susan Rice the NSC’s Africa person, and Chief of Staff Dick McCall, USAID Humanitarian Bureau Chief Doug Stafford, Africa Bureau AA John Hicks, Special Assistant Jennifer Windsor and my personal assistant Jackie Stein as well as a number of Africa and food aid assistance from USAID. We traveled to Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia and then onto Rome where we met with the World Food Program and the Vatican. We had press on the plane, including a national radio host who reported every day on our mission. We wanted the world to know that a crisis was pending and that urgent relief was needed.

We achieved our purpose and millions of lives were saved and the feared migration didn’t happen. Ironically, a famine would have created major news headlines, but preventing one was at best a page three story. Still, the US had utilized its influence and enhanced its “soft power” by helping people survive a horrible famine.

*That’s a great story Brian. Do you have other examples of your influence at the White House?*

Yes, a few. I led the presidential delegation to the inauguration of the President of Portugal. I knew the new President Sampaio of Portugal because he had joined us at NDI for a few of our programs. I also met with the new President of Mozambique who was in Lisbon for the inauguration.

I led the presidential delegation to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Philippines independence from the United States. I sat next to President Ramos for the reenactment of that ceremony 50 years earlier. He told me he had been a student who had been accepted at West Point the following year. When the US flag was pulled down on a pulley that raised the Philippines flag a wind gust caused the two flags to be wrapped together, I told him that that was a good metaphor for our close relationship. We shook hands on that.

I headed the US delegation to the first election after the civil war in El Salvador. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi was a part of that delegation and when I saw her a few years ago, she recalled that historic election and the role we played. We traveled to El Salvador on the same Boeing 707 that John F. Kennedy used. It was the plane where LBJ was sworn in after Kennedy was assassinated. I was later invited back to El Salvador and was given the honor of addressing the Salvadoran Congress. It then had members who fought in the FMLN, a group the US labeled terrorists during the civil war.

I also led the presidential delegation to the Haitian election when Preval won to replace Aristide. It was a bit messy, but none of the disruptions affected the outcome and we said that. I was later on the Newshour with Jim Lehrer and the lead-in made it look like the election was terribly bogus. I had to correct that impression and after the segment Jim teased me about undercutting his lead. It was all done with good humor. He was a great journalist.

*Q: Well, well done on that, well done.*

*Your mentioning the White House means I want to close this discussion out with asking you about Hillary Clinton. I mean, there's a section of—that we've kept off the table so far about Larry Byrne and management questions, but we'll get to that in the next interview. But Hillary Clinton, obviously a first lady with very major interest in the work of AID and in development and women and children, and the result of that is a big plaque on the wall in AID that came down in one administration and I guess is back up again. But did you have close relationships with Hillary Clinton and how did it help or hurt you at AID?*

ATWOOD: I had very close relations with the First Lady because she took a real interest in USAID. I'd meet with her maybe once a month, usually with Melanne Verveer, her chief of staff, and talk about different aspects of our program. When she traveled we would arrange to have people like Carol Lancaster go with her. I went with her a few times myself. But we'd usually send some of the professional career women with her. She absolutely loved the projects. She loved AID.

When I went with the president and her on the thirteen-day trip to Africa she insisted in Uganda, for example, going out to see a microenterprise program that was pretty far outside the capital. President Museveni said to President Clinton, “Why are we going way out here? I’ve never been to this place.” “Well, my wife wanted you to see this program.” Museveni was duly impressed.

She was just a strong, strong advocate for AID. At one time the President of Ghana, Rawlings, came to Washington and there was a lunch for him with President Clinton and I was invited. The President pulls me aside and says, “Every time Hillary goes on a trip she lobbies me for more money for AID.” So, there’s no question that she played a really important role in this whole issue of whether to merge AID into the State Department. I don’t know specifically what the role was; I don’t know what they talked about in the privacy of their bedroom, but I know that she was a big supporter, as was Al Gore. I mean, the State Department was up against a lot when they tried to take on AID.

*Q: Well, we hope that that is also followed by the current AID administrator, who obviously has very good contacts with the president and others. But it does go to prove that having an AID administrator who has a certain amount of prominence and links to key people in an administration can make a big difference for the AID program. The AID program is not something that is on everybody’s lips as the major activity. And as John Norris points out in his history of the AID program that it’s the most misunderstood of agencies doing an enormous amount of work. You exemplify that and these relationships you’ve described, which clearly come in part as a result of your getting around the country, having this talent that you discovered in Taiwan to address 25,000 people as well as twenty-five. But do you have any—I’m not asking you to be immodest, but in terms of influence and impact, how important these relationships are. I do remember in the case of Peter McPherson that clearly his ability to get things done during his extensive tenure at AID was heavily dependent on the relationships he had with key players in that administration.*

ATWOOD: Yes. I think I mentioned to you earlier that when I came out of the Foreign Service and started working for Senator Eagleton that all of a sudden I found myself in a different culture. I was this reserved Foreign Service officer concerned about what words I use and all of a sudden, I’m in a place where people are joking and talking politics all the time. And I spent five years there and that gave me an understanding of that culture, if you will, so I wasn’t afraid of it. I wasn’t afraid to make the joke about the dinosaurs with Mitch McConnell, I wasn’t afraid to go into Charlie Wilson’s office and confront him.

And I’d been assistant secretary of state for congressional relations too, that whole experience was really important in terms of understanding how far I could go and what I should do. In the end, you could say I maybe went too far because when I was nominated to be ambassador to Brazil, Jesse Helms refused to hold a hearing for me, and I had to withdraw in the end. But nonetheless, I felt comfortable in that milieu, if you will, and I think it served AID well.

And it wasn't just me. I mentioned all of the people that came in with me that had Hill experience, and State experience and development experience. The AID people respected them all, but they also knew State well and they knew the Hill well. They just amplified what I was able to do because I couldn't have done it without a tremendous group of political appointees who worked well with the career professionals.

*Q: Okay, well, this has been, again, a very fascinating two hours and I am deeply grateful, Brian, for that. And we will, in a moment, schedule the next session where we will pick up on the untold story about Larry Byrne and all the management issues that surrounded that, which were also going on while you were doing this other work. And then we'll proceed to consider your post-AID period as well, including what you've described as Jesse Helms's objection to your nomination as ambassador to Brazil.*

*So, thank you very much and we will see you soon.*

ATWOOD: Okay.

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*Q: This is Alex Shakow again, interviewing Brian Atwood for his oral history. And this is session number four. It is the seventh of March 2022. And we've been through many of the experiences that Brian had as the AID administrator in the 1990s, but we obviously have not finished everything and so, we'll see what we need to do to cover that territory now today. I want to start with Larry Byrne since he was quite a controversial figure in AID history during that period. I think it's important for Brian to be able to explain his version of why Larry Byrne was there, what Larry Byrne did and how Larry Byrne managed to stay.*

*So, why don't we start with that, Brian, then we can pick up any additional AID issues that you would like to cover.*

ATWOOD: Okay.

I think I mentioned earlier that Larry wasn't one of the people I recruited to come onto the team. There were a few people I interviewed to be the head of management for AID; Larry was being promoted by the White House. His wife was a member of Congress. And when I met with him, it was clear he had done a lot of work with government agencies, more as a consultant, and he had reformed a number of agencies; had at least recommended reforms for agencies. I was duly impressed by how bright he was and clearly; he was by far the best candidate that I interviewed. And of course, the White House wasn't displeased that I selected him to come onboard.

I knew and he knew, and I think everybody involved, including Dick McCall, who had done a study for Cliff Wharton, Christopher's first deputy secretary who was there for a brief period of time. Dick knew that we needed to reform the agency, to sharpen up the political message as to what the agency did. And I've already talked about how we

decided to be more strategic and write a white paper defining the five major goals. I've also discussed at length how we wanted the missions to operate in an earlier version of local ownership, in essence. And I think I've gone into that in some detail.

I was very much familiar with the Government Results and Performance Act and I very much wanted to be able to show results and to be able to report them in a transparent way. So, all of this came together. The contribution that Larry made in the early days was to look at our processes in some detail. I mentioned this earlier. We looked at the number of steps that it took to get something from the conception stage into the field and actually activate it. And it was helpful to all of the career people to look at those steps and to be able to eliminate several that were really not necessary.

As the head of management, Larry was also the head of the contracting office. The government procurement system was a real frustration, but you have to live with it whether or not you are procuring huge weapons systems for the Defense Department or whether you're procuring development projects for AID. And many of the contract officers had no idea of development and didn't have an understanding of the development process. That's probably unfair to all of them, but many of them had been recruited from other agencies. There was a huge burnout rate and so we had to keep recruiting people for that function, and many of them came from DOD and other government agencies. Unfortunately, I don't think they understood the soul of AID. Nonetheless, Larry was useful. I kept conceptualizing things I wanted to get done and Larry would find the management tools to do it. He was very important in the reform process itself and one doesn't make progress unless you're willing to break a few eggs.

Before we get into the new management system, there's something I want to say that I think precedes it, and that is the Foreign Service Act. I was involved tangentially in the Carter Administration when Ben Reid and Pat Kennedy were pushing to get a new Foreign Service Act. And as you know, Alex, it's an up and out system. You have a period of three or four years before you go from a junior officer to the mid-level, and that's like an academic system, if you don't make it to the mid-level you're out within a few years. Not very many people go out that way, but a few do. And then, when you get to that mid-level, you're guaranteed twenty years in the Foreign Service until the age of fifty or so. And if you don't then make it into the Senior Foreign Service you're out.

Well, at USAID every administrator before me simply waived that requirement, so people were staying well beyond that period when they would otherwise have been out because they didn't make the Senior Foreign Service. And I made the decision to stop waiving that because we had, basically, an inverted pyramid structure. We weren't bringing in young people and we were top-sided, we were just a lot of senior people, which is good in some ways and not so good in terms of bringing new people in to reinvigorate the agency. So, somewhere around '95, '96, we made that decision and announced it. I knew a few of the people that were going to be affected by it—they wouldn't be affected immediately, but would be affected by the decision I made. And I felt that I should tell them because I respected them. I thought it was a shame that they had to be affected by this, but I wanted them to know personally from me why I made the decision. And I'll

come back to that later to tell you one of the consequences of my having been kind to people by telling them personally.

But it had an impact in the next few years when we had to do the RIF, the reduction in force, the most controversial thing I had to do. More people may remember me for that and for nothing else. It's one of the saddest things I had to do but I felt as though I had to do it.

But before getting into that, I'll tell you that we were under tremendous pressure, especially after the Republicans took over the Congress, to either find a system wherein we could get a clean audit for USAID or else suffer the consequences. USAID had never had a clean audit. The General Accounting Office was on our back, the Congress was on our back and OMB was on our back to do it. So we needed something, and this is an era where the U.S. government was struggling to put in place software systems that could do this type of accounting. I decided that we could make this new management system work in a number of ways, not just to do an accounting system that was fully transparent. That in itself was controversial within the agency because over the years our career people had become quite clever at figuring out how to protect certain pots of money in different missions so that they'd have a little bit more flexibility, and they didn't necessarily want a more transparent system.

I also promised the Hill that they would have access to the transparent system so they would know when changes were made in programs or when money was being committed and then money was actually being expended and that there would be transparency all around. They couldn't, obviously, argue with that. And then, we wanted to build into the system the results framework. We wanted to build this in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act, in a way that we could not only measure results but also record them. In that way even the partner countries would know, the individual partners of various strategic objectives at the mission level would have an understanding of what results were being achieved and then record it.

In the end, we obviously wanted to do too much with this imagined system. We probably should have just gone with an off the shelf accounting system But we really couldn't afford to go out there to IBM or Microsoft and say, do this for us. We had to do it in-house. We didn't have the money to do it any other way, and Larry Byrne always had great confidence that he and his people could do it.

I will never forget when we ran into some trouble with it. It wasn't just about putting the system in place; it was having the ability to communicate with all of our missions. Larry was trying to figure out a satellite system so that we could communicate with all of our missions on a real time basis. I mean, if you really think about this system, it would have been wonderful to have if we could have done it. But doing it in-house and not having the talent to put it together was really the challenge we had. Most of the people, especially those that were most upset with the reduction in force, were not aware of the kind of pressure that I was under from OMB and from the Congress and the GAO to get a system

put in place. So, in my view, we were damned if we did, and we were damned if we didn't.

And so, when the reduction in force happened, I had already made the decision about not waiving the Foreign Service Act for Senior Foreign Service officers.

*Q: Excuse me for a second. Whose decision is it to establish a RIF? Is that something you decided, or it was—*

ATWOOD: No. OMB informed us that we were going to exceed the amount of appropriated funds that we had available to us. And so, we were told we had to do a RIF.

*Q: So, it was uniquely for AID, it was not something that hit other agencies at the same time?*

ATWOOD: It hit a number of agencies at the same time. The Office of Personnel Management went through a RIF; a number of other agencies had done the same thing. I mean, the people in Gore's reinvention laboratory thought, well, this is a demonstration that we're doing more with less. So, they weren't unhappy about agencies that went through RIFs.

The problem is with a RIF that you start off by doing a survey of the needs of the agency and in that survey it's the career people that participate in answering the questions. What personnel categories do you need the most? What do you not need? In our case, anyone affiliated with the agriculture sector, for example, because the money for agriculture had been so reduced, was on that list of people that were vulnerable. So, they determine which categories would be vulnerable. That is in accordance with the way RIFs are supposed to take place.

Our lawyers watched this carefully. Frank Almaguer, one of our best FSOs, was then the head of HR (Human Resources). He was a wonderful career guy who everyone trusted to do this the right way and he was chiefly responsible for implementation. He probably regretted that he ever took the job in the first place. In the end he found out that even his senior assistant was affected by the RIF, so he was being totally fair about it.

But it was, of course, when they found out who was RIFFED that people were most upset because there were a few people who got caught who shouldn't have. If they looked at something like three or four of your last efficiency ratings and if you were in those categories, agriculture, whatever, and then you had a bad efficiency rating, one that wasn't great, you were affected by it. That's how the decisions were made. I had people appealing to me, a good friend who was ambassador to Rwanda, Bob Flaten, appealed to me for his mission director, who got on the list. I couldn't do anything about it. If I had interfered in any way to support one person or the other, the lawyers would have thrown the whole thing out.



*Q: I've been through these situations where there are RIFs. I thought it was the last in, first out system that usually applied. Are you saying that was not the key criteria?*

ATWOOD: No, not that I recall, and that was important in terms of the decisions we had made about not waiving the senior people because there were a number of people that were eligible to retire that found themselves on that list because of the way the list was designed. And they would have gone out anyway and frankly, if you look at it from a humanitarian point of view, they were eligible to retire. They had enough years in to retire. Many of them, of course, went on to work for various contractors and the like.

The other thing that I did was ask Dick McCall to make sure that anyone on that list that wasn't in that senior category, we would help get a job. And six months after that RIF was over we managed to get everybody a job that was RIFFED. In particular Dick McCall did a wonderful job of that and I helped in any way I could.

But there was a lot of anger. There were a lot of people that directed all of their anger at Larry because of the new management system. Well, I take responsibility for that too because I just thought that maybe we were trying to do too much with it, maybe we didn't have the resources to do it. A Republican senator from Utah, Milton Bennett, came to see me in my office when he took the chair of the committee that oversaw State and AID on the Appropriations Committee.

Later, when I had to testify before him I was honest about the problems we were having with the new management system. I'll never forget him saying to me, "Don't beat yourself up, Mr. Atwood. You are not the only agency in town that's having problems with this." And part of the problem results from the U.S. procurement system. And there have been articles written about it. We couldn't go out and just ask one company, like Microsoft. You had to divide it up and go into competition for every aspect of this thing. So, it was kind of a mess that the U.S. government as a whole confronted, not just USAID. I recall that the FBI was having horrendous problems around the same time.

Getting back to Larry Byrne, there was a lot of tension during this whole period, obviously. He knew a lot of people were blaming him. He got into an altercation with the head of AFSA (American Foreign Service Association), State Department's Tex Harris. I don't know if you remember Tex...

*Q: I never knew him, but I know he's a legend and that he died recently.*

ATWOOD: Yes, he was a very popular guy. And I always got along well with him, but Larry got into an altercation with him. And the word spread very fast. Now Larry's people in his bureau loved him and he had all the loyalty in the world in his bureau. Everyone on the outside was the enemy to Larry and vice versa. The vibes went both ways. And he was quite unsympathetic, not empathetic. He didn't have those qualities.

At one point when I had heard about this altercation with Tex Harris and I'd heard about another altercation with one of the State coordinators of the former Soviet Union program over, I called him in and I reminded him that he said whenever he became a problem then

I should ask him to leave, and I said, "I'm asking you to leave." And some six months later he left. He had the protection of the White House. He was a presidential appointee, and White House personnel didn't want him to leave. And so, people then blamed me for not getting him out fast enough.

*Q: Was the White House interested in this solely because of his wife's position in Congress? Was there any sympathy at all for your plight as you described it and the circumstances that you were trying to deal with? Did the White House simply dismiss that?*

ATWOOD: I probably could have taken it up to a higher level, but he had the head of White House personnel on his side. I took it up with him, but they said just be patient. And it wasn't so much that his wife was then a member of Congress. She was defeated, so she was no longer a member of Congress at this time.

*Q: Ahh.*

ATWOOD: But he clearly had a good relationship with the head of the White House personnel operation. And of course, it could have been a problem for me in finding a replacement for him. I asked Terry Brown, a career person, to replace him, and I wanted that to happen as soon as possible, but again, the White House just dragged its feet. They didn't say no, they just didn't act. It was just a question of how long it took, and it took a bit too long.

*Q: Do you think that if he had had a different attitude towards the agency and to people there that would have made a difference in confronting these problems? You have very responsibly taken the responsibility for the computer system and management system and for the need to have the RIF, but how much of the problem in morale and attitudes do you think was a function of Larry Byrne's personality and his approach rather than the obvious discomfort that individuals faced in this situation?*

ATWOOD: It's hard to put percentages on it, but it was clearly a factor. I mean, he kind of lorded it over people, especially when they had to go through budget cuts and the like. He had become very much disliked within the agency before the RIF. But the RIF itself, we could have carried that out. I mean, people like Frank Almaguer was loved by the agency. He was a senior guy, and everyone liked him. He went on to be an ambassador to Honduras. So, there wasn't any question about the way it was carried out, but then it hit individuals and people reacted to that.

There was a young guy that was working in the Africa bureau that they thought was excellent, and I'm sure he was. We managed to get him a job with the Africa Foundation later. When they saw the people that were affected by the RIF they got even angrier about the RIF, and blamed it on Larry. I don't think that we could have avoided spending money on a new management system. I think we could have done it better. I think we could have possibly just focused on one thing, getting an accounting system that worked, rather than trying to put bells and whistles into it, so I take responsibility for that. I don't

know. I think it's a combination of things, but a RIF is not anything anyone wants to go through. It's the worst.

*Q: Sure, that's totally understandable.*

*When the management system did not work, what happened? Did you just revert back to using the same system that you had in place, or was there some aspect of this new system that was possible to use?*

ATWOOD: Yes. After overcoming some of the communications issues, because it was just as much about that as it was about the other parts of the system, Terry Brown just basically said, "We're going to make it into a more sophisticated accounting system so we can get a clean audit." So, we just basically took away all the frills and began to concentrate on that. But we kept spending money; we had to. I didn't think we had any choice in that regard.

*Q: When you say spending money, on the system or—?*

ATWOOD: On the aspect of the system that was the most important, which was the accounting component.

*Q: Fantastic. And you did get Terry Brown into that position once Larry Byrne left?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: And this was, when? Ninety-six? Was it in the second Clinton—?*

ATWOOD: Yes, during the second Clinton Administration.

*Q: One of the things that has always been a tough spot here is what you were mentioning earlier about the Foreign Service Act and the requirement that if you've been in grade too long or a certain number of years that you then—it's up and out. The problem that you were confronting, I think, was that a number of the best and brightest in AID had been promoted quite rapidly, and so they became victims of this system. A name frequently mentioned in this context is Tony Schwarzwald, but I know there were others. And so, this meant that a number of the very best and most talented got caught in this system. At no point did you think that it was important to go back on your decision not to waive anyone to try to save some of those stars of the system?*

ATWOOD: My memory is that I didn't have the choice of just picking out people and waiving them on an individual basis. And in any case, I didn't do that. The upshot of it was that because of the RIF some of those who had to go out as a result of the up or out system sued me, sued the agency and me—

*Q: Really?*

ATWOOD: —for age discrimination, which I was befuddled about because I wasn't discriminating against them. It was the Foreign Service Act that determined whether or not they had to leave. But the person that I called in, one of the persons I called in to tell them a few years earlier that they might be affected by this decision I'd made, was one of those who testified against me. I'll never forget, after I left AID, I had to come back to Washington to go to the courtroom in Washington and be questioned as a witness.

It was the first and only time I'd ever been in a trial, and I was on trial. I tried to explain the reasons for my decision because of the inverted pyramid that the agency was suffering from, and you know, you feel as though you've done something good and now you're on trial. Some people think I saved the agency and I've done all those wonderful things, and here I am on trial. I'm no longer a government employee, I'm retired now, and I'm out of office. And in the end, I think they settled it—my attorneys were from the Justice Department and they—I think they agreed in the end to pay the legal fees of the people who contested these decisions. So, I wasn't found guilty in the end of age discrimination, but still to be on trial for that—

*Q: Oh, it's shocking. But these people were not reinstated, right?*

ATWOOD: No. No, and they were receiving retirement checks and many were making much more money working for AID contractors than they were making at AID. (Laughs)

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: I mean, I don't know of anyone that didn't end up on their feet after that was over. We had some talented people that were involved.

*Q: When you think about your career in AID that is dominated in the first period by trying to save it from being absorbed into the State Department and then to have to go through this next period, you're remarkably good natured about it. (Laughs) It's really quite extraordinary what you had to face during that period, and everybody in retrospect has to be very grateful to you because you really did save the agency, but you had to go through a lot of hell in order to get there.*

ATWOOD: Yes. The glories of public service!.

*Q: You mentioned one other thing that I'm intrigued by because I've never really known what the story was on this. Do you have any light to shed on the Clif Wharton (Clifton Wharton) story?*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: You said that he was deputy secretary. You didn't mention the name, but it was Clif Wharton who was the—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: —briefly the deputy secretary of state. And do you have any idea of what happened to him? Because he also had prepared one of the ubiquitous reports about AID, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes, the report was never released; it was always in draft. I think it may have leaked. Dick McCall did a lot of the work on it as part of my transition team when I was the State transition person and even after. It was for narrowing down the strategic objectives of the agency, but I wasn't for just eliminating things the agency did. Because I saw the United States Agency for International Development as a global leader in development, and I didn't see us saying, Okay, we're only going to do family planning from now on, we're only going to do environment, we're only going to do three or four things in these sectors, as opposed to letting the partners and the local context make those decisions for us as to what we would do. It didn't seem to me that we could be all that we wanted to be as a leader in the international development community if we decided only to do one or two or three things.

*Q: I see. So, the Wharton report was really calling for quite a narrowing of AID's focus—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: —far and beyond just having a number of key priorities and that kind of thing.*

*I've just never known why Wharton didn't stay. Do you know?*

ATWOOD: Yes, he says so in his book. Warren Christopher never wanted him in the first place. He didn't feel as though Cliff Wharton was a foreign policy professional. He was more interested in development. I don't know if there were other aspects to it that were maybe more personal, but he was hoping that Peter Tarnoff would be his deputy. He eventually made Peter Tarnoff the undersecretary for political affairs. But he basically pushed Wharton out. That's all I can say, and Wharton believes that and it's in Wharton's book. I thought Cliff was a really nice fellow and very bright when it came to development issues. He had had some experience in development previously.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: And he would have been a very good friend to have at the State Department for me in the years where we had all of that tension.

*Q: Right (laughs).*

ATWOOD: And I think if he had Christopher's ear it wouldn't have come to the kind of battle that we got into in the end.

*Q: Yeah. Well, certain things, if only, if only, right?*

ATWOOD: Yes, right.

*Q: Now, there clearly are—we have not—in all this discussion we have not covered everything of importance in your experience at AID, and from your standpoint there are some things that we really ought to get on the record here that have not been dealt with adequately, and I'll ask one or two, but you tell me what you think we ought to be addressing.*

ATWOOD: Yes. Well, if people have fifteen minutes of fame, I guess mine was a trip that I took to Israel for the purpose of meeting for the first time with Yasser Arafat two weeks after he left Tunisia. I was there—I may have mentioned this in an earlier session, so I won't go into a lot of detail—but we met and got a lot of international publicity. And I go back to my hotel room at the King David in Jerusalem. CNN and everyone else had covered this meeting that I had with Yasser Arafat—so I'm looking to see whether CNN was going to run it. All CNN had on the air was this exodus of people from Rwanda into Goma in Eastern Zaire. My press aide, Jay Byrne, got a call from his counterparts at the White House saying the White House wanted me to get on a plane and get to Goma. There were humanitarian NGOs that were getting a lot of news coverage as this exodus happened and they wanted to show that the administration was on top of it.

So, I got on a plane to Nairobi, then on a World Food Programme plane and flew into Goma. The airstrip was covered with people; we had to scatter them away so we could land. Then I saw the most incredible sight I've ever seen: millions of people and young kids with blank, staring eyes, as if they'd been in shock. We got into a Red Cross truck, and we saw not only the terrible shape the refugees were in, but we also saw the remnants of the Interahamwe militia and the Hutu military that were there as well. As we learned later, they were controlling things as much as they could. We also saw that people were sick and dying. They were going to die of cholera related to the water they were drinking. And they were chopping down every tree they could get their hands on to make fires to cook.

Then I was asked by the White House to get back to Nairobi, get into a television studio and go on the air with the American networks. I went through all the morning shows all the way through to Ted Koppel's 11:00 pm show.

When I was in Goma I ran into Lionel Rosenblatt of the International Rescue Committee. He told me about a similar situation where they had to call the military in. And he said, "This situation can't be handled. There are going to be thousands dying here. It can't be handled unless the U.S. military gets here."

In light of what I was saying earlier about Somalia and the fact that Belgian peacekeepers had been shot in the early days of the genocide, this was not something the U.S. military wanted to do. So, I got on television, and I said, all day long, "We need the U.S. military here. They're the only institution that can really save lives." And in the last interview of the day Ted Koppel said to me, "Mr. Atwood, you know the Pentagon's very upset with you for calling on the military to come in." And I said, "Well, Ted, I'm here as a presidential emissary and this is what I see, and this is what I believe needs to be done."

He never used that little segment of the interview. I think he wanted to spare me! By the time I got back to Washington the president had already decided to send the military. He called me into the Oval Office and we—

*Q: You didn't know that before you went into the president's office, or you did?*

ATWOOD: Yes, I did. In fact, the then-deputy secretary of defense—the secretary of defense was on vacation—told me that he agreed with me and that he thought the decision had been made. And so, I didn't know for sure, but then the president walks out with me, and we meet the press, and the president announces that he's sending in the military.

The next thing that happened was that secretary of defense Bill Perry and I were called up to see Newt Gingrich, the speaker of the house. And we walk into the office and Gingrich has got his senior Republicans sitting there, maybe four or five of them, and he points to me, and says, "If one of those military people gets HIV-AIDS it's going to be on you." (Both laugh) Anyway, he just—he wanted us there to admonish us for having sent the military into this African country. I don't know, it struck me as one of those unique experiences.

*Q: Well, it certainly was. And what was AID's role in all this?*

ATWOOD: We were there on the ground with a DART team and trying to get some of our NGOs in there as quickly as possible to do the humanitarian relief work that one does in a refugee camp. I got a call when I got back from Diane Feinstein, senator from California, and she told me that there is a fire department in northern California that's developed a system for basically purifying water out of lakes. Goma is on a lake. And she said that we could get them over there very quickly. And so, I said, "Fine." And we got them there. The water purifiers that the military had ordered didn't get there for four or five months so that team saved a lot of lives.

*Q: Wow.*

ATWOOD: The military purifiers were sent by ship and then by ground transport. It took forever. We got the California firefighters there in a few weeks. And they began to offer fresh water to the refugees. Saved many, many lives. So, it was really quite something.

And then, of course, the refugee camps were settled in an area that was too close to the border, and over time some of those Interahamwe people started making raids into Rwanda. I went over to talk to Kagame and his then-president, who was a Hutu—he was a token president—and Kagame warns us, "If they continue to do these raids, I'm going to have to go in and we'll have to stop this."

So, I go back to Washington, and I report all of this and the next thing I know, I'm in a meeting in New York with Madeleine Albright, who's then the UN ambassador and Tony Lake, the NSC Advisor. The Canadians had called for a meeting. A few other

representatives from the Security Council and the Secretary General were there. The proposal was to respond to Mrs. Ogata, the High Commissioner for Refugees.

*Q: The head of UNHCR?*

ATWOOD: Yes. And she wanted us to create a “cordon sanitaire” between Rwanda and the refugee camps. She also wanted military in the camps to disarm the Interahamwe and the other military Hutu people. In the end, the Defense Department wanted no part of that, and Tony had to defend their position as it was the position of our government at that point. So we managed at the end of the day to convince everybody that we would only send the military in if it were a totally benign situation, which it wasn’t. Then the announcement was made that we wouldn’t be doing what Mrs. Ogata wanted without assurances on the security situation.

That announcement, in my opinion, triggered Kagame to ask his friend and colleague, Kabila, the older Kabila --he had a tribal ethnic relationship with the Tutsis, and he had troops based just south of Goma. He then took his troops, went into the refugee camps, scattered the refugees all throughout the Eastern Congo and then he marched all the way to Kinshasa. They then booted Mobutu out of power and Kabila took over in the Congo.

I’ll never forget talking to the French soon after the president’s trip to Africa about a year later. The French were convinced that this was an American plot to rid the Congo of French-speakers after having rid the Rwandans of the French-speakers there. I then tried to explain to them it was no plot at all. I mean, it was triggered by the insistence that we not get engaged in the refugee camps unless it was a totally benign situation, and that’s what triggered Kagame to encourage Kabila to go forward. So, that’s a long story, but a lot of these things happened because people don’t fully understand the consequences of the decisions they’re making.

*Q: Well, it’s fascinating, but you can’t always control the heads of government and heads of state when you wish you could.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: To say nothing of current circumstances.*

ATWOOD: Yes, exactly.

*Q: Are there other aspects of the AID experience that we haven’t covered? I mean, is the role of women in AID or women in development, is that something you’d like to comment on?*

ATWOOD: Well, what we tried to do, we had a “women in development” office that was started by Don Frazier’s wife way back in the seventies. It had done some really important research on gender equality. We hadn’t yet found a way to integrate it into all of the things that we were trying to do. Every project should be looked at from the



perspective of the extent to which we were engaging women. So, we put in place—I give Carol Lancaster and later Vivian Derryck a lot of credit for this—policies for missions to follow. The Women in Development office took an entirely different approach by integrating their work into the work of the missions. And so, I think we made a great deal of progress there.

I tried to draw the link between education and population or family planning. I also wanted to draw the link between microenterprise programs to the extent that women were both educated and working, then they themselves-- on a voluntary basis-- would want family planning. And it was that key aspect of not imposing something on them but getting them into the situation where they would be demanding that kind of service.

It's always difficult—it was difficult for me within USAID to get people to think beyond their sector. And that was one of the key ways that I was trying to at least push the notion that even when measuring results, we should be measuring results in more general categories based on the interventions that we were making that supported one another, that were integrated. It's hard to do because people were working in their own stovepipes. I think we made a great deal of progress and we had, of course, key women in key positions at AID and the political positions, like Margaret Carpenter, Vivian and Carol and a number of other people, Paige Alexander in the European bureau, and a lot of really good people on the political level that were pushing some of these issues.

The very first trip—it occurs to me because Terry Myers, who was a mission director in many places, but at this time, was working in the newly created office—before it became a bureau-- for the former Soviet Union. The very first trip I took as AID administrator was to the former Soviet Union. We flew to Frankfurt and got on an air force plane. Terry Myers was on that trip as was Bill Taylor.

*Q: Bill Taylor?*

ATWOOD: Yes, he was the deputy in the coordinator's office. It was just a fascinating trip. We went to Kazakhstan, we went to Armenia, We went to Georgia, though not by design. We ended up in Georgia because we ran out of fuel, and we then had to spend half a day in Georgia negotiating with the mafia that was running the airport at the time. And they didn't give us enough fuel, so we had to fly to a former Soviet airbase and get fuel there. It was just a fascinating trip, but we learned a lot and it was the only way to travel in that region at the time because the commercial airlines were in pretty bad shape, as the Russian airlines will now be after the sanctions.

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: I traveled to Russia a few times during that period just to oversee that program and got to know the then-finance minister under Yeltsin, who was one of the reformers. And we were convinced that they were committed to privatization, to creating a free market economy. We did a lot of publicity around the stock certificates that we

were offering. We wanted as many people as possible purchasing a part of the state-run enterprises.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: And we wanted to limit the number of these stocks that could fall into the hands of any one person. The Russian government opposed that. That's how the oligarchy was created.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: The people who used to run those state-run enterprises acquired all of the stocks. They bought into the privatization process that way and became very rich as a result. So, that's how the kleptocracy started in Russia.

What else? I mentioned the Greater Horn of Africa initiative that happened early on. And it was kind of a unique program because we had the State Department with us. And Susan Rice was with us from the NSC.

The other thing I guess I did was travel to Angola, where the civil war was still on. We managed to get Savimbi, the rebel leader, and the government to agree that both sides would destroy their landmines. I had been in Mozambique earlier where we watched a demonstration of what a landmine could do. It was impossible to develop the agricultural systems in either country when there were landmines scattered everywhere. And so, we put in a lot of money into getting rid of landmines. But in the case of Angola, where the war was a hot war, we asked both sides and both sides agreed. Don Steinberg was then the ambassador and after I left, they scheduled an event where they blew up the landmines. It was during a visit by Secretary of State Warren Christopher. He was visiting then and they put on this demonstration for him where they exploded the landmines.

*Q: Terrific.*

*I'm sure that we could tap further into your memory, which is very good, by the way, for all these various things, but let's see about your leaving of AID at this stage. It's now, what, 19—what year are we? Nineteen ninety-eight?*

ATWOOD: Ninety nine.

*Q: And you were ready to leave AID and you were nominated to be ambassador to Brazil. Is that right? But—*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Was it your idea to move to an ambassadorship or did you want to stay on at AID - any insights on that aspect of things?*

ATWOOD: I started my career as a Foreign Service officer and always had the hope that I would end it as an ambassador. Sandy Berger asked me if I wanted to consider being ambassador to India. They were also very anxious to have someone that they knew in Haiti because the Clinton Administration put a lot of time and effort into Haiti, as did I.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: They asked at one point if I wanted to be considered for Mexico. And in each case, I was really tempted, but this was in the middle of the battle for AID, and I had the strange feeling, it's probably unfair, that they were trying to get me out of town, frankly.

*Q: It could be, it could be.*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) And I said, "I'm not going to abandon AID at this point." So, after we finally reached the agreement that happened at the very end in 1999, when finally the State Department told Helms what the deal was going to be, that USIA and ACDA would be merged, but AID wouldn't be, then I would be free to accept an ambassadorship. By the way, there is something that's not quite right in John Norris's excellent book on the history of USAID. He said that for the first time AID would now have a solid line between the administrator and the secretary of state. Well before IDCA, the AID administrator always reported to the sec of state.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Otherwise, as you well know, the secretary of state couldn't fire the administrator of AID.

*Q: As it had done with Cyrus Vance and Jack Gilligan, yeah.*

ATWOOD: Right. So, I never thought it was making a major concession to say that after IDCA was eliminated the AID administrator would report to the secretary of state. What I didn't want, and which I managed to get through, was assistant secretaries of state thinking that they could order around AID Assistant Administrators who were of the same rank. Direction had to come from the secretary to the administrator. That was the line, not the assistant secretaries to an assistant administrator.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Assistant Secretaries and Assistant Administrators were confirmed by the Senate and are at the same level rank-wise. The Administrator, who has the rank of Deputy Secretary, had to have the authority to manage the Agency, and to be held accountable for that. So, yielding on the direct reporting line didn't seem to me to be a concession. But John Norris' book says that it was the first-time the direct line was established. His book is wonderful, but that's not accurate.

One other issue I have with the book is that Bob Lester, one of the most effective lawyers at USAID and a good friend, is quoted in Norris's book as saying that there was no need for the RIF, that we didn't have to do it, it wasn't necessary. Well, I think that was a common view of a lot of people at AID, that it wasn't necessary. But I can tell you, if I didn't want to end up in prison for over spending our budget, it was necessary. (Laughs) I don't mean to be critical of him, I just think he was wrong about this, and of course, if Bob Lester says something, then people say it must be true, because Bob is a great lawyer. To give him real credit, the other thing he managed to do in the early days was to get AID recognized in law as a statutory agency. Now, that had never happened. The Agency had been created by executive order. I remember going to Christopher and saying, "This has nothing to do with the future status, but it's probably in your interest that AID be a statutory agency. I mean, that way, if some future Republican Administration wanted to eliminate it, they'd have to pass a statute." Chris agreed, somewhat reluctantly, but he agreed. So Bob managed to get this into the law; he and Counselor Kelly Kammerer worked together in getting that done.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: And to this day it's a statutory agency. It is not something just created by the Executive Branch, so it isn't something that the president can just decide he's going to eliminate without going to Congress.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: The President would have to go to Congress. I think that's really important.

*Q: Absolutely, absolutely. Especially with executive orders being quite frequent these days.*

*Okay, so this time they dangled Brazil before you.*

ATWOOD: Yes. Well, by this time it had all been settled. I had by this time resisted the pressure to have the budget go through the State Department and so, everything had been settled. So, why not? It was something I wanted to do. I was going over at 7:00 in the morning to the Foreign Service Institute to take Portuguese classes.

And then Kosovo blew up. And initially the refugee situation out of Kosovo was horrible. I was then asked to be the humanitarian coordinator and a part of the cabinet group that was considering policy for Kosovo. At one point during that crisis a lot of the Muslims, the Albanians within Kosovo were at risk and had taken to the forests; the fear was that they would starve to death. So, how are we going to get food to them? I went to my assistant administrator for humanitarian affairs, Hugh Parmer, and said, "What do you think we can do? Can we do an airlift?"

Hugh had been Mayor of Fort Worth and was a candidate for the US House. He replaced Doug Stafford, another superb public servant when Doug retired. Hugh knew how to get things done. He went to Moldova and found some willing pilots who would take transport planes, old Ilyushins. I then went to Wes Clark, who was the NATO Commander, and asked him to create safe air corridors. Then I went to the head of the International Red Cross, and asked him to go in to see Milosevic, to ask them not to knock these planes down because they were going to be on a humanitarian mission. We never really got a promise about that, but in the end, they didn't bother them. So, we started an airlift out of an airport in Italy, and they went through about two weeks of dropping food into Kosovo.

*Q: And who provided the planes for that?*

ATWOOD: We paid for the planes. We leased these old Ilyushin planes and painted them orange with a red cross on the side. And Wes Clark managed to give us protected air corridors. He was very pleased because the humanitarian organizations wanted to take trucks in with food in them. Wes thought that was dangerous. He feared that they might accidentally be bombed. So, he liked our plan, and everyone knew when they were going to go and where they were going to go. So we managed to run the airlift.

Before we got that up and running, I sort of tweaked the military brass at one of the meetings with President Clinton by asking, "Why don't you guys do this? You did it in Bosnia." "Oh my god, we can't do that. There are all sorts of anti-aircraft weapons systems on the ground. We wouldn't be able to do that." So, I said, "All right, we'll do it." (Laughs)

*Q: And so, this came out of AID funds?*

ATWOOD: AID funds.

*Q: And the food was from—sorry.*

ATWOOD: They were the military food kits, MREs.

*Q: K-rations.*

*Q: AID paid for them, but they came from—*

ATWOOD: I think we took them out of military stock, but we paid for them.

*Q: Stock. I see, okay. Terrific. And now, you were doing this while you were still AID administrator?*

ATWOOD: Yes. When they had all this controversy about the refugee camps it was Julia Taft, the Assistant Secretary for Refugees at State, who was running that, and there was a lot of public criticism about the way it was being handled. It wasn't her fault as it was in

the early days and it was chaotic. Sandy and the president wanted a more high profile effort so they asked me to coordinate the humanitarian aspects of the Kosovo crisis. Julia wasn't very happy with that because State had lost a major function. There was a lot of public exposure, press conferences and visits to the refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia. One of the nicest things that happened was that Mary McGrory wrote an article on the role I was playing. She thanked Senator Helms for not confirming me for Brazil so that I could do this job in Kosovo. (Laughs)

*Q: Did John Norris pick that up in his biography of Mary McGrory? I'll have to go back and look.*

ATWOOD: He didn't. I sent him that article, but it was after the book was done. I always respected Mary McGrory so I was very pleased when she wrote that. Mary McGrory had a wonderful soul, and to have her write that piece was great. Of course, I still have it.

*Q: Well, she was very objective at seeing what was going on, right?*

ATWOOD: I guess so.

*Q: But as I recall or as I read somewhere, at some point you were still waiting for Helms to agree to your appointment and the administration had already nominated a successor to you, is that right?*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, what happened? You retired from AID?*

ATWOOD: First of all, I tried to make a case for the need for an ambassador in Brazil. There was a really bad situation. Brazil was suffering from serious economic problems and Larry Summers, who is a lot of things, a bright economist and everything else, but not a diplomat.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: He made a unilateral decision to force the devaluation of the Brazilian currency. There was no ambassador there to soften the blow. So I tried to make the case that you need someone there to describe what's going on in Washington and to provide a rationale. I went to every member of the Foreign Relations Committee, they all said, yes-- even the Republicans-- you should have a hearing. I had been confirmed three times unanimously. I'd never had a vote against me.

*Q: Yeah.*

ATWOOD: But Helms simply refused.

So, sometime in the early summer I'm on Air Force One in Germany, I'm with the president. He's visiting some of the Kosovo refugees that had been sent to Germany at this point. He and Chancellor Schröder went around to the camps. The President asked me what was going on with my nomination, and I said, "Well, it's being held up." He said, "Let me call Helms." So, he called him from Air Force One and he said, "I made the case. I'm not sure he's listening." And they asked the chief-of-staff to Jimmy Carter, Erskine Bowles. He and the senator from Wyoming did this special study on the U.S. budget.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: Bowles was an old friend of the Helms family and a North Carolinian. He called Helms. Then he called me back while I was on Air Force One in Germany, and said he had spoken to Helms and said, "Brian, it isn't going to happen. He's not going to let you go through." So, I wasn't very happy to hear that news. I figured I didn't have any choice at that point. I wasn't going to stay and prevent another ambassador from being named to Brazil because it was too important. So, I soon thereafter announced that I was going to drop out, withdraw.

It wasn't easy. I had, at the time, a five-year-old daughter, and one of the things that we asked them to do at the ambassador's residence was to put a fence around the pool to protect our five-year-old daughter. So, there is a permanent fence for my daughter, Michelle, down in Brasilia. In any case, it was very disappointing.

*Q: So, you were essentially out of a job at that point?*

ATWOOD: Yes, pretty much. I stayed in the job until July when I finally left. The USAID staff put on a nice farewell event for me. There were a lot of jokes, many warm stories and much goodwill. It was very moving.

*Q: At AID?*

ATWOOD: Yes, at the new AID headquarters in the Reagan building..

*Q: OK.*

ATWOOD: One of those final days I ran into Mitch McConnell in the Reagan building. It was kind of ironic because Mitch McConnell was one of the reasons I actually got the AID job in the first place. I said, "Hi, Mitch." And he said, "Brian, I was trying to get Helms to agree to at least give you a recess appointment." I said, "Well, I appreciate that, Mitch, but I'm not sure that having worked in the Senate that I would want a recess appointment." I didn't feel that was right. But in any case, I told him that I appreciated his efforts. I never had a great relationship with Mitch McConnell, but we'd meet quite often and I would brief him on things I was working on. He was the Chair of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee so he held the purse strings. We did a television show together,

the John McLaughlin show. McLaughlin talked about our earlier careers and our friends and family. Mitch and I are the same age, but from very different roots.

*Q: Too bad you didn't use all this influence, Supreme Court nominees and things like that. Over the years you could have helped change the world.*

ATWOOD: I would not want to classify my relationship with Mitch as being friendly. I would say that we had respect for one another, let's put it that way. His views of how to make our democratic institutions work are not mine.

*Q: That is still a tremendous accomplishment.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, AID gave you this farewell, but in fact, you were put in this strange position of not having a full-time job, and I presume you needed income and you had this young child, and this was not going to be good for you, so what did you do then?*

ATWOOD: Well, I had some heroes in my life, like Tom Eagleton, who was my mentor and friend, and Walter Mondale, who I'd gotten to know really well. Both of them went home after Washington. So I said to my wife, "I'm not going to be one of those people that hangs around Washington and people walk by you and say, 'Didn't that used to be Brian Atwood?'"

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) Wasn't that Brian Atwood? Anyway, no. I said, "I'm going to go home." So, I went back to Massachusetts and Joe Kennedy offered me an opportunity to start a new non-profit that would do development work. It was called Citizens International. He was running this Citizens Energy Corporation. And he had managed to get oil from companies—countries like Angola and Nigeria, and he would sell that oil under market prices to people that were poor in Massachusetts. Now he was—

*Q: This was for home heating, as I recall?*

ATWOOD: Yes, that's right, exactly.

He wanted me to start a new non-profit that would do development work in those countries, Angola and Nigeria. So, he offered me a nice salary, more than I would have gotten in government, and I'd always been an admirer of his father and an admirer of Teddy, Ted Kennedy—

*Q: Sure.*

ATWOOD: —and John F. Kennedy, so I said, "This is great, I'll do this." We went to Nigeria and met with President Museveni. He had just taken office and had given his major inauguration speech that was called *The New Nigeria*. And he was going to take on



corruption, and create a democratic country. So, I came up with the idea that we would create a New Nigeria Foundation, where we would funnel money. I would serve on the board; work with David Shear, a former AID mission director. We came up with two major projects, one an agriculture project and another a public health, a village health program. And we got UNDP to support it. And if you were to look up the New Nigeria Foundation today, you would see that it still exists and it's still doing development work, with still the same director, the one that we appointed.

The problem at the time was that the World Bank and other AID agencies didn't trust anyone in Nigeria because of all of the corruption. So, we found some of the smartest people and the people with the best reputation for honesty and put them on the board of this New Nigeria Foundation. David and I served on the board as well. So, we gave it external legitimacy. So UNDP felt that it could funnel money through it—and eventually the World Bank did as well. And it did a lot of great work. I mean, it really was important.

Unfortunately, Joe Kennedy's expectation of me was that I could walk in to see Jim Wolfensohn and just get money like that (snaps fingers). Or I could walk in to see Kofi Annan and get money. And I said to him, "If I tried to do that, it would be the last time I'd go in because they would never see me again." I did arrange to have Jim host a major meeting of his Africa bureau where I briefed them on what we were doing. I was not about to ask them for money, but obviously, if their local organization thought that we were doing something that was good they would give us the resources to do it.

The same was true of Kofi Annan, who by this time had named me to his UN panel on peace operations. It was called the Brahimi Report. We spent two years looking at what happened in Srebrenica and in Rwanda, and what was then happening on the ground in Sierra Leone. I was the only American on that panel. It was a nine-member panel, chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, the former Algerian foreign minister.

*Q: Uh-huh.*

ATWOOD: And we put out a really good report on how the UN should reform its peace operations, peacemaking-- the diplomacy side-- peace building, which is what we did at OTI, transitional assistance, and peacekeeping. The recommendations were mostly implemented, The one part of it that was not was the recommendation that the secretary general be given the right to table a resolution passed by the Security Council if adequate resources weren't available to carry it out. And there, the Security Council members did not agree. In the nineties, of course, they were passing all kinds of resolutions every other day on issues like Bosnia, but nothing got done.

*Q: Sure.*

ATWOOD: Passing a resolution was a way of responding to the crisis of the moment.

*Q: So, you were doing some really interesting things.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: You didn't have responsibility for 10,000 people, but you were not idle in those years, and with this Nigeria project you were right at the heart of important actions and this UN relationship also sounds fascinating. How long did you keep this up? Two or three years?*

ATWOOD: Well, yes, about two, two and a half years. And I was also teaching a course on international development at the Kennedy School at Harvard. That was really interesting because I had maybe 100 students. It was a big lecture hall. After one of these classes this guy comes up to me and he says, "I'm in your class. I'm the former prime minister of Mongolia." He had been a journalist for a military newspaper and then when Mongolia went through a democratization process, he was elected prime minister. Then he was defeated. I asked him to stand up and talk about his experience.

And another young guy was in the class. One day he comes to me, and he says, "Could I have lunch with you? I'd like to talk about my future." I figured he's going to ask me if I can help him get a job. And we go to lunch, and he says, "I'm looking for a way to spend the \$25 million I have in the bank from the sale of my dot COM Company. I want to do something in development. And I wonder if you'd mind being the chair of my advisory committee." It was Raj Kumar, who created Devex. (Laughs)

*Q: Of course.*

ATWOOD: —a big success. His wife was also in the class and she's a rather prominent television journalist.

*Q: Did you enjoy teaching? Had you ever taught before?*

ATWOOD: I had been the dean of professional studies at the Foreign Service Institute, and that led me into a career in academia.

*Q: Were you actually teaching at FSI?*

ATWOOD: I did a little bit of the teaching, but more importantly, I was designing the five-month mid-level course, working with academics. We decided on the different elements and the pedagogy—so I was pretty much aware of how you put together a course.

*Q: But that's quite different from teaching 100 people at the Kennedy School.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: So, you must have enjoyed that, given what you did later on.*

ATWOOD: Yes, very much so. I enjoyed it a lot and I saw this as a way of continuing my own public service career. I like being around young people; they keep me young! And one day I get a call from Walter Mondale, who I'd gotten to know very well when he was chair of NDI. We traveled around the world together.

*Q: Great.*

ATWOOD: And he said, "There's going to be a vacancy at the Humphrey School. You should apply for it." I said, "Okay." Of course, I didn't have a PhD degree. I had taken courses for a master's degree at American University, but I was in between Foreign Service assignments, so I never had the opportunity to get that academic credential.

*Q: You had a PhD in experience.*

ATWOOD: Yes. And I had an honorary degree from American University, so that enabled me to wear the American University colors at graduations.

*Q: (Laughs) Very important. Very important.*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) I apparently competed with three others, all of whom had PhD degrees. By the way, I guess I should precede this, I had earlier applied for the job of dean of the Fletcher School, and I was a finalist with Steve Bosworth, who got the job. But I came close, and the faculty seemingly wanted me, but the guy that ran the search committee was a big fan of Steve's. They had worked together on the US-Japan Council. I had worked with Steve in Spain and we were friends. They probably made the right choice. But that experience enabled me to understand how one competes for one of these jobs. In the end I was able to convince enough of the faculty and the search committee. The most important person on the faculty had been the head of BIFAD (Board for International Food and Agricultural Development) when I was AID administrator, Ed Shue.

*Q: Of course, yes. A wonderful guy.*

ATWOOD: He had been dean of the Humphrey School. And Ed apparently made the case; at least I heard later that he did. He apparently told the faculty, "Okay, he doesn't have a PhD degree, but he's smart and he knows how to run things." Anyway, he made the case for me.

*Q: Was this before or after Ed had been head of agriculture at the World Bank?*

ATWOOD: This was after he left there.

*Q: He was a wonderful guy. To have him in your corner is a great asset.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: And he, of course, had experience. He'd been at Agriculture and dealing with international stuff—*

ATWOOD: That's right.

*Q: —including with AID, because that's where I first met him, I think.*

ATWOOD: Yes. He did a lot of work on the agriculture research centers at the Bank, the CIGARs. He helped create them, I think.

*Q: When we were trying to get PL-480 turned into a more developmental resource, not simply as commodity exports, we worked very closely with Ed. It was almost impossible to get that accomplished, but Ed was a wonderful partner. So, that's all background to say that to have Ed supporting you, I can't think of anything better.*

ATWOOD: I absolutely agree. And he became a very good friend. In fact, I spoke at his funeral. His wife was Brazilian, and he had done a lot in Brazil. Had actually received the highest award from the Brazilian government for his advice on their agriculture policies.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: Yes, so—

*Q: So, that was when? That was 2002?*

ATWOOD: Two thousand two, yes.

*Q: October 2002.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: When you became dean of Hubert Humphrey at the University of Minnesota. And you were there for about eight years, I guess, as I read your cv.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: So, what was that like?*

ATWOOD: Very different. One has to use a very different leadership style at an academic institution. You're dealing with a faculty that in most cases are already tenured—they can't be fired, basically. You have to be careful. Before I started, I spent a lot of time interviewing everyone and listening very carefully. Then I gave what, in essence, was an inaugural address. The thrust of it was, "This is what I hear. This is what you are telling me we need to do." Of course, I used a bit of license!

*Q: Of course!*

ATWOOD: I didn't want to come off saying, "This is what I think should be done." That is very important if you're going to be the head of a school or a faculty. For the first year, the faculty would come to me and treat me like someone who needed to be taught about what it's like to be in an academic administration. I listened very carefully, but after a while things turned around and we managed to get a lot of reforms in place there. Success started to breed success.

Maybe it was something to do with the ideas I had at AID. The school was a public policy school, and it was ranked very highly when it came to public and nonprofit administration. We were ranked third in the country. They were down to twenty-one in the country overall, but they also had a department that did environmental studies, another section that did urban regional planning, and another that did international relations.

They didn't have a degree in international development, and I introduced that. A really talented Egyptian professor, Ragui Assaad, who had also had World Bank experience, was the head of that. He put that together. And then we broke the school into areas or quasi departments: one for the environment, one for urban and regional planning, one for international-global work. I had banners made for each of these. We hung the banners in the atrium leading into the building so people could see what the school was all about. We defined the school by the public policy areas we taught. It was similar to AID, which I believed also needed to be defined.

I eventually got the faculty to agree that we would have a PhD program, and I said, "You're never going to make top ten unless you have a PhD program." So, they finally accepted it. It took awhile and didn't happen during my tenure, but there are now about 25 PhD students at Humphrey. And the School is now ranked in the top ten in the US News and World Report ranking system.

*Q: That must have been particularly pleasing to those people who thought, "Well, he doesn't have a PhD, but he believes in the PhD program". (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: (Laughs) Exactly.

Well anyway, to make a long story short, I was then elected as Chair of the University Deans 'Council. The University of Minnesota is a very large university and there are probably twenty deans. The Humphrey School is one of the smallest schools, but I was asked to chair the deans' council, which hosts the president at its monthly meetings. I was also eventually made president of the Association for International Schools of Public Policy (APSIA). I had been a member of that when I was the dean of professional studies at the Foreign Service Institute, so I knew it well. But to be named the president of it was quite an honor.

In my capacity as the chair of APSIA, I brought all of the APSIA deans--which includes people from the US public policy schools and schools from Singapore, Korea and

Geneva, all over the world-- into the State Department when Hillary Clinton was Secretary. Many of the top State officials met with us, including Deputy Secretary Jim Steinberg who had been dean of the LBJ School before coming back into government.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: When there I received a call saying the Secretary wanted to see me. She had come back from a trip to Asia early because of the Haiti earthquake. I had earlier been over to AID and met with a number of people, including Jim Michel, who was then acting Administrator. I asked him what I should tell the Secretary you need over here? And Jim gave me a list of things, including, of course, would you please name someone to be Administrator, because there hadn't been anyone named at that point. Another one was to nominate an American for DAC Chair. Jim Michel had been DAC chair, so he said; tell her that we should again have an American as the DAC chair.

Hillary's schedule was pretty open so we had a good long meeting. We sat and talked for three-quarters of an hour, and I raised all the issues and then got to the DAC Chair. She asked about the DAC. And I gave her a full description, covering the fact that the DAC had created the Millennium Development Goals, and said, "It can be really important in terms of getting consensus among the donors." To make a long story short, she, of course, put that on her agenda. Two weeks later I got a call from her chief-of-staff telling me that Hillary wanted me to be the U.S. candidate for the DAC Chair position. Former USAID Assistant Administrator Margaret Carpenter was at State and she had called me before that to ask if I was interested. She clearly promoted the idea within State. I couldn't really say no, but I had to decide to give up being dean. My wife was particularly excited about it because she speaks French fluently.

So, I became the US candidate and the State Department sent messages out to all of the OECD embassies to lobby for me. The Europeans were apparently unhappy because they had identified the development minister of the Netherlands to be their candidate. When they found out that I was going to be the candidate, he dropped out. So, I didn't have any opponents in the end.

*Q: I know that that experience was a very important one for you and you have quite a lot to say about what was going on at the DAC in that period. And so, maybe the thing to do is to close the discussion today. Does that make sense to you? I mean, do you have—*

ATWOOD: Sure.

*Q: More than ten minutes to speak on the DAC. So please close out your experience as the dean, and then we will schedule a final discussion so that you can talk particularly about the DAC. You did other things beyond the DAC, but the DAC is probably the primary thing you want to spend some time on.*

ATWOOD: Sure. Right.

*Q: So, anything further to say about the Humphrey School before we close out for today?*

ATWOOD: Well, I offered a course myself on diplomacy and another course on development that I had taught at Harvard. I did visit China—because the University of Minnesota was the first school that Chinese students came to; there are more Chinese students at that university than at any other. The University has an office in Beijing. I went there and spoke to the Communist Party School. This is where they train their apparatchiks. And there was a lot of interest in what I had to say because Obama was about to make his first trip to China. It was out in this beautiful old palace. I'll never forget it because one of these young people stood up and in perfect English said, "How can I get into your school?" This is another day in terms of the relationship with China. I don't think that would happen today. But it was a fascinating trip. I met with a lot of the universities there and got a lot of insights into how people think. We also had one of our faculty, an environment expert, taking a year's sabbatical there in China. So I visited with her.

*Q: Chinese alumni?*

ATWOOD: Yes, I met with many U of M alumni.

*Q: And were they working for the government or were they in education or—?*

ATWOOD: All of the above. Some of them were in government and some in education. I met with hundreds of alumni and visited the Great Wall of China and did a number of other things as well. It was just a fascinating visit.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: I later went to China as DAC chair as well, and I can tell that story the next time.

*Q: Okay, well, you have been very candid, as always here today, and—*

ATWOOD: We'll see how candid I want to be when I see the transcript. (Both laugh)

*Q: Well, you're not vilifying the reputations of anybody as far as I can tell so far. You've been very honest about taking responsibilities where it is appropriate. You've had an extraordinary career for the young fellow who started out in a small Massachusetts town. And it's not over yet. You're still a young man and you still—*

ATWOOD: I don't know about that.

*Q: Well, no, I can say that from the benefit of my old age. And so, what we'll do is we'll Once again, thank you, Brian, for taking the time to do all this, and we'll look forward to seeing you next time.*

ATWOOD: Very good.

*Q: So, see you soon.*

ATWOOD: Thanks, Alex, okay.

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*Q: Back with Brian Atwood. It is March 11, 2022, and this is now session five of the oral history interviews with Brian. And we'll see whether we complete the life history, such as it is so far, now that he's almost halfway through his life. We'll see how it goes. But I realized that I was very remiss in that I have not yet asked Brian to explain a little bit about his family and that's obviously a very important part of anyone's life. I've been sticking more to some of the professional side of things, jobs and so forth, but family is crucial. So, before we start and go back to the discussion of what happened at the Development Assistance Committee, Brian, maybe you'll fill us in a little bit on the family and what's important for us to know in that context.*

ATWOOD: Okay. Well, I married initially my high school girlfriend, a day after I graduated from college, and we had two children. My son, John, is the communications director for the Economic Development Administration at the Commerce Department, and my daughter, Deborah, who has a masters in social work, is now the head of human services for the county of Frederick, Maryland, where she has some 200 people working for her. So, they've both done really well. I am very proud of them.

*Q: And both of them are in public service just like their dad.*

ATWOOD: Yes, both are in public service.

*Q: Wonderful.*

ATWOOD: And about thirty-two years ago I met my wife, Susan, who was the then-executive director of Liberal International, a political organization for liberal parties, based in London. We didn't hit it off exactly. I accompanied Walter Mondale, who had just been the presidential candidate, over to a Liberal International conference, and I found out when I got there that they had distributed a draft of his speech to everyone before he got there. So, I was unhappy, and I called the executive director and she, of course, heard that there was a very ugly American waiting to see her. I admonished her, and she stood up to me saying, "It was your staff's fault." That was the way we met. But a few years later the relationship changed, and we have been married about thirty-one years now. She was with me during the time that I was at AID. When I left NDI, she was hired to be the director for the Eastern and Central European region of NDI, where she already had a lot of experience and contacts. So, we shared a professional life together as well. Of course that meant we couldn't work together on anything related to an AID grant. We actually signed a letter agreement to that effect.



Everything has been very amicable in terms of the divorce. My first wife remains a friend. It's a very difficult thing to go through.

Susan and I have a daughter; her name is Michelle. She's now twenty-five years old and she's working for a political action committee here in Washington and doing political work, trying to raise money for LGBT candidates. She graduated from Wellesley Summa Cum Laude, which was quite an accomplishment.

*Q: Oh, terrific.*

ATWOOD: She was one of fifteen out of about 500 students that were summa cum laude. Wellesley's a tough grading school, so that's pretty darned good. Anyway, she's living in Washington. We moved back to Washington because everyone is here. I have four grandchildren and they all live in the region. That's why we decided to come back despite my earlier qualms about living here as a "former."

*Q: How old are your grandchildren?*

ATWOOD: My grandson from my daughter is twenty-two, and he's just gone off to basic training in the military. He wants to be involved in the cyber side of warfare. His sister is twenty-one. She just graduated from college and wants to be a doctor. And the younger daughter, who's seventeen, just graduated from high school and she's going to college this year. And then, my son John has a son. He's quite a student-athlete. He's a freshman in high school. So, that's the family.

*Q: Well, wonderful. And it's so sensible of you to have moved so that you could be close to all of them and you're lucky that they're all kind of close by, which is not something that all of our former colleagues have been able to arrange. (Laughs) So, that's great, that's really terrific. I'm sure that these kids are, in one form or another, active in the public sphere. It is not surprising given your wife's interest in this kind of thing and of course, yours.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: Thank you for adding that. I think it's very important that readers know about this side of your life and the encouragement that you get from a family that is obviously interested in just the same kinds of things, at least in a general sense, that you are.*

ATWOOD: I should mention, my wife is English, she's a dual citizen now, but also speaks French very well. So, when we were in Paris at the DAC, she was very helpful. She is also an international relations professional who follows politics; so we have a lot to talk about.

*Q: We left your discussion of the DAC when you explained to Hilary Clinton what the DAC was. Did she then respond to your interest in being DAC Chair?*

ATWOOD: Well, to be fair, I didn't express an interest initially. I was conveying Jim Michel's view that the US should nominate an American for DAC Chair. Jim Michel, who was the acting head of AID at the beginning of the Obama Administration. And of course, he would naturally have an interest in the DAC since he had been DAC chair, and a very good one. So, I was simply conveying to her why it was important that we, after three DAC chairs had been Europeans, should go back to nominating a DAC chair, an American.

Now, I think it's really important here for context. When I was AID administrator and Jim decided he was going to leave, I decided, really on my own, that we didn't have a right to have an American in that chair permanently. And so, we didn't nominate anyone. By that time, we had fallen to third in terms of overall volume of aid and I didn't think we had a right to do it even though an American had always held the position. We created the institution back in the 60s. So, as a consequence, a French person took my place and then Richard Manning, a British person, took his place, and then the third was a German who I ended up replacing. So, those three countries had the opportunity to chair the DAC before me.

*Q: And so, you were nominated to be DAC Chair. Was it any kind of a contest? I know you were unanimously chosen for the position.*

ATWOOD: Well, the Europeans, especially the European Commission, were trying to recruit a European. In fact, I heard that the European was Bert Koenders from the Netherlands, who had been the development minister. He later became foreign minister. And it's interesting, because later he became a very good friend as we moved onto Busan and I had asked him to co-chair the group of delegates and others that negotiated the outcome document for Busan. But when he found out —this is what I heard—that I was the candidate, he decided not to be a candidate. Then my appointment became unanimous at that point. Sort of like running unopposed for president of my high school class!

I had to come over to Paris and go through an interview process where all of the DAC delegates had a chance to grill me. And one interesting intervention was by someone who became a very close friend, Ana Fernandes of Portugal. She said, "Mr. Atwood, what do you think about whether the sponsoring countries should pay for the DAC chair? There are a lot of smaller countries like Portugal that can't afford to do that; don't you think we all ought to collectively contribute to the financing of the DAC chair?"

The DAC Chair is a permanent position within the OECD because of the history wherein the DAC had been an independent organization that later merged with the OECD. All other chairs of committees at the OECD are not permanently based in Paris, so there is an expense related to the DAC chair. So, I laughed and said, "Well, you're obviously trying to trick me with that question, aren't you?" I said, "That's something I think we should

study. I think we should, if there's agreement among all of you, to contribute to a fund to support the DAC chair, and I think that's something we should be considering. But right now, that isn't on the table and I'm here, and the U.S. is willing to pay for me." So, anyway, that was the only somewhat troublesome question and it came from someone who became a very close friend. It was an interesting day.

*Q: Speaking of expenses, as I recall, one of the major results from the introduction of three non-American DAC chairs before you was that the American embassy, that had provided the home for the DAC chair, had sold that very nice house, and so there no longer was a home for the DAC. So, what did you do about establishing a place to live?*

ATWOOD: Well, again, I regretted that because I'd been in that home many times, and when I was AID administrator I'd stayed with Jim on occasion, and stayed with David Aaron, who was the ambassador, on occasion as well. The Embassy basically showed us a number of apartments. The DAC Chair was supposed to be ambassadorial rank, so the apartments were very nice. The one we finally chose was the one closest to the OECD so that I could walk to work. And it was a beautiful place; I had no complaints about it. You could look out the window and see the Eiffel Tower. There was nothing to complain about.

*Q: Right. And what did Susan do while you were there?*

ATWOOD: She wasn't working. She basically took a lot of tours. She knows more about Paris than anyone; she could probably be a tour guide herself. (Both laugh) She comes from a British family. Her parents were still living then, in England, so she was able to take the Eurostar over a few times. Our daughter went to the British School, about 20 miles outside Paris on the Seine River. My daughter made the decision that she wanted to go to that school, and it was pretty far out. Susan would take her to the bus; stand there with an American diplomat, Jonathon Cohen who later became our ambassador to Egypt. He and his wife had two daughters who went to the British School. They'd go to the bus stop each day and talk. And then, my daughter would play sports, so Susan would have to go all the way out, twenty miles to the British School to pick her up. So, she was pretty busy with that kind of thing.

*Q: Sounds like it.*

*So, you were there for two years, right?*

ATWOOD: Two years. And it could have been longer, but my daughter wanted to get back and finish school in the states. And I had done what I thought was the biggest thing that I could possibly do there, which was the Busan Forum on Aid Effectiveness. It was a big deal. And that's where I thought I could accomplish something important.

*Q: Do you want to describe that, how it came about and your role?*

ATWOOD: Yes. The DAC had decided to do this series of effectiveness forums right after the Monterey summit where the summit leaders promoted aid effectiveness in addition to putting more money into ODA, Official Development Assistance. The initial forum was in Rome in about 2003, on harmonization. They discussed how the donors could harmonize their work so that they wouldn't be imposing twenty-four different reporting requirements on the partners.

The next one was in Paris in 2005, probably the most significant, where for the first time several of the partner countries came and a few INGOs. There they adopted the effectiveness principles that were reinforced at Busan, principles such as local ownership, transparency, mutual accountability, etc.

Then in 2008, they went to Accra, Ghana, the first time one had been held in a developing country, and there was a large contingent of partner countries. The developing countries created a really strong caucus. They said that the donors haven't lived up to what they've committed to do, so they put a lot of pressure on. That was a coming-to-Jesus moment, if you will, for the donor countries. And I think anybody who looks at that conference can see that those kinds of pressures were all very good because if the donors weren't able to live up to their commitments, they should hear about it.

Now donor agencies, most development ministries, understand the importance of these effectiveness principles, but they live in a larger political environment. USAID, for example, lives in an environment where you've got Inspectors General, and the Government Accountability Office and Congressional committees looking over your shoulder. You've got risk averse regulations, risk averse laws that restrict what you can do and risk averse bureaucracies. So, receiving pressure from our partners is very important. And that was the setup for what was to happen a couple of years later in 2011 in Busan, Korea.

What excited me was the possibility that for the first time we could get the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries involved and maybe even on board on the principles. A couple of them, South Africa and Russia, were already participating in the working group, but Brazil, China and India were on the outside looking in. So we invited the Brazilians to participate in the working group meetings.

There was a very effective Brazilian diplomat in Paris who helped us understand the perspective of the emerging economies, the new providers of assistance. By the way, the Brazilian ambassador in Paris knew me well because he knew I had been nominated to be ambassador to his country and he himself had had conflicts with Senator Helms when he was ambassador to the US. And so, we kind of joined together in that mutual dis-admiration society. (Laughs)

*Q: Right. (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: And the Brazilians were important because they and the Mexicans-- the Mexicans actually participated as observers on the DAC-- and there was a really superb

Mexican delegate, Gerardo Bracho, who was one of the authors of the book on the DAC that you may have seen. The Brazilians wrote a memo about the problems that the so-called new providers of aid had with being members of the DAC, or accepting all of the conditions of the DAC, meaning subjecting themselves to peer review, submitting their statistics to the DAC so the world knew how much you were actually contributing to development. They were still receiving some aid so they didn't want to be seen as donors. They didn't want to go over to the other side and be with the traditional donors. They also didn't want to be classified as donors because of UN politics. UN politics has the, what is it, the Group of ...

*Q: Seventy-seven.*

ATWOOD: Yes, the Group of Seventy seven.

*Q: There are more countries in, but it's still G-77.*

ATWOOD: Yes, so, for example, China also wanted to be identified with the developing countries despite its recent growth. So, I was able to gain a real understanding of what their concerns were. Taking into account these concerns, I drafted a statement that I wanted the DAC to approve, a welcome statement to the BRICS countries reflecting their concerns but asking them to participate with us in Busan, and hopefully to agree to the effectiveness principles. I had some opposition initially within the DAC, from the Finnish development minister who was from a more conservative party. He was saying, "Are you saying that they don't have to live under the same rules as we have to live with under the DAC?" I responded by saying, "We're welcoming them to have a discussion and that's all this is supposed to be."

There was a lot of clarification in that welcoming statement as to what we expected and what they could expect. Well, after getting beyond the Finnish objections, we finally did have a document. And we invited a Chinese delegation, an Indian delegation, and a Brazilian delegation to our annual High-Level meeting. I read the statement at the meeting, and lo and behold, the Chinese delegation spoke up and said that they appreciated the welcoming document and that they would participate in Busan.

So, then, the working group was formed. It was something like ninety delegates from the donors, partner countries, multilateral organizations like the UN and the World Bank, a parliamentary association, INGOs, the private sector and labor unions. It wasn't easy. I asked Bert Koenders to be the co-chair with Talat Abdel Malek from Egypt. Talat, a development academic, was the head of the developing country caucus in Accra. He was living in Canada, and was well respected in the development community. The third co-chair was from the EU Commission but he was transferred before he could actively take the chair so he couldn't do it. So, it ended up being Talat and Koenders.

I was on the committee, and I tried to work behind the scenes to see what we could do to get agreement before we got to Busan. There were several meetings, and the U.S. was a

particular challenge because State and Treasury got deeply involved. Dirk Dijkerman, a senior USAID officer was the US representative, and that was a great benefit. He would fly back to Washington and try to get everybody on board. What he was trying to do mainly, as he told me, was to avoid redlines so that he'd have some flexibility in negotiating these things. And that all turned out well, even though he'd come to meetings with two briefing books that looked like they were six inches thick. Dirk had a PhD in Ag Economics. He was a friend and everyone respected him. He spoke French and Dutch so that helped with the Europeans.

*Q: (Laughs)*

ATWOOD: One set of guidance came from the Economic Bureau of the State Department, another from Treasury, and another one from USAID. The group of 90 was reduced to about 20 for the final negotiation. The sessions were extraordinary. I selected the donor representatives. INGOs had a single representative, but that was unique. And of course, the partner country caucus was well represented.

*Q: Well, the process of even determining who should get invited must have been a major international problem.*

ATWOOD: Right.

*Q: The numbers seem large, but they don't compare to the numbers of potential people.*

ATWOOD: Exactly.

Koenders and Talat were excellent. Talat was very strict and kept things on time. Koenders then said he had to drop out just before the final session in Paris. He had been asked to be the UN representative to Cote d'Ivoire, which was then transitioning out of their civil war. I called Helen Clark and said, "Can't you ask the Secretary General to let him attend the last meeting in Paris before he takes on his responsibilities for the UN?"

*Q: She was the head of the UNDP at that time?*

ATWOOD: She was the head of UNDP, and someone who became a good friend. And by the way, she knew that I was her competitor to be the head of UNDP. Obama had nominated me, and it came down to either Helen or myself. Susan Rice, who was then the UN ambassador, asked me not to lobby for the job. And so, I didn't, and of course Helen had been a prime minister, so she knew a lot of people, including PM Gordon Brown in the UK, also a friend of mine. But he was committed to supporting Helen..

*Q: Commonwealth, you know, Commonwealth.*

ATWOOD: Yes, it was the Commonwealth and more. She also visited Korea and the UN Secretary General was the former Foreign Minister of South Korea so he knew her well. In any case, the secretary general interviewed me, and I was one of the two finalists,

mainly thanks to a person on the search committee that had been an AFS student like me and to the former president of Mexico, who knew me. And they insisted that I be a finalist.

*Q: Sure.*

ATWOOD: Nice to be interviewed by the Secretary General. But he may have been more nervous than me!

Back to preparations for Busan. I decided fairly early on that if this whole effort on aid effectiveness was going to have any credibility, we needed to get the UN involved in some way, and the most benign way was to get Helen and UNDP involved. And I'd asked Helen if she would play that role and even eventually join OECD/DAC as the secretariat for the operation after Busan. The Development Cooperation Directorate of OECD and UNDP would be the joint secretariat to the Global Partnership I wanted to have created as a mechanism to determine the agenda for future forums.

We were assembled for the very last meeting of the larger group in Paris and Bert Koenders hadn't arrived. I found out that Bert had been in an accident. He was on a motorcycle, and got hit. When he then walked into the room I said, "Thank goodness you're here." He had a couple of bruises, but he wasn't badly hurt, so he was able to come in the end.

Then the whole scene then moves to Washington and the World Bank meetings, where we were going to have side meetings to talk about Busan. DFID Secretary of State Andrew Mitchell and a few others were very upset that Bert was dropping out to become the secretary general's representative in the Ivory Coast. And they wanted to replace him. I said, "You know, we're too far down the road to have someone else step in at this point." I said, "Let's just let Talat run this thing. I also thought that we'd have a heck of a lot more credibility with the developing countries if our chair of that negotiating group was from Egypt." They eventually conceded on that.

Here's one other really important aspect: There were ninety delegates on the original working group. Well, that was unworkable so we agreed to reduce the group down to something manageable, something like twenty in the room. I was part of that, the Korean representative had to be, and she later became very important. And then, I had to decide who the DAC members would be, and it was tough because I decided, as per what you just said about the Commonwealth, that the British could represent the Commonwealth. Well, that didn't make the Canadians and the Australians very happy, particularly the Australians, who were really unhappy. But I think I helped smooth that over and eventually made sure that the British representative was very solicitous to them and let them know what was going on so they could contribute.

But the most interesting thing about it was that we created a live podcast so anyone in the world could listen to the deliberations. We were hearing real-time reactions from everywhere.

*Q: As they were going on?*

ATWOOD: As they were going on, absolutely. So, you can't believe the number of comments that came in from the broader development community. Talk about participatory diplomacy, I mean, this was certainly that.

*Q: For sure.*

ATWOOD: At one point, while we were still in Paris in the smaller group, the Chinese, through their embassy in Paris, sent a representative, as did the Brazilians and the Indians. I wanted them involved as deeply as possible. And at one very crucial point the Chinese representative said, "Beijing has agreed to the following language." And it basically was a paragraph that accepted the effectiveness principles and made clear that they would do it on a voluntary basis. They also made it clear that they wouldn't be part of the DAC.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: I thought that was a huge breakthrough. Talat took that statement and said, "Let's put parts of it in different parts of the document because it doesn't make sense to have it as a unique statement all on its own." He was confident that we could argue with the Chinese that the substance of what they wanted was all there; it's just integrated into different parts of the statement. That infuriated the Chinese, and Beijing insisted that they drop out of the deliberations. And when they arrived in Busan, they announced that they were not going to agree, that they would not sign on. I knew that the Chinese delegation that was in Busan wasn't high enough ranking to change that position. So it looked bleak.

The Koreans were very, very kind to me. They had this office that had this sign reading "DAC chair" in very large letters in the beautiful convention hall in Busan. I found out from the British delegate to the working group DAC-- the highest-ranking person from DFID (Department for International Development)-- that Andrew Mitchell was going to Beijing before coming to Busan. I called him in and said, "Let's try to resurrect that language and see if the Chinese will agree if we put back the language that they had agreed to, and in the way that they had proposed it." I didn't even consult with Talat, I just said, "Let's do this." Mitchell went in to see the commerce minister in Beijing, and he got him to agree.

So, I get this good news, and I have an early morning meeting with all of the DAC ministers at the time. It was very high-level; the Ministers were all there. And I said, "We've got good news. The Chinese have agreed to this. So, they've in effect agreed to the principles, and I think that's a great breakthrough for us." Well, the Swedish minister, who was probably the senior minister at the time, objected. I listened to her and then opened it up for discussion. After a while she backed down and everyone seemed to agree.



Then the VIPs started arriving. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton arrived. And the foreign minister of Australia, who had been the prime minister, Kevin Rudd, arrived. Kevin Rudd is, in fact, a China expert. He served in the diplomatic corps in China, and speaks Mandarin Chinese. And he and Hillary apparently got together late in the evening. The next morning, I'm still asleep at about 6:00 a.m., and Cheryl Mills, Hillary's chief-of-staff, calls and says, "Brian, I don't know about this language the Chinese have accepted. We don't trust them, and Kevin Rudd doesn't trust them either." And I said, "Well, what's not to trust? I mean, they say they're going to voluntarily accept the principles, this is a great breakthrough, Cheryl." And she says, "Well, I don't know. We want to be tough on the Chinese." And I said, "Please, don't. It has taken a year to try to negotiate this and finally we get the Chinese, the Brazilians, the Indians onboard." So, she said okay.

Then Hillary, who I had urged to come to Busan, gives a speech where she is pretty tough on the Chinese but she held off criticizing the agreement. She didn't come out against the language. Rudd did, and so I called Raj Shah and the Australian, head of AusAid, into my office. And I let them know that I was upset. I said, "We've been working so hard on this and you two are going to blow this up at this late stage when we get the Chinese, the Brazilians, the Indians, the Russians, everyone to agree to the principles?" The head of AusAid was equally forceful, "Well, Kevin Rudd knows a lot about the Chinese, and he doesn't trust them." I said, "This is not a matter of trust. It's getting them to sign onto these effectiveness principles." And I mentioned that Wen Zi Bao, the Chinese premier, had earlier put out a white paper that was largely based on the principles. "Seems as though they're moving in the right direction," I said. "I mean, obviously trust but verify and at least you have them agreeing to something on paper where you can call them on it later." I said, "Besides that, with respect to the voluntary nature of this, this is not a hard treaty. This is soft law. This is an agreement that can be used to test the signatories in the future as to whether or not countries have complied."

So, then, I turned to Raj, and I said, "Do you want me to talk to Hillary?" He didn't want me to do that. He said he would take care of it. So, he ended up later in the day telling me that Hillary was okay with the language. "Yeah, yeah, she's okay," he said. "Don't call her."

What I didn't know at the time was that Andrew Mitchell had confronted Kevin Rudd. Mitchell felt some ownership of this now because he'd gotten the Chinese to agree. He approached Kevin Rudd and, each of them told me later that they had a shouting match. Kevin Rudd said to me privately, "That fancy elite Tory has probably never heard the words that I used." I sat next to Rudd that night at dinner, and that's how he described the altercation with Andrew Mitchell. I saw Mitchell the next day and he confirmed it.

*Q: So, how did it come out?*

ATWOOD: Well, it came out that they finally agreed, I mean, but I had this last-minute fear that the whole thing was going to fall apart after I'd worked so hard before to try to make it happen. In the end, it was accepted. The vice president of Korea came to the final

event and Hillary was there. Everybody felt very good about it. It's history now. It's an outcome document that has had some influence. The more important thing is that we created an institution called the Global Partnership for Development Effectiveness. And I then had to put together who would serve on that body. And again, I made it clear that both UNDP and DCD would serve as the secretariat for it so that they would meet a couple of times a year to discuss what would be the subject matter to be taken up at the succeeding forums.

I then called Ellen Johnson Sirleaf because I wanted an African to be co-chair—to represent the developing countries. And the African I wanted was the then Finance Minister of Nigeria, Ngozi. She had been the deputy chair of the World Bank and she's now the head of the World Trade Organization.

*Q: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.*

ATWOOD: Right, I wanted Ngozi because I had seen her operate and she was superb. In fact, Ngozi and I were close and she was supportive. After she became co-chair, she even came to a meeting in London when she had been recovering from malaria, for the third time, she said. I had written an article that I was going to try to place in the *Financial Times* endorsing her for the World Bank presidency. That would have been extraordinary, an American basically recommending a foreigner to be the head of the World Bank. That's just not done. Well, before I could actually get it printed, the Americans announced that it was going to be the President of Dartmouth, Jim Kim.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: We were at a World Bank meeting in Washington, and I told Ngozi that I had written this article. She said, "Could I see it?" I happened to have it with me, so I showed her the draft. So she saw that I was trying to promote her candidacy as the World Bank president. That solidified our relationship. Well, she's now become an American citizen and she's the head of the World Trade Organization.

*Q: Yeah. She would have been great at the head of the World Bank, too, but—*

ATWOOD: Yes, she would have.

*Q: —forces were aligned against her.*

ATWOOD: Well, it's always been an American position. Our government wasn't about to give it up, so. She's now an American, so maybe she'll get it in the future.

There were to be three chairs of this new Global Partnership, co-chairs. One was to be a traditional donor. Andrew Mitchell was in line to do it, but he had to resign his position as the head of DFID to become the parliamentary majority whip. I wanted the Finnish development minister, Houtla, whom I thought was very effective. I pushed her with the other DAC ministers, but the British prevailed and they got the votes to elect the new

DFID head as the co-chair. And then, the “new providers” ended up being the Indonesian development minister. Ngozi represented the partner countries. We had a couple of meetings, and we also included the NGO community, the private sector, and the parliamentarians who were all part of that as well. Then I had to decide who the DAC representatives would be. That was less contentious this time around.

There were annual meetings of the Global Partnership to discuss agendas for the forums held every two or three years. There have been meetings in Mexico and other places, none as large as Busan.

One of the things that influenced me in the run-up to Busan was the way in which the Treasury Department and State backed away from the earlier DAC report, the one that became the Millennium Development Goals. I didn’t want just development ministers in Busan. I wanted as high ranking people as there could be, including the Secretary of State. I convinced Hillary to go, and then it was easy to convince the secretary general of the UN to go because he was Korean. And I wanted Helen Clark involved. And we had a number of heads of state including Kagame from Rwanda, Meles Zenawi from Ethiopia, Helen Johnson Sirleaf. They were all in Busan and that’s rare.

*Q: Right. That obviously lends a certain authority to this that just having the development ministers would not do.*

ATWOOD: Exactly. And so even though it’s what we call “soft law,” in this case, it had the backing of high-level people, so it was even more significant.

*Q: Well, that’s, you know, to have such a session and to go through all that you did in order to get there, it’s obviously quite an accomplishment. And even though some of these issues still remain, it was an important step and a very big step.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: So, in addition to that, although that alone would have been worth your time at the DAC, were there other high points of your period in the DAC? Did you have time to do anything else?*

ATWOOD: Yes, I did a lot of things—

*Q: It sounds like virtually a full-time job to negotiate all these various personalities and country issues and so on. I admire your ability to have moved from one step to another and actually get it done.*

ATWOOD: Well, thanks. There was a lot more to be done. The peer review process had me going to countries and I would chair the deliberations on the final day when those who had done the evaluation would make presentations on each section of the report. The DAC delegates had to approve each section as we’d go through, and the country that was being reviewed would be present in person and it would sometimes take a whole day.

Occasionally it was really awkward because we had internal battles going within governments. My last peer review was Korea, and the foreign ministry was battling with the finance ministry over who controlled what. The prime minister's office was present as well, but they couldn't bridge the gap. So, it was really awkward.

*Q: Yes.*

ATWOOD: But then after a peer review was complete and approved by the DAC I would go to the country and, depending on the country, they would have me do a press conference and meet with key people, including their NGO community and other interested parties. Perhaps the most dramatic example was when I testified before the European Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee. I thought there were going to be maybe thirty or forty people in the room. There must have been a thousand people in the room, which may be an indication of why that European parliament isn't all that effective, frankly. The staff from the European Commission was there as well. I was quite critical of how bureaucratic their processes were; that was one of the results of the peer review.

So, it was a lot of travel. I traveled twice to Beijing, and during one visit there I participated in what is called the DAC-China Study Group. We had done three or four meetings with the Chinese to try to understand how they did development and then share information about how the DAC members operated. Two of the meetings were in Africa. I think that all helped, frankly, in the end to get the Chinese to sign onto the effectiveness principles.

*Q: Was this the one that Richard Carey was responsible for putting together?*

ATWOOD: Yes. Richard Carey did a lot of the work in the early days, and he continues to have really good contacts in China, so he continues to do a lot of work on that.

*Q: In retrospect, would you say that the DAC is very misunderstood or is it even more accurate to say it's not well understood at all? We've just celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the DAC, and, as you noted, there is now a history of the DAC with many hundreds of pages, but it's still, in this country, at least, not very well known. What is your assessment now, after having not only been the chair of the DAC, but over the years when you were at AID working with the DAC and going to Tidewater meetings and that kind of thing? How useful and helpful is it - or not?*

ATWOOD: I think it's vital and if it didn't exist it would have to be created. Initially it was better known for keeping statistics on ODA, Official Development Assistance. It's not as easy as it may sound. It's a question of having to define what it means when there is a real donor effort being made, in other words is there a grant component? There are questions relating to whether or not a loan, when it's repaid, is still an ODA contribution.

We got into some real trouble within the DAC that I had to try to resolve over the European Development Bank and whether their loans should count. And there was a

great deal of pressure among European countries because they'd agreed to—not to 0.7 percent, but they'd agreed to 0.5 percent of GDP as an overall contribution by each EU country to development. And so, each country felt some pressure. And there was a lot of pressure to count loans that the Development Bank was making. But they were making loans that were close to commercial rate levels and they were being repaid and they were making money. There wasn't any real effort shown, so the DAC statistics people said they couldn't count those. And the European Commission went after us, even threatening to leave the system.

And then, we find out that, even though the DAC wasn't counting loans from the European Bank, they were counting similar loans from Germany and France, the big countries in the European Union. A European commissioner brought this to my attention and said, "You have to resolve this problem." So, what could I do? I had to go after the French and the Germans and convince them that their loans really shouldn't be counted as ODA unless they were highly concessional and had a grant component. It wasn't as if there weren't some benefits because they were giving loans at under commercial rates, but they're also being repaid, and then they would just circulate the loan again, and each time, they'd take credit. When we challenged them, they were threatening to leave the DAC if we insisted on this measure. And at the very last meeting I chaired we finally reached agreement that we would use the World Bank's definition of what ODA was with respect to loans. And we reached agreement that loan details would be transparent. Finally, the French and Germans just agreed that the matter would be studied and that we'd find another way to give them credit for loans that didn't qualify for ODA.

It's a lot more complicated than what I'm just describing now, but in the end a system was worked out to determine what the grant component is. It is still controversial because calculating the grant element with a discount rate added leaves room for rationalization. But it is better than it was.

*Q: Well, it still persists, as I recall. There are still issues about what should be included and what should not be included.*

ATWOOD: That's right. But the other side was when you could reach agreement on things like tied aid; you could begin to limit the worst offenses. Once again, it can be complicated. For example, if a country like the United States was providing assistance to young people to come to the United States for a college education, that's technically tied aid because we're insisting that if we give you the grant, you have to come to a U.S. college. So you've got to make some common sense exceptions. Reaching agreement on tied aid, especially when the Japanese still, to this day, hold out on it because they see this as in their commercial interests, was really difficult.

All this gave me an understanding of multilateral diplomacy and how one gets from here to there. It is not easy. But what became really important to the DAC was that all the donors participated, even the multilateral donors like the World Bank and UNDP. Every organization that had a development mission eventually was part of the DAC, and that made it all the more important.

We then, during my tenure created a unit out of DCD that did reviews of multilateral organizations. They just did one on UNESCO that I recently used on Capitol Hill to explain that UNESCO had improved its efficiency. That was important. We had another committee that I co-chaired with a developing country representative to discuss using local systems. That was important.

The different DAC working groups on democracy governance, on evaluation, everything under the sun-- environment, education, gender, statistics-- those were really important in bringing people in from the different donor agencies, sharing their understanding and then having the DCD write a report which would represent a consensus position and might also reflect where there wasn't a consensus. That's really important in terms of bringing the development community together in terms of the way it does its business.

*Q: Well, obviously the DAC is a unique institution. One last question about that. As you note, the DAC chair is a permanent position. It is, unlike the other chairs of committees with the DAC. Did you have any kind of issues in your relationship with the secretary general of the OECD? Or were you basically left free to do what you thought was important to do?*

ATWOOD: Well, I pretty much felt free because I didn't work for the secretary general. I worked for the member states. I mean, that's the way I saw it and it may not have necessarily been the way Secretary General Angel Gurría saw it, but that's the way I saw it. He and his people always wanted to take credit whenever the annual report on ODA came out. He had to be involved in some way. I had lunch with him once a month and he would be very candid with me about his problems dealing with the ambassadors from the different countries and how they wouldn't let him do this or that. It was his organization and he was a strong personality. I think he respected the fact that I had been the head of a U.S. government Agency, so our relationship was probably different than it was with other DAC chairs.

I told some of my successors that it isn't easy because you technically had to operate under OECD rules. I remember one meeting where we invited the Chinese, the Brazilians and others to participate, and this delegate from Sweden comes up to me and says, "It's against the rules—unless there's unanimous consent it's against the rules for you to have a formal meeting, and invite non-members to the meeting." So, they're already there, and I had to finesse the whole thing. I said, "Well, it's been brought to my attention that we're not having a formal meeting today. This is an informal meeting." So, I just finessed it by saying that. So there are OECD rules that come into play—even when you had DAC meetings.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: It worked out all right. I mean, I was a little frustrated, having been the head of an agency and then having to share the stage. For example, the Busan Forum was organized by the DAC, but when we had a press conference there, I participated, but so

did the secretary general. He didn't know a lot about what we were doing, but he was there. He is a gregarious, very smart former finance and foreign minister of Mexico. We got along fine.

*Q: Yes, and very articulate and—*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: —as you say, energetic.*

ATWOOD: Yes he was. He brought the OECD into many international forums, including G-7 and G-20 meetings..

*Q: And he spent something like twenty years in that position, I think, only recently bowed out.*

ATWOOD: Yes, that's right.

*Q: In your career you've had some experience in dealing with the president of the United States, the secretary of state, the head of the OECD; there's a certain amount of learning that goes on through that.*

ATWOOD: Yes.

*Q: Okay, so you decided that you wanted to be back here, have your daughter back here and all the rest, so you left the DAC, and you went back to teaching, is that right?*

ATWOOD: Yes, they created a position for me at the Humphrey School. I was the chair of global studies. I taught and wrote articles and did other things that academics do. But I felt a little guilty, frankly, taking advantage of the fact that I had tenure. I had tenure because when they select a dean, the dean has to have tenure. You make decisions about other people's tenure. I could have stayed at the University of Minnesota forever. My daughter at this point came back to the East Coast to go to college and so, after two years, I left and was supposed to retire, but retirement wasn't something I wanted. I don't ever want to do that. So, I went over to Brown University, the Watson Institute, and met with the director and said, "I'm available. I'd like to teach and here's my background." So, they invited me to do that, and I've been doing that ever since. I am a Senior Fellow there; that is my main institutional association.

*Q: When you were back up at the Humphrey School, were you living in Minneapolis at that point?*

ATWOOD: Yes, in a suburb called Minnetonka.

*Q: And then, when you went to Brown did you actually move to Providence, or did you stay here and commute?*

ATWOOD: No, we moved just across the canal in Cape Cod, near my hometown, where I grew up, Wareham, Massachusetts. The town is called Bourne.

*Q: Right.*

ATWOOD: I drove an hour to Providence a couple times a week.

*Q: But you decided at some point to come back here, so you're living in Washington now?*

ATWOOD: Yes. And I taught remotely for a while during the pandemic. Then, last year they were insisting that people be in Providence to teach. So they call me a visiting scholar now and I go up twice a semester and do a program. Next year, they're going to do a Brown-in-Washington program and I'll be back as a senior fellow teaching in Washington in a hybrid program with students in DC and some in Providence coming in by Zoom. I might even ask you to come and participate.

*Q: (Laughs) That would be a mistake on your part.*

*I see that you do maintain your email link to your Minnesota connection, though.*

ATWOOD: Yeah, I'm an emeritus professor, so I get to do that. And I have a Brown email too. It gets a little confusing.

*Q: I know that in just a few months you will celebrate your eightieth birthday. You're still a very young man, and you have had such an interesting career and held so many important positions. You have related so many interesting experiences during these sessions. And as I've said to you before, it is amazing the degree to which you are able to remember so vividly some of these experiences. The discussion today about how you pulled off with others the Busan conference is a good illustration. But you've just said that you're going to be carrying on, working with Brown in Washington, for example, so this is not the end of your career. As you look back on all this, do you have any final thoughts as we bring this oral history to a close - for at least this period? In ten years we can do an addendum with what you've done since this period.*

ATWOOD: Yes, thanks Alex. It's been very interesting, especially when you have so much to look back on. It is good to be teaching and hopefully even inspiring young people. One of the things I try to leave with them is that you shouldn't underestimate your ability to influence change in the world, even big things. I mentioned earlier my decision to go back to Spain and to look at the transition there and how my understanding of that transition helped me look at other transitions when I was with NDI. You kind of build on your experience. I don't know what it is that's inside me that made me think that it's possible that I can do these things.



I didn't hesitate to fight to keep AID an independent agency, and a lot of it was because I learned so much as the administrator about how important the work was. But I had also seen the report done by career State officials during the transition pointing out that it would be impossible to merge AID, given its complexity and its management systems. And frankly, I came to the conclusion that it was equally important to the State Department that they not do that. And yet, there's this avaricious desire for more power in Washington and that drives people to acquire more.

I also recall very vividly that when Cyrus Vance and Warren Christopher agreed to let the Commercial Service go over to the Commerce Department that a lot of career FSOs at State, especially the people in the economics cone, were furious when that happened. Warren Christopher certainly remembered that The American Foreign Service Association strongly opposed that as they saw State jobs going over to Commerce. And I believe that that was in Warren Christopher's mind when he was told, "Well, let's merge all these agencies into the State Department, including AID." And it was just wrong; it didn't make any sense. It was not a question of me just trying to protect my bureaucratic turf, which is what some alleged. I just felt it was wrong for the country. I sacrificed a great deal for that belief. I sacrificed being an ambassador. I sacrificed some friendships. I think some people look at me suspiciously now. Who is this creature that fought so hard? (Laughs) It's not a Washington thing to do, to perhaps even damage your own future by taking a stand like that. But I just think it's important when you do understand the legitimacy of an issue to be honest about where you stand.

I also remember—I think this is probably something that Warren Christopher remembered too—it goes back to the Carter Administration when Nicaragua was a big issue. Bill Bowdler was the assistant secretary of state for Latin America. Bowdler resigned because he opposed a decision we made on Nicaragua. I don't recall the details.

Cyrus Vance resigned in protest. And I think I told the story earlier in these sessions about being with him that night of the failed rescue mission, when he told me that he was going to resign. Then he asked me whether or not he should accept the president's invitation to stay on, even though he'd disagreed. And I said, "What would Zbig do with that?" And he said, "I know, I know."

I may have contributed in the end to his finally making that decision, I don't really know. But I admire people that do that, that stand on principle. And maybe that was my weakness in the context of how Washington works. But I do think that it is possible for anybody, even from a small town, coming from a blue-collar family, who didn't have an advanced degree, to make a difference. It's possible for anybody to step in when they see opportunities and make a difference in the world. And I hope that there are young people that are brighter than me that will be able to do that in the future because we are going to need them.

*Q: Well, Brian, you are a great model for people from small towns in Massachusetts or big towns and wherever they may come from. But I think that the model you provide of standing on principle and fighting battles, whether you think they're good for your career*

*or not, if you think that they are good for the institution you are responsible for or where the principle overrides personal—what is the right word—benefits and so on, I think is—that’s a great model. And I think your students are lucky to have you and hopefully those that come in the future, the Brown in Washington people or whoever you’re helping to teach, will see that. And I think this oral history is something that you should get your students to read to give them a sense of what you have gone through and what you’ve accomplished. It’s been terrific.*

*So, I thank you again for doing this oral history. We’ve had a lot of these sessions. It’s been, I guess, about nine hours, a little more than nine hours of this conversation, and I have benefited greatly. I’ve learned a lot myself and I’m sure others will do likewise. So, thank you very, very much.*

ATWOOD: Thanks, Alex. Thank you very much. Thank you for doing this. You have a lot of knowledge of these issues and that has helped you ask all the right questions.  
(Laughs)

*Q: Well, I’m sure there’s more that could be done, but we’ll stop now and, as I say, in ten years you can do another update, okay.*

ATWOOD: I hope to be here! (Laughs)

*End of interview*