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

DOROTHY J. BLACK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: September 20, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Coursework in advanced economics

Embassy Athens, Greece	1976 – 1980
Negotiations for Greece's membership in European Community	
Pearson Fellowship, U.S. Congress, Rep. Jonathan Bingham (D-NY)	1980 – 1981
Office of the Under Secretary for Management, Staff Advisor	1981 – 1983
Embassy Colombo, Sri Lanka, Economic Counselor	1983 – 1986
Sinhalese violence against Tamil minority	
Tamil Tigers	
Use of foreign assistance to promote capitalist, free trade economies	
Generational consequences of "Sinhalese Only" law	
Embassy Kingston, Jamaica, Economic Counselor	1986 – 1989
Controversial PM Michael Manley	
Ambassador Michael Sotirhos	
Economic challenges and Caribbean Basin Initiative	
Hurricane Gilbert	
Retired	1989
Post retirement activities	
USAID economic consultant, Kingston, Jamaica	1989 – 1990
JD/law degree from Georgetown Law Center	1990 – 1993
Morgan, Lewis, and Bockius Law Firm	
Associate attorney	1993 – 1999
Part-time attorney consultant	1999

Increased representation of women in Foreign Service and other professions. Impact of changes in biased and restrictive policies regarding women in the Foreign Service

INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 20th of September, 2010. This is an interview with Dorothy J. Black. What does the "J" stand for?

BLACK: Jean.

Q: And do you go by Dorothy or what do people call you?

BLACK: Generally by Dorothy.

Q: Dorothy. All right. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy, and so we'll have at it.

Dorothy, when and where were you born?

BLACK: I was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1944.

Q: Nineteen forty-four. Okay. And you were born in Glendale?

BLACK: I was born in Los Angeles and I grew up in Glendale.

Q: Okay. Let's talk about your family on your father's side. What do you know about them?

BLACK: My father was born and raised in Canada, in Regina, Saskatchewan. His father was a doctor, which probably influenced my father's decision to become an orthopedic surgeon. My father did his undergraduate education at the University of Edmonton, his medical training at McGill University in Montreal and his orthopedic training at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He met my mother when he was training at the Mayo Clinic and she was on an internship in dietetics at St. Mary's hospital there.

Q: Okay. And going back to your grandparents, what were they up to?

BLACK: My grandmother, Johanna McGregor Black, was of Scottish descent. Her father, Absalom Bell McGregor, was somehow related to Alexander Graham Bell. He was born in Ontario Canada. My grandmother studied nursing and probably met my grandfather when they were both working or studying.

Q: Medical roots run deep in your family.

BLACK: They do indeed.

Q: Now what about on your mother's side?

BLACK: My mother was born in Anadarko, Oklahoma. Her father was a lawyer. He did estates, trusts and personal law. He was one of the first graduates of the University of Oklahoma. His father, my great-grandfather, came from Ohio to Anadarko when Oklahoma was Indian Territory. He was sent to the Oklahoma Territory as physician for the Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita Agency. He took care of around 1,500 American Indians. His wife, Annette Ross Hume, later became renowned in Oklahoma as a photographer of Indian women, children, and generally everyday life of the people in Anadarko. Her photographs and plates are now in the library of the University of Oklahoma.

Q: Anadarko. Now that's a name I've never heard. Where is it and what is it?

BLACK: It's an Indian name, from an Indian tribe I believe. It's in Caddo County Oklahoma, in the center of the state not far from Oklahoma City.

Q: Do you feel ties to Oklahoma, particularly?

BLACK: Not really. I've only been to Anadarko once, when I was eight years old. I still have many cousins in Oklahoma City.

Q: You grew up in Glendale, is that right?

BLACK: That's right.

Q: When you were a kid, what was Glendale like?

BLACK: At that time Glendale was a bedroom city for Los Angeles. Most people who lived in Glendale worked in Los Angeles because there was no major industry or business in Glendale at the time. That was true of my father. My parents came to the LA area because, when my father was at the Mayo Clinic, he had an offer from an orthopedic surgeon to join his practice in LA. There were just the two of them in an orthopedic practice on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Glendale had two high schools, Glendale High and Hoover High. On the main street, Brand Boulevard, the highest building -- a department store called Webb's -- was just two stories, maybe three. There were three movie theaters, two dime stores, a large Sears, and not many restaurants. I remember the street car that ran down Brand Blvd. and went to downtown LA. Traffic in Glendale in the 1950s was light. Most people, if they had a car, had only one. My family had one car, a black and white Packard.

Q: It was a doctor's car.

BLACK: That's right. Many doctors had Packards back in those days. Glendale was a very white city in the 40s and 50s. In fact, it was discriminatorily white. The city didn't allow black people to stay overnight in the city.

Q: Oh how delightful.

BLACK: You don't think of California as having racism but it certainly did exist back in those days.

Q: Yes. Did you live in a house or an apartment or what?

BLACK: When I was born my parents lived in an apartment but my earliest recollection was a house, a little three bedroom house on a street that was lined with magnolia trees.

Q: Brothers, sisters?

BLACK: I have an older sister and two younger brothers.

Q: In the family, was this sort of a typical American family unit? Did you get together for dinner and all that stuff?

BLACK: Yes, we were very traditional. My mother was trained as a dietician. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma in home economics and was doing an internship at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester when she met my father. After she was married and had her first child, my sister, she stopped working and raised the children. We had dinner together every evening when my father came home from the office or the hospital. My mother made sure we got to school -- we used to walk when we were living in our first house and then we car-pooled when we moved further away from the school. We were a very traditional Ozzie and Harriet type of family.

Q: Where did the family fall politically?

BLACK: My parents were moderate Republicans their entire lives.

Q: How about religiously?

BLACK: My parents were members of the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. We went to this church every Sunday from the time I was around eight. I joined the church as a teenager.

Q: Yes. What about as a kid in the neighborhood? I take it you could get on your bike and go all over the place?

BLACK: Yes, we lived in a very safe neighborhood. When I was four years old, I was in kindergarten -- that would have been about 1949 -- and we had one of the very few snows we ever had in the Los Angeles area. I was late for kindergarten because I had stopped to play in the snow on the way. The teachers were wondering where I was, and I think they called my mother. I was fine, just distracted. Back then it was safe to send a four or five year old kid walking to school.

Q: Sure. What about school? How did you find school?

BLACK: I liked school. I was younger than most students in my class because I started school at the age of four and then skipped second grade. Back then, you could start the school year at four if you turned five before March 1. I always enjoyed school and did well. In my senior year I was class co-valedictorian. Another student and I both had straight A's.

Q: You were probably one of those kids that was a good speller. I hated that, you know. Were you much of a reader?

BLACK: Yes. I loved to read and still do.

Q: Can you think of any books or series of books or something, I'm talking about sort of elementary school, that you particularly liked to read or enjoyed?

BLACK: The ones I remember most were Perry Mason mysteries. I think I read every one of the Erle Stanley Gardner series that was written. I loved fairy tales and used to go to the library to read large volumes like the Grimm Fairy Tales. I also liked mysteries such as the Nancy Drew series.

Q: How would you describe the Glendale elementary school system?

BLACK: I think in the 1950s Glendale had a very good school system. It was a relatively affluent city and at that time the school systems were financed locally. I believe now the state takes a greater role in funding schools. I remember my parents talking about school bonds on the ballot for the voters to approve. Glendale voters generally would approve the bonds because they wanted to have good schools. I don't think this is true anymore.

Q: In Glendale was Los Angeles much of an attraction? Was there much of a downtown in Los Angeles to go to?

BLACK: I remember going shopping downtown with my mother to fancy stores like Bullocks Wilshire and Bullocks Downtown department stores.

Q: May Company?

BLACK: Yes. And Robinsons. A very exciting outing for us as children was to go with my mother to downtown LA on the streetcar that ran from Glendale to LA. We particularly liked to go to Angel's Flight. It was a little tram that went up and down Bunker Hill. Apparently it was originally to take wealthy ladies who lived on Bunker Hill down to do their shopping at markets below and then back up to their houses. The original has now been moved to another place in LA. Have you heard of it?

Q: Oh yes, I've been up that.

Unidentified Male: Were you from there?

Q: I lived in San Marino in South Pasadena as a kid.

BLACK: So you probably remember. That was so much fun. And then we'd go to Bullock's Wilshire. My father's office was on Wilshire Boulevard.

Q: Oh yes. Were you much of a movie buff?

BLACK: We didn't go to the movies very often so I don't recall. I enjoyed movies but it wasn't something we did on a regular basis.

Q: I lived movies.

BLACK: Did you?

Q: As a boy we went to see them all, you know, including the tearjerkers.

BLACK: I remember theaters used to have double features. When you went to a movie you would first see the news reel, then a cartoon, and then two movies. Going to the movies would take practically a whole day.

Q: Oh yes. A movies and B movies.

BLACK: Yes. In Glendale, on Brand Boulevard, the main street of town, we had the Alex Theater, which was the biggest and fanciest and then we had the Roxy Theater. In fact they're both still there but the Alex was renovated and has become a community theater with live performances. The Roxy is no longer a movie theater but the facade has been preserved.

Q: Yes. How things change. In high school, where did you go to high school?

BLACK: I went to Hoover High School in Glendale.

Q: What was Hoover High School like?

BLACK: In the 1950s when I attended, Hoover had an excellent nationwide academic rating. We had three grade levels, tenth, eleventh and twelfth, and a total of approximately 1,800 students. Junior High School was seventh, eighth and ninth. There were about 600 students in each grade level, which was large at the time. Our class preceded the baby boom generation by a few years.

Q: Did they divide the class up into general, college bound and commercial, that type of thing?

BLACK: No. We had a few advanced classes, like advanced English and advanced mathematics. I recall taking an advanced math class during my senior year. Honor students were put in these classes and took more advanced mathematics than the general curriculum, such as beginning calculus and more advanced algebra and trigonometry. But we didn't have a gifted student track or "magnet" schools like some districts have today. They mixed us all together. One thing we had then which seems to be unusual now is a required one hour of physical education every day, five days a week.

Q: What did you do?

BLACK: We played team sports like baseball, basketball, and field hockey and more individual sports such as tennis and swimming. We also had warm-up calisthenics and

gymnastics for about 10 minutes every day. Schools put a big emphasis on physical education in the 1950s.

Q: How'd you find the teachers?

BLACK: As far as I can remember they were generally good teachers. Some we liked better than others, which is not unusual, but they did a very good job. More women than men were teachers, but we had male teachers in most subjects. I remember male history, mathematics, French, biology and chemistry teachers.

Q: You were in high school from when to when?

BLACK: From 1957 to 1960. I graduated in June of '60.

Q: Did you participate in extracurricular activities?

BLACK: Some. When I was younger I took piano lessons, flute lessons, ballet, tap dancing, toe dancing, and horseback riding. In high school I was in the scholarship society, the girls' athletic association, the Junior Statesmen club and the French Club. Although Hoover had a fairly extensive student government, with a president, cabinet, student council, student legislature, and student court, I never held office in these organizations.

Q: Did you get involved in anything like dramatics or anything of that nature?

BLACK: No. I played in the band.

Q: What did you play?

BLACK: I played the flute.

Q: In Glendale during that period, was there a change in the demographics at all?

BLACK: Not during the time I went to school there. In the 50 years since I graduated from high school there has been a tremendous change. When I was living there the population was overwhelmingly white and middle class. There were some Hispanics. I believe they were primarily from Mexico.

Q: Had they developed a significant Armenian population when you were there?

BLACK: Not in the 1950s. A few Armenians lived in Glendale at the time. For example, the family who lived in the house behind us was Armenian. There has been a huge influx of Armenians since the 1950's, to the extent that 40 percent of the population of Glendale now is Armenian. I believe that most Armenians in Glendale arrived beginning in the 1960's from the Soviet Union, Iran and Turkey. After the Soviet Union dissolved in 1989, there was another big wave.

Q: I know because this comes up in the Foreign Service context. I've talked to people who've gone to Armenia as ambassador and they have to go pay obeisance to Glendale.

BLACK: I believe it. We have had Armenian council members, mayors, and a large number of Armenians are in Glendale city government. The congressman from the area, which includes Pasadena, Glendale and Burbank, regularly introduces a resolution in Congress to recognize the Ottoman Turks' slaughter of Armenians in the last century as genocide. I don't think it has ever been adopted though.

Q: With your mother's and father's involvement in medicine, were you pushed at all towards the medical profession?

BLACK: No. My parents always told me and my siblings that we could do and be whatever we wanted to. We just had to work hard and accomplish it. Also, I was a girl and not many women became doctors in the 1950s. I think my father wanted one of his sons to go into medicine, however.

Q: Did you know where you wanted to go to college?

BLACK: I wanted to go to Standard University.

Q: Why?

BLACK: Why? I'm not sure. I'm not even sure when I first heard about Stanford but once I knew that it was in Northern California and was an excellent school -- the "Harvard of the west" -- I set my sights on it. My sister, who was one year ahead of me in school, was accepted to Stanford when she graduated so she was there the year ahead of me. I do remember that I wanted to go to Stanford even before she did.

Q: Things change, but today to get in to Stanford or one of the top schools is quite a big deal. But earlier on I don't think it was, was it? I mean you just sort of applied?

BLACK: It was a pretty big deal even when I went. Only three people from my high school class went to Stanford, including me. I don't know how many applied, but it was probably a lot more than three.

Q: You were there from what, '60 to '64?

BLACK: Yes.

Q: What was Stanford like when you arrived in 1960?

BLACK: I remember it as being a beautiful campus. I particularly remember the quad, a Spanish style inner courtyard with arches and covered walkways outside the classrooms and offices in the buildings. Memorial Church was in the center of the inner Quad, a non-

denominational church decorated with lovely mosaics. Stanford was endowed with a huge amount of land that in 1960 was largely undeveloped. It didn't have nearly the number of buildings that are there today. The linear accelerator, which was off in an obscure part of the campus, was just being built and the Stanford engineering department was very proud of it.

Q: This is a physics apparatus.

BLACK: Yes. Stanford was well known for its engineering school, its physics department and its medical school and hospital. The hospital was on the premises. The law school had only been there one or two years when I came. Men outnumbered women by a ratio of four to one in the undergraduate school. Women were very protected. Undergraduate women were required to live in the dormitories on campus and they had strict curfews. We had to be in the dorm by 10:30 pm unless we signed out. The number of nights we could sign out were limited to maybe ten for freshmen and then the curfew was 12:30 am.

Q: Did you wear skirts or jeans or-?

BLACK: No jeans. Always skirts. And I got around on a bicycle. Very few students had cars. But I could go all over the campus on my bike. It doesn't rain very much in California so it wasn't too big a problem. I could even ride into Palo Alto, the nearest town, on my bike. It was quite different than it is today.

Q: You went there in 1960; did you get caught up in the election of 1960 between Nixon and Kennedy?

BLACK: I was too young to vote. I was only 16 in 1960 and I didn't really develop my own political consciousness until later on. My parents, being Republicans, were for Nixon. So no, I didn't get much involved in the election. I also didn't get very involved in the civil rights movement, although I recall a number of my classmates from Stanford went off to register black voters in the south.

Q: Of course you were younger; you were 16, weren't you?

BLACK: That's right.

Q: Did you feel young?

BLACK: I did. There's a big difference between 16 and 18.

Q: Absolutely. What sort of courses were you taking?

BLACK: When I went to Stanford I wanted to major in international relations, which was in the political science department. I already knew then that I wanted to go into something that had to do with international studies. However, the freshman curriculum

was pretty much fixed. As I recall, there was freshman English, History of Western Civilization, and some of the required general studies courses. Stanford was on the trimester system so we had three trimesters in a school year. History of Western Civilization was a three trimester course that started with Greek civilization and took us to modern day history at the end. The general studies program required all students to take a certain number of credits in different areas, particularly the humanities and sciences. I remember taking biology and geology for my science credits, and in my political science major I took several political and social philosophy courses. Everyone had to take some language courses. I spent six months from March to September 1962 in the Stanford in France program at Tours, France. While I was there I took French, of course, and child psychology and abnormal psychology, which fulfilled some general studies credits in humanities.

Q: What spurred or sparked your interest in international affairs?

BLACK: I think I was just fascinated by reading about other countries, and I loved geography. When I was in the fourth grade, I remember my math teacher telling us about a visit she made to the U.S. Embassy in a European country. She had a problem during a trip overseas, possibly a lost passport, and had to ask for help from the consular section. She was so impressed with the officer who helped her that it made a long lasting impression on me. I never went overseas except to Canada when I was a child. We went up to Canada several times to visit my grandmother when I was very young. I always loved reading about different countries and geography and cultures and I wanted to travel and see these things for myself.

Q: Was "The Los Angeles Times" a newspaper you read?

BLACK: Yes, but when I was young I read mainly the funnies.

Q: Of course.

BLACK: They had great comics in those days -- especially Li'l Abner.

Q: Yes. What about radio or TV?

BLACK: I recall TV appearing in the early '50s. We had a small black and white TV when I was pretty young so I remember the early children's programs, such as "Cecil and Beanie," "The Lone Ranger," and "Roy Rogers." We didn't have "Sesame Street" or even the public broadcasting system. That came later. Later on, "I Love Lucy" was one of my favorites; we used to watch that. "The Hit Parade" came on Saturday evenings, and "Dragnet" on Friday, I think. Then there were the westerns, "Maverick," and "Have Gun Will Travel." These were all TV shows that were popular when I was in high school. Another show, "Paul Coates' Confidential File," scared me so much about the effect of drugs like cocaine and heroin that I would never have considered using them.

Q: Oh yes. Did you get involved with people with sort of an international outlook at Stanford?

BLACK: I did. As I mentioned before, Stanford had an overseas campus program. During my time, there were campuses in Tours, France; Florence, Italy; and Stuttgart, Germany. Because I had had French in high school, I applied to go to the campus in Tours. I was accepted for France IV, from March through September 1962. The campuses operated 12 months a year, with two groups for six months each. This meant I had to go to one trimester during the summer. The overseas campus program was one of the reasons I was interested in attending Stanford. While I was in Tours, I was invited regularly to two French families for lunch and dinner, which greatly helped my French and gave me exposure to French views.

My original major was international relations and a lot of the courses I took gave me exposure to people with an international outlook. One of my professors who taught Middle East history was a woman who had been a Foreign Service officer serving in the Middle East. She was married to a Stanford professor of history, who I believe also had a Foreign Service background. There was also an international student center and a number of foreign students there.

Q: Did you think about the Foreign Service while you were at Stanford?

BLACK: Oh yes. As I said, I declared my major in international relations from the beginning. This story will give you an impression of the way women were considered in the professional field of foreign affairs back in the 1960s. Shortly after I arrived as a freshman, I met with my counselor, who had been assigned to me because of my interest in international relations. We talked about what kind of career I might have in the field and he said "you probably will never get into the Foreign Service as an officer because they don't send women overseas. What you should do while you're here at Stanford is, at some point, take a course in typing. After you graduate you could apply to be a Foreign Service secretary and marry a Foreign Service Officer. The State Department is very concerned that young Foreign Service officers who go in as bachelors end up marrying secretaries that are not intellectually up to their standards." Needless to say, I did not take his advice, although I did take a course in typing, which has been very useful in many ways.

Q: That was very much the outlook, you know.

BLACK: Yes, but to have your career counselor tell you that is pretty discouraging.

Q: Going to a first rate university in the early '60s, did you feel there was the equivalent of what we call a glass ceiling now, that women were going to be held down or not?

BLACK: Absolutely. You have to understand that the women had to meet a higher standard to get into Stanford than the men because they only took one woman for every four men.

Q: Yes.

BLACK: Even so, many of my female classmates planned to get married by the time they graduated.

Q: Get a MRS. degree.

BLACK: Exactly. And if they weren't married by graduation, the careers most women went into were secretaries, teachers and nurses.

Q: So it was appalling, isn't it?

BLACK: The women of today certainly would find that very limiting and discriminatory.

Q: Did you chafe under this or was this just a given?

BLACK: It was pretty much a given but I didn't accept it. When my counselor told me that I didn't have a chance to be a Foreign Service Officer, I thought to myself, "I'll show you." I went on and did exactly what I intended to do. After about a year, I dropped my international relations major and changed to political science, partly because the international relations requirements left little choice of courses or professors. International relations was a subset of political science but, unlike the political science major, it required a lot of courses that were taught by professors who had not updated their course material for years. I guess at that time international relations was not particularly popular, unlike today.

Q: Then did you take a year abroad?

BLACK: It was six months at Stanford in France.

Q: Six months. You went to where?

BLACK: I went to the Stanford campus in Tours, France.

Q: Could you talk a bit about your experiences there and the courses?

BLACK: I absolutely loved being in Europe. The campus in Tours was a building rented by Stanford where we lived, had our classes, and ate breakfast and dinner. We ate lunch at the student mensa (canteen or cafeteria) that was about a half hour walk through Tours. Our classes were held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday so that we had four day weekends to travel around Europe.

There were a lot of places one could travel to from Tours in four days. I remember going to Belgium, Holland, and Rome. Over the break between semesters, I traveled to England and Scotland. I and three friends had intended to take the ferry from England to Bergen,

Norway, drive through Norway to Denmark, and back to Paris. We didn't make it because we had an accident near Bath. My car was totaled and I injured my back. I stayed in London and later Edinburgh with friends of my father, both doctors and their families.

We students often went up to Paris for a long weekend. It was a two hour train ride. The year was 1962, when the Algerians were in their most extensive terror campaign in pursuit of independence from France. Bombs were going off from time to time in public places in Paris, so we had to be careful about where we went. While my group was in Tours, President de Gaulle announced he would give Algeria its independence, which caused a lot of French people to be unhappy with him, but of course the Algerians were ecstatic. Paris in those days was a dream for students. Unlike today, the Louvre, for example, was not crowded at all. I remember going into the room where the Mona Lisa was displayed and it was practically empty. No crowds of tourists like now. And no security lines, metal detectors, police, etc.

One time I went to San Sebastian in Spain on the train. I and some other students took the train from Tours to the border between Spain and France. We had to change trains because at the time the gauge of the Spanish trains was smaller than that of the French trains. The things that stood out to me were how late the Spanish ate, and how brutal the bull fights were. I've never seen another one. But the weather was enjoyable and the city was full of life.

Of course we saw all the chateaux. Tours is the capitol of the Loire region, so we were right in the middle of the Loire chateau country. There were chateaux up and down the river. The Loire valley is also a wine growing region. The mayor of Vouvray -- a town renowned for its wines -- was a vintner and I remember taking a wine tasting tour through his company's caves -- literally caves. He even opened a bottle of a very old vintage wine for us, something like 1923.

We had no choice in the courses we took. Everyone took the same ones. We had to take intensive French both trimesters we were there. There were always two Stanford professors at each overseas campus to teach one or another of the courses that qualified for the general studies program. I think each professor stayed six months but it was not always the same six months as the students in each group. In my France IV group there was a woman professor of psychology. She taught child psychology the first semester and abnormal psychology the second. I think the other professor taught two courses in the history of art and art appreciation. I remember a field trip to Carcassonne for this class, to see the cave drawings from prehistoric days. I believe our field trip to Rome was also tied to the art class. The entire six months was a wonderful experience.

To enhance the students' French skills, the Stanford center looked for French families in Tours who wanted to invite a student for lunch or dinner. I was invited by two families. A doctor's family invited me once a week for lunch, which at that time was the main meal in France. The doctor would come home from his practice for lunch, the usual two hour break from 12 to 2 pm. They had three children, as I remember, from about five to ten years old. I particularly remember that the children would have glasses that were filled

with a bit of red wine and lots of water. It impressed me that the French began their wine drinking quite early. It was a great way to learn French, being with a French speaking family for a meal. Either they spoke no English or were told not to speak English to me. A second family invited me over in the evening from time to time. As I remember, the father was a merchant, he ran a small shop. The evening meal was usually French bread, some soup, cheese and cold cuts.

Q: Did you get any feel for French government or the French way of life?

BLACK: I certainly got a feel for the French way of life through my two families, at least in the "provinces." That was anywhere but Paris. As I mentioned, we took breakfast and dinner at the Stanford campus but walked to the student mensa for lunch. That was the University of Tours' student dining area. We would meet French students sometimes in the mensa, although they often did not particularly like to speak with foreigners. As for French politics, the big issue of the time was the Algerian independence movement I mentioned before. I was in France during the last days of the Algerian revolution and there were still bombs going off in Paris.

Q: That was part of the Algerian revolt, the army.

BLACK: Yes. General Charles de Gaulle was president and he suddenly decided to give Algeria its freedom and end the whole Algerian problem. Many people had been killed in Algeria and in France, particularly Paris. That was a very big event in France, with different opinions expressed. It was also not too long after the Second World War and there were still strong feelings about events of the war, including the occupation by Germany, Vichy France, the concentration camps, the murdering of so many French Jews, etc. There is no better education about a country than actually living there, speaking the language, reading the newspapers, and talking with the people.

Q: I imagine you were in Palo Alto during the Cuban Missile Crisis, weren't you? That was in October '62, I think.

BLACK: Yes, in October '62 I would have been there.

Q: Did that have much effect?

BLACK: I don't remember too much about the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy's assassination of course had a huge effect on everyone at Stanford.

Q: That was a year later.

BLACK: Yes, November 1963. We just didn't have the instant communications, the extensive television coverage, or the internet that exist today to spread news. I didn't watch television while I was at Stanford and was busy at school. I don't remember the Cuban missile crisis having a great influence.

Q: How'd you do in your courses?

BLACK: At Stanford? I did pretty well. I graduated cum laude. My worst grade was a C in geology. I did have a bit of a shock my first semester because in high school all my courses seemed easy. I had graduated from high school as valedictorian with a 4.0 average. When I got to Stanford all of a sudden I had to work hard because all the students who were in my class were very high achievers, many had also been valedictorians in their high schools. It's an awakening. When you leave high school and go to college, you have to be prepared to deal with a lot more competition. My first year at Stanford I probably had a B or B+ average. Later on, when I started taking the courses in political science that were for my major, I did much better.

Q: You graduated then when- this would have been '64?

BLACK: Nineteen sixty-four, yes.

Q: Whither?

BLACK: Then I went to graduate school. I was accepted at Johns Hopkins SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies) for their Bologna Center. I spent one year in Bologna and the second year in Washington and earned a two year Masters' degree in international relations.

Q: Why Johns Hopkins?

BLACK: There were only around a few graduate schools that specialized in international relations: SAIS, Columbia, American University, George Washington and Georgetown. As far as I remember, Johns Hopkins was the only one that had an overseas campus, and they specialized in European affairs and European integration. I was very interested in going to Bologna because I had had such a wonderful time in France, so I was very pleased that they accepted me for the Bologna Center.

Q: So this was in '64 to '66?

BLACK: Yes.

Q: What was Bologna like in '64-'65?

BLACK: Being in Bologna was a wonderful experience. Again, it was an American university that had a campus in Europe. The Center had its own building in central Bologna. At least some of the students had the option of living in an apartment building rented by the Center. Not all the students lived there but a lot of them did. .The Center would assign four students to each two bedroom apartment, and mix up nationalities to the greatest extent possible. I believe there were three apartments of women and the rest were men. I had one Austrian and two American roommates, but one of the Americans left the Center before classes really started. Living so closely together, and getting to

know classmates of different nationalities, was a great part of the education in Bologna. I have many friends today that I met in Bologna. Quite a number of the European students went into their countries' diplomatic services too, which provided future contacts for many alumni.

About two-thirds of our student body was European. I think we had around 75 students total. Some 50 were European or other nationalities and the rest were American. A lot of our professors were also European; I remember in particular one French/German professor, Professor Grosser, and several Italian professors, Professor La Pergola and Professor Mancini among them. There were also American professors who came for one or two years from the Johns Hopkins Washington campus. Our professor of international economics, Wilson Schmidt, taught at George Washington and I believe SAIS, and was in Bologna for two years.

Q: Did you get a different impression of the political world of the left and the right and all that, which seemed much more pronounced in Europe then?

BLACK: Bologna was known for having a communist mayor at that time. This seemed strange to Americans because in the 1960s we were not far from McCarthyism, which made it practically a crime to be a communist. Also we were fighting the Vietnam War, the rationale for which was to stop the spread of communism in Asia. Europeans did not have irrational fears of the evils of communism. The Italian communist party was quite acceptable at that time and in fact they ran a pretty good city in Bologna. At the Center we had courses on European political systems, for example a course on French politics that included analysis of the different political parties. Most countries, including Italy and France, had a domestic communist party and then the fringe communist party that was beholden to Moscow. That didn't exist in the United States' political system, since Americans thought all communist parties were beholden to the Soviets. It was very interesting to see such a different viewpoint, one of the lessons learned by living abroad.

Q: Did you get a chance to go to Eastern Europe?

BLACK: At the end of my year in Bologna I went to Berlin, driving through East Germany. It was difficult in those days to get a visa to an Eastern European country. When I was in the Foreign Service, I went to Berlin on the flag train from Frankfurt and I went once to Prague from Bonn.

Q: Was your eye on the Foreign Service?

BLACK: I definitely thought of the Foreign Service as a potential career, yes. Most other organizations with international staff did not want to send women overseas. Banks, for example, would hire SAIS women graduates but only for domestic positions. I wanted to live and work abroad. I took the Foreign Service exam before I graduated from SAIS. I took it for USIS (United States Information Service), which used the same written exam but had a separate oral exam and a separate personnel system. I passed the written exam but didn't pass the oral. The examiners from USIS told me that my education and

experience was much more conducive to a career in the State Department so I subsequently took the exam again for the State Department and I passed both written and oral exams.

Q: Well let's talk about the first time. You applied to USIA (United States Information Agency)?

BLACK: Yes.

Q: And how did the oral exam go?

BLACK: Not very well. They asked me a number of questions on different American artists and authors. They'd give me the name and I was asked to say what the person was famous for. American art and culture was not my forte; I had never studied it. So I missed a lot of those questions. I felt that it was unfair to ask me this type of question because you were supposed to have been asked the knowledge questions on the written exam. The oral exam was supposed to be assessing your fitness for the career.

Q: You were about 22, I guess, by then?

BLACK: Yes.

Q: What did you do when you didn't pass the exam?

BLACK: I worked for a year at the Commerce Department after I graduated.

Q: Doing what?

BLACK: I was working in the Office of International Regional Economics, in the Far Eastern Division, Trade and Tariff Office. We dealt with businesses that exported to Asian countries and wanted information on tariffs and other trade restrictions for specific countries and specific products. Back then this type of information was hard to find. We had tariff schedules for all the countries we covered in our office. Of course there was no internet at that time. We also wrote brochures on different countries. For example I remember writing one on trade regulations and tariffs in Singapore and Malaysia and on the foreign investment climate in certain countries. I worked there for about a year until I passed the Foreign Service exam the second time. I joined the Foreign Service in October of '67.

Q: How did the Foreign Service exam the second time around strike you?

BLACK: The oral exam?

Q: Yes.

BLACK: It struck me as being biased against women. The examiners did pass me but they asked if I had plans to marry or was engaged, and when I answered no they said "based on the records from your exam a year ago we see that you were telling the truth then since you are still single."

Q: But there was very definitely a look at young women who were coming in, whether they would get married or not, at least the question came up?

BLACK: Yes. I think they always asked those questions of women candidates. I don't think they asked it of the men but at that time if a woman joined the Foreign Service and subsequently married she was required to resign. There was no question that she would be able to continue her career.

Q: How did you feel about that?

BLACK: I thought it was unfair but since I didn't have any plans to get married at the time, it didn't affect me personally.

Q: Then you came in when?

BLACK: I came into the A-100 course October 1967.

Q: What was the course, sort of what was the consistency of the course?

BLACK: It was a three month course. It was held at the Foreign Service Institute, which at that time was in Rosslyn, Virginia. After the three months' introductory material, we had a course on immigration and consular law and regulations to prepare new officers for consular positions such as visa officers and American citizen service officers. Most young officers would go to a consular position their first or second assignment. During the three month course, we went to various bureaus of the State Department and learned about the structure and workings of the Department. We also went to different agencies that worked with the State Department, including Commerce, Agriculture and the CIA, to understand their interests abroad. We also had lectures from people in various government departments.

During the course we talked with State Department personnel officers about where we might like to be assigned. During those three months they were assessing people for the assignments that they would get at the end of the course. Each of us had a counselor and the counselor tried his or her best to match the officer up with a post he or she would like. At that time, the first assignment was the only one where the Department tried to match an officer with a job that suited him or her. In 1967 there was no bidding system for future assignments. The Department personnel office, in consultation with the Bureaus, just sent you where they had an opening that one or another officer could fill. In reality, however, in 1967 most of the openings, particularly for single men, were in Vietnam, due

to the escalation of the Vietnam War. Many State Department officers were detailed to the CORDS program out in the rural areas of Vietnam.

Q: How did you feel your counselor analyzed you?

BLACK: I had a wonderful woman counselor. She was a career counselor, not a Foreign Service officer on assignment to the personnel bureau. She had probably worked in State Department personnel for 30 years. When I did my M.A. at SAIS, I specialized in Western European affairs and economics. My original plan on entering the Foreign Service was to focus on Western and Eastern Europe, and the postwar economic issues that arose from European integration and the cold war. Since I already spoke French and some German and Italian, I told my counselor I wanted to go to Europe and that I had a particular interest in going to Germany. Germany seemed a logical place to start since it was involved in European integration but was also divided by the cold war. I was pleased when she got me a job as "central complement" in Bonn.

Q: At that time did you take German?

BLACK: I did. I had taken a semester of beginning German at Stanford and a year of German at SAIS. I spoke some German so was not sent to FSI language school. However, when I arrived in Bonn, the embassy gave me private lessons in German. I think it was an hour a day for several months.

Q: You were in Bonn from '68 was it?

BLACK: Yes. I went to Bonn in February of 1968.

Q: And you were there for how long?

BLACK: I was in Bonn for a year and a half until June of 1969 and then was transferred to Hamburg, to the consulate general there.

Q: What were you doing in Bonn?

BLACK: I was in what was called "central complement." It was in a way a training assignment. The purpose of central complement was to give junior officers six months in each of the main embassy sections, political, economic, consular and administrative. There were no "cones" at the time. They came later. I was supposed to spend six months in economic sections, six months in political, six months in consular and six months in administrative. As it worked out, I only spent two weeks in the consular section when the consul was on vacation because Bonn's consular district was small and there was only one consular officer. By the same token, I did two tours in economic sections because there were a number of offices in the economic section and I was interested in doing economic work. My first six months were spent in the financial office, which was really the treasury attaché's office. I spent the next six months in the economic section that reported mainly to the State Department and was responsible for most of the CERP

(Centralized Economic Reporting Program) reports. For example, they did the biannual economic trends report as well as handle representations to the German government on general economic issues. The Bonn embassy economic section was quite large because of our complex relations with Germany. There was an aviation office with an FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) attaché, a commercial office with an officer detailed from the Commerce Department, the economic policy office where I spent six months, and the financial office with the treasury attaché. I ended up with one year of training in economic issues and then I spent six months in the political section. After one and a half years at the embassy in Bonn, an opening for an economic officer came up in the consulate in Hamburg and I was asked if I wanted to be assigned in Hamburg. I accepted and spent the next two years as the economic officer in Hamburg.

Q: Hamburg. In the first place in Bonn, who was the ambassador?

BLACK: Let me think. When I arrived George McGhee, a Lyndon Johnson appointee, was just leaving. Then came Henry Cabot Lodge, who was ambassador for only a short time. He left Bonn in 1969 to become ambassador in Paris to the Vietnam peace negotiations. Then came Kenneth Rush, a Nixon appointee.

Q: Was there anything, while you were in Bonn, anything doing there? I mean was it pretty quiet politically or-?

BLACK: Large political issues at the time were the U.S. balance of payments "crisis" and the Vietnam War. In fact my assignment to Bonn was almost canceled, because one of the foreign exchange saving measures was to cut back on U.S. government overseas positions. This was the infamous "BALPA" program. All overseas assignments were frozen in January 1968, pending each post's decision whether its budget could handle a junior officer position. I was fortunate that Bonn decided I could come on schedule. I know other posts eliminated the central complement position at post. I arrived in February 1968 and later that year was the presidential election, which Richard Nixon won. Nixon's first overseas trip was in January 1969 to Germany and other European capitals. The U.S. still had a lot of military bases in Germany which was partially responsible for the large foreign exchange imbalance with Germany. One of the major bilateral issues at the time was the cost of stationing U.S. troops in Germany and its effect on the balance of payments. There were ongoing negotiations about "offset payments." We asked Germany to pay a lump sum to the U.S. to offset the balance of payments burden of stationing troops in the country. The cold war was raging in those years too, so the issues of a divided Berlin and a divided Germany very much dominated bilateral relations.

Q: Did you get any feel for your German colleagues?

BLACK: Yes. I was able to make contacts with Germans living in Bonn who had previously been at the Bologna Center. As part of the youth outreach program I hosted a group of young Germans from the university once a month for awhile. They would come over to my apartment and we would discuss current affairs. Also, one of my previous

roommates from my year at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington was a German lawyer who was doing her legal internship in Kiel, the most northern city in Germany. We would meet from time to time and through her I met a number of her cousins and her friends. I liked the Germans and because I could speak German I had a lot of German friends.

Q: The war in Vietnam was beginning to pick up. Were you feeling the dislike of this war in Germany at times?

BLACK: Very much so. I don't remember too much in the way of demonstrations in Bonn, but the embassy there was not very accessible to demonstrators. It was in a complex of buildings that the U.S. built to house the Allied High Commission in Germany, from where the allied powers administered Germany until 1955. In 1968 the U.S. retained only one of the buildings as the embassy. The other high commission buildings had been handed over to the German government and housed various German agencies. The consulate in Hamburg, in contrast, was right in the middle of the city, fronting on the Außenalster. There were a number of anti-Vietnam war demonstrations there. I do remember criticisms of U.S. policy in Vietnam from my student group discussions. Fortunately I was a low level junior officer while in Bonn, so I was not called on to defend the war to the government of Germany, because I was personally very much against it.

Another international incident that occurred while I was in Bonn was the "Prague Spring" in Czechoslovakia, and the subsequent Soviet invasion in 1969.

Q: Ah yes.

BLACK: The Prague Spring took place in the spring of 1968.

Q: Sixty-eight.

BLACK: Yes. Czechoslovakia is just next door to Germany, and West Germans felt themselves very lucky that their occupying powers were the U.S., France and England, while East Germany and Czechoslovakia were occupied by the Soviets. Unlike the western allies, the Soviets never left the territories they occupied. In Germany there was first euphoria that Czechoslovakia might become much freer behind the Iron Curtain and then terrible disappointment when the troops marched in from Russia.

Q: This was in, I guess, August of '68.

BLACK: I think it was August of '68, yes. I actually went to Prague in January of '69 to visit a friend. It was a very sad place in January of '69. The Soviet tanks were by and large kept out of sight, but one could see they were there. Very few people and hardly any cars were out on the roads.

Q: How did you feel about the Vietnamese war?

BLACK: I was very much against it. I tried to stay as far away from it as I could. A lot of my classmates from the A-100 class were assigned to Vietnam. The CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support) program in Vietnam, a joint program between USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development), DOD (Department of Defense) and the State Department was absorbing a lot of young officers in AID, State and CIA. Many of the young men who were in CORDS were killed, including one of my classmates from SAIS. They were vulnerable because they were in rural areas working with the villagers. Because the war was really a civil war combined with a war for independence, I believe it was hard to tell where the sentiments of the villagers lay.

Q: Who was that?

BLACK: I don't remember his name now but he was in my graduating class at SAIS. I had another friend who was in my class at Bologna who was in the military over there and we corresponded a little bit when he was there. Fortunately he came back alive and well. My brother was drafted and almost went to Vietnam but due to the timely intervention of our congressman was sent to Aberdeen Proving Ground instead. He was an engineer trained at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California. Apparently, based on the congressman's intervention, the Army decided that he was better used in Aberdeen than in Vietnam.

Q: Well then, in Hamburg what sort of economics were you doing?

BLACK: In Hamburg? Because Hamburg was a consulate general, the work there was primarily commercial. On the economic side, we did a lot of what at that time were called CERP reports, the Combined Economic Reporting Program. These were a series of reports that were required by the State Department, based on the needs of many participating government agencies. Most of them had to do with industries. Because Hamburg was an important seaport in Germany, as well as the home of a large shipbuilding industry, the Hamburg consulate general was responsible for reporting on the shipping industry. I think we also did some of the minerals reports from there. We did not do the semiannual Economic Trends report; that was done in the embassy. We also supported a lot of U.S. commercial activities. Hamburg had an active American business community. My supervisor, the commercial officer, was very active in the business community and I did most of the economic reports. There were a number of trade missions sponsored by states looking to promote business between their states and Germany and some sponsored by U.S. agencies. We also supported U.S. Department of Commerce participation in trade shows, such as the Hanover Air Show, which at that time was one of the world's largest exhibitions of aircraft and aviation equipment. Because of the U.S. Government's concern about our balance of payments deficit, it was trying to promote exports and Germany was one of the largest markets in Europe. Ironically, no one seems concerned about trade deficits or imbalances today. They just worry about the budget deficit, most of which is money owed domestically. The fact that the U.S. has the world's largest foreign debt does not seem to be a problem politically anymore.

Q: Did you get a feel for the Hanover mentality and all?

BLACK: You mean northern Germany as opposed to southern Germany? Yes. Northern Germans are much more austere, a little harder to get to know but when you get to know them they are friends for life. It was interesting to talk to northern versus southern Germans about their experience in the war. Southern Germany was where Hitler got most of his support. The northern Germans in Hamburg claimed that they were very much against Hitler and the war. They didn't think too much of him, but they didn't have a whole lot of choice. We had some wonderful local employees in the consulate general. Most of them had been hired after the war. They were loyal, they spoke good English and they used to tell wonderful stories. I remember one of them told us that once Hitler came to Hamburg and there was a big parade. Everyone was told they had to go out and cheer for Hitler. Nobody wanted to do it but they didn't have too much choice.

Hamburg also had a long and illustrious history as a "Hansestadt," which were the members of the Hanseatic League, a commercial association of free city states in the 13th and 14th centuries. Hamburg had a large and active group of consulates, probably because it traditionally had many consulates that promoted commercial activities during the Hanseatic League period. I used to attend monthly meetings of the commercial officers from the consular corps, for example, which was very much like a diplomatic community in a capital city.

Q: Did you get involved in going to visit the various commercial firms or industrial concerns?

BLACK: Yes. One of the more interesting aspects of the job of being an economic/commercial officer in general and being in a place like Hamburg in particular was the opportunity to visit businesses and industries, because we were expected to report on how well the economy and various sectors of the economy were doing. We were also expected to maintain contacts with U.S. firms that had invested in our consular district. Shipping was one of the major businesses in Hamburg and there were at least two U.S. shipping lines with representation there: the American President Lines and U.S. Lines. There was a lot of industry because Hamburg was an industrial city with an important port. Shipbuilding was a very important industry. I remember in particular attending the launching of the Esso Europa, one of the first supertankers to sail the world. I believe it was built in Hamburg and launched there, sailing empty down the Elbe to the North Sea. I was told that it was too large to ever come back to the Hamburg port when filled with crude oil. I think Lisbon was one of the few ports with deep enough water to be able to service and repair these huge ships.

Q: Oh yes. As a port city did you get involved in reporting or looking at port activities?

BLACK: One of the reports we had to do was the annual CERP shipping report. We also would make representations on behalf of the American shipping lines, to make sure they were given treatment equivalent to other countries' lines. There were still U.S. flag ships

in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. Because they were required to have American seamen, who were paid at much higher wages than seamen from many countries due to the maritime unions, the U.S. lines had a hard time competing with European lines. We used to make representations on their behalf for various reasons. The two biggest American shipping lines with offices in Hamburg were American President Lines and United States Lines.

Q: Did you get over to Berlin?

BLACK: I did. At that time, Berlin was in the middle of East Germany, held by the Soviet Union. U.S. military was stationed throughout Germany and also in Berlin. Because Berlin was divided into East Berlin, the Soviet sector, and West Berlin, the American, British and French sectors, Americans at the embassy or consulates could get to West Berlin only by flying or taking the military “flag” train. The military ran daily trains from Frankfurt, where there were lots of military bases, into West Berlin and one had to have “flag” orders to go on the train. The flag trains went on schedule, regardless of whether there were passengers. Embassy officers and personnel were encouraged to go to Berlin on these flag trains, to make a point to the Soviets that they would continue the connection between Berlin and West Germany. I remember they started in Frankfurt at night and you would end up in West Berlin in the morning. It passed straight through East Germany. There were also daily flights to and from West Berlin. Our policy in the late ‘60s was to keep West Berlin viable and prosperous, to make it a showcase for western values and economics in the middle of the eastern bloc. Twenty years earlier the Allies had to save West Berlin from starvation through the Berlin airlift, and the western powers were determined to keep the hard won channels of transport open.

Q: The idea was of course to make sure that the connection didn’t atrophy, even on a daily basis.

BLACK: Yes. I believe there was also a flag train route from the north but the one I took was from Frankfurt. I think the northern route was from Bremen or Bremerhaven, near Hamburg. The train routes were probably agreed upon after the Berlin air lift kept West Berlin viable despite the Soviets’ efforts to make it part of eastern Germany.

West Berlin was an exciting place in those days. Perhaps because it lay in the middle of East Germany, it had a vibrant night life and cultural life, with lots of theater, concerts, restaurants, bars, etc. When I visited West Berlin, I did take the underground over to East Berlin just for a day.

Q: The U-Bahn, yes.

BLACK: The West Berlin underground went to Checkpoint Charlie, where no West Germans were allowed to get off. I passed through the Soviet/East German checkpoint using my diplomatic passport. I wanted to go to East Berlin to see the Pergamon museum. It was walking distance from Checkpoint Charlie and near the Brandenburg Gate, which at that time was in “no man’s land.” After I passed through passport control

and started walking to the museum, I was walking down a semi deserted little street near the U-Bahn and a car drove up next to me with several men inside. They asked me if I wanted to change some western money for Ostmarks. I strongly suspect that they were East German Stasi or something similar who were trying to put me in a compromising position. Because I had entered East Berlin with a U.S. diplomatic passport, they knew I belonged to the U.S. embassy in Bonn. I refused of course. I went on to the museum which was just fabulous, the ancient artifacts that were there were amazing.

Later, on my way back to Checkpoint Charlie, a young East German man started speaking with me in German. He asked if I would like a coffee, and I agreed to join him until I had to return to the west. I think he was just an ordinary East German citizen. When he left me at Checkpoint Charlie and sadly said he wished he could accompany me back, I felt very sorry for the East Germans and their plight. It took another 20 years before they were able to make the same journey I did.

Q: Did you see the Berlin Wall where Kennedy had made his speech?

BLACK: Yes, I did, and the "no man's land" where the statue at the Brandenburg Gate is.

Q: Yes. How did Germany appeal to you as a posting and all?

BLACK: I very much liked the Germans and Germany. I loved being in a country that had centuries of history, beautiful historical buildings everywhere, fabulous museums and wonderful music. When I was in Hamburg I had a season subscription to the opera and remember seeing Placido Domingo sing Radames in Aida, before he was famous! The one thing I did not like was the weather. It was just too cold for me. The weather in Bonn in particular was extremely depressing because it was always gray. The city lies on the Rhine River, between two mountain chains. I think this brings constant low pressure areas and lots of rain and overcast weather. In 18 months there I saw the sun shine for one month. Since I come from California I'm used to a little more than that. Even though I had picked Germany as my first choice for a posting, I eventually decided that I didn't want to spend the rest of my career in Northern Europe. Particularly the winters are depressing. The days are short, it gets dark early, it's really cold and it snows. And it looked to me as if the Cold War split between Western and Eastern Europe was not going to change for a long time, probably most of my Foreign Service career.

Q: Well then, so your next posting, whither?

BLACK: The current system of choosing postings through the bidding system did not exist in 1971, when I was due for transfer from Hamburg. The State Department would just decide where they wanted to send you, particularly junior officers who did not know the system or have mentors to look out for them. While I was in Hamburg, maybe six months before I was due to leave, the consul general called me to his office and-

Q: Who was the consul general?

BLACK: The consul general was Alex Johnpoll. I do remember him.

Q: I knew Alex Johnpoll.

BLACK: Did you?

Q: He was chief of political section, Belgrade.

BLACK: Was he?

Q: While I was there.

BLACK: I believe that consul general in Hamburg was his last posting. I think he liked it because he was a German hand and had had several postings in Germany. Anyway, Alex called me to his office and showed me an Operations Memorandum that had just arrived in the diplomatic pouch. Can you imagine that the Department didn't even bother to send a cable telling me where my next post would be? They sent it by diplomatic pouch, which sometimes would take a month to get to post. Anyway, Alex said "this arrived in the pouch today and you are being assigned to Lagos, Nigeria." I said "where is Lagos, Nigeria?" I had never had an interest in Africa. Lagos in those days was known as a place nobody wanted to go to. 1971 was about two years after the Biafran War ended, and I had heard of Nigeria primarily through posters that had been put up all over Europe, particularly in and around Catholic churches, showing starving Biafran children. The poor little Nigerian children in the pictures were mostly skin and bones. The war ended in early 1970 and the Biafrans lost. The Nigerian head of state in 1971when I was assigned there was General Yakubu Gowon. He had been head of the armed forces for the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. By the time I arrived in Lagos the war was over and Nigeria had been unified under General Gowon. Given the general level of corruption in Nigeria, Gowon was one of the least corrupt and most benevolent rulers in Nigeria's history. His nine years in power were among the most peaceful and prosperous in Nigeria's turbulent history. Nigeria had a reputation of being among the most corrupt countries in the world and that wasn't far from the truth. General Gowon was certainly a lot less corrupt than leaders before or after him. I won't say he didn't take bribes or profit from his position as head of state but he apparently did so in moderation. He certainly wasn't known as one of the greatest offenders. He came from one of the minor tribes, not one of the three major ones, the Yorubas, Ibos and Hausas. I think this made him a good arbiter, able during the time he was in power to keep those three tribes from fighting too much.

Q: He did. It was remarkable.

BLACK: Yes. He was unfortunately deposed in another military coup in 1975. While he was out of the country, there was a coup that deposed him and installed another general as head of state. I believe Gowon went into exile in London. I'm sure he was smart

enough to save money overseas for just such a contingency. He's actually one of the few Nigerian heads of state who was able to retire. So many of them were killed in office.

So that was how I found out about my onward assignment.

Q: You were an economic officer?

BLACK: I was one of two economic officers in the Lagos embassy. The economic section had an economic counselor, Bill Courtney, a petroleum officer, Alan Logan, and two economic officers, me and Tom Carter. I arrived in Lagos around September of 1971.

Q: How long were you there?

BLACK: I was there for not quite two years. I left in July of 1973.

Q: What was life like for an officer then?

BLACK: We had very nice living conditions in Lagos. Most officers lived in single family houses, but I lived in a beautiful three bedroom apartment. My apartment was on the tenth floor of a newly built high rise building that was right on the water. There were only two apartments on each floor, and each apartment had views on both sides. One side looked out over the beach on Victoria Island and the other side was on the ship channel going into Apapa Port, the main Lagos port. There was a jetty on the other side of the channel which protected the beach on the mainland across from Victoria Island, where my apartment building was located. Lagos is built on three main islands, Lagos Island, Ikoyi Island and Victoria Island. Most of the residential housing where embassy personnel lived was on Ikoyi. Victoria Island, where I lived, was much less developed and in 1971 building was just starting there. I lived not far from one of the main hotels, the Federal Palace. The high rise building where I lived was newly built and had a boat launch on the ground floor where residents could keep boats. Once you launched a boat from the launch area you could go to several beaches or just go fishing in the shipping channel. The view from my apartment was spectacular, 240 degrees and water and beaches all around. And there was a balcony on the front that ran the length of the apartment.

Q: Nothing more exciting than watching ships.

BLACK: That's right. There was an active expatriate community there that included the diplomatic community and American and European businessmen. Having been a former British colony, Nigeria had many Brits living there. There was a polo club, a yacht club, and a couple of tennis clubs. The polo club was one place a lot of expatriates congregated, although some of the best players were Nigerians from the North. The Nigerian military were particularly keen on riding and playing polo. By and large, however, the British expatriate community was quite segregated and there was not a lot of mixing with the Nigerians. Most of the social activities, such as dinner parties or

cocktail parties, ended up primarily with people from other embassies or European and American expatriate businessmen. I met some Greek businessmen who had polo ponies that needed exercise. I took horseback riding when I was a child in California and loved it, so I volunteered to exercise the ponies on the beach on Victoria Island. These Greek brothers were in the business of producing modular freezing units that were shipped and then assembled all over the country. Another Greek friend who lived in my building kept a boat there and on weekends I would accompany him on boat trips for fishing and water skiing. In fact, I learned to water ski on one ski in Lagos. He worked for the local representative of Carrier air conditioning. In general we did little travel outside of Lagos because it was very difficult to get out of the city. There was only one main road out of town, which also went to the airport. It was only 12 miles long but due to traffic and robberies it was a dangerous road to travel.

Q: Basically there was no infrastructure.

BLACK: That's correct. We had power outages all the time. I remember dreading coming home after a party if I saw there were no lights in my building because I had to walk up 10 stories. My home had no telephone so all arrangements to meet friends on the weekends had to be done from the office or by driving to their house. There were only a few good roads in the country. To get out of Lagos to go anywhere one had to travel the awful road that went by the airport. The problem was that Lagos was built on islands, as I mentioned. Once out of Lagos and past the airport, you could go west to Cotonou, the capital of what at that time was Dahomey, or you could travel north up to the Kainji Dam, a major project that dammed the Niger River, or you could go east to Benin and other cities. Lagos was in the far southwestern corner of Nigeria. You could also drive up to Kaduna and Kano in the northern part of the country but it was a long journey due to the bad roads and also bandits that roamed the countryside. After the Biafran war there were many unemployed former soldiers who had no jobs but had guns. Armed robbery on the roads, particularly at night, was a big problem there. There wasn't much choice about places to stay either. The British had built a network of government rest houses during the colonial times, approximately one day's travel apart. Some were in better repair than others, but those were the main places that people stayed when traveling around the country.

I took several trips during the two years I was in Nigeria. I went once to Cotonou for a long weekend. It was about a three hour trip west of Lagos. Many people liked to go there for a real change of food. Dahomey was a former French colony and they imported French cheeses and baked French bread. We stayed in a hotel where there was a swimming pool and I noticed that there was a lot more interracial mixing in the former French colony than in Lagos where the British had been the colonizers.

Another time I drove with a couple of embassy friends up to the Kainji dam. It is the largest hydroelectric project on the Niger River and was fairly new when I came to Nigeria in 1971. The landscape is pretty barren around Kainji. I also visited Ibadan, the second largest city in Nigeria, by road. That was one of the most dangerous road trips in Nigeria because of the traffic and the terrible driving. I visited the International Institute

of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) there, which I believe received some funding from the U.S. The IITA was involved in research to increase the yield of crops that developing countries could grow, including soybeans, corn, yams and some tropical tree crops. This was of course important for developing the economy of Nigeria.

One of the most interesting trips I took was to the east of Nigeria. I went with a political officer and his wife, and the purpose of the trip was to learn about economic and political events in the eastern part of the country where we had no representation (in 1971 we had an embassy in Lagos, a consulate in Ibadan, and a consulate in Kaduna, in the north.) We drove through Benin, which is known for its bronzes but also its human sacrifices when the British were first conquering the country. Then we drove on to Enugu and Port Harcourt, the heart of Biafra, where the separatist insurgency started. It is also where most of Nigeria's oil is being pumped. I learned when I came to Nigeria that, contrary to the propaganda that had been disseminated in Catholic churches throughout Europe, the Biafran war was really not about starving children, it was about oil. The Federal Government had not refused to allow planes to deliver food to the rebel territories, but they insisted that the flights with humanitarian supplies be searched first to look for weapons being smuggled with the supplies. The Biafran leader Ojukwu refused to allow the searches so food supplies were not being delivered into Enugu and children were starving. After meeting with local officials in Port Harcourt, and seeing all the oil extraction activity, we traveled further to the east to the Cameroon border. The landscape goes from fairly thick jungle areas to hilly grassy regions when you come to the border. This area has a very pleasant temperature, unlike the temperature around Lagos and the southern strip of Nigeria, which is quite tropical, hot and humid. There was actually a cattle ranch near the border of Cameroon, which was established by a Scot. He produced beef cattle, strawberries, and had horses that guests could ride. That was probably the most enjoyable part of the journey. I believe we flew back to Lagos from one of the small airports in the region from there.

As I noted, the southern part of Nigeria is rain forest and tropical jungle. This is where the rubber, cocoa, palm oil, and tropical hardwoods grow. Once you pass out of this tropical belt, the landscape becomes flat and relatively barren. Some of this land is suitable for ground nuts, otherwise known as peanuts, and Nigeria used to be a major producer of ground nuts. In the far north the Sahara desert is increasingly encroaching. I believe, when I was there, around three to four inches a year became desert. I also took a trip once to Kaduna, where we had our third consulate. There was an AID (Agency for International Development) project there to assist in agricultural production, particularly to improve cultivation methods and help the farmers to adopt more modern methods of agriculture. Visiting these different parts of Nigeria helped in my job as economic officer to understand the economic base of the country and how the country was progressing economically. Before oil prices jumped in 1973, Nigeria was actually a very rich producer of agricultural commodities. It was one of the major producers of cocoa, next to Ivory Coast, and of palm oil. Unfortunately, once oil became their dominant product, after prices increased and production grew, which was shortly after I left the country, agricultural production seems to have collapsed. I don't know now whether Nigeria is a net importer or exporter of agricultural products.

Q: I'm just thinking that in this context, here you are, you're trained in economics, you know you've been around and all, where'd you see Nigeria going?

BLACK: Nigeria had tremendous potential when I was posted there. It had a relatively diversified economy, the potential for considerable foreign exchange inflows, and newly discovered oil reserves. It also had the largest population in Sub-Saharan Africa. The big problem with Nigeria was the fact that the population was not unified as a country. It seemed it was always a question of one person trying to push down others or steal what he could in order to get ahead, which resulted in widespread corruption in the government and military. Remember that when the continent was divided up among colonial powers, there was no country of Nigeria, it was a collection of tribes, many of which had been fighting each other for centuries. I mentioned that Benin had a history of human sacrifice. The victims came from prisoners taken in battles with neighboring tribal areas, I believe. Much of the wealth that was produced through oil or even from the agricultural trade was siphoned off by those in power, be it civilian governments or military governments, to make private fortunes. If a country's wealth is not reinvested in the country it is unlikely to see growth that brings up the general population. I don't like to denigrate any person or country, but Nigeria's government while I was there and even now, almost 40 years later, has not raised the living standards of the ordinary Nigerian, despite the riches of oil production. Even when there is a democratic government it seems like the people who are governing Nigeria are always out for themselves and the people get a very poor shake in Nigeria. The level of education was very low when I served there and I don't think it's changed. There have been a lot of individual millionaires created in Nigeria in the meantime, mostly through the oil business, but the wealth of the country has not been very well distributed among the people.

Q: This is what I understand. The universities started out with great promise and then, well there wasn't the money to maintain and expand them. The money went to bribes for politicians.

BLACK: Yes. I don't have the answers but I don't think that the country at the time I lived there was going anywhere and I doubt the people today are much better off than they were then.

Q: Looking at the time this might be a good place to stop.

BLACK: Okay.

Q: I think we'll pick this up the next time; this would be- you left there-

BLACK: Nineteen seventy-three.

Q: Nineteen seventy-three. Did Africa appeal to you or was Nigeria pretty much a turnoff?

BLACK: West Africa was a turnoff. I would have very much liked to go to East Africa at some time. Subsequently, after my retirement, about seven years ago I went to South Africa, which was a beautiful country. I think I liked it better partly because it was geographically very beautiful, with mountains and game parks and beautiful coastlines and lovely birds and the gorgeous wine country. I did not see these things in Nigeria. Nigeria was not a comfortable country to be in, neither the climate, nor the landscape, nor the people. Yes, Nigeria was pretty much a turnoff.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up, we'll get to my book and we'll come up with a date.

BLACK: Okay.

Q: We'll pick this up in 1973. Where did you go?

BLACK: I went back to the States; I was going into the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) six month economics course.

Q: Yes. It's supposed to be a great course.

BLACK: It is, yes.

Q: Who was running it at the time?

BLACK: Warwick Elrod and John Sprott. John Harrington was a young professor who taught calculus.

Q: Yes. Okay, we'll pick it up in 1973.

BLACK: Great.

Q: All right. Today is the third of December, 2010, with Dorothy Black. And Dorothy, we're to 1973, I believe, and you've come to take the econ course. Had you had econ training before, I mean in college or anything?

BLACK: I had Econ 101 at Stanford. When I was at SAIS Bologna Center, international trade and international finance were required courses. SAIS had an emphasis on economics in general and had very good teachers for international economics. Other than Econ 101, however, I had never had intensive macroeconomics, microeconomics, or statistics. I had studied calculus before, but it was included in the econ course. I had never had many of the econ courses in depth, since I majored in political science and international economics. I found it a wonderful six month course.

Q: How did you respond to the calculus? Maybe Foreign Service officers are not ordained to be mathematicians?

BLACK: I did very well. I must have a mathematical mind.

Q: Great.

BLACK: Even though I never took math at Stanford, I have always done well in math. In high school I was in an advanced mathematics course that included beginning calculus.

Q: Did you find, in your later career that you were drawing on what you'd learned?

BLACK: Yes, I did. Even today with all the news reports about the economy, it's amazing to me how much misinformation is disseminated.

Q: I think it reflects the fact that so many of the reporters have never been through the discipline.

BLACK: That's right. Everyone now thinks they're an economist but most of them have only a very perfunctory understanding of it.

Q: So you finished the course after six months, then what did you do?

BLACK: I was assigned to the State Department in ARA/ECP, which was the regional economic office for the Latin American Bureau. At that time, the Latin American Bureau in the State Department was what they called "back to back" with AID. In other words all offices had officers from the State Department and from AID and we worked side by side. That probably reflected the fact that much of our bilateral and multilateral relations with Latin American countries were focused on development programs. A lot of what we did in ARA/ECP was to follow the economies and AID programs of individual countries and attend interdepartmental meetings. ECP had one section that was assigned individual countries and another section that was assigned functions. I was in the country section and was assigned five countries whose economies I followed.

Q: Which countries?

BLACK: I had Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Q: Argentina must have given you quite a workout.

BLACK: Yes.

Q: Particularly during that period Argentina seemed to be almost perpetually verging on bankruptcy.

BLACK: A lot of Latin American countries were at the time. The two most active of my countries were Argentina and Chile. Allende had just been assassinated and Chile was nationalizing many U.S. companies, particularly copper mining. I represented ECP at meetings of the Interagency Expropriation group. There was a lot of discussion on how we would handle the expropriation. Under international law a country may nationalize

foreign companies but must provide prompt and adequate compensation. The issues were, of course, what was prompt and adequate compensation, and how much should Chile pay the expropriated companies?

Q: There was the Hickenlooper amendment I believe.

BLACK: That's right. It would cut off U.S. foreign aid to a country that did not provide prompt and adequate compensation if American owned assets were seized.

Q: Which said, you know, no expropriation without adequate compensation.

BLACK: Exactly, yes.

And then Argentina. President Juan Peron had just died and his third wife, Isabel, succeeded him as president. She was really incapable of running a country and did not have good advisers. The economy was in a mess, with high inflation exacerbated by the world oil crisis. Argentina produced some oil but was a net importer of oil. Peron had increased government employment and wages, without a corresponding increase in tax revenue. I believe the runaway inflation had discouraged exports too, most of which were agricultural, especially beef. Another of the countries I followed, Uruguay, was also in dire straits at the time, for similar reasons: High budget deficits due to bloated government employment, high inflation, more imports than exports, and high foreign debt.

Q: Was this basically a reporting job?

BLACK: No, it was in the Latin American Bureau of the State Department so our office was a consumer of economic reporting from the field. It was more an analytical position, to provide policy recommendations based on the reports we received from embassies and consulates as well as other sources. At that time there was no CNN, so the communications from the embassies received more attention than they probably do now. Our office was more a coordinator of policy options towards Latin American countries, particularly on development programs – that is why AID officers were serving alongside State Department officers in the Bureau -- but also on other economic policy issues such as expropriation policy. We were supposed to give the foreign policy arguments for taking one course or another. That is why ARA/ECP was represented in a number of interagency committees. We would often write policy memos for the assistant secretary or even the secretary of state. We also wrote briefing books for high level government officials who were traveling to Latin American countries.

Q: With Chile, this was after Allende had been overthrown so Pinochet was running things?

BLACK: Yes, that's true. I remember a lot of chaos at the time, trying to sort out the expropriations of copper mines and such. It seemed as if all Latin American economies were also plagued with inflation.

Q: Although it wouldn't have been your particular area, was there any concern of how we may have been involved in the overthrown of Allende and all?

BLACK: I don't think anyone in the government was talking about that at the time. The cold war and the U.S. fear of communism spreading in Latin America, particularly after the Cuban revolution, was very much the prevailing sentiment among the upper echelons in Washington. Remember that Richard Nixon was still the president until August 1974. Allende was portrayed as almost a communist and the most vocal people in the U.S. Government were glad he was gone. It was only later that allegations of CIA involvement arose, particularly when former Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier was assassinated in the U.S.

Q: Yes, on Sheridan Circle in Washington.

BLACK: That's right. If my memory serves me correctly, that was some years later after I left ECP. I was in the office for only one and a half years.

Q: What about Argentina? Argentina had gone through one disastrous government after another. Were we writing off Argentina as just don't go anywhere or what?

BLACK: Argentina was not our greatest friend at the time. Isabel Peron was a very weak and ineffective leader and I think controlled to a great extent by the people around her. I particularly remember her economic advisor, Jose Gelbard. He was the architect of the economic plan under Peron and then Isabel. I believe it was under Isabel that the military coup happened that led to the disgraceful period of "disappearances" in Argentina. I believe she eventually went to Spain in exile. My memory is not terribly clear about the events in any one country because I was responsible for following economic events in five different countries and I was not living in any of them. Argentina has always been an important country in Latin America but our relations have often been strained. The Cuban revolution and the U.S. reaction to it have always been somewhat of a thorn in relations with Latin American countries because they don't subscribe to our great fear of communism, particularly the paranoia experienced during the cold war.

Q: Yes. Then after a year and a half where did you go?

BLACK: I went to Princeton for one academic year on the State Department university training program.

Q: What were you taking at Princeton?

BLACK: Economics. It was a year of graduate university economic training following the six month FSI course. The FSI course was intended to give the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in economics. Everyone took the GRE (Graduate Record Exam) in economics after completing the six month course at FSI.

The GRE is the exam that students graduating with a bachelor's degree, who want to continue on in graduate school, take to test their skills. It's kind of like the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) that high school students take to go to college, but on the graduate level and in specific areas of expertise. Most everyone who came through the FSI course did quite well on the GRE in economics. The State Department, like most government agencies, had a program of continuing education at universities for professionals in their mid-career years, to prepare them for more senior level positions. Many of the economics officers chosen for university training chose to go to the Kennedy School of Public Administration at Harvard, partly because they could earn a master's degree in one year there. According to my advisors, however, the economics training at the Kennedy School was not as rigorous as the Princeton economics department. The Kennedy School specialized more generally in public policy.

Q: How did you find the academic approach to economics?

BLACK: It was mixed. I was sent to Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, because Woodrow Wilson has a mid-career program that makes it easy administratively for the State Department to deal with the university. The Woodrow Wilson School is the equivalent of Harvard's Kennedy School of Public Policy, but gives a master's degree after two years. Thus I could not earn an M.A. after one year, but I already had an M.A. from SAIS. I wanted to take economic courses in the Princeton graduate economics department, but the courses at Woodrow Wilson School all started half an hour later and ended half an hour later than courses at the university, so it was hard to put together a schedule that included both Woodrow Wilson classes and Princeton university classes. I took graduate courses in macroeconomics and international economics from the well known Princeton professor William Branson, a seminar from Laura Tyson on centralized economies, courses on fiscal and monetary policy from a young Dutch associate professor who is now well known in international economic circles, Willem Buiter. I also took a course in development economics from W. Arthur Lewis, who was a Woodrow Wilson School professor. One problem with university economic training was that in many ways it was not too relevant for work that Foreign Service economists did in the field. The graduate school emphasized mathematical analysis, especially econometrics, and Foreign Service Officers at an embassy don't really find that to be helpful in, for example, writing an economic trends report or analyzing the investment climate. It turned out that courses at the Woodrow Wilson School, which focused on public policy, were more relevant.

For example, Willem Buiter's courses on monetary and fiscal policy were very useful in providing a framework for looking at government economic policies in general. He had studied with James Tobin at Yale and his courses used mathematical models but also analyzed in plain language how governments can determine the most effective fiscal and monetary policies. Those courses have served me well to this day. They gave me an understanding of how fiscal and monetary policies interact, how they differ, the power of one, the power of the other. We're seeing a lot of failures today both in Europe and in the United States in their fiscal and monetary policies.

Q: You finished this when?

BLACK: I was at Princeton the academic year 1975-'76. I finished June 1976 and was assigned to Athens.

Q: You were in Athens from when to when?

BLACK: From 1976 to 1980.

Q: What was the situation in Athens when you got there in '76?

BLACK: I arrived about two years after the military junta collapsed in 1974. Constantine Karamanlis was the prime minister. One year previously the CIA station chief, Richard Welch, had been assassinated in Athens. That and lingering Greek suspicions that the U.S. had had a role in supporting the military junta made relations between Greece and the U.S. somewhat tense. Greeks always had a love/hate relationship with the U.S. On the love side, many Greeks have emigrated to the U.S. and have done very well; many parts of the U.S. have large Greek- American communities; and the U.S. played a large part in liberating Greece from the Germans in World War II. On the other side, many Greeks were always suspicious that the United States was manipulating Greece and the United States was leery of communists in Greece, particularly during the Cold War. I'm sure it had a lot to do with the legacy of Greece's civil war, in which the Greek communists fought the Greek royalists and, with U.S. assistance, lost. These bitter feelings were continued during the cold war and U.S. suspicions of communist movements in Europe. Greeks were also very suspicious of U.S. relations with Turkey. Any suggestion that the U.S. was favoring Turkey over Greece in any dispute brought out denouncement of U.S. policies and the U.S. government. While I was there there were several crises between Greece and Turkey. I remember once a Turkish ship got too close to one of the Greek islands over on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea. The Greek newspapers went ballistic. The Turkish papers and government on the other hand were quite calm. I think they enjoyed poking the Greeks and watching their reactions. Turks pretty much said "what's the big deal?" The Greeks always insisted, too, that a ratio of 7 to 10 be rigidly maintained in U.S. military aid to these two NATO (North American Treaty Organization) allies.

On the economic side, there were two major issues in my four years there. After the military junta collapsed and Greece returned to a democratically elected government, U.S. AID (Agency for International Development) approved a loan of $65 million as economic support funds, a policy based loan program, to help the country's large balance of payments deficit. Since there was no resident AID mission in Greece, the economic section was the liaison with AID in Washington to administer this loan. We, along with the IMF (International Monetary Fund), followed Greece's progress in implementing the policies agreed on.

Greece had also applied for membership in the EC (European Community, which later became the EU or European Union) after returning to democracy. When I arrived in

1976, the Greek Government was just beginning negotiations with the EC on terms and conditions for EC membership. These negotiations continued throughout the four years I was in Greece. Although the U.S. was not a party to the negotiations, we had considerable interest in a successful outcome which hopefully would help stabilize the Greek economy and the country. Greece has always been an important ally in southern Europe, due to its strategic position between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The EU negotiator was a German, and he and I had a rapport, particularly since I had spent time in Germany. The negotiations concluded successfully and Greece became an EC member in 1981, shortly after I left.

Q: I have heard some people say the European Community made a mistake in taking Greece in.

BLACK: Yes, especially now.

Q: We just went through a crisis with them but even before that Greece was always sort of the weak sister and it was one of these countries that only was going to receive from the EC; it was not going to add much to it. What was the feeling at the time as we were watching the negotiations?

BLACK: The United States always supported Greek membership in the EC. Greece was an important member of NATO because of its strategic location and the bases we maintained in Greece at the time. Greece also had two communist parties, the KKE "interior" which claimed to be independent of Moscow and the KKE which affiliated with Moscow. This always raised concerns in Washington during the cold war. I always felt that Greece's admission to the EC was more political than economic. Greece was interested in getting loans and economic support from the EC and the EC wanted to secure its southern flank and bring Greece into the western camp. Greece was a fascinating country to me because I could see a lot of Oriental influence.

Q: At one time, up until 1970s or so, Greece and Turkey were both in the Near East in our bureau.

BLACK: Yes. And when you live in Greece you see this kind of dichotomy. You know, Greeks want to be part of the West but they have a lot of Eastern attributes. So I would say that the decision to admit Greece to the EC was essentially political. Economically it did not make a lot of sense because everything you just said is absolutely correct. Greece's economy was not well developed. You know I used to have to do the semi-annual economic trends reports which required reporting on a number of aspects of the economy. Investment, both foreign and domestic, and growth were important aspects of the trends report. Domestic investment in Greece was always unhealthily balanced towards construction and housing. Greeks always saved their money to purchase land and a home. But investment in housing is not productive in the sense that it creates growth and jobs other than in construction. Most of the investment in industry was foreign investment. This is ironic because in the United States we just went through an overabundance of investment in housing and construction. From an economist's point of

view, housing is not considered productive investment. It does create jobs in the construction industry for a period of time but once you finish one house then what are those people going to do? They have to keep building houses to keep employed. Investment in housing doesn't create wealth, except for developers. Everybody needs housing, that's true, but when you have 50 percent of your investment going into housing that it doesn't do much for economic growth and development. It was not a well balanced economy. Furthermore, Greece always had trouble collecting taxes.

Q: It's almost a Greek attribute that you don't pay taxes.

BLACK: That's right, they could never collect taxes. The Greeks always were evading their taxes. That's why a lot of the houses were unfinished. I think you had to start paying taxes on your housing when you finished it and so they'd just leave the top story unfinished.

Q: Yes. What about, as you were looking at it, the role of the Greek ship owners?

BLACK: Shipping was one of Greece's major sources of foreign exchange. Greeks have traditionally been seafaring and shipping was one of the most important sectors. Tourism was becoming a very important source of foreign exchange too. Although many Greeks were traditionally involved in agriculture, young Greeks were leaving the countryside and moving to the cities. Agriculture did not employ as many people as in the past. Much of the land was dry and rocky, suitable mainly for olive trees.

It's been many years since I've really looked at the Greek economy so I don't know how much shipping contributes today but I imagine it's still quite a lot. Of course, the millionaire ship owner Aristotle Onassis was known internationally since he had married Jackie Kennedy. Other well known ship owners were Stavros Niarchos and Georges Livanos. I never met any of these men, but did meet lesser known and less wealthy ship owners while I was in Athens.

Q: How did you find the Greek ministry of finance or whatever it was called?

BLACK: They was a ministry of finance, a ministry of economic coordination, and a central bank. I had good contacts in the ministry of economic coordination, and particularly discussed the negotiations with the EC with officials in that ministry. The last two years of my tour in Athens the minister of economic coordination was Konstantinos Mitsotakis; he was quite good. I used to envy Greek civil servants, however, because they only worked until around two in the afternoon. They would then leave for lunch and not come back. I always had to see my contacts before 2:00pm unless I took them to lunch. Many of them had second jobs. They'd work in the ministry during the morning, go home for lunch and maybe a siesta, and then go to their second job in the afternoon. Many of them were small shopkeepers. They might have a little tourist shop or a taverna somewhere and part of the family would work in the morning and others would work in the afternoon.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Greeks; in the first place was there concern about the, what is it, November 18-?

BLACK: November 17th Revolutionary Organization.

Q: Assassination.

BLACK: Yes, it was active while I was there. It was named after the day the students at the polytechnic university protested the military junta in 1973. I believe it was responsible for killing Richard Welch. I think there was at least one assassination while I was there, a Greek policeman. Their modus operandi was to get on motorcycles and drive through traffic and shoot people in their cars as they were sitting still in the middle of a traffic jam. They were particularly against the U.S. military bases in Greece and the Greek security apparatus. While I was in Greece the U.S. maintained an air base at Hellenikon, near Athens. We also had a naval presence in Crete, at Souda Bay, but the Hellenikon Air Base was the one we at the embassy were most familiar with because it had the PX (Post Exchange) and a lot of facilities there.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BLACK: When I arrived it was Jack Kubisch. He left after about a year and was replaced by Bob McCloskey. They were both quite good. We also had a Consulate General in Thessaloniki. When I arrived the Consul General was John Negroponte and after he left Dan Zachary took over from him.

Q: How did you find social life in Greece?

BLACK: Social life was wonderful in Greece. I very much liked the Greek people. They were very nice, very welcoming. They loved to eat and have parties and they loved music. One of my favorite recollections is going out in the beautiful warm summer evenings to the tavernas. Greeks used to eat very late, probably because they had late lunches and siestas. If you went to a party at 9:00 pm you were probably the first one there. I also loved traveling around to the islands and to areas outside Athens. Because of the rich Greek history, there were many historical sites within a few hours or a day's drive from Athens. The landscape was also beautiful and varied.

One nice thing I think I mentioned before about being an economic officer is that it provided lots of good excuses to travel. To accurately report on an economy it is important to get out of the capital and see the economic activity around the country, to talk to people in different areas. I went to different parts of the country to get an understanding of how they lived and what they produced. For example, I went to Kastoria in the middle of the country to investigate the fur industry. I also loved the north of Greece because of the scenery and the scuba diving possibilities.

Q: Industry was not a big part of Greece's economy, was it?

BLACK: No. Most industries had grown up with a domestic focus and, because Greece had a small population, were rather small cottage-type industries. However, Greeks have been involved in producing fur coats for many years and Greek Americans have a presence in the New York fur industry. The biggest industries were shipping, some cement production, and some mining, for example bauxite, stone quarrying and things like that. There's an awful lot of rock in Greece. But most industries were small scale, which makes them less efficient.

Because of the civil war in Lebanon, a number of regional offices of foreign companies moved into Athens. They were never very happy with doing business there, however, because the Greek financial system was much more controlled than Beirut's. I think they found other places eventually to move to.

Q: Did you have much contact with the economic officers in other embassies?

BLACK: One of my major contacts was the German negotiator for the EC.

Q: Somewhere at the technical level where they would be the negotiators.

BLACK: I believe many Europeans were skeptical of Greek EC membership from the technical point of view.

Q: I was going to ask. You know, they were given their orders but at the same time they were taking on, essentially, a weak sister.

BLACK: They were, yes. What Greece saw in it was exactly what they got, which was a lot of transfers from the EC economic development fund. It's true that in the first years, I don't know now but in the first years there was definitely a transfer of money from the EC into Greece. What they did with it I'm not sure. I left Greece before they actually became a member.

Q: I was going to ask, were you able to have any feel for elements of corruption within the system?

BLACK: Like any semi-Oriental country, a certain amount of corruption is just part of the landscape. It comes, I think, from family connections, from being a small country where most people in a certain class went to school together. And as I mentioned before, tax evasion was a way of life. But I would not say Greece was a highly corrupt country. I've been in a lot more corrupt countries than Greece.

Q: I was going to say having your experience in Nigeria.

BLACK: Yes.

Q: I mean, this was world class corruption.

BLACK: That's right. Greece could not compare with that.

Q: No. My impression was it was family stuff in Greece. I mean, we can take care of that.

BLACK: Some nepotism in jobs. I remember particularly Olympic Airways. Olympic Airways had belonged to Aristotle Onassis but he sold it to the Greek Government. When I was in Greece it was a state owned airline and it had big losses. One of the big problems for the Greeks and for the Europeans who were negotiating with them was the state owned companies and how inefficient and overstaffed they were. Olympic Airways had become kind of a place for people in the government, parliamentarians, ministers and others to find jobs for their relatives. You know, what we would call a pork barrel company. There are certainly U.S. Government bureaus and offices where that's the case as well. As a result of overstaffing with minimally qualified personnel, though, the airline was always losing money and it was a drain on the Greek budget. There were other state owned countries as well. One aspect of the Greek economy is that it had a lot of state owned companies.

Q: Yes. How palpable was the anti-Americanism? I mean, was this a youth thing or what?

BLACK: In my experience I would say the Greeks had a love/hate relationship with the United States. In a way it's the syndrome of the relationship of a small country to a big one. The Greeks felt helpless to an extent in dealing with the United States. They loved the United States but on the other hand they didn't like a lot of things that they thought the United States was doing that they didn't have any control over. I don't think there was a huge anti-American movement. Certainly nothing like what you see in the Middle East today in some of the Islamic nations where they want to go out and kill Americans. It was nothing like that. Mainly resentment of some of the things the United States did, particularly whenever they felt that we were favoring Turkey. There was always a suspicion that Turkey was favored in military aid, for example. We had to keep, I think it was a 7:10 ratio in military aid. Greece had to get at least 70 percent of the military aid the U.S. gave to Turkey, even though Turkey was a much larger country and actually in a more strategic position vis a vis the Soviet Union, which at the time was our major focus.

Q: You know, the whole time, I mean from a military point of view Turkey was important and Greece really wasn't.

BLACK: That's right, yes. That galled them, too. Greeks kept saying "we stuck by you, we were your allies in two world wars, while Turkey was on the other side. Why are you favoring Turkey?" This was, of course, a failure to recognize the geopolitical realities of life.

Q: Did Cyprus crop up a lot?

BLACK: Yes. Cyprus was obviously of great concern for Greece, since it had been divided into the Greek area and the Turkish area since Turkey came into Cyprus in 1974.

There were many negotiations brokered by the U.S. to try to resolve the situation, but it never came about during my tour in Greece and for many years thereafter. I believe it is still divided.

Q: It was 1974; July 1974.

BLACK: It was still a very raw point with the Greeks and it was a thorn in their side.

Q: Yes, I found with the Greek Americans that I've talked to here and I've been to some conferences, haven't been for a long time, but it's almost a complete blindness to what caused the Cyprus crisis; it was purely a Greek move to take over and the Turks only responded to the Greek invasion. The fact that they responded was considered an invasion by the Greeks.

BLACK: Yes. The irony is that in a way it was great for Greece because it got rid of the junta.

Q: Yes.

BLACK: The junta fell because of their stupid moves in trying to take over Cyprus. So the Greeks came out ahead but they always resented it.

Q: How did you find the newspapers for news? Worth reading?

BLACK: Yes. Although I had a three/three at the end of my stay there my Greek was not so good that I could easily read the Greek newspapers. There was one English language paper, I think it was called "The Athens Daily News," which was mainly for the expatriates. Of course we had very good Greek local employees who read the papers and translated articles that were of interest to the economic section. Important articles were given to us in English. I think "Kathimerini" was one of the more scholarly of the papers. There were a lot of Greek newspapers, most with some kind of political outlook, be it liberal, conservative, or communist. Some of the papers were pretty far out. By and large, Greece was a country with a lot of very educated people and the newspapers reflected this and the fact that there were many political views.

Q: How did you find the embassy as a team? Sometimes in Greece it's been divided. I was there at a time when it was, well it was divided because the junta was in power. Was it pretty much a team when you were there?

BLACK: I think it was a pretty good team. I still have some very close friends who were officers in the embassy at the time. I think the CIA did perhaps have a little too much influence over the ambassador's attention and perhaps policy but as economic officer I was not responsible for those policy issues.

Q: It had the reputation for years as being a CIA embassy as some embassies were AID embassies; some get this reputation. I think Tehran was considered a CIA embassy.

BLACK: Yes. Athens was. I remember the DCM and ambassador's offices were much closer to the CIA office than the political and econ sections, which were all in the same corridor.

One reason for greater intelligence agency presence at the time was due to the civil war in Lebanon and the revolution and embassy takeover in Tehran which were affecting the region during my time in Athens. Lebanon had been very much a regional center for the Middle East, both for business and for other offices. A lot of companies' regional offices moved to Athens when Lebanon was no longer tenable for doing business. I remember that the Regional Commercial Center moved from Beirut to Athens around 1974. Then, when the Shah was overthrown and the revolution in Iran began, there was a lot of concern that events would spill over into Greece because it was so close. Greece did receive a number of refugees from neighboring countries in the Middle East.

Q: You left there when?

BLACK: I left in 1980.

Q: Nineteen eighty.

BLACK: Yes.

Q: So, whither?

BLACK: From there I came back to Washington. I had a "Pearson program" (a program to assign foreign service officers for short periods, usually one year, to offices outside the State Department such as congress, governors' offices in states, etc.) assignment to Capitol Hill and I was assigned to the office of Representative Jonathan Bingham. He was a democratic congressman from the Bronx and served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC). He was also the chairman of the international economic policy and trade subcommittee of the HFAC. I was detailed to his office for a year, with responsibilities depending on what was going on in the Congress and in his office at the time.

Q: How'd you find that?

BLACK: To be honest I didn't really like Congress that much. Jonathan Bingham was a wonderful man and I liked him and I liked the people in the office. However, there were two aspects of working on the Hill that bothered me, having worked in the administration for my entire career. First, it was extremely partisan, and second, there were no defined duties. In 1980 the Democrats had a majority in the House but the Republicans had just won the Presidency and the Senate. Reagan was elected during the time I was there. It was also the time when Iran released the hostages in Tehran on January 21, 1981. I remember watching the buses drive up Capitol Hill and the U.S. hostages from the embassy in Tehran being received and greeted by the congressional leaders. On the Hill,

everyone identifies themselves as a Republican or a Democrat. I've pretty much been an Independent most of my life. I've never totally affiliated with any one party. I make my political decisions on which policies I support, not on what one party or the other supports. Then I would base my decision which party to vote for depending on whether that party espoused my policy choices. In those days the parties weren't so polarized. You didn't have all the conservatives on one side and all the liberals on the other. You had conservative Democrats and liberal Democrats, conservative Republicans and liberal Republicans and a much greater number of moderates. But on the Hill you were identified with one party or the other. It was like being a Catholic or Protestant in Ireland. It was practically written on your forehead. I remember the legislative assistant who ran Congressman Bingham's office saying, "I'd never hire a Republican. There are too many good Democrats out there." In contrast, when I worked in the administration, civil servants were expected to follow the policies of whichever president was in power, regardless of party. Most of the time we didn't know and didn't care what political affiliation a colleague might have.

Q: Did you have much contact with Bingham or not?

BLACK: I did, yes. He was very open.

Q: I'm just thinking- did he have a loud voice?

BLACK: No, he was rather soft spoken. He was a tall, very patrician looking man with pure white hair. He was around 66 when I worked for him. His constituency, being the Bronx, was heavily Jewish and as one might expect he was a great advocate of Israel. In fact AIPAC (the American Israel Political Action Committee) practically worked out of his office. AIPAC at that time was called the American Israel Political Action Committee and they have now softened their title to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Q: You know, as a Foreign Service officer AIPAC often is calling the shots which often are not in American interests. Did you find that this sort of galled you a bit?

BLACK: Oh yes and it still does. The Congress, in my opinion, catered much too much to the Israeli lobby at the expense of other important U.S. interests. But there wasn't much I could do about it and I didn't really have much to do with that aspect of Congressman Bingham's legislative agenda. Another legislative assistant pretty much dealt with AIPAC and Israeli policy for Mr. Bingham. Bingham was a very strong advocate of foreign assistance to Israel and Israel was probably the major recipient of aid at the time. One of my main tasks during that year was to follow the progression of the foreign aid authorization bill for Mr. Bingham. He was chairman of the subcommittee on international economic policy and trade, but I didn't work on the issues that subcommittee dealt with because it had its own staff. The subcommittee was responsible for renewal of the Export Administration Act, which gave legislative authority to export controls. One of the main jobs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee was to pass the authorization for the foreign aid bill every two years. The committee would hold hearings with officials from AID (Agency for International Development), non-profit

organizations, Department of Defense (for the military aid portions of the authorization) and other interested parties. At that time there were a lot of earmarks and policy directions included in the bill, one of the ways the Congress would legislate foreign policy. The civil war in El Salvador was one of the issues in 1981. Several nuns had been assassinated there and some congressmen were questioning whether the U.S. should be giving aid to El Salvador. Mr. Bingham asked me to attend hearings on the bill and report back to him because he did not have time to attend all the hearings with everything else on his plate. That was one of the main things I did that year. There were also hearings on lifting the Russian grain embargo.

Q: This is over the response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

BLACK: Yes, that's right. Because his subcommittee dealt with trade and export controls, it landed there. U.S. farmers were upset because it was depressing wheat prices.

Q: What did you come away from this with?

BLACK: It was a great learning experience but I was very happy to go back to the Department. I think everyone should spend at least a year on the Hill. You get a much better idea of the process of legislating and how the Congress affects foreign policy formulation. One thing I found quite interesting is how different the process is on the House side from the Senate side. Their rules and procedures are totally different and the atmosphere in each chamber is totally different.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship, good or bad, between the Department of State and Congress?

BLACK: Yes. I could see that the Department of State had one of the weaker relationships with Congress. AID and Defense Department clearly had much stronger ties with the committees and with the congressmen themselves. I believe that part of the reason is that State Department rotates their officers every two years whereas the congressional liaison people in AID or defense stay in place for years. You'd really have to call them lobbyists because of their relationships. Agencies are not really supposed to be lobbying Congress but they do.

Q: Obviously, yes.

BLACK: Right. Many of the officers in AID and the Defense Department who came up to testify on the foreign aid authorization bill had been in their positions for many years and had developed contacts with committee personnel and also congressmen. They dealt with the same people year after year, they went out to lunch together, and they had much stronger relations in the committees than the State Department officials.

Q: By the way, when you're in Washington, earlier on did you ever run across Frances Wilson?

BLACK: No. I know the name. She was consular, wasn't she?

Q: Well no Frances Wilson was sort of the, maybe a little earlier but she really developed sort of the economic officer corps. She was a very important figure.

BLACK: That was maybe a little before my time.

Q: Then you went back; this would be what, '81?

BLACK: This would have been '81. I was on the Hill from '80 to '81 and then I came back to the State Department. I had just been promoted to what at that time was FS-03 but, under the 1981 Foreign Service Act, it became FS-01. My career counselor said I needed an assignment outside my economic specialty in preparation for management assignments in the future. I was assigned to the office called M/MO, which was known as Management Operations. It was really a staff office to the undersecretary for management. The undersecretary was Richard Kennedy. Bob Miller was the director and Don Leidel was deputy director. We were given special projects to help determine policy by doing research and developing policy recommendations for the undersecretary of management. As is often the case, the main issue was how to cut the State Department budget, doing more for less so to speak. Reagan had been elected in 1980 and was in his first year and the Senate had also gone Republican. The Republicans assumed there was all kinds of waste, fraud and mismanagement and they were going to find it. They were looking at all positions in the Department and overseas to see where cuts could be made. One of the permanent responsibilities that was given to M/MO was approval of any position increases. If a bureau wanted an additional position here or there then it had to be approved by M/MO. The bureau had to justify the request for new positions and we looked at the rationale, the current staffing, whether all positions were filled, whether everyone was fully employed, things like that. I remember that L, the legal advisor's office, one of my bureaus, was starting to staff up for the Iran claims tribunal. L needed a large number of new positions in order to staff what was a huge undertaking. We had fairly extensive discussions with them but I think they were given what they asked for.

Q: What was your impression of the management side of things?

BLACK: In what way?

Q: I'm just wondering whether you were going at it with a hard nose operation or did you find that maybe the European Bureau got what it wanted but the Near Eastern one didn't. That sort of thing.

BLACK: Yes, I think there's probably a lot of truth in that. European Bureau was probably overstaffed but they didn't significantly cut their positions. Bureaus like the African Bureau, they kind of got the short end of the stick. It is often hard to convince people to change policies or staffing or anything that has been around a long time. Bureaucracies don't like change.

For example, in order to find ways to save money M/MO sent a cable to all the posts' administrative sections asking for suggestions to save positions by cutting admin officers' burdens at post. One of the complaints we heard from many posts was the time it took the administrative sections to enforce the Department's policy -- which was embodied in a regulation, not a law – forbidding U.S. employees at post to profit from selling their personal effects. You can't imagine how many admin officers said it took an inordinate amount of their staffs' time to examine all transactions reported to them and they didn't see how useful it was. No other country's foreign offices had such a policy. The suggestions were that if the admin sections were relieved of this burden they could free up time and perhaps positions. I looked into it and my conclusion was that the policy didn't make a lot of sense. I wondered why the U.S. government should care if embassy or consulate employees make money from selling their personal property overseas? If Americans in some posts are able to make money selling used goods, which generally happened only in developing countries that had import restrictions and high tariffs on imports, they should report it on their taxes as a capital gain just like they would if they made such a profit in the U.S. Why would the State Department care one way or the other, particularly since most of the time people lose money when they sell property at post.

After I completed the report, M/MO tried to implement the policy change. We went through a lot of negotiations with various interested offices and we even had to get input from AFSA (American Foreign Service Association). I was amazed at the pushback we got from AFSA and particularly state's civil service personnel. I think there was a lot of envy among State employees who were not Foreign Service, thinking that Foreign Service personnel were making out like bandits by selling things overseas. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. In fact, Foreign Service personnel take a lot of losses when they change from one post to another. Anyway, we had meetings with all bureaus that needed to sign off on the policy change and finally my position prevailed -- for a very short period of time. It required a change in the Foreign Service regulations. Admin officers overseas and most Foreign Service personnel were glad to get rid of that ridiculous policy. Admin sections overseas were no longer required to oversee the sale of property by personnel leaving post. Unfortunately, some people were unhappy with the change and others found ways to take advantage of it. About a year later there was a cable from the embassy in Ghana, I think it was. Some person leaving post had made tens of thousands of dollars by selling some personal property, perhaps a car. I can't remember what the property was. I believe the property was sold for local currency and then changed into dollars at the embassy's official exchange rate. This can only happen in a country where the black market rate of the currency is significantly different from the official exchange rate and/or where there are large tariffs on imports. Instead of restricting the amount of local currency that could be changed to dollars, the Department had a fit about the policy of allowing profits to be made in local currency. Particularly State officials in the civil service who didn't serve overseas were just appalled and felt this was just terrible. I think there was a lot of envy on the part of those who were not Foreign Service.

Q: Oh yes.

BLACK: The attitude was, if I can't make money overseas why should you? So Department officials asked Congress to pass a law that reinstated the policy that U.S. personnel overseas were forbidden from making a profit on the sale of personal property, but this time it was enshrined in law. I think that's the way it stands today. This shows the control mentality of the State Department administrative personnel. Instead of identifying the real problem, which was an embassy's willingness to change an unlimited amount of local currency into dollars at the official exchange rate when a black market exists for an overvalued currency, they decided to control the sales of all personal property everywhere in the world, imposing a huge burden of enforcement on all administrative sections worldwide. The embassy in countries that have large black market exchange rates could have just said, you can sell your property for local currency but we don't have an obligation to change it into dollars. But instead they ask Congress to pass a law. To me it doesn't make a lot of economic sense.

Q: Did you find you were, I won't say snooping around but kind of looking, turning over rocks and looking for things?

BLACK: Sometimes. I was never a great admirer of the State Department management system. The personal property story is one reason. Our housing policy was another.

Q: After that job what did you do?

BLACK: After that job I went to Sri Lanka. I wanted to go to the War College for one year, but my career counselor said I needed another economic assignment. I couldn't quite understand this reasoning, since other than the M/MO job all my assignments had been more or less economic, and my OERs (Officer Evaluation Reports) noted that I should broaden my experience in anticipation of senior level management positions. To me, an assignment to the War College which focused on politico-military issues would have been the perfect way to do this. However, career counselors in the State Department were often more interested in their own careers than those of their advisees. When I was turned down for a War College assignment but a personnel officer was accepted, I was pretty sure this was what had happened. There may also have been some gender discrimination in the assignment process, since very few women were chosen for the War College back in the 1980s. When I was not accepted for the War College, I started looking for other jobs overseas. I spoke with Victor Tomseth, the director of the office in the NEA Bureau (Near East and South Asia) that dealt with Sri Lanka. He was looking for an economic officer to fill the position of economic counselor in Colombo and offered me the job. I was particularly excited to be going there because the U.S. mission in Sri Lanka was also accredited to the Maldives, one of the best scuba diving places in the world.

I went to Sri Lanka in the summer of 1983 and my assignment started off with a bang. I flew from Los Angeles to Hong Kong and planned to spend one or two days resting there. I was scheduled to arrive in Colombo on July 29, 1983. However, while I was in transit the Sri Lankan Sinhalese community engaged in a periodic "Tamil bashing." The

Sinhalese in Sri Lanka were mostly Buddhists who originated from northern India and the Tamils were primarily Hindus who came from southern India, known as Tamil Nadu. Both had settled in the small island of Sri Lanka centuries before, but they kept their individual languages and had an economic rivalry on the island. Sinhalese were the majority with around 70 percent of the population. They periodically had been rampaging against the Tamil minority by burning shops, houses, and killing people who spoke Tamil by throwing gasoline on them or cutting them to pieces with machetes. It was not pretty. When the government was unable to restore peace, they imposed a curfew and closed the airport. When I heard the airport was closed, I contacted the embassy. The DCM, Herb Hagerty, told me to sit tight in Hong Kong and wait until I was told to come. I ended up spending an extra week in Hong Kong, which was quite pleasant. It was just as well I stayed in Hong Kong because Colombo was under total curfew at that point.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in '83 in Sri Lanka?

BLACK: Other than the Sinhalese/Tamil conflict … Sri Lanka was one of our major aid recipients at the time and the U.S. had a large aid mission there. To give a bit of background, in 1977 the UNP (United National Party) had won parliamentary elections, defeating the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) whose prime minister was Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The SLFP had championed a heavily state controlled economy. They nationalized private lands and businesses and closed the economy with import and currency controls. When UNP Prime Minister and later President J.R. Jayewardene came in, he reduced state control over the economy, opened it to market forces, permitted more imports, and asked donor nations for help in revitalizing the economy. This resonated with the free market ideology of Ronald Reagan's administration. His policy towards foreign aid was to use it to reward democratic Third World countries that, if not in fact then in perception, switched from a socialist, perhaps communist leaning government to a more capitalist, Western oriented government. That was precisely what happened in Sri Lanka when the SLFP lost in 1977. Mrs. Bandaranaike was certainly not a communist but she had on occasion been accused of being a Marxist. I think she was more socialist, but her economic policies had stifled growth in Sri Lanka and were very unpopular. When she was defeated, Jayewardene looked to the West – Europe and the United States—for help. He was very successful. Because Sri Lanka gave the west an opportunity to create a showcase during the cold war -- a democratic country that switched to free market policies and became prosperous – there were aid programs from Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, the UK, and the US to name just a few. Foreign aid became an important source of foreign exchange for the country. One of the major projects was a series of dams and hydroelectric projects called the Mahaweli river scheme. The largest dam was Victoria, I think built with British aid, but the U.S., Sweden and I believe Germany were all collaborating on the Mahaweli project. A lot of aid activity was going on in the 1980s and a lot of foreign money was flowing into the country, from both private and public sources. Sri Lanka was also becoming a major garment producer and had set up a free trade zone that promoted exports. A number of foreign firms operated textile factories there. We had a bilateral textile agreement with Sri Lanka that regulated their exports to the U.S., and Sri Lanka was always trying to get higher quotas. Textiles were also important in U.S. - Maldives relations. A few Chinese textile companies had

established factories on islands there and exported to the U.S. In general, the Sri Lankan economy was doing fairly well.

On the negative side, relations between the two major ethnic groups, the Tamils and the Sinhalese, were deteriorating. The Sinhalese, who were the majority, about 70 percent of the population, somehow resented the Tamils who were a minority population, I think around 20 percent. Many Sinhalese felt that the Tamils held disproportionately more government jobs, more university positions, and more professional jobs. It was true that under the British the Tamils had been favored for civil service positions, but Tamils also worked harder than Sinhalese, in my experience. Similar to other minority groups, Tamils looked to educational opportunities. Tamils were overrepresented in professions like doctors, lawyers, surveyors, and the civil service. One reason was because they studied and worked very hard, but of course people who are envious of others' success never like to hear that. They'd much rather believe that they have been unfairly discriminated against, even if they belong to a majority ethnic group.

SWRD Bandaranaike, Mrs. Bandaranaike's late husband, successfully exploited minority-majority tensions when he was SLFP's prime minister in the 1950s. He promoted and managed to pass the "Sinhala only" law that changed the official language from English to Sinhala. At some point the grammar schools were also segregated into Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The only ones considered English speakers were "Burghers," the small group of descendants of Portuguese, Dutch, and British settlers. The segregation by language guaranteed that the Tamils and Sinhalese children who grew up after 1956 were unable to communicate easily. It was intended to put Tamil speaking people at a disadvantage when competing for civil service jobs, which it did, because all official documents were in Sinhalese.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

BLACK: When I arrived it was John Reed.

Q: Governor of Maine, was it?

BLACK: Yes, I think maybe he was. He had also served on the National Transportation Safety Board. He was a staunch Republican supporter and donor to the Republican Party. He had previously been the ambassador to Sri Lanka under Gerald Ford and when Ford lost the election to Carter he had to resign. When Ronald Reagan was elected, Mr. Reed wanted "to finish out" his term as ambassador to Sri Lanka. I think he had asked to be assigned there. He was a very nice man. One of his distinguishing characteristics was he never forgot a name. When the ambassador had a cocktail party or dinner, he greeted everyone by name. At large events like the July 4 celebration, where there were guests that he might not have met, he had embassy officers standing by to make sure he knew each person's name when he welcomed them. It was amazing. This trait served him quite well; he was very popular in Sri Lanka.

Q: Was there much of an indigenous economy or was the economy based on everybody from outside investing?

BLACK: Outside of the money flowing in from foreign aid, which became an important budgetary support, tea was Sri Lanka's major export and had been for many years. Tea prices fluctuated based on world markets -- particularly Indian consumption and exports -- and Sri Lanka's economy traditionally did well or badly depending on the international price of tea. One tea trader told me that tea prices were closely connected to the price and abundance of sugar in India, because the cheaper the sugar, the more tea Indians would consume. In other words, tea for them was merely a way of consuming sugar. But the Sri Lanka government was trying to diversify the economy. They didn't have what I would call a large industrial base, but for example the garment industry was developing quickly, particularly in the free trade zone. Other more traditional industries were gems and jewelry, coconuts, rubber, coffee, cashews, and the like. When I arrived in Sri Lanka, tourism had been developing very rapidly because the island has beautiful beaches, scenery, and historical sites. Unfortunately, as the ethnic problems became worse, and particularly as the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) became stronger, some of the most beautiful areas in the north were taken over by the insurgents. Over the years -- I was there in 1983 so it was 27 years ago -- tourism dried up. With suicide bombers, roadside bombs, and periodic fighting all over the island, the bad publicity discouraged tourism. I hope now that the LTTE leader Prabhakaran has been killed and the government has reportedly solved the insurgency problem, at least to some extent, tourism will start to improve.

Q: How was the Tamil/Sinhalese situation at the time, when you were there?

BLACK: When I arrived it had generally been the Sinhalese who were periodically attacking the Tamils, although several Tamil insurgency groups had been formed. You should understand that there were two groups of Tamils. The "Ceylon Tamils" who had come to Sri Lanka several thousand years before and whose Hindu kingdoms had risen and fallen, and the Indian Tamils who were brought as indentured laborers by the British from Tamil Nadu, the southernmost Indian state, to pick tea on the tea plantations. The Sri Lankans did not consider Indian Tamils to be citizens or even permanent residents, although many had been there a long time and had raised children born in the country. These people were quite poor and had no rights. When the Sinhalese went on a Tamil bashing rampage, both groups of Tamils suffered, although the Indian Tamils were the most helpless. When I arrived, there were already several Tamil insurgent groups, the main one being the Tamil Tigers, the LTTE. I remember a few others, including the National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam, the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam, and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front. Eelam was what the Tamils called the state they hoped to create in the north of Sri Lanka, where they were the majority. Most of the militant groups developed up in the north around Jaffna and had their headquarters in India, in Tamil Nadu. Jaffna, at the extreme north of Sri Lanka, is only about 18 miles from Tamil Nadu so it was quite easy for the militants to cross back and forth by boat. There was certainly a lot of support among the Indians in Tamil Nadu for the Sri Lankan Tamils so they were able to get money, arms, and safe haven.

Over time most of the groups disappeared except the Tamil Tigers. I think this is because the leader, Prabhakaran, was absolutely ruthless with both friends and enemies and was uninterested in negotiating. I think he planned to fight to the death. He would have been a terrible leader of a government if the Tamils had ever managed to get their Eelam. I always said that the only way to end the Sri Lankan insurgency that wracked the island for so long was to kill him. And that's what they finally did just a year or so ago.

But while I was there, the Tamils really started to organize and strengthen their fundraising after the 1983 bashing by the Sinhalese. That convinced many Tamils that they could not survive in a state run by Sinhalese so they began demanding a separate state in the north and east, Tamil Eelam. It was supposed to include the Tamil majority areas Jaffna, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Economically Tamil Eelam never made sense. One of my assignments while I was there was to look at the economic viability of a Tamil state and I just couldn't see how it could be viable. The island of Sri Lanka was pretty small in the first place and its resources were limited. To cut it in half and have two states didn't make sense to me. First of all the cost of governing would double. It's expensive to run a government, with parliaments, ministries, embassies in other countries, military, etc. The economic base was not very strong either. The north did not even have the tea country, the rubber and coconut growing areas, the gem areas, and the major tourist attractions. But it's hard to reason about the expense of running a country with people who are out in the jungle with weapons.

Q: Could you move around much or did you feel unsafe?

BLACK: When I arrived, after the curfew was lifted, I was able to go to almost every part of the island. Early on, I took a field trip to Jaffna and another time I went to the game park on the western side of the island, Wilpattu National Park. Later both these areas became off limits due to the insurgency. One of my first trips shortly after I arrived was to Trincomalee, which is on the eastern side of the island. I was at that time able to go to the area north of Trincomalee that had beautiful beaches and several tourist hotels.

Q: Trincomalee was a huge, beautiful port wasn't it?

BLACK: Wonderful port, yes. It is a large harbor with very deep areas, allowing big ships and submarines to come in. And whales -- there were sperm whales and blue whales sighted in and around the harbor when I was there. During World War II the British had an RAF (Royal Air Force) base and a naval base there. It was particularly used for refueling and fuel storage. Large oil storage depots were still there when I visited, although I am not sure they were operational. My first year in Sri Lanka I spent a week in Trincomalee scuba diving and looking for sperm whales to photograph with some friends. Another time I spent a few days visiting a Sri Lankan friend who had a house near the harbor. At that time fishing was great. In the last year that I was in Sri Lanka, Trincomalee was off limits for U.S. embassy personnel to visit. I always wanted to go back but never managed to. Similarly, after I had visited Jaffna it became off limits. Jaffna was the headquarters of the Tamils and the northernmost city, which is very close

to the Indian mainland. It was an interesting city. I remember we had an AID water improvement project up there. An American couple who were AID contractors were kidnapped during my tour. It was quite scary with U.S. hostage negotiators sent over by the State Department.

Q: Were they kidnapped by an organized Tamil group?

BLACK: Yes, it was one of the Tamil groups. I don't remember exactly which one. Eventually Indira Gandhi became involved. I believe she got word to the Tamil group that the Americans must be released unharmed or she would cut off their support from India.

Q: Was Colombo a place you could walk around and go out?

BLACK: Yes. I didn't perceive Colombo as being dangerous when I was there, although I didn't do a whole lot of walking. The hot sticky weather and the lay of the land didn't really permit it. The department was building a new embassy, which had been delayed quite a lot. When I first arrived we worked in the old embassy which was actually an old house. I believe it used to belong to the Jayewardene family and it was on the ocean side of the main road, Galle Road, and next to the Indian High Commission. Galle Road was full of traffic and very noisy. About a year after I arrived, the new embassy was finished and we were able to move into it. It was a little bit farther down Galle road and also on the ocean side. Because one tactic the Tamils used was to put a plastic bomb on the underside of cars, the embassy started to examine all cars as they drove into the compound. The guards had mirrors that they used to look under the cars when they were driven in. They checked under your fender or in the trunk to make sure there were no explosives. The big hotels would do the same, as they were also targets. I guess there was a certain amount of danger at the time but I don't think it was aimed at the foreigners there. It was really more aimed at the government and at the Sinhalese population. I remember one bomb going off at the Colombo railway or bus station. It did kill a number of Sri Lankans but most foreigners would take cars rather than public transport. Later on there were bombs planted on some of the roads in the north, which is why areas like Trincomalee, Jaffna and Batticaloa became off limits for us.

Q: On the economic side, where did Sri Lanka fit into the region? Was it part of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) or anything like that?

BLACK: Let me think. I don't think it was part of ASEAN. ASEAN members as I recall were further east, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore. Sri Lanka was a member of the Colombo Plan and was in fact the headquarters. The Colombo Plan was originally created after World War II by commonwealth nations to foster economic and social development in the south Asian region. It now includes some of the Asian countries that are also part of ASEAN. Sri Lanka is considered part of South Asia, along with India and Pakistan. Its closest neighbors are India and the Maldives. In the State Department it at one time was in the Near East-South Asian Bureau, but I have heard there is now a South Asia Bureau.

Q: Did you get any high level visits?

BLACK: At one time while I was there we hosted one of the regional meetings of American ambassadors. I remember the ambassadors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal all coming to Colombo for a meeting. Sri Lanka was not really on the priority list for congressmen to visit, which was not a bad thing for us at the embassy. High level visits take up an inordinate amount of time from embassy personnel with little accomplished, in my opinion. Many congressmen are more interested in shopping than in informing themselves on issues in the country.

Q: You left there when, in '86 or so?

BLACK: Nineteen eighty-six.

Q: How'd you feel whither Sri Lanka?

BLACK: During my time there John Reed left and James Spain was assigned as the next ambassador to Sri Lanka. Because Senator Jesse Helms objected to some of his remarks in a book he had written, Senator Helms put a hold on his confirmation for quite a long time. He eventually was confirmed and arrived not long before I left. I remember a conversation I had with Ambassador Spain when I was accompanying him on some of his introductory meetings with Sri Lankan ministers and high level government personnel in the economic area. He opined that the Tamil problem would be over quickly and Sri Lanka would become a very dynamic economy. After almost three years in the country, I disagreed. Having observed the enmity between the two communities, I felt it would take at least 25 years to end, which is essentially one generation. Prabhakaran, the leader of the Tamil Tigers, had no incentive ever to reach a negotiated agreement. His calling in life was being an armed rebel. People who are guerrilla leaders never do very well in governing. I told Ambassador Spain that I didn't see an end to the insurgency any time soon.

The other reason I felt it would take a generation to work out the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is that it took that long to simmer and come to a boil after the "Sinhalese only" policy of Bandaranaike. It was a generational problem -- Sinhalese and Tamils didn't trust each other in large part because the 18-25 year old population couldn't communicate with each other. The problem arose starting in 1956 when S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike ran for prime minister on the "Sinhalese only" platform, which is when Sinhalese became the official language and schools were segregated based on language. The main purpose was to give Sinhalese speaking people a leg up in the economy because they would know how to read and write in the official language, Sinhalese. It took about a generation for older Tamil civil servants to retire and the new generation of Tamils that were not fluent in Sinhalese to be disadvantaged based on their language. When the Sinhalese were murdering Tamils in July 1983, the only way the Sinhalese bullies could tell if a person was Tamil was to ask him to speak. If he didn't speak Sinhalese, the Sinhalese would attack and often murder the person with machetes or by burning alive. English, as the bridge language,

was largely eradicated in the majority of the population because the only children who studied in English were the Burghers, the descendants of Dutch, Portuguese and British settlers. Of course the well educated upper classes in Colombo spoke English, but outside the capital many did not. So if it took a generation to create an economic and language gap, I felt it would take at least a generation to stop the insurgency. It more or less did.

Q: Yes. And killing off the rebels, which happened.

BLACK: That's right. But by that time Prabhakaran was well into his 50s and he had started out as a young man, in his 20s. In that 27 year period Sri Lanka lost many, many economic opportunities and many educated people who either died or emigrated. I understand their economy is not in very good shape right now.

Q: Let's say that with a wave of hand we could take away the ethnic violence; Sri Lanka's got quite a potential doesn't it? I mean, small population, lots of resources?

BLACK: It did. A lot of people forget that at the end of the war in 1948 Sri Lanka had one of the highest per capita incomes of any of the countries in East and Southeast Asia. It was much higher than in India, Thailand, Malaysia, or Singapore. Ceylon was a very wealthy country. Unlike India, which had the partition wars, Sri Lanka never had any wars prior to independence. The British gave Ceylon its independence on a silver platter in 1948. The Ceylonese did not have to fight for it. The country entered independence with a large foreign exchange surplus. Their coffers were full. Ceylon was and is one of the largest tea exporters in the world. When I was there the reported literacy rate was over 80 percent, so there was a relatively well educated population. Unlike many countries in the region, Sri Lanka's income distribution was not skewed toward a few rich and many poor people. From what I have heard, all that has changed. I understand that Sri Lanka has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the region.

Q: So when you left there you weren't very optimistic, were you?

BLACK: I was not, no. I loved the people there but I could never understand how such gentle people could be so brutal to one another.

Q: Where were they looking for education investment? Were they looking more towards Britain or towards the United States or somewhere else?

BLACK: Their education system was based on the British system because they had been a British colony. I assume it still is, with A levels and O levels. Their government is also modeled on the British system. It has a parliament led by a prime minister, several political parties, a civil service and a common law legal system, all inherited from the British. In the 1970s the constitution was changed to make the president the most powerful figure, so their governing system is more like the hybrid system adopted in France. For higher education, many Sri Lankans went abroad. At first I think they preferred Commonwealth countries because of the similarity in high school education. However, there is now a fairly large Sri Lankan community in the United States. I know

personally that a lot of Sri Lankans live in the Los Angeles area. With the ethnic strife in the last almost 30 years the country lost a lot of talent. Many Tamils emigrated to Canada, Australia, Britain and the United States. I assume this also means that emigrant remittances are becoming a more important form of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings.

Q: Then where'd you go? You left there in '86.

BLACK: I left in '86 and I went to Jamaica.

Q: Ah ha. So you're sort of an island specialist now.

BLACK: In a way, yes. Islands coincide with my interest in swimming and scuba diving. Interestingly there are a lot of parallels between the economies of Jamaica and Sri Lanka. But maybe we should take a little break now?

Q: Alright, why don't we take a break? Or would you like to come back another time?

BLACK: That would be a good idea because this is a good stopping point, going on to a new country.

Q: Okay, all right. I'll go get my calendar and be right back.

Do you have any questions?

BLACK: Any questions?

Intern #1: Do you have experience all over the world or have you focused on one geographic area?

BLACK: Actually my experience was all over the world. Since I was an economic specialist I wasn't really restricted to a geographic area except perhaps by language. But three of my posts were former British colonies where English was sufficient, and in Germany and Greece I learned the language. When I first started in the Foreign Service, and I think we discussed this in the first interview, I wanted to specialize in European economic issues and my original idea was to have postings in Western and Eastern European countries. My first posting was in Germany. But first, northern Europe was too cold for me. And second, I realized that because of the Cold War, there just really wasn't a whole lot that was going to change politically or economically in Eastern Europe, at least as far as I could tell, in the next 20 years. I spent 23 years in the Foreign Service, and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989 just as I was about to retire. After studying economics at FSI and then Princeton University, I found that the economic issues in developing countries were more interesting and dynamic. Developing countries in all regions of the world face many of the same economic challenges. The only area I did not serve in was East Asia. I would have loved to but the East Asian Bureau seemed to want an entire career commitment. As I became more senior without ever serving in an East

Asian country, it became harder to get a position there because the powers that be in the personnel department were rather parochial. I guess they thought that since I was not an "East Asia hand," I was not a contender for the good positions like consul general, economic counselor or DCM (deputy chief of mission.) So I never got any of the positions I bid on in the Philippines or Indonesia. I served in the European Bureau, the Near East/South Asian Bureau, the Latin American Bureau (Jamaica), and the African Bureau (Nigeria). Four out of five bureaus.

BLACK: What do you do here?

Intern #1: I'm an intern so I sit in on a lot of interviews and then I work with them afterwards, transcribing and editing.

BLACK: And where are you from?

Intern #1: I'm from Denmark.

BLACK: Denmark. I had a friend who just recently died, and one of his favorite posts was Copenhagen.

Intern #1: Yes.

BLACK: He was there in the 1960s, '62 to '65, something like that. A number of his Danish friends from that period were in contact regarding his memorial service. He had quite a number of friends whom he had known from that period of time and one of them is married to a Danish woman. I've heard a lot about the wonderful times they had in Copenhagen.

Are you from Copenhagen?

Intern #1: I'm studying in Copenhagen. I'm just here for one semester and then I leave Washington; it's a semester program at American University so you intern two days a week.

BLACK: Okay. That's very good.

Intern #1: Yes, that's very good. And I like it. It's my last day here too.

BLACK: Oh, I see. Then you go back to Denmark?

Intern #1: Yes. I'm looking forward to that. We have a lot of snow now and it's very beautiful.

BLACK: We may have snow here soon but I don't like it.

Intern #1: It's okay when you have vacation, when you have to go to school every day it's a bit hard.

BLACK: I know. I've heard they've had a lot of snow in London. They closed the airport there. Also in France. Places that don't normally get the snow have had a lot.

Intern #1: Yes, they really had a lot this winter.

Q: Okay. Today is the ninth of February, 2011. Interview with Dorothy Black. Dorothy, we had moved you out of Sri Lanka and where'd you go after that?

BLACK: Let's see. From Sri Lanka I went to Jamaica.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BLACK: I arrived in Jamaica around September 1986. I retired from Jamaica in September of '89. I was there for three years.

Q: Jamaica has always sounded like a resort type of post, and yet for many it's been a very difficult post. One, you're not sitting on the beaches, you're in Kingston. Also we've had some very difficult ambassadors there. I mean, some are fine ambassadors but others are political appointees who are difficult to deal with. Anyway, in '86 what were you up to? What was your job?

BLACK: I was the economic counselor.

Q: All right. You want to talk about Jamaica at the time? What was it like?

BLACK: Jamaica is one of the two party democracies in Latin America that has seemed to work since independence in 1962. Edward Seaga of the JLP (Jamaica Labor Party), which is the more conservative, free market-oriented party, was the prime minister. The JLP had been in power for about six years when I arrived. It took over in 1980 from Michael Manley's PNP (People's National Party), which was in power in the '70s.

Q: Who was very controversial--

BLACK: Yes, Manley was very controversial. The United States had a troubled relationship with Jamaica while Manley was prime minister in the '70s. Manley came in around the time of the oil price shock in 1973. Small nations like Jamaica were greatly affected by the oil price increases and began running large fiscal and balance of payments deficits. One of Jamaica's main exports at the time was bauxite, produced by three foreign companies. These were Alcoa, Reynolds Metals and Alcan. Manley imposed a large tax on the bauxite companies to help his budget deficit and I believe he nationalized part of the industry. This and his close relations with Cuba and Castro made many in the United States look at him and his government with suspicion. In Cold War times, the United States suspected any government that looked as if it were tending towards

communism. Given Manley's perceived socialist economic policies and closeness to Cuba and other left wing Caribbean governments, many U.S. officials saw Jamaica as possibly heading towards the Soviet side. I don't believe Manley was ever a communist, but he did espouse democratic socialism as an economic/social policy. Unfortunately he was not successful in improving the Jamaican economy with these policies. In any case, the U.S. in those days was very suspicious of any leader who was friendly to Castro.

Q: How was it by the time you got there? I mean, were relations fairly good?

BLACK: Relations were very close when I got there. In 1980 there was a very violent election, and Edward Seaga's JLP won. I heard that a lot of guns were imported into Jamaica at the time, which also set the stage for future violent criminal activity. I remember hearing that around 800 people were killed during the 1980 election campaign. However, I wasn't in Jamaica at the time so I shouldn't get too much into that. In any case, Seaga won the election and succeeded Michael Manley as prime minister. Seaga's win was seen in the U.S. as a triumph of free market ideology over socialism similar to the perception of Sri Lanka. When Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980, there was an immediate affinity between administrations. As I noted before, Reagan wanted to support democracies that moved away from socialist policies with foreign assistance, so Seaga was able to secure a large AID (Agency for International Development) program. It was a very similar situation to what I experienced in Sri Lanka. When Mrs. Bandaranaike was replaced by J.R. Jayewardene, Sri Lanka received a lot of American aid from the Reagan administration. Jamaica had quite a large aid program for its 2 million population when I arrived in 1986. There was a big AID mission that was housed in a separate building from the embassy. AID had programs in education, agriculture, housing, and private sector development. Jamaica was also receiving aid from the UK, the IMF, and the World Bank (IBRD or International Bank for Reconstruction and Development). As far as foreign resources were concerned, Jamaica was doing pretty well.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BLACK: Michael Sotirhos.

Q: What was his background?

BLACK: Michael Sotirhos was a political appointee. I believe he was from New York. He was a Greek American and had organized Greek American Republicans for Bush. He later became U.S. ambassador to Greece. I think he was appointed to Jamaica when George H.W. Bush was vice president and to Greece when he became the president. I believe his business was interior decorating but for commercial establishments like country clubs, hotels, things like that.

Q: What was your observation of how he operated as ambassador?

BLACK: From his background clearly he didn't have much diplomatic or foreign policy training but he was very politically savvy. One thing he did that greatly endeared him to him to the Jamaicans was to attend a different church in Jamaica every Sunday. Because he was Greek Orthodox and there was no Greek Orthodox Church in Jamaica, he decided to attend them all. The Jamaicans were quite the church going people; they had a lot of different denominations and religions there. It made a wonderful impression on the Jamaican people to see the American Ambassador at their community church. It was also publicized in the newspapers and of course, being a small island -- you could get from one end to the other in about four hours driving time -- it was not too difficult logistically to go to churches all over the island. From the public relations point of view he was very admired by the Jamaicans. He had a very good relationship with Seaga and eventually also with Manley. During my time there, he was politically savvy enough to see that Seaga, who had been in power since 1980, could lose the next election. The economy was not doing too well and was being shored up by foreign aid. The IMF and World Bank were raising concerns about an overvalued exchange rate, but the exchange rate in Jamaica was a very politically touchy subject. After the bad relations between Jamaica and the U.S. in the 80s, Manley had pretty much been shut out and ignored by the U.S. Government. Sotirhos instructed his country team to start talking with the PNP shadow cabinet officers in their respective areas. It took some time and Seaga was not happy about it, but eventually Ambassador Sotirhos met with Manley himself. As economic counselor, I met with a number of the PNP (People's National Party) advisors on the economic side, those that were likely to be finance minister, agriculture minister, tourism minister, etc. in a Manley government. Indeed Manley and the PNP did win the election in 1989, so Sotirhos turned out to be quite prescient.

Q: What was the economic situation? What were you reporting on?

BLACK: The economy, being an island economy, had limited resources. Exports were mainly agricultural and bauxite. Like Sri Lanka, they had a free trade zone that produced mainly garments that were exported to the U.S. Imports were high, which is why the exchange rate was so sensitive politically. I think their imports were around 50 percent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Jamaica has traditionally had a balance of payments problem. Being so close to the United States, Jamaicans aspired to a living standard similar to ours but they really didn't produce enough or export enough to support it. That is why imports were so high. Much of the foreign aid that was going to Jamaica was used to finance imports, and much of that was borrowed. So the country's foreign debt continued to rise. When Seaga kept the exchange rate pretty much pegged to the dollar, this encouraged imports and discouraged exports. This problem worsened during my time in Jamaica because inflation was higher than in the United States. A lot of World Bank and IMF money, that was really foreign exchange borrowing, went towards supporting their level of consumption. Seaga tried to control imports with monetary policy – interest rates were enormous, in the 35-50 percent range – but the government itself was printing money through central bank borrowing. When the problem became critical, Seaga was forced to reschedule foreign and private debts and eventually had to devalue the currency. Of course that's always bad for the ruling party because ordinary people suffer a lot when import prices go up, as imports are such a large percentage of their consumption.

Q: What about the bauxite mines? I mean, this was a big deal at one time. Was this still a big deal there or not?

BLACK: Oh yes. Jamaica's major foreign exchange earners at the time were tourism, which had overtaken bauxite at some point, bauxite and alumina, and agricultural products like sugar, rum, bananas, oranges and coffee. There were some AID projects focused on non-traditional agriculture and they were starting to do more exports of asparagus, mangoes, papayas and those types of products. But yes, bauxite and its refined product alumina were still important. The companies that produced there were Alcoa and Alcan. I think their mining operations were a joint venture with the Jamaican government at the time but Alcoa and Alcan still managed the production. I visited both plants when I was there. Since the price of bauxite and alumina is determined on the world market, Jamaica did well when it was up but when the price went down it was a big hit to their foreign exchange earnings.

Q: Was there a strong labor movement?

BLACK: Yes. Both the JLP and the PNP had strong support in labor. JLP was more conservative, and seemed to have more support in the business classes than PNP. Jamaica has a fairly large population, about two million strong. There has always been a lot of Jamaican emigration to the U.S. and other Caribbean countries. If there wasn't emigration, they would have had an incredible population problem. I think there were as many Jamaicans in the U.S. as in Jamaica.

Q: Looking at it I would imagine remittances must have been important.

BLACK: They were, yes. They definitely supported a lot of Jamaica's standard of living.

Q: Was there sort of a class system on the island?

BLACK: Yes. There was a small, wealthier class, many of them white descendents of the Brits, and quite a number of poor Jamaicans. Income distribution was not good. I don't mean to imply that there was a white upper class and a black lower class however. Race relations were much better than in the U.S., interracial marriages were common, and the wealthy class included whites, blacks, and other immigrant groups like Chinese-Jamaicans. Emigrant remittances might have been responsible for some of the income disparity. Families with relatives in the U.S., England, or Canada tended to be better off. Also those who inherited money and land from their families, like the early British immigrants and even some Sephardic Jews from Europe who had been in Jamaica for decades. The large number of poorer Jamaicans was probably responsible to some extent for the high rate of crime in Jamaica. In the Caribbean, Jamaica was known for a high rate of violent crime, like robberies and murders.

Q: Yes, actually even Jamaican immigrants are known, at least I used to hear, they usually intended to kill people.

BLACK: That's true, yes, also on the island. We had armed guards on our houses. All the embassy officers who lived in houses had 24 hour armed guards there because there had been, before I arrived, a terrible incident. I think it was the gunny sergeant's house where armed robbers had broken in, tied up him, I think they raped his wife and stole several guns. There are a lot of guns in Jamaica. It could be a result of the political violence from the '70s and '80s. In any case, Jamaica has much more gun violence than most Caribbean islands. Jamaica has many, many guns and that causes a lot of violence and murders.

Q: One hears about these wealthy enclaves where movies stars and just wealthy Americans live and summer there.

BLACK: Yes, what you're thinking of is primarily up around Montego Bay. Round Hill and Tryall are two very fancy gated developments with golf courses. I remember that the CEO of Citibank, John Read, had a house there. Quite a number of well known Americans either owned or vacationed there. Back in the '50s Errol Flynn had a place in Portland, in the north of Jamaica, called Navy Island. I think it is now a resort. Don't forget Jamaica was a British colony until 1962. It was one of the wealthiest and most popular British colonies. Maybe because of its dramatic landscapes and views, it attracted famous people like Noel Coward and Ian Fleming. Ian Fleming had a house a house there, called Golden Eye, where he wrote some of his James Bond novels. Noel Coward had a house on the north coast near Port Maria which he called Firefly. He also wrote musicals and plays there and did a lot of his composing. It is now a museum that you can visit. I believe he is buried there too.

Q: How did you have find tourism as an economic entity? Would you look upon it as a blessing, a curse, or what?

BLACK: It certainly brought in and I'm sure continues to bring in a lot of money to Jamaica. But Jamaican hoteliers favored the all-inclusive hotel, which includes drinks, food, sports activities, and entertainment along the lines of the Club Méditerranée. The guests come there and get everything they need and paid for in a gated hotel. So they don't go out on the economy and spend their money in local establishments like restaurants, bars and nightclubs. A lot of Jamaicans were not participating in the economic benefits of tourism unless they worked at those all inclusive places. There were a lot of complaints from ordinary Jamaicans about this. In this sense tourism could be seen as a bit of a curse because they could see the tourists living in fancy places, with access to the beaches cut off from the people, and that could breed resentment. The tourists in the all inclusive hotels did not go out to restaurants, they didn't buy crafts and souvenirs outside the hotel gates, they didn't use taxis, etc. Then cruise ship tourism became more and more important during the years I was there. Cruise ship tourists contribute even less to the economy. The cruise ships come in, let their passengers off for around three hours, they walk around the port, maybe buy a craft or two and then leave. They have all their meals on board the ship.

Q: These huge cruise ships.

BLACK: Enormous cruise ships, yes.

Q: You know, there's a way of tourism that strikes me as horrible.

BLACK: Yes. Tourism certainly does not, in Jamaica anyway, provide jobs for the poor people. It provides jobs but only in certain areas for a limited number of people.

Q: How'd you find social life there?

BLACK: Social life was very active. Jamaicans are very outgoing people and love parties. I had a lot of Jamaican friends. It's easy to meet them. I met Jamaicans in the government, Jamaicans and expatriates in the business community, they were all very friendly and they like Americans. Many had relatives in the U.S. I also met people through scuba diving. It was easy to go diving in a different place every weekend because Jamaica is a small country. You could just jump in your car and drive to the north coast; you're there in about two hours, and the diving locations were up and down the coast. There was a British Sub-Aqua club in Kingston so there were always people to go diving with. It was a very active and fun place to be. Many people from the embassy would drive to a nice resort on the weekends, there were so many around Ocho Rios and Montego Bay and in between. The resorts and hotels generally had a two tier pricing system: one price for those who lived in Jamaica and another price for tourists. Since embassy personnel were living there we were often able to travel cheaply, which was very nice. My favorite place was Portland, at the east end of the island. The main city is Port Antonio and the diving there was very nice. We met local fishermen who would take us out to the reefs for a reasonable price.

The best part about the social life is that I met my husband, Tom Tifft, in Jamaica. He came to the AID mission in 1987 as the head of the private sector and program office. He was a scuba diver, and joined our weekend diving group. When my main diving buddy, Don Besom, the Public Affairs Officer, was transferred in 1988, Tom and I became diving buddies. If you are a diver, you always want to have a regular buddy, someone who dives as you like to dive. Tom and I were very compatible buddies as we kept together and dived at similar depths. This was the beginning of what eventually became a romance. Since Kingston was such a small town, it was hard to keep a secret when two members of the embassy family were dating, and ours was no different. Tom retired from AID in 1990, the same time I left to go to law school. We were married in 1995.

Q: Did you find that Jamaica produced reliable statistics? You know, as an economic officer you live and die by statistics. How were statistics there?

BLACK: There were a lot of them. Sometimes you had to question the methodology however. For example, interest rates were very high but the consumer price index did not reflect inflation of that magnitude. Part of it was that the exchange rate was tied to the dollar and half their goods were imported. But when I looked into the structure of the CPI index I found that the cost of housing was hardly represented and had remained at the

same level for years. Since housing is a large part of anyone's monthly expenditures, and we knew rents and housing prices were rising, I suspect the index was considerably understating the inflation right there. Financing of the treasury's fiscal debt was another area where we had to look deeper to figure out what was going on. The government was continuously running large deficits, but the cost of the interest on that debt didn't seem right. You have to understand that commercial enterprises were paying from 35-50% in interest on their borrowings from the banks. The government was borrowing from the central bank at a much lower interest rate, but only when I started to dig into central bank financial reports did I find that the central bank was financing the government's large fiscal deficit year after year with 50 year loans at zero percent interest. This was responsible for a huge increase in the money supply and that in turn caused a lot of the inflation. Jamaica did have the British system of audit firms and most of the time the auditing of financial reports was pretty clean, but things got buried in details.

Q: Did Jamaica serve as a center for banking, commerce, what have you, within the Caribbean area?

BLACK: No, I wouldn't say so. They had too many controls. Jamaica had exchange controls, controls on foreign exchange coming in, foreign exchange going out, and high import duties. Jamaica restricted the Jamaican dollar to domestic use, and Jamaican dollars were not supposed to be taken out of the country. This put a real damper on international payments systems. So it was too restrictive for multinationals. Actually Puerto Rico was more of the commercial center in the Caribbean because it was American territory, it used the American dollar, and the territory was given a lot of tax advantages to attract multinationals. A lot of American businesses had their Caribbean operations there. When I was in Jamaica the U.S. had the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) which was supposed to promote foreign investment and trade in Caribbean nations through trade and tariff preferences. There were several trade missions from Puerto Rico, and Jamaica was vying for some investment from the U.S. businesses that had cash reserves in Puerto Rico. The incentives to invest in Puerto Rico required the firms, many of them pharmaceutical companies, to retain their profits in Puerto Rico or pay income tax on them. So there was a lot of cash there. I think the CBI allowed the companies to invest that money in CBI countries without paying tax on it. Other places like the Netherlands Antilles, that were still part of the Netherlands, also had much freer monetary and trade regulations, so Jamaica was not a banking center by any means.

Q: What was the currency of Jamaica?

BLACK: The Jamaican dollar.

Q: Where was that pegged?

BLACK: When I was there I think it was pegged at about 5.5 Jamaican dollars to the U.S. dollar. From what I've heard it's now about 40 Jamaican dollars to one U.S. dollar and may still be overvalued. But that was one of the problems that I mentioned earlier. Edward Seaga was very adamant about keeping the Jamaican dollar pegged to the U.S.

dollar at a fixed exchange rate but they really couldn't afford to do that as imports greatly outstripped exports. Jamaica had to borrow foreign exchange to support the exchange rate and paid the price in growing foreign debt.

Q: As a former consular officer I imagine everybody at the embassy got bugged by people who had relatives who wanted to get visas. Did you get asked?

BLACK: I was asked from time to time, particularly by business colleagues to help facilitate visas. They would mostly ask for help in avoiding the long lines at the consular section. In most cases where the request was legitimate and there was a valid business reason for a visit I would talk to my friends over at the consulate. They were generally very helpful because it didn't cost us anything and gave us access when needed. However, I tried not to become too much of a bother to them because it was a very busy consular section. They had lines going around the block every morning. They really had their hands full and of course there was a lot of fraud, as you might imagine.

Q: So were there a lot of fraudulent activities going on in the community?

BLACK: There certainly was a lot of visa fraud because many Jamaicans wished to emigrate to the U.S. to get a job and earn higher wages. Jamaica had a high unemployment rate. Jamaicans would see that people who went to the U.S. usually made higher wages and had an easier time getting jobs. There were a lot of people who were hoping to seek their future by emigrating to the U.S. If they couldn't get an immigrant visa, which were scarce, especially for people who had no preferences, then they tried to go on a non-immigrant or visitor's visa and just not come back. I'm sure there are many Jamaicans in the U.S., even today, that came over on a visitor's visa and just never returned.

Q: Did the ambassador get involved in the economic reporting or was this not his interest?

BLACK: He was interested in business and very interested in helping the business community, but was not too interested in the details of macroeconomic reporting. In many ways Ambassador Sotirhos was as much an advocate for Jamaica to the U.S. government as he was an advocate of U.S. interests to Jamaica. In a number of ways he was trying to help Jamaican development and wanted to get more U.S. firms to invest in Jamaica. He had a strong interest in the foreign aid program and the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI).

I should mention one of the other big foreign exchange earners was textiles and garments. Like many developing countries at that time Jamaica had a free trade zone and one of the major exports was garments that were being sent to the U.S. While I was there the Caribbean Basin Initiative provided enhanced access for CBI countries' garments to the U.S. One of the economic issues we had was the Bilateral Textile Agreement that set the quotas for textile exports to the U.S.

One of the disputes which occurred under the Caribbean Basin Initiative had to do with ethanol. The Jamaicans discovered that if they produced ethanol in Jamaica they should be able to take advantage of duty free entry into the U.S. because there was a fairly high tariff on ethanol imports to protect the U.S. ethanol industry. A U.S. company had started an ethanol producing plant in Kingston to turn the alcohol byproduct of sugar cane (fermented molasses) into ethanol. At some point the Jamaican government became the owner of the plant. They began importing wine from Europe – remember the "wine lake" in the EC? – and used it as the raw material for ethanol rather than sugar cane molasses. I am sure the excess wine was probably a lot cheaper. Then Jamaica began exporting ethanol to the U.S. duty free under the CBI. U.S. ethanol producers who were being protected by the U.S. tariff objected – I think the main one was ADM (Archer Daniels Midland). I think they complained to various congressmen. In any case, we had the GAO (General Accounting Office) down doing a report for Congress on the ethanol issue. It became a major dispute and eventually Congress changed the CBI to permit ethanol made from Jamaican origin products like sugar cane but not from wine imported from Europe. Jamaica had invested a lot into the ethanol plant but I don't think it was successful in the long run.

Q: Was Cuba messing around in there?

BLACK: That depends on whom you ask. I didn't see much sign of it but it was still a very sensitive subject in some U.S. circles. There were still allegations that certain Jamaicans had rather too close ties to Cuba. When I was there I saw little evidence that Cuba was doing much in Jamaica. They still had close ties and certainly had economic and political relations but I don't think Cuba had much influence over the Jamaican government. But that was one of the reasons that certain parts of the U.S. Government were afraid of Michael Manley coming back into power. When he was re-elected in 1989 these fears were proven to be without any basis. Manley was prime minister for about three years and then retired and P.J. Patterson took over as prime minister. As far as I heard, there was no evidence of Cuban influence under either PNP government.

Q: Did you have congressmen or congresswomen who were particularly interested in Jamaica? This often happens in these islands.

BLACK: Oh, we did indeed. When I first arrived in Jamaica we had a congressional delegation that wanted to see the effects of the CBI on Jamaica. A whole group came down and was royally wined and dined on the north coast. They were also interested in an investment dispute with an American businessman, John Rollins, who had owned a hotel on the north coast, the Wyndham Rose Hall. He and his wife had bought the old great house Rose Hall and restored it, and then built a hotel nearby, as far as I remember. I think that the Jamaican government bought the hotel from Rollins in the 70s when economic circumstances were dire, but Rollins maintained it had been expropriated because the price paid was too low.

One frequent visitor to Jamaica was Charlie Rangel, who came down a number of times. I think he had a number of Jamaican American constituents.

Q: New York, yes.

BLACK: The Black Caucus was very interested in Jamaica for obvious reasons. I should mention Hurricane Gilbert because it and its aftermath were the most dramatic events of my time there. I had been scuba diving the day before the hurricane. Because it was a Sunday, we didn't listen to the weather but Tom and I went out diving with friends on their sailboat. It was a beautiful calm sunny day, literally the calm before the storm. As we were coming back to the yacht club, we noticed that a lot of the sailboats were gone. Our friends had heard that a hurricane was predicted and double tied their boat when we got back. This was September 11, 1988. On September 12, Hurricane Gilbert struck Jamaica. It was the most devastating hurricane to affect Jamaica for at least 20 years. I heard in Jamaica it was a category six, although I guess in the U.S. they only go to five. The hurricane started in Kingston around six in the morning. The eye passed through around one pm. Everyone in the embassy was told to stay home during the hurricane, but I went outside during the hour we were in the eye. I saw roofs had flown off houses around my neighborhood. Fortunately my house had a concrete roof and the only damage sustained was a broken sliding glass door during the second half of the storm. However, the swimming pool was full of branches and required a major cleanup later on. Running water went out several hours after the hurricane started, and the electricity and telephone were all out by the end of it. In the 80s we were still communicating with the embassy through the radio network run by the marine guards. I remember that my radio's battery had enough power to contact them up until the next morning. After the hurricane passed through, those of us who were able came into the embassy to assess the damage and try to communicate with Washington whether any Americans were hurt or missing and our initial assessment of the damage. My mother had called the State Department numerous times to find out if I had been hurt, but we had no communication with the rest of the world for several days. The storm knocked out all the satellite dishes and telecommunications even in the U.S. embassy.

The first day after the hurricane AID sent a team from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). They came in a C-5 cargo plane, I think. They brought emergency communications equipment with them which was set up in the separate AID building. The embassy was running on emergency generators but that limited a lot of things like lights and air conditioners. It took some time for electricity to be reestablished in the building, but it was much faster than in the private homes. I had a small emergency generator that gave limited electricity about six hours a day, three in the morning and three at night. But it took three months to restore the city electricity. The U.S. sent several electrical crews as part of our disaster aid. I remember when the Florida Power & Light crew was in my neighborhood. We welcomed them with open arms! My water was out for about 10 days. The water utility had shut down the water voluntarily to avoid having it contaminated. The big problem with water once the city restored the flow was that my water tank needed electricity to pump water to the house. When the generator was on, it pumped, but when it was off we sometimes ran out of water. The generator wasn't strong enough to make ice, so we put things we wanted to keep cold in the freezer. The telephone was out for at least three months.

After the hurricane, the donor community pledged something like $500 million in reconstruction aid. Seaga visited the major donor countries asking for help to recover from the devastation. Whether it all materialized I can't tell you. But the post hurricane reconstruction, the effectiveness of foreign assistance that we gave them, and analysis of the effects of the hurricane on the economy, the currency, the debt, and the budget pretty much defined my reporting and activities during my final year as economic counselor. I retired a year after the hurricane hit us.

What triggered my memories of the hurricane was your question about congressmen with a particular interest in Jamaica. Right after the hurricane, while we were all busy trying to help Jamaica recover, we also had to contend with high level visitors who came down to "observe" the damage. I particularly remember Jessie Jackson and Charlie Rangel visiting. We were literally inundated with various congressmen and other luminaries who were there to show their "support" for Jamaica. I'm not sure how much help they gave but they might have been influential in obtaining aid for the country. So you're absolutely right; there were certain congressmen who had an interest in Jamaica.

Q: Did you have several officers working for you?

BLACK: I had one officer working for me. Molly O'Neal was there when I first arrived. She left in '88 and George Kopf was her replacement. He was there for two years. I also had one American secretary and one Foreign Service National. So we were four people in the econ section. But I guess for a small Caribbean country that was a reasonably sized economic section. We shared a suite with the political section. The political section had a political counselor, one political officer, one labor officer, and an American secretary. That was our staffing.

Q: Were you looking at the other islands too? I mean, just the economy of the other islands? Because you were probably the biggest embassy, weren't you?

BLACK: Barbados was the regional embassy. They had responsibility for quite a number of islands. Actually I was a little jealous because in their official duties they got to travel all around the Eastern Caribbean. We were only accredited to Jamaica. Cayman Islands was the closest island to Jamaica, except maybe for Cuba, but it was still a British protectorate. From time to time we'd go over there but we didn't have reporting responsibilities there.

Q: What did the British do with them?

BLACK: What did the British do with them? I think most protectorates are responsible for their own internal administration but the British manage their foreign relations. Some protectorates are also subsidized. The islands that are still under a foreign power generally do not want to be independent. Many of the islands that have become independent have had real economic problems. Small islands with limited natural

resources really are not economically viable as independent countries in this day and age. If they want to have a living standard similar to the U.S. mainland they just don't have the resources to support that. The islands that I remember are still British protectorates are Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos and British Virgin Islands. The Netherlands Antilles are Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire. Saba is also still Dutch, and St. Martin is half Dutch and half French.

Q: And Martinique, of course.

BLACK: Martinique and Guadeloupe are departments of France. I believe all the protectorates are heavily subsidized. I mean, their sources of income are generally tourism and then whatever resources are available on the island. Jamaica happened to have bauxite, which puts them a bit ahead of the others. It's also a bigger island, has more land.

Q: Did the criminality on the island make it difficult for you moving there? I mean you and others at the embassy?

BLACK: I think it does. You always have this concern about safety. During my four years in Jamaica there were some pretty horrible murders. One Dutch woman, the wife of a Dutch diplomat, was brutally killed. An American businessman who was the owner of the Burger King franchise there was murdered by his gardener. In another one of the embassy houses, the occupants were having a party and were sitting outside late at night. They were attacked by gunmen who shot one of the guards on a nearby embassy house. While nobody was killed, the guard was badly injured. A Jamaican businessman friend of mine made a grisly discovery in the house of one of his employees. She, her mother, and the helper had been murdered by the gardener. I mentioned before that the house of the gunny sergeant was robbed and his wife was raped. There were some very violent crimes that went on in Jamaica. And then there were the 24 hour armed guards on our houses. It does make you a bit nervous. We had what they call rape gates on our bedrooms. These are metal doors inside the house providing an additional barrier between the bedroom and the rest of the house. Say the bedroom is off the living room, there is a metal wrought iron gate with a padlock at the entrance to the bedroom. I never bothered to lock them but they have separate locks so if somebody invades the house, they have to first get through the locks on the outside doors and then the locks on the bedroom doors. But they were there for a reason.

Q: Then you left there in '87?

BLACK: I left in '89. Kingston was my last post and I retired from there.

Q: What have you done since?

BLACK: After I retired in '89, the AID director in Kingston offered me a job as a consultant at the mission. I stayed on in Jamaica for one year and was a consultant in the economic office. I worked for the AID economist and did a number of studies. I did

papers on macro-financial indicators in Jamaica; relationships between Jamaica's monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies; effectiveness of USAID's assistance to the apparel industry; Jamaica's PL-480 Section 108 currency auction program (the law that allowed countries to retain local currency earned from sales of PL-480 commodities to develop the private sector); and eliminating restrictions on foreign exchange access.

When my consultancy was finished in August 1990, I came back to Washington D.C. I had previously applied to several law schools, and partly because Tom came back to Washington I chose Georgetown Law Center. I graduated from Georgetown in 1993 with a JD degree, passed the California bar and then waived into the D.C. bar. In 1994 I started working for Morgan, Lewis and Bockius as an associate attorney in their international section. I worked full time for a few years. However, in February 1999 my husband Tom went to Cairo on a consulting assignment for AID. On February 11 in the middle of the night I had a phone call from a consular officer at the Cairo embassy informing me Tom had died the night before. He had a heart attack in the swimming pool of the Cairo Hilton. This was a terrible shock for me. When my mother had a stroke a year later, I found it impossible to continue with full time legal work. I worked part time for awhile and then I went to a consultant basis with the law firm. I still have a consulting agreement but I only work for one partner.

Q: This term "consultant" is bandied about so much in Washington; in your case what did this mean?

BLACK: When I worked for AID in Jamaica it meant I was a full time employee but my employment was limited by the terms and job description in my contract. At the law firm it meant I was paid only for the hours that I worked. The firm was not obligated to give me any minimum level of hours, but by the same token, if I was unable to take on an assignment they asked me to do that was ok. As I said, I worked only for one partner at the law firm. I would tell him when I was available to work and he would tell me what he was working on where I could be helpful. It depended on the clients and what they needed. There was always more work than they really had people to handle in my field. When I first started working at the firm I used to do customs law, export controls, trade and immigration law. Because of my Foreign Service background I also worked on some cases that involved more obscure laws like the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the Anti-boycott laws. When a firm has a multinational client base, as Morgan, Lewis does, some of its clients inevitably have problems with one or more of those issues. Most are inadvertent violations, but if the law imposes strict liability this doesn't matter.

Q: It's difficult the way we keep trying to right the world.

BLACK: We do, yes. Particularly things like exports to Cuba or to Iran without a license. The sanctions laws and the particular laws I just mentioned are, to many companies, rather obscure and easy to contravene without knowing. Maybe an exporter ships on the wrong ship and it docks in a Cuban port or something. I did some work with baseball teams because they sometimes hire baseball players who are Cuban nationals living in third countries. There are certain laws that applied to them.

Anyway, back to the consultant question. In my case, when I went on a consultant basis, I was paid only for the hours I worked but I didn't have to do any minimum billable hours. I only did billable hours.

Q: Yes. You did not have to sweat out partnerships and all that.

BLACK: Exactly, yes.

Q: They work the younger lawyers to excess to increase the firm's income.

BLACK: Some firms do this to excess. But because I was in my late 40s when I graduated from law school and joined the law firm, I found I didn't have as much energy as some of these younger attorneys who were in their 20s.

Q: We have two or three young ladies who are interns who were observing.

BLACK: Yes, I'm sure they have wonderful careers ahead of them.

Q: Okay. Now we will have all this transcribed. You'll get a copy and you do the usual editing. If there are things that you feel you'd like to expand on or forgot to mention a whole subject, put it in.

BLACK: Okay. I'm sure things will come back to me like Hurricane Gilbert. How can I forget the hurricane?

Q: The thing about oral history is we try to get as much into it as we can and we're not worried about length because people will go in for specific subjects. So I want to thank you very much.

BLACK: Thank you for having me. This has been very enjoyable.

Q: This is a second part with Dorothy Black. But Dorothy, a question I didn't ask, because now the Foreign Service has gotten practically feminized, but did you see changes in being a woman and working as a Foreign Service officer during your time in the service?

BLACK: During my career? Oh, enormous changes. When I came into the Service we had three women in our junior officer class of around 30, those who were in the State Department. So about 10 percent. USIS (United States Information Service) had more women than State. I came into the Service in '67. In the '70s the Department changed the policy requiring women officers to resign if they married. When I came in, any woman who married had to resign but this did not apply to men. When the policy changed, some of the women officers who had previously resigned were invited to come back into the Service, but at the grade level they had when they married. That increased the number of women officers. I think the real changes started when women started suing. There were

several lawsuits, some class action suits. I remember particularly Alison Palmer's class action lawsuit that went on for quite a number of years. I believe that she won in federal court, and as a result the Department was required to actively try to recruit more women. Trends in the country overall also affected the Department. More women were attending universities. When I was at Stanford I think the ratio was one woman to four men. That is about 20 percent women. I believe that at most universities women now make up at least 50 percent of the student body. The same thing has happened in law schools and medical schools. When I graduated from Stanford in 1964, law school classes had maybe one or two women. When I attended Georgetown Law Center in 1990, around half the students were women. There has clearly been a huge change in the career options women have now. When I was growing up, most women were considered only for secretarial, teaching or nursing positions. And look at the ambassadors now. I can't think of any women ambassadors I knew when I first came into the Service. I don't know what the percentage is now, but I know there are many.

Q: Yes. There has been a real revolution in this.

BLACK: When I think back to when I graduated from Stanford, I didn't consider going to law school or even medical school – my father would have liked me to consider that – because I thought it would take too long, three years or seven years, and I would probably be married with children by that time. For example, Sandra Day O'Connor, although she is a bit older than I am, I think she was the only woman in her Stanford law school class. The changes are very gratifying. I think the women are changing the whole landscape; they're certainly changing law firms. I mention law firms because so many women are coming out of the law schools, so many good women lawyers, law firms really have to accommodate them and change their view of how they work. They're becoming much more flexible, with for example flex time and maternity leave. Otherwise they're going to lose all these good women.

End of interview