

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

ROBERT BOOTH

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INTERVIEW

Q: Where were you born and raised?

BOOTH: I was born October 29th, 1952 in Johnson City, Tennessee. My father, at that time, was assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro as a Foreign Service Staff Officer. The State Department regulations at the time were that spouses, and they were almost always women back then, of embassy officers were to return to the United States to give birth. Accordingly, my mother traveled to Johnson City, Tennessee which was my father's hometown, and 10 weeks later I was on the SS United States, along with my older brother Thomas, heading out to my father's next posting which was at the embassy in Bonn, West Germany.

Q: Very interesting. Now yes, the rule to have the baby delivered in the U.S. is fine, but did your father still have family there, is that why your mother went to Johnson City?

BOOTH: Yes, absolutely. The rest of his family members were there, his brothers, and other relatives so that they could take care of my mother whose English was still a work in progress.

Q: OK, so just one step back for a second. So, your father's hometown was Johnson City. What kind of work was he involved in before he met your mother, and so on?

BOOTH: He was born in 1909 in Johnson City. His full name was Ernest Wendell Booth. He was the son of Cornelius Booth who was a professor of English at Sewanee University. As a young adult growing up in the time of the Depression he did not finish high school and worked as a millwright in a little shop outside Johnson City until 1941. When war was declared he immediately volunteered to serve in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the 3rd and 20th Armored Divisions which deployed through the European theater of operations. At war's end he found himself serving in the army of occupation as a Military Police Officer and volunteered to stay behind as part of the "army of occupation" because he was not married. His primary job was working with a squad of soldiers to locate and arrest members of the Nazi SS (Schutzstaffel) who had shed their uniforms and were trying to hide and blend in with ordinary German citizens. One method was for his squad to hike into a local forest and look for secluded cabins, discreetly surround the structure and wait for evening to fall. If the cabin's chimney suddenly started to produce smoke, there was good reason to believe that it was occupied. At the right moment they would storm the cabin and if they found military aged males inside they would be ordered to remove their shirts and to raise their hands over their heads. If they discovered a blood group tattooed in the right armpit it was a clear indication that they were members of the Waffen-SS. In those cases my dad and his squad would detain the suspects and escort them to the nearest U.S. military detention facilities. Apparently, it was during one of these turnovers that somebody mentioned to my father that they were looking for people to join the Foreign Service as security/communications personnel. And my dad, from my recollections of what he told me, was ready to experience the world beyond leave small town USA and so he said, "Yes, I would like to consider that." As a result, he returned to the United States and undergo a security background investigation conducted by the FBI. While waiting for the FBI to

completer their inquiry, he got a job as a guard at the Mellon Gallery. I have one picture of my father in his security outfit at the Mellon Gallery.

Q: Oh for heaven sakes.

BOOTH: After his security clearance was approved, he was hired by the State Department and immediately assigned to the U.S. Legation in Budapest. It was there when he was working with three other...

Q: Wait. So now this assignment to the Legation was what year?

BOOTH: I think it's around '46 or '47.

Q: So it was right after the War?

BOOTH: Oh right after the war. So apparently my dad and two or three others at the U.S. Legation were recruited or volunteered to be involved in a program where the American Government was trying to sneak royalists out from the previous Hungarian government under the noses of the occupying Russian forces. According to my father these fugitive royalists were being snuck into the U.S. Legation and put into wooden caskets that were identified as containing the remains of American airmen whose planes had been shot down over Hungary during World War II. The caskets would be driven to the Hungary/Austria border and then turned over to U.S. authorities in Vienna. Eventually the Russians, after a couple of such trips, discovered what the U.S. government was up to and my dad and his colleagues were declared persona non-grata and forced to leave Hungary.

During his assignment to Budapest he had met my mother Maria Elizabeth Sebok and they had started to date and had become quite a couple. They were not married, but as a result of the Russian declaration of persona non-grata they quickly married, which gave her protections, although not yet U.S. citizenship. As a result, she became a ward of the U.S. government and was shipped off to Austria by train for protection until my dad could pack up join her and, after a short stopover in Washington, D.C., traveled by ship to Italy to take up his next assignment at the to the U.S. Embassy in Rome.

Q: OK, let me just go back one second. Since your grandfather was a teacher at Sewanee, do you trace your heritage back to settlers? Do you go that far back?

BOOTH: The furthest we've gone back certified is Hiram Booth who was in the Tennessee 3rd Union Cavalry, during the Civil War, Union. As far as we know he was a shopkeeper. We haven't really gone much genealogy research beyond that. Our DNA testing suggests German-English background. That's as far as we go.

Q: Because you know, there are always a few people with these incredible stories that go back almost to the Revolution. They're part of the initial wave of settlers that go beyond the Appalachians and begin settling in that unknown territory, and all of those stories. Alright, so we're back to Europe. Your father has just gotten married to his Hungarian bride. They get her out to Austria and he's assigned to Rome, but how is her status regularized?

BOOTH: Oh, she had to come to the United States to become a U.S. citizen. She tells a funny story. She fell in love with chocolate milkshakes. Sometime during her stay in Washington, DC she lived in hotel close to the State Department and had milkshakes breakfast, noon, and dinner. And she tells the story with a great smile on her face that at one point after like her 10,000th chocolate milkshake she got sicker than anything. And she had never touched one since. While residing in Washington, DC she prepared for the citizenship test. She passed, and her oath of allegiance was administered inside by the Secretary of State inside the Main State Department building. I apologize I don't remember exactly who it was. I believe it was Dean Acheson. Back then it was a privilege accorded to the small number of Foreign Service personnel who had non-U.S. citizen spouses.

Q: OK. Do you remember which year she became a citizen?

BOOTH: I do have her card. I'm going to have to assume it is '47 or '48 at the latest.

Q: That would have been Marshall.

BOOTH: That would have been. I know I have her documents. She's no longer with us. And I can find it out and clarify that later.

Q: Imagine taking the oath of allegiance from the Secretary of State, and somebody of historical significance like Marshall. Wow.

BOOTH: Still, the Department of State was so small that such privileges were common. I still laugh with people when we talk about the State Department. The State Department, the second smallest federal bureaucracy. It was and is just tiny.

Q: Sure, sure. Alright. Your parents are now regularized. Your mother is a U.S. citizen. And your father's next assignment is in the security part of the Embassy? How did it work?

BOOTH: That's something I'm not sure of. I know later he was fully in communications and records branch, known as "C and R." At a point his dual role as security and communications changed. I didn't discuss this as much as I now really wish I should have with my father. And the existing personnel records are not helpful on this matter.

While in Rome my mother became pregnant with my brother Tom and she flew back to Johnson City to give birth. She returned to Rome and shortly thereafter, my father was assigned to Rio de Janeiro where, 12 months later, my mother became pregnant with me. In Rio de Janeiro my father was working full-time in the embassy's communications and records branch.

Q: OK, so that's clear enough because communicators are a specialty that continued throughout the history of the department. Responsibilities change over time but he wasn't exactly a DS (Diplomatic Security) officer, was he? Was he a security officer?

BOOTH: No. No. The only time I can say he was security was in Budapest... I know that from my understanding of the history of the DS... I've done some work on it and I try to explain it in my book that the first real State Department security officer was a gentleman assigned to the American Embassy in Athens, Greece. Why Athens, Greece? I don't know. It's sad that the paper record of SY in its creation and how the security officer positions were established at the embassies is just lost to time. I do have some old records, I do have some congressional testimony, I'm kind of the amateur historian for DS in many ways, especially in keeping memorabilia that we destroy too quickly. And the best that I can come up with is that the first truly named security officer is 1947. I had the gentleman's name based on an obituary I found in the Washington Post.

Q: OK. That's fine. Alright. So, you were born in Johnson City. You then as an infant go out to Rome?

BOOTH: No. My brother went back to Rome after being born in the United States and then from Rome my father was assigned to Rio de Janeiro. In Rio de Janeiro my mother became pregnant with me. She returns once again to Johnson City to give birth. About two months later my dad joins us in the United States and we travel as a family aboard the SS United States from New York to Hamburg, West Germany where my father takes up his next posting at the embassy in Bonn.

Q: OK.

BOOTH: Allegedly the youngest baby ever allowed on a transatlantic cruise. I still have some memorabilia from that trip aboard the SS United States.

Q: But what fun, for at that time you weren't flown out. Of course, you wouldn't have remembered but your mother gets a nice ocean ride to Europe.

BOOTH: My dad was with us and I do have photos of us three years later taking the same SS United States back to New York City. We're all in our big fluffy life jackets. It's a

black and white photo and my dad and the men all wear hats. I do have those photos that were taken in the summer of 1955

Q: Alright. So your father is in Bonn for his two or three year tour?

BOOTH: It was a three-year tour. And the interesting thing was that we lived in the same apartment as Julia Child.

Q: Oh for heaven sakes.

BOOTH: My mother laughs when she tells the story that we were raised on Julia Child's cooking. Years later it was interesting because my mother had gone down to a book signing by Julia Child being held in a store in Washington, D.C. After standing in line for some time she finally hands over the book to Julia Child and says, "Miss Child, I was one of the Americans who lived above you in the Bonn apartments and you used to cook food which you shared with us." (I have the picture of the apartment there in Bonn which actually located in Bad Godesberg). After a few seconds Julia said, "I'm sorry, I really don't remember you." That's fine. My mom walks around the store looking at other books when about 10 minutes later Miss Child comes up to her and says, "You had the two boys, didn't you?" So it took Julia a few minutes to say "Yeah, that's Maria." And my mother really had a passion for cooking and I think that Julia Child had a huge influence. I still have the signed book

Q: Alright. But your recollections from Bonn couldn't have been terribly....

BOOTH: The only thing I remember from Bonn, Germany was running into the radiator and getting stitches in my forehead.

Q: Oh for heaven sakes. Well every little boy, you know...

BOOTH: I was running after my brother. He made a sharp turn around the radiator. I have one or two black and white pictures of our time there but there's no personal recollection besides running into the radiator.

Q: Alright. So where do your parents go from there?

BOOTH: Well, again, because State Department employees could take passenger ships and not planes to travel across the oceans, we took the SS United States back to the United States. We took the train across the United States and hopped on the SS Presidential lines to Hong Kong – a British Crown Colony - where my dad was stationed for the next four years.

Q: Good heavens. What year is this?

BOOTH: 1955, '56. We were there for four and a half years. In Hong Kong we lived at 222 Prince Edward Road, which was a six-story beautiful apartment on the Kowloon side. I went to a Catholic school called Maryknoll Convent taught and run by nuns, I cannot remember their names. We did the four and a half years in Hong Kong and after two years we had to come back to the United States for leave. Again, we took a passenger liner back across the Pacific Ocean. I have been back to Hong Kong many times since, and my memories are it was a wonderful time being a kid because schooling was fun and we lived in an apartment with American kids. One of our neighbors were Harry and Mary Lou Allen. He was assigned to USIA (United States Information Agency) and we've stayed in touch with them all these years. We're still in touch with the Allen family as of today. Her husband just passed away recently, and Mitch, the oldest boy, was about our age so we did things together

Q: OK, so that's sort of early childhood. From Hong Kong did you and your parents do any other traveling in Southeast Asia?

BOOTH: My recollection is that we did not. My mom did, my mom loved to travel. Our big travel was when we crossed the Pacific. The ship stopped off in Hawaii before it was a state. We stopped in Japan for a few days. I forget the boat's itinerary, we might have stopped off on other islands, I think we might have. But we were in Japan. Each stop would be for about three days. We may have stopped in Korea. The ships were semi-passenger lines, nice. But no, once we were in Hong Kong we pretty much stayed there. We couldn't go into China obviously back then. We would go to the border. But that was about it.

Q: And so now at the end of Hong Kong this is ...

BOOTH: 1960.

Q: OK, and you're going on to where?

BOOTH: Hop the boat again, across the Pacific. By train from San Francisco to New York City where we board the SS America and sail to Le Havre France where my dad commenced a four year tour in Paris, France.

Q: Wow.

BOOTH: 1960 – '64.

Q: A great time to be in France.

BOOTH: It was. My mother, again being a bit of a renegade amongst the American community, decided to send my brother and I to the French bilingual school, L'ecole Active Bilingue. We were the only American kids in the embassy apartments, located at 29 Quai du 4 Septembre, who were not enrolled at the American School in Paris. Every morning my dad would drive us, in his new Pontiac car, to a specific spot near his work place and the Ecole Active school bus would then take us to school. It was bilingual, but it really was a French school. The classes were 8:00 – 4:00 every day and two hours a week were in English but everything else was in French. The first couple of months were kind of tough but it was at that point I became fluent in French.

Q: So you're now eight years old?

BOOTH: Yes. And the funny thing is that some 20 odd years later when I'm assigned to Paris in the RSO's office (Regional Security Office) I decided to enroll my daughter Chloe in the very same school. And to my great shock, when I had to go there and try to fill out the appropriate paperwork, I discovered the current school director, Madame Gomez, was in fact one of my former teachers. By chance my brother Tom was visiting Paris and decided to accompany me to the school. We walked into the Director's office together and Madame didn't recognize us. My daughter had previously been interviewed to see whether she qualified, and Madame Gomez said "Absolutely, your daughter's French is pretty good, but we only have room in the afternoon class, not the morning class." And I said, "Oh, Madame Gomez," and everybody in the room is speaking in French, "that's really too bad. Because with my job and my wife's job, and the nanny's availability and time schedules, my wife and I will drop her off to morning school so that the nanny can come in the afternoon." Madame Gomez responded, "Well, I'm sorry, morning classes are completely full." I looked at her and I said, "Don't you recognize us?" She looked at both of us and shook her head. Finally, I said, "Tom and Robert." And she exclaimed, "Les frères Booth!" (The Booth brothers!) "Your daughter's in the morning class.", she said immediately with a great smile

Q: She's a legacy.

BOOTH: Chloe's a legacy, that's right. We lived in France during the early 60's. My dad had a car and boy did we travel. Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sardinia, Germany, London, Belgium and other European countries. We couldn't go to Budapest. The Hungarian authorities would not give my dad a visa. I understand. But boy did we travel in that big Pontiac.

Q: Oh for goodness sakes.

BOOTH: Hydramatic drive. So that means automatic. Oh, we traveled a lot.

Q: Wonderful.

BOOTH: Of course my brother and I spoke fluent French, so we were the family translators. Wherever we left the apartment with my mother or father we would translate between our parents and the shopkeepers. My mother's French was getting there but she would use us. And the funny thing, typical of the French government back then, they had a program where the spouses of diplomats, and of course most of the spouses back then were women, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered a six-week long cooking course offered and paid for by the French government. My mom signed up for that offering. And that's when her cooking skills took off ...and she was a phenomenal cook. Paid for by the French. Typical French culture. We loved that.

Q. Alright. So here you are in a French sort of a middle school would you say?

BOOTH: Yeah, middle school, right. They're a little bit different from ours. Deuxième (second), troisième (third). They go the other way so for them twelfth grade is like kindergarten, so they move the other way. Première (first) is your graduating senior. Yeah, we enjoyed it. It was a great school. I made lots of good friends. I wish we'd had Facebook and Twitter. I'd love to be in contact today. But it was an enjoyable time. We lived well. The apartments we lived in are still there. They've been renovated. And it was a great life style too.

Q: OK. So around age 12 now you're getting ready to go. And how is it for you? Some people and some children adapt to the Foreign Service life very easily, some feel really bad every time they have to move. You know, torn up and it takes them a long time to, you know, they go through the silent period, and they're very uncomfortable and unhappy having to leave. How was it for you?

BOOTH: I'm going to leave all my old enemies behind, I'm going start at a new school and make new friends. I just didn't have any problems with saying goodbye and moving to something new.

My dad had to come back to Washington, D.C. from Paris for specialized training which upset your school schedule. He was going to go to Teheran, Iran for his next assignment. And so, we came back a little off season – early fall - and I started school in America for the first time in my life. It did not last long. I forget the grade, and Tom and I were enrolled in a private Catholic school out in Arlington, Virginia. St. Teresa's, I think it was, and we were there for two months or three months. One more time, a ship from New York to Beirut, Lebanon and a Pan Am flight to Teheran. We arrived in Iran late '65 and a little bit late in the school year. We were enrolled in the Tehran American School, TAS as it's called, the Fighting Eagles. The yearbook was called the Talons, I remember these things now. I just kind of showed up in the classroom full of new faces where studies had already started. So that was a bit discombobulating. But again, we lived where a lot of Americans lived, and you just did things together, so again you go to school and there's

lots of stuff going on. So, for me there were new friends to make. And again, you realize in a year or so you're going to be moving again.

Q: While you were in Tehran were you able to get out to see any of the ancient ruins?

BOOTH: Persepolis was the only one. My mother did some more travel, but it was tough to travel back then in Iran. I mean, the hotel accommodations are just not what you have today. And that was the other thing when we lived in France too and wanted to travel. First, you'd have to find a "chambre d'hote" (guest room). Second, you had to call to make reservations. No cell phones back then, and some French hotels had one single phone for the entire property. The French telephone system was appallingly bad. I mean bad. Third, language miscues. These are some of the many complications. And Iran was not prepared to receive tourists, there were just some social things you had to familiar with. And I remember at Persepolis, we finally got there, and there was this one elderly guy. He's kind of the gate keeper, the guard, the guy who cooked the tea. Who spoke a little bit of English who will kind of show you around a bit. That was it. You walked. It was wide open. I have one picture somewhere and it's just desolate there's nothing. There are the ruins, but there's no people, there are no tourists. There's one guy. And a little shack, and I think he showed up when he showed up.

Q: Boy, times have changed. Alright, that's great. From Tehran did you do any traveling otherwise elsewhere in that region?

BOOTH: No, we didn't. My dad arrived on a shortened tour and something happened somewhere, and the State Department wanted my dad return to Italy. But because my father's forthcoming transfer to Rome would occur during the middle of a school year my parents decided to enroll Tom and I at Cascia Hall, a Catholic boarding school, in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Q: Well how did you end up in Tulsa?

BOOTH: Oh, it's our dear friend Jonnie Lairmore who we knew from Hong Kong. It's a tremendously long story. She became a true member of the family and she helped set up the Cascia Hall enrollment. Tom and I arrived the first day of school with hours to spare. We stayed there for exactly nine months a year. In the meantime, my dad transferred to Rome, and then at literally the day we graduated from school, we boarded a Braniff flight headed to Rome. I was now a freshman in high school. In Rome, Italy we were enrolled at the Catholic school, Notre Dame International which no longer exists. We were there for just one year when my Dad was identified for a transfer to London. Unfortunately, when my parents tried to enroll us in international schools in London, no spaces were available. Fortunately Tom and I were enrolled in the Villa Saint Jean school located in Fribourg, Switzerland – the French speaking area of that country - which unfortunately no longer exists either. I was a sophomore at the Villa Saint Jean and my brother was a

senior and we both just flourished at this private Catholic school. It was just an unbelievably great time. My mother and father remained in London and we came home at Christmas and at Easter. When we graduated in '68 my parents drove from London to Fribourg and of course in '68 what was happening? Huge street riots throughout France. All U.S. Embassy personnel located outside France were told not to travel through the country. Skirt France altogether, he had to stay inside Germany, cut through Belgium, and take the ferry boat across to England – both ways.

Q: So they told you to avoid the entire country?

BOOTH: The entire country, absolutely. Yup. And we think these notices are something new. Even in France it was just either stay put or stay out.

Q: So your brother graduates, I imagine he's thinking about college.

BOOTH: Oh yes, he had been accepted to attend Georgetown University. He's been accepted to Berkeley, but my mother said, "You're not going to Berkeley." You've got to remember '68 Berkeley. The family arrives in the United States for the first time to commence a new life. What happened was that the State Department asked my dad whether he would consider an assignment tour embassy in Saigon, Vietnam as an unaccompanied tour. My dad said "yes", and we said "no". We said, "Dad, you have not been assigned back to the United States since 1946." Twenty-two straight years overseas. He said, "OK, you're right. It's time to come back and become Americans again." My mother had lived in America for a grand total of a year and a half. My brother and I had lived in America for a total of a year. I'm 16, Tom's 18. In September 1968 Tom started Georgetown and I start Bethesda Chevy Chase High School in Montgomery County.

Q: Holy Cow. Alright. So you're now like a regular high school kid in the public school.

BOOTH: Except that when my High School friends first asked me to play football and they brought out this kind of elongated thing, I said "what's this?" I was quickly introduced to American football which I didn't like. Many new things to get used to. I mean you know, television series and stuff which I'd never seen. Certain things American kids know by rote. They grew up all together in the same neighborhoods so by the time they attended Bethesda Chevy Chase (BCC) High School most of the students had their own little cliques. And so, I was kind of an outsider in a fairly large school that graduated 700 kids two years later in 1970. BCC was always a very high-quality school as a public school. It's the first time I went to a public school in my life. At that point I had been offered a slot at the Naval Academy and I started in the summer orientation program of 1970. I realized very quickly that I had made a terrible mistake.

Q: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. You've been traveling all around the world, you've seen all these different cultures, and you decide that the military is the profession for you.

BOOTH: All you had to do was go aboard the aircraft carriers and cruisers in Hong Kong and see those massive ships, and take tours aboard military ships in London and see them around the world. And I said, "Yeah, I'd like to drive some of those boats. I think that would be neat. I'd love to drive those boats."

Q: OK. That's what I wondered.

BOOTH: Within days of arriving I said, "Oh, have I made a terrible mistake." That's why the Navy has the summer program. They bring you in early and test you. Doing Navy stuff. And they see if a career in the Navy is really what you want to do. And God bless the Navy for that. I quickly said, "Woops, I made a mistake." Now I had been accepted to Georgetown on the waiting list, and the University of Tennessee. I was running late and had to decide fast which school to hold out for and that was the problem. Eventually I contacted Tennessee because I would be considered an in-state student and would start immediately that fall. If I were to tell you what my room and board and tuition costs were a year you would faint.

Q: Yeah, I can imagine. This was...

BOOTH: It was 1970. It was less than \$1,000.00 a year. I keep my winter quarter fee slip because when I tell people room, board, and tuition for the University of Tennessee, the flagship university – a land grant university - for the state, was less than \$1,000.00 a year, they don't believe me.

Q: Wow.

BOOTH: I started my studies and asked, "Now what do I want to do?" I believe in government service. I think that what my dad did was great, but I was now thinking about towards federal law enforcement and I had friends in the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). However, my dad said, "Have you ever thought about the Office of Security, in the Department of State?" It's what we were called back then, I talk about it in the book. I said, "I've never heard of it." He says, "No one has heard of it." Almost no one knew the Office of Security, Department of State. The FBI didn't know we existed. Hell, half of State didn't know we existed unless they had served overseas. I said, "Well, that's kind of interesting, what do they do?" He said, "Well, they do a little Secret Service stuff and a little FBI stuff, they serve overseas." In the Navy you travel overseas too. The thought of just remaining in the United States for the next 20 or 30 years was not unappetizing, but I enjoyed going traveling around the world. I enjoyed these cultures, I enjoyed these things. As a raising senior at the University of Tennessee in 1973, I submitted my application for employment with SY (Security) as a special agent. I now know that my file 1A-11.21 was numbered 742191. A gentleman by the name of Billy Hughes contacted me shortly by letter.

Q: SY is the old acronym.

BOOTH: Yes, the acronym SY was derived from the first and last letter of the word “security”, and I should have explained that. I’m sorry. And Billy Hughes who actually knew my father, all the SY people knew my father, eventually comes to the University of Tennessee campus conducts my personal interview, interviews sources, friends and teacher, checks in with the campus Safety and Security office and finishes by talking to the Knoxville police department. He tells me he will write everything up and submit a report for consideration for hiring purposes. And then nothing for months. Comes the new year and I’m waiting.... waiting.... waiting. Graduation day approaches comes, and I remember thinking “Well, I haven’t heard back anything, so it is time for Plan B”

Q: Graduation from college?

BOOTH: Yeah. I graduated from college and I hadn’t heard anything. Plan B was to register for Tennessee’s master’s program in Public Administration.

Q: Not so fast. You had four years at this university during the Vietnam war and you're also thinking about your future, but what did you major in?

BOOTH: I majored in political science and minored in French and anthropology. I loved it. I loved every minute of my time at the University of Tennessee. I’m privileged and lucky to have picked it and I’ve been back to visit the campus four times since.

Q: And you were satisfied with the education.

BOOTH: Oh, absolutely. The thing about the University of Tennessee is that it a land grant university the administrative rule back then was that if you were a Tennessee resident and you had a 2.25 or better GPA you were automatically accepted into the University of Tennessee state system.

To combat a surplus of incoming students, half of whom would never graduate, the UT system administrators came up with a remedy. The administrators decided that since most incoming freshmen would be majoring in the school of Liberal Arts, how could UT separate those students who really wanted a college education from those who were just testing the waters? The solution was simple. The administrators created the requirement that Liberal Arts majors had to minor in a foreign language. Now for a lot of Tennesseans, English is a second language. And while I say it with the greatest respect for UT comrades there, even today most American college graduates lack any foreign language fluency. For me to come to the University of Tennessee where you had to minor in French, was a dream requirement. During my first quarter at UT, I enrolled and obtained an A in a 3000 level French composition and conversation course, with a Dr.

Benouis who eventually left to teach at the University. With a passing grade in a junior level course, I had satisfied my minor requirements in my freshman year. This allowed me the flexibility to take classes like Marxism as a Philosophy, Art History, International Law and other liberal arts classes that I might not otherwise have taken.

And the professors were great. We didn't have TAs (teaching assistants). In retrospect that surprises me a bit. I only had TAs in my Western Civilization class because it was a required liberal arts course and you had hundreds of students. Dr. Richard Marius was the professor of that class. He hated Tennessee football and took every opportunity to criticize and ridicule Big Orange (nickname for the UT Athletics) in the classroom. he was kind of a renegade at UT Knoxville. All the classes were taught by the PhD professors. And they weren't big. The only survey classes that I remember having TAs were in Geology and Western Civilization. From 2012-2016 I was a full-time auditor at Dartmouth college where I enrolled in 31 classes and never had TAs except in my Oceanography class which had 140 students. My interactions with the UT professors were intimate. There weren't these huge classes. You'd think they were, but they weren't. I got a great education at UT and graduated with honors. It was during my junior year when I decided I wanted to continue with government service.

Q: Did the UT campus have any protests?

BOOTH: Oh yeah. The Vietnam War caused my rallies on campus. Gus Hadorn and Charles Huddleson, were UT's vice president and president of the student government body and were all for confrontations with UT administrators on any number of local and national topics. I was interviewed along with fellow students by the Chattanooga News -- who did not believe the campus was the right venue for such disruptions. There is an accompanying photo of those students who were interviewed, and I'm identified as a military brat, which I was not. I guess the Foreign Service was not a distinct agency back then. I was identified as someone who said, "You know, protest is absolutely fine but don't disrupt the classrooms." To me I was paying for an education -- I worked all through college and summers -- and our parents are paying for it. Students can protest all they to want in public areas, but don't disrupt the classrooms, don't disrupt the students. Because some students believe in your message and other don't their rights the protestors must remember that their rights end when they start violating mine. I have the right to go to class. I don't recall any serious police student confrontations, there was no tear gassing, it was just getting painful to be confronted by spontaneous gatherings outside classroom buildings. Of course, one of our biggest worry was the whole question of military conscription and deferments

Q: That's what I was going to ask next.

BOOTH: I figured that was coming. In 1972 the selective service was abolished along with my II-2 deferment and a lottery was established. That I'll never forget. The Vietnam

war was winding down. You don't want to be the last one drafted and shipped off to Vietnam as the war was seriously winding down. The night they drew the 1973 lottery, which was televised on national T.V., Melrose Hall residential students gathered in the basement in front of the T.V. surrounded by cans of beer. We could drink at 18 back then but you were not supposed to have alcohol on campus, however, the faculty had a bar on the campus. Hypocrites. In any case, we all stared at the T.V. while the screen showed a spinning cage that contained the ping-pong balls marked with dates and months. And we thought, "Here you go." I remember as clear as day the first number that comes up was, November 5th. And the kid in front of me screams "Oh, my God, oh my God, I'm number one!" He almost passed out. I know the next morning he ran down to the military recruitment office and tried to join the air force. "No", he was told, "you're number one buddy." I do not remember what happened to him. He obviously got called. My number was 79 and I quickly reached out to knowledgeable friends who advised that I might have a less than even chance of being called. My reaction was "Ok, I'm going to take a risk. What can I do?" Luckily for me, I'm drawn from a pool of eligible citizens from the state of Tennessee. Fortunately for me Tennessee's quota was met by enough volunteers and draftees by number 55-56. Would I have gone? Of course, I would have gone. But it brings up an interesting situation because when I talked to my dad, a decorated combat veteran from World War II, a true blue eyed American, he told my brother and I that he would have had no problem if we went to Canada. For me, there's something was wrong with this war if my father – a combat veteran - says, "This thing might not be right."

Q: Yeah, yeah.

BOOTH: And I'm sure, this is not classified, but I know my dad saw the State Department cable traffic, and it is quite clear now that by '66, '67 almost all U.S. Government foreign policy experts believed that the Vietnam could not be won militarily. Maybe the American public was not so sure, but the CIA, State, and the NSA thought so. I believe my dad was aware of this did not want me potentially dying for something American leaders would not admit. I know by '72 he had seen enough cable traffic to know that this war was wrong, we shouldn't be there, we should have been out in '66. Six years ago. Soldiers were still dying. For my dad to say, "You can go to Canada," was a serious revelation.

Q: Sure. Sure. And even if you had still been hanging around with Foreign Service Officers, they might have just told you, "Yeah, we..." Because I have interviewed some people who served in Vietnam as Foreign Service Officers back then, and man, they knew, for sure.

BOOTH: The Pentagon papers and subsequent publications support this. I won't go on a political diatribe, but the military and Johnson's senior policy advisors did no service by not challenging President Johnson. And that's clear. There was not a single Foreign Areas

Specialist in any agency doing analytical work by '66, '67, who was not saying, "It's lost, it's lost. What are we doing here?"

Q: Yeah. So fortunately, your number 79 was not reached.

BOOTH: It was not reached.

Q: And you're now thinking about graduate school and this office of security in the State Department?

BOOTH: Pretty much so. I visited the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations) Knoxville field office to talk about careers. They said, "We'd really like you to have at least two years of employment beyond college. It can be graduate school, it can be something else. But you need to show us something beyond college." I thought, "OK. the FBI is good, the Office of Security is good, but I haven't heard from the office of security." The FBI says it wants graduate work, so I decided to enroll in Tennessee's master's in public administration and started in the summer of 1974 program. Bother Tom was slated to commence at the University of Tennessee's law school and we roomed together that summer..

Q: Oh, interesting.

BOOTH: Yup.

Q: OK. Now when FBI or others said, "We want to see a little bit of graduate work," were they kind of indicating it should be in criminology or forensics or administration of justice?

BOOTH: My memory is not that good. I just don't remember anything specific along those lines. I took public administration, thinking that that is something I could use in any job in the government. Budget, money, resources, and so on. How do you handle policy problems. What is funny, in retrospect, is that on one of my first tests in public administration, a scenario was described in which a brand new Foreign Service officer assigned to Indonesia had come to post and was tasked to write a cable describing some local event and crafting a recommendation. When the Consul General disagreed, and told the young officer to change portions of the cable, the two got into a disagreement. The young Foreign Service officer's draft report said one thing and the Consul General was saying, "Well, no, no, I think we have to report it back this way." The question was who was right, the Consul General or the junior Foreign Service Officer? I was to be the arbitrator and wrote a one-page opinion. I still have the graded paper, an A minus.

Of all the test questions this teacher could have possibly chosen for a University of Tennessee management course was a question concerning the Foreign Service, what luck.

I, who knew something about the Foreign Service, and who had lived this kind of stuff. For me it was a very easy question to answer. For my fellow students I think they looked at this and said, "What's this Foreign Service crap?" Seriously. It wasn't fair, but it was fair for me. It was a generic management question but in context was easy for me to answer.

Q: Right. Yeah, it's a small organization and not many people knew about it. Once you find out about it it takes a little while to figure out what they do, the corporate culture and everything else. But alright, do you complete graduate school?

BOOTH: No. All of a sudden out of nowhere, I get this letter from the State Department saying, "Report October the 7th, 1974, for your swearing in ceremony."

Q: Whoa.

BOOTH: Whoa, wait a minute. I'm six or seven months shy here of graduating. I quickly contact my student adviser and Assistant Dean of Students, who believe it or not, was Ralph Boston, a gold and bronze medalist in the Rome and Mexico Olympics. I explain my predicament to Ralph Boston by saying, "Ralph, October 7, let me go back to State Department and tell them first let me finish my masters and then I will" Ralph interrupted me and said, "Call State back and confirm that October the 7th is a drop-dead date with no extension." Which I immediately did by phone and State instantly replied, "Mr. Booth, October 7th, 1974, final call." Back to Ralph Boston's office and I explained what just transpired. He looked at me and said, "Son, this is a real job." I explained that I had already paid for that winter's upcoming classes. He calmly replied, "Robert, I'll take care of everything. I'll dismiss you academically so that you can get your \$300.00 back." Upon returning to our apartment I said to my brother, "Tom, I leave for Washington, D.C in five days and I'll give you some money for the apartment we're renting out." In any case I loaded up everything I owned in my Cougar RX7 and drove almost 500 miles up highway 81. That road is still a nightmare. In 2009 I had to drive my daughter Chloe, a freshman Vanderbilt - talk about being a traitor to Big Orange -- and we drove down I- 81 for the first time I over ¼ of century and it's just as bad as it always was. It's a small super highway and the trucks, it's the corridor from Mexico to the eastern shore, and just flying by.... just zoom, zoom, zoom. Once home in Bethesda, Maryland, father and mother were glad to see me my. My father had converted to GS (General Schedule) in 1968 and SY (Security) hired him right away where he worked in the SY Communications Center. On October the 7th 1974, I arrived at a designated building in Arlington, Virginia, which I believe has been subsequently demolished. With my father as a witness, I swore alliance to the Constitution along with a Baltimore city police officer by the name of George Mitchell.

Q: Oh my God. George Mitchell was the security officer at my first post in Kingston, Jamaica. It's funny how connections in the Foreign Service happen. You are sworn in with George Mitchell and then I years later my first post is where he is the RSO.

BOOTH: He was a good mentor because of his police background and we were assigned to the Washington Field office together. He drove in every day from a suburb of Baltimore, bless his heart. That's how and when I started off in the Washington field office. The agents in WFO that I remember were Burley Fuselier, Jr., whose father was also was Foreign Service, there was Denny Williams, I'm trying to remember some of the others. Clyde Deffa, a former Marine, who left us relatively early. Additional agents assigned to WFO in 1974 were Bud Collins, Clarence Stafford, Bob Vertocnik, Rich Voshberg, Tim Kelly, John Chornyak, David Bosckor, and Steve Donelli. Our firearms training officer was Shep Kelly. We were a small office of around 15 agents. We had one female agent by the name of Nancy Lestina. WFO was located in a building that still exists and it's right behind our main headquarters now. I'll get the address.

It was there that I fell under the mentorship or the stewardship of the older agents like Steve Jacobs. Their mission would be take me along so that I could learn how to conduct what SY call background investigations. SY's primary domestic role in the mid to late 70's was to review the SF (Standard Form) 86 application form of candidates seeking employment with the State Department. The responsibility of WFO special agents was to authenticate and verify the information contained in the SF-86s and submit our findings in a Report of Investigation so that the department adjudicators could make a determination as to whether or not the person applying for the job was suitable to be given a top-secret clearance. That was our primary mission back then.

In addition to background investigations, WFO agents were called upon to provide protection for certain foreign dignitaries visiting the United States. Which came in infrequently. Before WFO agents were allowed to participate in protective details one had to attend a small two week class, kind of off that was taught by Greg Bujac, who eventually became our director. Jerry Wilson was another instructor. I'm trying to remember the names of other instructors. The class also the basics of how to do a background investigation and how to conduct personal interviews along with basic protection know h ow. While the majority of my work revolved around background investigations, I remember I was on the protective detail for Israeli dignitary Yigal Allon when he came to the United States for a fundraiser. We traveled all over the United States aboard a rented 727 tri-jet that had been paid for by a private Jewish organization attending huge dinners in L.A., Portland, Chicago and other large cities.

Q: Now this is interesting because I also thought that the Secret Service provided some...

BOOTH: Ah, OK. You hit significant *distinction*. Up until 1972 or '73, all foreign dignitaries who came to the United States were protected by SY, not Secret Service.

However, there was an incident where George Pompidou was spat on while visiting Chicago - I think it was – by some protestor outside his hotel. President Nixon was forced to call up and apologize for that incident. As a result, Nixon signed an executive order directing the U.S. Secret Service to protect all visiting foreign heads of state. All others, including the wife of Chiang Kai-shek who lived in California, would be afforded protection by SY. We picked up every other foreign dignitary else. That's when the split occurred. By the time I got to SY in '74, there already was a split, so it was '72 or '73 when George Pompidou was spat upon.

Q: Right. OK. So roughly how large was SY in terms of agents at that point?

BOOTH: Oh we were tiny. We did protection on the cheap. At some points I remember saying, “Wow, only 4 of us”. One agent is driving the follow car, one's doing advances, one agent in the front seat of the dignitary's car who was normally designated the Agent-in-Charge of the protective detail, and one agent riding in the follow car, who might carry a long rifle.” We did it on the fly. The best way to conduct protective security is not to draw attention to yourself. We protective services quietly. The Secret Service does it differently. Even today I'm embarrassed as an American to see the president of the United States in the motorcade in America or overseas surrounded by 20-30 cars, helicopters, police cars with lights and sirens everywhere. Blocking streets and walkways for hours, denying access to buildings and, in one instance, stopping the Russian Foreign Minister from entering a bathroom in California. They also stopped Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in Canada from walking down the hall in a Ottawa hotel to see President Clinton. Wow, to me it is so imperial. And so, for SY we deployed two cars, no lights and sirens, no police cars. Rarely did a member of the public who was walking on the sidewalks or driving on the streets ever give us a second glance. Most Americans could not name, let alone recognize, any foreign minister who would be visiting the U.S. Secret Service has their methods and SY has theirs in dealing with the public. If a lone wolf is out there, we'll deal with him.

You know the Secret Service's record is uneven, so let's look at how they want to protect their dignitaries from a historical aspect. Presidents have been shot at, presidents have been wounded, a president was killed, a presidential candidate was wounded, and a presidential car was struck at an intersection. Poor Mr. Ford, if Squeaky Fromm did not know that she had to pull the slide back on that .45 semi-automatic pistol to load the weapon, President Ford might not have served out his term. That's how close the bad guys got. And you see the White House has been hit a couple of times. As a result, the Secret Service has a very different version of protective services than SY. of ver. That's all I'll say.

Q: Did anyone ever complain, any foreign official ever complain, “This is all I get?”

BOOTH: I certainly didn't hear about it. Many foreign dignitaries told SY, "That's too much anyway" you are providing. I mean the French for example said, "Come on guys, after seven o'clock leave us alone. We want to be left alone during the evening social hours." We responded, "No, no, no, that's the time we have got to be with you." Most ministers, I think, were appreciative of SY's efforts. I remember one time I was the AIC for the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka with one other agent at a United Nations General Assembly in New York City. And it all work out fine.

Q: Oh yeah, well look. If the French aren't complaining, who is, who will? I mean you know.

BOOTH: From 1995 to 2001, I was identified by the Office of Protective Services to be the Agent- in- charge of protective details for of all the French foreign ministers that came to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City or who visited Washington, D.C.. I speak French, I have lived in France for more than 8 years and I understand their attitudes towards personal protection. "Send Robert, he can deal with the French" went the saying in our headquarters. It was a light joke at that that point. "The French are coming, don't worry, Robert's the AIC everybody else can forget about dealing with the French" was the common saying. It's personality like you said. I know how to deal with the French.

Q: OK. So those are the two principal activities that you began life with in Diplomatic Security in the Washington office.

BOOTH: Washington field office, correct.

Q: So how long did you spend in Washington?

BOOTH: I was there for a short period of time when SY Headquarters said, "We're looking for volunteers to go Beijing, China." And I said, "Goodbye WFO, I'm out of here." So barely eight months after joining SY I volunteered along with two other WFO special agents, John Chornyak and David Bosco volunteered to replace agents Mike Woods and Peter Bergin who were finishing up one year tours of duty. There was no training offered to go overseas. What happened was that the Marine Security Guards assigned to the U.S. Liaison Office were ordered out of China by the Chinses officials for rowdy behavior. The Marines had built a bar in the Marine House that they named the Red Ass Saloon that simply was getting out of control every weekend. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had had enough and ordered the Marines withdrawn. As a result, DS, or SY at that time said, "What are we going to do?" SY decided to replace the Marines on a temporary basis with special agents who would serve either 1 year or 18 months tour of duties and pretty much serve as Marine watch stander. But I said, "Wait a minute, who cares what I am supposed to do, I can get overseas, this is great."

Q: That's so interesting. That the Chinese could declare Marine Security Guards persona non grata, or whatever they had to say to get rid of security guards. Because I've never seen that anywhere else.

BOOTH: You never will again. The Chinese MFA considered the Marines as uniformed military personnel serving inside China and this was simply not to be permitted. The marines of course are back there now. But back then the Marines were ordered out and the best solution the State Department came up with was to replace armed marines with armed special agents who did not wear uniforms. Could they get four agents who would be willing to do watch standing duties? Especially in a 25% hardship pay post, with primitive telephone service, restricted travel options, no television, VCRs in their infancy and restricted social life? You bet. I said, "Now wait a minute, I don't have to pay rent, no gas, electricity, water or telephone bills, no property taxes and I get overtime pay on top of hardship pay. I'm a single guy, I don't have family. I said, "Let's go."

Q: Alright. At this point how old are you?

BOOTH: Twenty-two.

Q: Alright. So being a watch stander and having to do midnights, you're still young enough where you could be resilient.

BOOTH: Eighteen months will go fast. When I arrived in Beijing George Herbert Walker Bush was the ambassador. And boy did he and Barbara welcome the agents with open arms. After my first week in Beijing, he had me over to his house to dinner and they made you feel welcome as part of the U.S. diplomatic community. Barbara and I are still in contact. Beijing represented interesting time for me both socially and professionally because life changed really quickly for me. One, I was a single male and that had phenomenal advantages in a posting were scores of British, Australian, New Zealand, French, Swede, Norwegian and West German officials were single females. Not to count the foreign European students attending Beida University in Beijing. Single NATO country males were virtually non-existent, and my social life was quite robust. I still keep all the social invitations I received during my 18 months. All the official ones, anyways. Nine months ago, I had lunch in Boston with Annie my dear British friend of over a year in Beijing. And just had lunch with my old British girlfriend Annie, in Boston nine months ago.

Q: Isn't that amazing?

BOOTH: My wife knows Annie from years past. Socially my life in Beijing was unbelievable. I got to meet the British students and Canadian students who were at Beida University. We were all young and love music, luckily, I had Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" album, among others, and invited them over to my apartment for parties to listen

to music on my huge stereo system. We had parties in my apartment and for the lucky ones I'd say, "You know what, this weekend I'll be staying with someone else," so I'd let the British students with their lady friends or whatever have a key to my apartment for a night or two. We had lots of bicycle tours and picnics in parks. Football games in the parks and outings in the "Fragrant Hills",

The Great Wall or "Summer Palace" were common. Shift schedules as a watch stander, however, were onerous and interrupted many evening parties. But frankly, when the paycheck came in, wow, it made a difference. And you knew in the back of your mind that when it was time for your transfer you would be getting a nice onward assignment.

Q: Correct. OK. At that time remind me, it's '78 you said?

BOOTH: I'm there in Beijing in '76. Mao Zedong is still alive. He died while I was there.

Q: Oh, wow. OK. When you were there did it already show signs of the pollution?

BOOTH: Oh God, it was awful. It was bad way back then.

Q: Because it only gets worse.

BOOTH: You would see hundreds of tongzhimen (comrades) pedaling three wheeled bicycles back cargo space loaded down with black briquettes of soft coal. And that's what they cooked with that produced a constant white/blue haze that hung over the city. People forget that Beijing is in a "bowl" surrounded by tall mountains, so the inversion is always there. They had a crematorium about a mile behind the Liaison office, and you knew when it was operational. The streets and sidewalks were clean, there was no trash on the ground, but the air pollution was noticeable. While Beijing streets were almost void of cars it was the burning of soft coal that caused problems. Coal was used for heating and cooking. And it got cold. Beijing was cold.

Q: Wow, wow. Alright. You did your 18 months, what's your reward?

BOOTH: Geneva, Switzerland.

Q: OK. You couldn't complain.

BOOTH: The only problem was, when I got to Geneva it really wasn't a security officer position, it was the administrative/security role for the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty) team. I was working out of the SALT building, I wasn't assigned to the U.S. Mission to work under RSO Dave Roberts but a U.S. Colonel named Norman Clyne and all he had me do was beat the mission administrative management work. I informed SY Headquarters in Washington, D.C. about my situation and said, "Guys, I already did watch standing for one tour where I did not perform any RSO work and I'm not doing

any RSO (Regional Security Officer work here.” Headquarters’ response was, “You wanted Geneva.” My retort was “Well, I identified Morocco, Geneva, and Stockholm,” as top choices because the position indicated that I would work for the RSO. That’s not what I found in Geneva.”

Dave Roberts was at the RSO at the U.S Mission but I came under the management of a U.S. Army Colonel Kline who wanted me to ensure that the SALT tax-free liquor locker was properly stockpiled, the coffee bar was refreshed daily, the fleet of cars with assigned chauffeurs were properly maintained, helping prepare for evening social functions at private residences, making reservations at local restaurants, getting out to Cointrin International airport (the same one I used to travel from as a high school sophomore from the Villa St. Jean in 1967-1968) to help with TDY arrivals and departures and any other number of general services operations. The only security work I was involved with was the Marines assigned to protect the Botanic Building (SALT Headquarters) and the security violation program. getting things done. And I said, “No, I’m a security guy.” And he said, “No, you are security kind of, but when the SALT delegation is here you’re kind of management.” Clyne (who some at SALT nicknamed Ku Klux Kline) told Dave Roberts not to come into the building. He was a terrible manager and supervisor. Maybe his style worked in the military, but he was simply unsuited to manage civilians. It got to be a real brouhaha between SY and the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks in Washington, D.C. over my role and responsibilities. Finally, I informed SY Headquarters, “Guys, I’m not happy here. I’m coming to work every day and I’m not doing anything related to SY work.”

Q: Well, how did you get as a State Department officer how did you get a military officer as your supervisor?

BOOTH: That’s who my boss was, when the SALT delegation was working in Geneva. What was supposed to happen, in theory, was that when the SALT delegation returned to Washington, D.C. I would report to the U.S. Mission to commence SY work. Unfortunately, the SALT delegation arrived and stayed permanently. That was the problem. I informed the seniors in SY of my situation and eventually George Kemp a Regional Security Supervisor assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Bonn, West Germany was dispatched to review the situation. I told him that, “I’m dying here. I’ve got to be an ARSO (Assistant Regional Security Officer) I’ve got to get back to security stuff.” SY Headquarters decided to re-assign me several months to our embassy in Tokyo, Japan. It was perfect. Now I’m an ARSO, now I’m at an embassy. R. “Lance” Putney was my boss and I am still in contact with him as of today. Now I work with the Marines on a daily basis, I help conduct security briefings and de-briefings, I work with my military counterparts in AFOSI and NCIS, I am responsible for the security violation program, I’ve got my suitability investigations to do, a few criminal investigations, also, and I supervise two FSNI’s (Foreign Service National Investigators) – Tak and Mike - -to

conduct local background investigation. Now this is what I should have been doing the moment I left Beijing.

Q: And this is now 1979?

BOOTH: 1978. I arrived there in the summer of 1978 and am immediately assigned to conduct security surveys of the consulates in Sapporo and Naha. I fly out to both and finish the required surveys. I worked with the U.S. military at various camps on counterintelligence issues. The RSO office supervised a bodyguard detail staffed by members of the Japanese National Police Agency who protected Ambassador Mike Mansfield whenever he was off diplomatic grounds. We worked with the local police protecting the embassy and Ambassadorial residence and we supervised our local Japanese citizen guard protecting the interior grounds of the embassy and housing compound located about 1 mile from the embassy. This is what I should have been involved with in Geneva. But I'm assuming SY based its decision on my bid list submitted from Beijing and decided to reward with Geneva not knowing what SALT would morph into. Unfortunately, it was a bad call. In the long run it was absolutely the right thing. Everything turned out fine.

In Japan, I got exposed to just about everything security officer could encounter. We actually had a KGB officer working in Japan under journalist cover defect. I was allowed to talk about this incident because both State Department and CIA did not object during pre-publication review of my manuscript before it was published. I was very surprised, the CIA allowed me to say as much as I did about that defection. In fact, the military had recently been briefed about four months before on just such a possibility.

Q: To the Japanese military?

BOOTH: No, briefings to the U.S. Military. The possibility that a clandestine intelligence officer working in Japan would defect was minuscule. Even so, the U.S. Intelligence Community in Japan decided to brief a select number of U.S. Government civilian and military employees about such a possibility. One identified group included the U.S. Army military police working at the U.S. Air Force Base in Yokosuka. Unbelievably, about three months later in October 1979, a member of the Yokosuka MP detachment was assigned to work at the Sanno Hotel in downtown Tokyo. The Sanno was the R&R building with overnight accommodations, a restaurant, movie theater, small shops and bar for U.S. Military personnel who needed a break from working at the military bases. MPs were assigned there on temporary duty to provide security services. Suddenly one evening, a semi-drunk individual approaches our MP inside the Sanno hotel and indicates that he wants to "go to America". And it's the one guy in the whole place who had the counterintelligence briefing. You talk about unadulterated luck. This the young PFC (Private First Class), immediately recognized the situation for what it was, placed him inside and room and proceeded to the adjoining restaurant in search of a higher authority.

He spotted a Colonel seated at a table with family and friends and announced, “Colonel, you need to come with me now.” Can you imagine a Colonel confronted by an insistent private first class? The Colonel said, “Yes, Private?” Luckily the young private was convincing and professional enough so that the Colonel left the table and proceeded to the room where the semi-drunk individual was waiting. Long story short, that was the beginning of an intelligence bonanza and my first taste of real counterintelligence. Several days later, Stanislav Levchenko’s asylum request was granted and he could depart for the United States. This all can be found on-line.

I was involved in a little bit of everything in Tokyo that gave me a real view of what an RSO does and what security consists of at a large style embassy overseas. Japanese super-nationalists who drive by in large vans equipped with huge loudspeakers to protest U.S. presence in Okinawa. I remember when a Japanese father and mother traveled from the island of Hokkaido to protest that their daughter was dating a Marine Security Guard assigned to the U.S. Embassy. We had the diplomatic issues to resolve, we had the Japanese police complaints about embassy children to take care of, we had to work with the U.S. military coordinating potential helicopter evacuations in case of a severe earthquake to resolve, you had internal security inquiries to take care of so it was a good young first time ARSO going overseas. Tokyo, you can't get much better. You get exposed to a lot. From a criminal or terrorist case we were relatively safe from physical harm, except for the two earthquakes.

Q: Were there any attacks while you were there that kind of revved people up?

BOOTH: One deranged Japanese citizen managed to overcome police static surveillance and jumped over the wall surrounding Ambassador Mansfield's house. But they got him before he broke into the residence. There were constant physical attacks against the Narita Airport expansion as many Japanese farmers were upset over the local attempts to use eminent domain to seize farmland to build a new runway. Somehow the USG was involved. But in Tokyo, no, there was never any physical assaults against a private or government American citizen during my tour. In 1964, however, U.S. Ambassador Edwin O. Reischauer was stabbed in Tokyo in an assassination attempt. I believe there was a knifing attack against the Russian ambassador some years earlier. Like the attack on the U.S. Ambassador in Korea last year. Guns are strictly prohibited, and I am not aware of any firearm assaults against diplomats. One funny story involving the Japanese police and a U.S. diplomat started one morning when Takomoto-san, the FSNI said, “Mr. Booth, the Japanese police are here to talk about the hit and run last night.” Tak said the Japanese police related that, “A car with diplomatic U.S. embassy plates hit a taxi cab and left the scene immediately.” No one was hurt, however, the taxi cab had serious body damage. I said, “Oh, alright, do they have the license plate number?” Tak replied, “Oh yeah, they have the license plate number.” I proceed to our security files and determine that the license plate in question was issued to Wally Horn, our GSO. Now I know Wally to be one of the nicest and easy-going people working in the embassy. There must be a

mistake. Undeterred, I walked over to the residential compound and walk around the parking lot looking for Wally's car. Sure enough there was a nasty gash on the side and the damage looked fresh. I returned to the embassy and asked Wally if he would come to my office. Once he arrived, I said, "Wally, I've got to talk to you about an incident involving your car last night." He says, "Why?" and when I replied, "When you hit that taxi...". He interrupted, "What? I was at a party. I was at the Harris house party all evening." I said, "Wally, go back to the compound, look at your car, and tell me what happened." Long story short, his son snuck the car for a joy ride that night and caused the incident, parked back on the compound and told nobody.

Q: Oh, my God.

BOOTH: Here's where you learn how to take care of these things for embassy "off-the-books" so you say. We contacted the police and said, "How do we want to handle this?" and everyone including the cab driver agreed that nothing should get into the press So what happens? The Japanese police agree that if the taxi driver is satisfied with getting his cab repaired everything can be kept out of official files. Nothing in the press and no negative publicity on embassy brats running loose in company cars in Tokyo. You learn how to resolve things diplomatically so to speak. This would follow me in my next overseas assignment when the political counselor's wife was stabbed in the Consular parking lot in Haiti.

Q: Very fortunate that the Japanese were so accommodating because of course it could have gone....

BOOTH: And here's is how that is accomplished, isn't it? All parties come in, you all sit at the conference table. Tea comes out. Seniors of both sides talk first. Salutations first. It's a formal way. It's very un-American. No immediate demands or counter-arguments. Respectful listening. Tea and polite introductions first. You sit down and take time to test the waters politely. What's the agenda, what are the facts and what do both sides want. In Japan saving face is huge. And then you ease into how best to move forward. You learn something from that. You learn a lot.

Q: Wonderful. Absolutely wonderful.

BOOTH: My assignment to Tokyo was a typical two-year tour. In the summer of 1979 Lance and his family left on annual leave for one month and I was the acting RSO for a summer. In addition. I had to fly to Seoul, Korea on two occasions to assist RSO Bill Cole with security work. In addition, I was tasked with working with the U.S. Secret Service when President Jimmy Carter arrived for a State visit in June 1979. That reminds me that while I was stationed in Geneva I was tasked with assisting the Secret Service when President Jimmy Carter arrived for a brief stay in May 1977. I also assisted the Secret Service when President Gerry Ford visited Beijing in 1976 and we discovered that

all the Chinese cleaning crew responsible for maintaining the official Chinese guest quarters where the U.S. delegation was housed were fluent English speakers who spent an inordinate amount of time rummaging through the trash cans hanging out near members of the U.S. delegation that included Henry Kissinger. Suddenly my two-year assignment is up and SY Headquarters asked me to submit my onward bid list. My submission included nothing but overseas assignments with Rabat as my top choice. SY Headquarters response could not have been clearer, “No, Robert, you've had three straight overseas tours, and you will be assigned to a domestic tour.”

Q: Well, let me just ask you one thing before you go back to the U.S. When you had presidentials (presidential visits) how do you compare those presidentials of the '70s to what has become the presidentials of today?

BOOTH: Well I can certainly say that the presidential visits I was involved with in Beijing, Geneva and Tokyo seemed proportional for the mission. Their staffs' requests were reasonable and requirements manageable. President Clinton's staff for his visit to Paris were simply overbearing, pompous and imperial. To me it's just too much.

Q: Well, no I mean so for example when Carter came to Geneva did he fly in with his armored.....?

BOOTH: Secret Service did fly in his armored limo. The White House wanted to ensure that there was one place in Switzerland that the President could have confidential conversations. They worried about bugs amongst other things. This was the only time SY Headquarters directed Colonel Clyne to let me be. They advised Clyne “Look, Robert's got to help with the presidential. You guys serve your liquor locker and worry about your own personal stuff.” As a result, I worked with the Secret Service and Dave Roberts on that one. Secret Service demands were not as much as I saw later when president Clinton came to France in June 1994. As the official U.S. law enforcement translator between the Secret Service and their French counterparts I attended meetings in Paris where the two sides almost came to blows. Threats were made. At one point the Secret Service threatening the French with advising the White House to cancel the visit, and the French responded, “Well, good ahead, we have our ways of conducting personal security in France and we are not changing to meet your numerous demands, we're not going to have it.” I had never witnessed such strident demands that the US Secret Service imposed on guests. I just had to keep a straight face and translate.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Because now of course it is like medieval China moving the emperor. You have these the thousands of retinue that go along.

BOOTH: I remember translating for the Clinton advance team when the President was to participate in the ceremonies commemorating the 50th anniversary of D-Day held in Normandy and Paris in June 1994. At one point during the discussions, held at the French

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Defense personnel informed that only two official cars from every country would go up the Champs d'Elysee during one part of the Paris ceremony. The White House delegation refused to listen and eventually pounded their hands on the table saying, "Oh, we want six." The French turned to me as did the Secret Service silently asking, "Well Robert, aren't you going to intervene?" Finally, I broke the silence and said, "This is the French government operation. I'm the security officer for the American Embassy and I'm here to try to mitigate real terrorist or counterintelligence security issues. The president of the United States' limo will be going up the Champs d'Elysee. That's all I can say." I refuse to become a part of the argument. Silently I thought, "Who are all these strap hangers who must travel in four additional cars for the two minutes up the Champs Elysee. I'm sorry. I'm not arguing. You, the White House fight it out. And do it. I'm not doing it." That was that was the kind of rancor you never saw even in the '80s. By the '90s it had gotten out of control.

Even before that meeting at the French MFA, the Clinton White House advance team staffers arrived at the U.S. Embassy sometime in May and requested that Avis Bohlen, our DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), call for a five o'clock meeting. I represented the RSO's office and the rest of the embassy representatives arrived five minutes early. All of us appropriately dressed. About 20 minutes the White House advance team arrives dressed in blue jeans and t-shirts. No apologies for being late. Avis, being a career and consummate diplomat gives all the embassy staff a quick look. The White House staffer, not one over the age of 30, were chewing gum and drinking Coke out of cans and slouching in their chairs. They were naive inexperienced and dismissive. They were making demands and requests that astounded me. When they left we all stayed behind and DCM Bohlen said, "I want to apologize to all of you for what just happened." We all got it.

Ok, it's November 9th, and we're resuming with Robert Booth. He's completing his assignment in Tokyo and going on to the Secretary's detail. What year is this?

BOOTH: This would be 1980. I was probably notified in February or March, that I had been assigned to the Secretary's detail (PRS/SD. It was not a slot that I had bid on, however, that was the Office of Security's decision. Luckily for me, because it was an unsolicited assignment my tour was limited to 18 months. Starting in June 1980, I first started protecting Secretary of State, Ed Muskie, and then following the November Presidential election, started to protect Secretary of State designee Alexander Haig. Those were the two Secretaries of State I worked for during my 18-month assignment. It's always funny for me in compare the foreign travels of Secretaries Clinton and Kerry, over the past several years, with that of my two protectees. They hardly traveled at all. Muskie never traveled overseas, except to Japan. Haig visited China, Europe and the Middle East but it was not a constant thing. I was the lead advance agent that went out to China before Haig's arrival to help arrange security requirements because I'd served there before. The office of the Secretary of State has evolved significantly.

Q: Yeah, wow. So you arrive in Washington for the Secretary's detail, do you get any training?

BOOTH: No, there is no training. There's no training really required, it's on the job training. It's like being on a protective detail – which all agents have done before - where you are protecting a foreign dignitary, it's just the Secretary of State. You still have the motorcades, you still do the radios, you have the advance agents, and you do certain basic things. During my 18-month tour I was identified along with other agents to undergo five-day remedial protective security training course with emphasis on the qualification with long rifles. Bill Penn, who was SY's firearms instructor, was responsible for the course that included firearms training, driving, and some hand to hand judo, and a little more training with night sticks and so on and so forth. But pretty much the job is 95% waiting around listening to radio traffic and standing in hallways or in front of doors, and 2% of high terror when you're driving down the streets at high speed. It's a glamorized version of being a body guard. That's all it is.

Q: Now if any of these questions are classified, I totally understand, but at this time when you are just beginning with the Secretary's detail, what was the size of a typical Secretary's motorcade? That would be on a daily basis.

BOOTH: Just two cars. The Secretary was driven around in an armored car, and the rest of the traveling agents followed in an unarmored station wagon lightly modified with lights, sirens and a public-address system. Infrequently in Washington, D.C. when going to a high publicity we requested motorcycle or a police escort. But basically, if you are driving two black cars, with no flags on the bumper grills, no lights and sirens, you draw little or no attention.

Q: OK. And to the Department and various other locations in the District, were you given special privilege to ignore traffic signs?

BOOTH: No you always want to obey the traffic signs unless you use lights and sirens because you would cause an accident. And in most cases neither secretary of state was in a mad rush to go anywhere. When we went to the White House it was all set up ahead of time, we followed the lights. I think one of the only times I recall using lights and sirens was Inaugural day 1981 and we had to get the secretary Haig downtown from his residence and the traffic was just terrible. I was the assistant shift leader at the time, and I convinced our shift leader Bill Trites to do something a little unusual. I asked him, "Look, why don't we put the station wagon in front of the limo and use our lights and sirens to get through traffic down to the Blair House?" He agreed, and we got there with time to spare.

What happened next inside the Blair house is funny. I'm waiting on the inside front door of the Blair House for Secretary Haig to emerge when suddenly Vice-President Bush started to walk down the hallway and Barbara Bush says, "George, it's Robert from Beijing!" Shift leader Bill Trites and some of my fellow agents stared at me as the newly elected Vice-President of the United States walks comes over and gives me a huge hug.

He grabs his coat and pulls on the back collar to show me the collar label and he said, "See, Hong Du tailors from Beijing. Remember the store, Robert?" And all my agent friends just stared probably thinking, "Oh, my God, Robert Booth knows the Vice-President of the United States to that degree." So that was very funny.

Q: That's wonderful. OK. Now you have the motorcade. Was it also a 24 hour shift?

BOOTH: Oh, absolutely. There are three shifts of 8 hours. We had the midnight, swing and morning shifts. The morning shift commenced at 0630 and normally started at his private residence. The classified daily reading file was dropped off early in the morning so that they could hot topics read while they were driven to the State Department. As we normally departed early in the morning there was little traffic. I do not recall any traffic incidents. Pretty boring stuff. traffic. Midnight shifts were about as boring as could be. When the Secretary traveled to New York City to attend the United Nations General Assembly all shifts would go up to New York and shift integrity was maintained. It was two weeks of midnights, two weeks of days, and two weeks of afternoons as I recall it.

Q: OK. Now you are principally guarding, but are you also doing courier activity or other activities other than what you would think of as traditional security?

BOOTH: No, every morning an agent would go down to the command center and they would give the hot topic folder for the Secretary to read that morning. Technically the folder was classified but agents were armed and driving a police style car so no issues there. The shift leader handed the Secretary the folder as he entered the limo. Beyond that no, it was all traditional agent work. You drove the car, you stood with your sunglasses on, and that's what you do eight hours a day. It's numbing and boring.

Q: Were you also, in the event this ever should happen, responsible for giving the secretary a security clearance if he or she had left something out?

BOOTH: It never happened to me, and again, like I said, we rarely traveled overseas with the two, so I was in the secretary's plane only twice, and that was with Haig returned from China and when we traveled to Brussels. On the Brussels stop-over the U.S. delegation s were supposed to travel to Pakistan. I was on the secretary's plane and we got to Brussels, and Israel government did something. I forget what it was. And Haig, said, "We're ending this trip, we're going back to the States." We're all stunningly disappointed because the agents were looking forward to doing something a little different. My recollection was that when we went overseas, all the classified was there in the Embassy.

Q: OK. Just because I'm a neophyte when it comes to all of the activities of DS, or SY when it was in its earlier creation. I didn't know how much other activity would go on with the secretary's detail.

BOOTH: You're fully working, checking hotels in advance, checking out meeting sites in advance, and going to the White House ahead of time to bring him in. The cars must be

gassed or whatever. Your eight hours are numbing but either way, it's full. You're 30 minutes in front of a door, or you're 30 minutes with a car, or you're 30 minutes in the office. So, you're rotating every 30 minutes on your eight-hour shift.

Q: OK. So now, this regular detail that you've been placed on, how long is it assumed that you will be there?

BOOTH: Eighteen months to the day. The personnel office tried to extend me a little bit longer saying they had not found a replacement and I told Bob Clarke, the Agent-in-Charge of the Secretary's Detail that in February 1982 my 18 months were up. My onward assignment had been picked. I remember saying to Bob, "February 13, is my last day Bob, my 18 months to the day is up." He said, "Robert, your replacement hasn't been picked." I replied, "Bob, I really don't care." I was and remain brutally candid in thought. I continued, "The deal was 18 months and my 18 months are up on the 13th, personnel knew I was going to be gone 18 months ago, what have they been doing besides I am slated to start in the special assignments staff presently." Which I will talk about in a second. And he said, "Well Robert, you really..." And I interrupted, "Bob, on the 13th. I'm in my new office." And he didn't say anything. And on the 14th I was in my new office.

Q: Now one last question before we leave. It was all with all with Haigh?

BOOTH: Haig, and the former secretary from Maine, Muskie. Muskie and Haigh, yes.

Q: And so you leave before Shultz comes in?

BOOTH: Right.

Q: OK. And now you go on to your next assignment.

BOOTH: That's correct.

Q: OK.

BOOTH: What had happened was that the moment I arrived on the Secretary's detail I was planning for my onward assignment by determining what positions would open in 18 months. I really wanted to get into criminal investigations. We did not have that big of a program, but we had something called the Special Assignments Staff, SAS, and SAS was broken into two components. One was the counterintelligence side, which would come to haunt me many, many years later as the place I ended up staying for 17 years. It's a very small little group. The other side was called Special Investigations. It's kind of the internal affairs office for the State Department. Fortunately, the Director of SAS was Lance Putney, my boss from Tokyo. When Lance took over SAS a year earlier it was an elite office comprised of nine agents and two clerical staff. Within months of Lance's assuming directorship of SAS I arranged for an interview. In Tokyo I had been responsible for a variety of criminal and waste, fraud and mismanagement cases at the embassy and he knew my capabilities. Eventually he advised, "Robert, you're going to

replace Ed Gaffney, he's leaving in February, it works out just fine for SAS.” So that's why when I told Bob, “I'm gone”, I already knew my desk was available and I was coming right in. I moved into Special Assignments staff in my little small room with two desks facing each other. Agent John Murphy sat directly across from me. Eventually he would become the AIC (agent in charge) for Secretary of State Colin Powell. John and I were roommates for three years in a small little room. And we did all the internal affairs investigations for State Department. Suicides, assaults, firearms violations criminal activity, drugs and misconduct. Activities that occurred inside State or happened at our diplomatic missions overseas. At that time homosexuality was considered a potential blackmailable vulnerability and SAS conducted homosexual inquiries

Q: What year was that?

BOOTH: 1980s.

Q: OK. Because you're going from 1981 into 1982, Shultz becomes the new Secretary of State. And when you talk about the homosexuality cases, are you talking about simply people who are known as homosexual, or people who are known to have had relationships and therefore believed to be blackmailable?

BOOTH: Yeah, I think at that time the gay community was looked at as being exploitable by blackmail especially if you weren't out of the closet. But when U.S. employees with TS clearances who were gays started to come out of the closet in the early 80s things changed. There were some State Department personnel who did, mostly GS but not so many FS. SAS was tasked with conducting what we called SRA cases. The goal an SRA investigation was to determine if an FSO was gay. The institutional fear, or so it was articulated back then, was that gays posed an unacceptable blackmail risk if their sexuality was a secret. There are any number of U.S. and NATO ally gay diplomats and military who had been recruited by the KGB and MfS because of their sexual proclivities both hetero and homosexual. The last aspect of a SRA case was to set up an interview with the officer and eventually, since most did not want to be exposed, many resigned.

Q: That's interesting. So in other words, most of them had not been open about it.

BOOTH: Oh, absolutely not. There were some ambassadors who SY knew were gay and they told us so. We told them, “Ok, if the bad guys try to blackmail you, you must immediately let us know.” But most junior officers were just not prepared mentally to do that and resigned during the SRA investigation. They were not our preferred cases. We would rather do Unauthorized Disclosure inquiries and criminal investigations. Unfortunately, the internal affairs moniker meant we had to handle all misconduct cases involving SY special agents. Agents did bad things.

Q: SY agents, or DS agents themselves?

BOOTH: Oh, absolutely. And that's where I developed my corridor reputation in SY – eventually DS - was during my first tour in Special Investigations. I investigated agent

misconduct. It didn't bother me at all. I said, "We're investigating agents because they...." For instance, I recall when an agent discharged his or her weapon and I was called in to investigate, inevitably all the witnesses – who were fellow agents - would call it an accidental discharge. I would respond, "No it is not accidental it is it's inadvertent dischargea huge difference." If you put your finger through the trigger guard and somehow exert enough pressure to allow the weapon to discharge, that is not an accidental...there is some negligence involved. Way too many supervisors wanted to protect their staff from being reviewed by SIB. Another case involved one DS agent discharging a Uzi submachine gun in the back of the follow car where one of the bullets struck the DS agent responsible for driving the car during the course of a dignitary protective detail in Washington, D.C. Once I was called from my office to head over to Main State following an incident where two uniformed members of DS's building guards who were practicing "quick draws" in the basement when a pistol discharged. Luckily the victim had his bullet proof vest on because the bullet struck him squarely in the chest. Three guards were fired because of SIB's investigation. Not a single case was reported in the press. Were these stories worthy of press coverage? Well....as far as the State Department was concerned, the answer was "no" and SIB was discreet in its investigations and was calling the press on any hotline. One SY agent stole historical china from the 8th floor diplomatic room while assigned to the midnight shift at the SY command Center in Main State and tried to sale it to an antique dealer in Georgetown. The dealer bought it, recognized what he had, informed the State department and SY let the agent resign

We investigated discharges, suspicious deaths, misuse of funds, the unreported damage to official vehicles cars and misconduct of all nature. One agent discharged a shotgun in the basement of Main State one night. One of my FSO (Foreign Service Officer) friends happened to be there and witnesses the whole incident. He called me that night and said, "Robert, I think one of your agents discharged a shotgun in the basement." I said, "No!" No one had called me from our Command Center and no other senior had reached out to me. It was about nine o'clock at night. I said to myself, "That's got to be someone on the secretary of state's protective 's detail who discharged a weapon." Early the next morning I went down in the garage and I walked around an area where agents parked our official vehicles. Sure enough I looked up at the ceiling and noticed a hand sized crater in the concrete ceiling. Directly below was some concrete debris and shotgun paper wadding. No question, someone had discharged a 12-gauge slug round and they didn't even bother to clean it up. I immediately went to see Clark Dittmer, the director of all investigations, and said, "Just letting you now that someone on the Secretary's detail let fly a round last night", as I handed him the wadding, "and can open up the case and do whatever you want, but obviously something happened last night." I made it clear that someone or group were trying to cover this up. Mr. Dittmer did not ask me to open a case. I was able to identify the shooter. The incident did not seem to affect his career and many years later I became his direct supervisor. In addition, SIB investigated a plethora of misconduct cases that remains classified including a blackmail case involving a senior State Department GS employee. I worked that case with fellow agent Arthur Jones.

SAS' role remained the same for approximately three years, and then there was a reorganization and SAS's only role was counterintelligence programs. Special Investigations was carved out and transferred over to the General Investigations Branch which included one group who worked fraud and mismanagement for fraud for the IG (inspector general) and one final group who worked for passport and visa fraud cases. SIB now consisted of Ben Schaumberg, our Chief and three agents including myself. I remained in that position until April 1986 when I assumed the title as Acting Chief. During all that time I continued to investigate the same kind of misconduct that I had managed previously. One particularly nasty case involved two DS agents (SY was now known as DS) who were savagely assaulted in broad daylight on a street in Bonn while working the U.S. Ambassador to the UN's protective detail.

Q: How do you get beat up in Bonn?

BOOTH: Well, there was an initial report in which they claimed that a bunch of skinheads had attacked them. Long story short, these two agents inadvertently entered the whorehouse section of a high-class bar. When asked to leave, one of the agents put up a little resistance and were physically taken out and badly roughed up in the street. What we learnt later was that these bouncers didn't want two non-Germans this high-quality house of ill-repute. Because one of the agents attempted to push a bouncer away who was trying to escort the agents out, the other bouncers started to assault the agents and dragged them outside the establishment. One agent had his arm placed over the sidewalk while a bouncer stomped on the arm. The bouncers then called a taxi and had the agents driven to a hospital. Interviewed in Germany by the RSO, there was fear that this attack was directed at UN Ambassador Albright. The story they told did not sit right with us in SIB when we got the initial. They claimed they were walking down the street after shopping for Hummel figurines when they were attack in an unprovoked manner by skinheads screaming anti-US rhetoric. Ben Schaumberg, the SIB Chief is a fluent German speaker and immediately traveled to Bonn and got the truth. Once back we designed our investigative strategy. Both agents worked and lived in the New York City region and we did not want to interview them in their home environment to avoid potential embarrassment. One of the agents was directed to report to a distant State Police barracks in New Jersey to participate in a bogus law enforcement meeting. Once there he was interviewed by Ben Schaumberg and Mike Considine. The agent told the truth right away. He was advised not to tell the other agent about the interview or what we knew. It was the other agent who represented a real problem. I decided to arrange for an interview the next time he traveled to D.C. in support of Albright's protective requirements. When that happened, he came to my office while Ambassador Albright was visiting Main State. First thing I said, "OK, take your weapon off and hang it on the coat rack, I'm going to talk to you." All through the interview he kept telling the same lies. Finally, I said, "You know, I'm going to tell you what happened." And I told him what Ben had uncovered, and he looked at me and said, "Was that the story you wanted me to tell you?" Caught lying he wanted to preserve his skin. In any case he resigned from DS left us to attend law school. I hope he develops a better appreciation of what of 18 USC 1001 false statements are all about. But that's what my reputation was, that Robert gets these kinds of cases. He gets the shootings, he gets the agents, and he gets the stuff that no one likes

to do. The sexual misconduct cases, that's Robert bailiwick. I am not saying I particularly enjoyed those investigations but that was my responsibility.

Q: Now how much discretion is there in these kinds of cases about the punishment?

BOOTH: Oh, I have none. I don't get involved in that, it's all passed up the line. I do the investigation and hand the report of investigation to the Director. He forwards it up his chain of command. I do not get involved in the final resolution and I do not recommendations.

Q: OK. That's kind of one of the curiosities because of course, at some point one of these cases could become a grievance depending on a whole variety of factors.

BOOTH: I've never had a grievance filed against me because of an investigation in which I personally conducted. Never. That's why I think I also had the reputation of being extraordinarily fair. With me, no favorites. After an allegation was made, SIB conducted a preliminary inquiry. If additional facts supported the allegation, a focused investigation would be initiated with as much desertion as possible to preserve the integrity of the investigation and the reputation of the officer in question. I summoned the target employee in for an interview after all other requirements of the investigation were satisfied and forwarded the report of investigation to the Director of Investigations. One had to be very careful when conducting these cases. So, when you received an allegation, and some of these allegations were horrible, and some were blatant lies, SIB normally took its time in resolving issues. Rarely were these cases time sensitive or life-threatening so we had time to design our interview and evidence collection strategies

I remember one case where the IG tasked one of the investigative branches to resolve an allegation. While it was not an SIB matter, I was asked to assist another agent. When I arrived at the meeting we were told, "Gentlemen, we've got an allegation here that an officer in Paris used a government franked envelope to send back an announcement to be posted on the Main State cafeteria board that listed his D.C. private residence was available for rent." The IG people were silly at that time, and I said, "What's the crime here?" "Well, it's a franked government envelope." And I said, "But, if he had taken a regular envelope and written the same things, it would have still been forwarded to Main State without postage and" To no avail. The IG investigated an officer for the misuse of a single franked envelope. Total loss to the USG? Probably ¼ of a cent. Maybe that was the IG's zero-policy strategy back then. Eventually another agent was assigned the case and the Paris officer admitted his guilt and we forwarded the report of investigation to the IG for adjudication. I thought the IG was just out of control with waste, fraud, and mismanagement inquiries back then. I really do. They were trying to make a name for themselves and they wanted to be a State Department law enforcement competitor with SY/DS, which was just ludicrous.

Q: Wow. It is a little odd that in the great scheme of things that you spend your time on a single franked envelope.

BOOTH: Requests were made to our office that were inappropriate and, on many occasions, I refused to take any action. This is something I want to be clear about. I said, "There are inquiries that I'm not about to initiate. And if you have a problem just go to my director." Clark Dittmer never ever told me to open an inquiry or conduct an investigation when I told him that the preliminary investigation of allegation had no merit. He ever had me deploy an inappropriate investigative technique. I wasn't going to do it. Again, part of my corridor reputation with my supervisors.

Q: Now by comparison, I'll give you an example that I know of, without naming any names, at one of my posts. The Foreign Service Officer was the wife and the husband was the eligible family member. The husband ran some kind of church that had mail and online things, and questions arose as to the validity of the church first of all as an institution. Because it had been founded in some state and it was not entirely clear that it was not entirely legally founded. That's one thing. But secondly he had been found to be using the pouch for all sorts....

BOOTH: Yeah, Boy Scouts trying to sell boy scout cookies or greeting cards by using the APO at an embassy. You can't do that. The APO or FPO can't be used for profit of any kind. State Department pouch is considered in the same way.

Q: So that did come up. But a single franked envelope, to me, that does seem a bit

BOOTH: Other cases can be challenging. In 1983 I was directed by my supervisor, at the request of the State IG, to travel to our embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi to conduct two fraud investigations. One resulted in a criminal conviction for Richard T. Salazar. He was a senior State official assigned to the African Bureau who traveled frequently on TDY assignments to Kenya. Before returning to Washington, D.C. he submitted a travel voucher to the embassy's admin section and then, once he returned to Washington, D.C., he submitted a duplicate travel voucher for the same travel. I think we call that double dipping. At post, I immediately compared Mr. Salazar's D.C. vouchers, which I had made photocopies and brought with me, with Salazar's embassy voucher file. Fraud was obvious. The final question I had was whether the Admin Officer was aware of the scheme. I could not believe he did not know. I briefed the Ambassador of my findings and advised that I needed to interview the Admin officer. Immediate pushback. In fact, he said, "Mr. Booth, I'm not going to authorize you to do any more interviews or activities here." When I first arrived in Nairobi, the RSO was Ben Runner and ARSO Fred Mecke were fully supportive and gave me a green light to do as I sought fit. Unfortunately, my inquiry appeared to implicate senior Department/embassy personnel. I immediately responded, "Mr. Ambassador, at twelve o'clock, if I can't interview the admin officer and other embassy officers, I'm calling back to Washington DC and I'll tell the IG that you personally are interfering with the criminal investigation." He looked at me as I stood up and walked out of the room saying, "I will be in the RSOs office." I mean at 11:59 I get the phone call from the Ambassador's secretary saying, "Alright Mr. Booth, you can conduct your interviews." Salazar retired from State shortly that year and I was the sole person in the courtroom in Washington, D.C. in 1984 as the judge read from Salazar's plea agreement

From Nairobi I flew to Dar es Salam to investigate the GSO, Sheryl Garrison, who was suspected of renting embassy furniture to Sunmark an American oil company operating in Tanzania. She and her husband were in a scam there that was unbelievable. I interviewed the Sunmark personnel who gave Sheryl high marks. In her interview she admitted renting the furniture but alleged that she used the funds as kind of a slush fund for GSO operations. Of course there was no paperwork. Both were immediately brought home. I was flying all the time. I was asked to serve in Cairo as TDY DRSO after RSO Fred Brandt was involved in an accident. Fred immediately had me conducting internal investigations. The one case that sticks in my mind involved the spouse of an embassy officer and she was responsible for the commissary. I discovered that she flying to Athens and buying electronic equipment at the U.S. military NATO commissary, bringing them back in the diplomatic pouch and selling them to the locals. She was let go. Those were the kinds of cases I did overseas. Finally I was asked to proceed to Cameroon for a 90 day TDY. On top of my regular RSO duties the post was awash with fraud and mismanagement cases in the administrative section to administer to. And I was burning out. I was really burning out. I kept getting the cases that no one else seemed to get stuck with. I didn't want to be fighting the senior embassy management or ambassadors anymore. I didn't want to be the RSO's bad guy. I was tired of vetting embassy admin and GSO operations. Some Ambassadors like David Charles Miller, Jr. in Dar es Salam was fantastic. He had me stay at his residence during my entire TDY assignment and took a genuine interest in SY/DS. Others were actual hostile to my presence. This thing about law enforcement personnel arriving at post and conducting inquiries that the Ambassador could not make go away was something new for the old Foreign Service. But anyways, that was what I did from about February 1982 to the summer of 1986. So it was about three and a half years of really intense criminal and misconduct investigations.

Q: Ok. And none of the counter-intelligence stuff?

BOOTH: No. That had been separated. Absolutely.

Q: Just a very quick question about that. The State Department's own internal counter-intelligence powers were designed to do what? And once again, not to go into any particular detail, what was their....?

BOOTH: It really focused on countries whose intelligence services were designated as first tier hostile entities representing a significant personal and technical counterintelligence threat to our embassies and personnel overseas. And sure, we know Russia's going to be on the top of any such list. State Department counterintelligence attempted to understand how our embassies were being targeted. How the FSNs, now called LSEs (locally engaged staff) were being used or exploited, and how to develop a good awareness briefing and training program to sensitize our officers before they go overseas and what to look for once in country. This is not counter-espionage. Counter-intelligence is the program whereby you deter, detect and neutralize hostile intelligence attempts to steal our secrets. Contrary to popular belief it is an offensive program and defensive in nature where you sit back and wait for the bad guys to strike and react. You

interview embassy staffers when they return to D.C. people when they come back. You ask, “What was it like there? What did you see? What were the things that are happening? Who are the FSN who worry you? Who is an FSO at risk?” What would you do differently? What are our CI vulnerabilities?” Based off the debriefings you hopefully craft good awareness briefings for specific first -tier countries and for the rest of the world as well. Counter-espionage focuses on individuals suspected of violating 18 USC 794.

Q: Yeah, that's what I wanted to really make sure I understood, because I figure that's much more the FBI, and then overseas more the CIA.

BOOTH: The FBI's presence overseas in the form of the Legatts, which did not exist until the mid- 60s and they did not get involved in embassy counter-espionage investigations. The historical evidence is clear on this point. The only counter-espionage investigation that occurred overseas prior to the 90s was the 1961 Irwin Scarbeck case a GSO assigned to our embassy in Warsaw. Blackmailed with photos of him having sex with Urszula Discher, a woman not his wife in a Warsaw hotel, he provided the Polish intelligence service with numerous classified documents. Frankly, it was RSO Ken Knauf, assigned to our Bonn Embassy who initiated the inquiry, obtained Scarbeck's confession on 6/15/61 and allowed the FBI to make the arrest when Scarbeck returned to in Washington, D.C. He was initially sentenced to 30 years in prison. What was interesting about that case was that Ken's ARSO was Colbert King who now writes a weekly column for the Washington Post. I interviewed Colbert King years ago for my book

Q: You would not know.

BOOTH: I only read it when King wrote an article years ago mentioned that he was a former SY agent. Since I was writing my manuscript at that time I called him up to get background for the historical background on SY's role in counter-espionage. The Scarbeck case did not end up in my book. King spoke affectionately about Knauf who passed away a few years ago. He explained how it was Knauf who devised the scheme of arranging for Scarbeck and his East German lover to be in West Germany at the same time allowing the West Germans to detain Discher at the same time Scarbeck arrived at the Bonn Embassy as a non-pro courier. It's a very important case, because on appeal, Scarbeck's attorney claimed that the interview occurred overseas, the crime occurred overseas, and therefore, could not be admitted into evidence or tried in the U.S. The court citing *Erdos vs. U.S.* (18 USC 7) held that U.S. Embassy territory is considered the same as special maritime territory for purposes of prosecution of U.S. citizens in America. This precedent allows the Department of Justice to prosecute U.S. Government citizens assigned to embassies and consulates who are suspected of crimes to be tried back here. This case and its importance is lost to history.

Q: Fascinating. So I understand what the internal investigations typically would entail. And that you would not be the one actually prescribing the penalty.

BOOTH: While agents certainly have their opinions, they never prescribe the penalty. That would be like an FBI agent saying, "OK, you're guilty of lying to an FBI agent, now you are going to get 5 years in prison." The FBI agent may be relatively certain what the possible. Internal Department sanctions are a little different because they are not played out in public. Once or twice I might have been asked for an administrative sanction recommendation based off the outcome of similar cases I handled in the past and I and would respond, "You know what, I only heard what it was X." I would remind them to contact HR or the Director General's office for specifics. Many times, I never knew the outcome of a case. I never got involved in the punishment phase.

Q: OK. Because obviously there is a little bit of an element of discretion and that's where you can get into the potential for grieving.

BOOTH: I never had a grievance filed against me. I had one grievance filed against me by a special agent who was not satisfied with the EER I prepared for him. No, I never had a Foreign Service Officer, or anyone related to the State Department file a grievance against me based on my conduct as a special agent. Never..

Q: OK. Now during this period, your three and a half years, and you did also travel overseas?

BOOTH: Oh God. Oh, did I travel. And never to Paris, London or Rome. It was always Africa.

Q: Right. Of course.

BOOTH: Or the Middle East. That's all I did.

Q: And I imagine maybe once or twice in Eastern Europe.

BOOTH: No, I never made to Eastern Europe. That was more for my colleagues in SAS. If there was misconduct back then in those countries it was assumed the activity was known to the internal security services and was handled as a counter-intelligence issue. I do not recall conducting any misconduct cases in Eastern Europe like we had in Egypt, Addis Ababa and Cuba.

Q: And you would also cover things like financial mismanagement?

BOOTH: It had to be theft of money. Waste, fraud, and mismanagement and paper fraud allegations that came to us were referred to the IG. Which reminds of several other kinds of cases I was asked to investigate. There was another incident involving the disappearance of firearms from an embassy's inventory. We found them in an FSO's household effects in a container on the dock of Baltimore Harbor. DOJ declined prosecution and the DG handed out an administrative sanction. That was the first case in which I served a search warrant. Another case involved Mr. Turley, the GSO at our embassy in Athens. A report from the RSO in Athens indicated that shortly after Turley's

departure for re-assignment to Washington, D.C, some inventoried U.S. Government property was missing. Search warrant in hand, I proceeded to the Baltimore docks and searched the container holding his HHE. We discovered clearly marked U.S. Government property items and forwarded our report of investigation up the chain of command. Imagine my surprise when I was notified that DOJ wanted to prosecute Turley. At one-point, DOJ representatives asked me to sit in on a meeting with Turley's lawyer so that he could better understand what this unusual case was all about. I was stunned to see that Turley's lawyer was Nathan Lewin, a constitutional law professor at Harvard Law and well known and respected First Amendment Rights advocate. The whole *Erdos v. U.S.* was broached as well and I discussed the Scarbeck case in detail. Mr. Lewin had many specific questions for me to answer. I saw where he got his reputation. One brilliant and civil individual. My recollection was that Turley eventually pled guilty, I did not testify and I do not know what sentence he received.

There was one case where I had to make and arrest and process a State Department employee at central lock-up in DC. A GS employee in Refugee Affairs named Thomas Anton Palcic who was involved in more misconduct and criminal activity than any other employee I ever encountered. What finally ended Palcic's reign of terror in the State Department was when he submitted false documents to receive financial aid in obtaining helicopter pilot training. As a veteran and with false documentation from the State Department claiming that such training would help him in his employment, the Veteran's Administration provided money to a helicopter training company for Palcic's flying instructions. I had to work with a Veterans Affairs special agent named Ralph Hackley and Assistant U.S. Attorney William S. Block. The key piece of evidence in the case was in obtaining the original signed false State Department letterhead memorandum and his Pennsylvania flight instructor positively identifying Palcic's photograph. When Palcic eventually showed up for a meeting at the AUSA's office for a supposed conversation about facts he did not know that Block already had an arrest warrant in hand. Palcic thought he would be undergoing an interview, but Mike Considine and I were there to handcuff and walk him across the street to central lock up in Judiciary Square. The look on his Palcic's face was priceless. I did not attend his trial, but I know he pled guilty on November 10, 1982, resigned from the State Department and served time. If interested one can check the case of *U.S. v. Thomas A. Palcic*, Crim. No. 82-00330 before Senior Judge Howard Corcoran. Yes, I conducted investigations that resulted in arrests, convictions and jail time. Some of my investigations resulted in terminations, forced resignations or early retirements. I was never threatened by a subject. I was characterized by Mark A. Venuti, a lawyer with the D.C. firm Venuti and Lopes in a letter dated December 20, 1982 to Judge Corcoran as "....a zealous investigator, whom I have met, and who not at all objective in his assessment of Tom Palcic." And other cases are just lost to time and memory.

Q: Now, we're going back for a second to a specific case. Which one was this?

BOOTH: Oh, this is in Cairo. If you remember I went out to Cairo to act as the TDY Deputy RSO. But what I really ended up doing was conducting misconduct cases in the largest viper pit I ever encountered overseas. If you recall the commissary manager,

Carol, was involved in all these shenanigans, eventually confessed and resigned. As a spouse, there was not much else to be done. Three years later, I'm reading the post magazine for the State Department, and there she is in a photograph where she is identified as the commissary manager at an African embassy. I quickly sent a cable to both RSOs in Accra and Cairo stating "Cairo, please send a copy of the investigative file to RSO Ghana. Ghana, you can see that Carol was fired for commissary misconduct." Now it was their problem. I'd forgotten about that old investigation until now.

Q: And it's a big post.

BOOTH: It's the biggest post because of the large USAID (United States Agency for International Development) program. I can remember that they even had a poisonous snake eradication contingent, programs for just about everything. These programs required tremendous oversight that just did not exist which resulted in lots of petty crime and money disappearing. While there, I was asked to shake things up as waste, fraud and management was endemic. Some USG employees were put on notice and some FSNs were fired.

Q: Periodically I've been at posts where FSNs have been found to have done either theft, or trying to sell visas. Whether successfully or not. But I don't want to make it sound like there had been an outbreak of this everywhere. But every once in a while you find that an FSN has been fired for cause.

BOOTH: Yup.

Q: Well, this takes you all the way to 1986.

BOOTH: Right. And at that point I had been back in the United States five or six years and it was time to go overseas. I was called in by my career development officer Roy Higgins who explained, "Robert, you haven't done a hardship post recently. Beijing is almost ten years old, it's time for a hardship post." At that time, I was very much in love with my current wife, my only wife. And I said, "Whoa, whoa this is not good." My future wife was up for a partnership in a well-respected law firm in Washington DC, and so I said, "If I have to find a hardship post, I've got to be close to maintain this." Remember Skype, smartphones and the like did not exist.

Previously I had visited in Port-au-Prince, Haiti after conducting a misconduct case concerning the consul general's misconduct in hiring summer interns in Santo Domingo – which resulted in a reprimand by the DG –, and before I could return to DC, was instructed to stop in Port-au-Prince to look some fraud allegations. Jim Lannon, the RSO in Santo Domingo – who just passed away several weeks ago- decided to join me as Haiti was his constituent post. He said before we left "Robert, Haiti has all sorts of issues because there is no permanent RSO." It was a mess, indeed. In short order I identified two FSNs for termination, left behind scores of recommendations and flew home hoping never to return. One year later I was considering the improbable. Cuba's RSO position was not open and the only hardship post within two-three hour flying time of the U.S was

Haiti. Before anyone could beat me to the punch I told my career destruction officer, “OK, I’ll go to Haiti, I’ll open up the RSOs post.” Opening RSO posts back then were frequent. In late summer of 1986 I boarded an Eastern flight out of Miami and flew into Haiti.

Q: Because you went into the internal affairs I think in ’82.

BOOTH: Yes, February of 1982. Shortly after arriving, I noted that Haiti was still a mess. Baby Doc Duvalier had just fled the country and General Namphy was in power. First things first. I had to establish an RSOs office. Billy Armor Jr, who was the RSO in Santo Domingo had already shipped the pertinent Port-au-Prince security files by pouch. The local guard force contract needed to be reviewed. The five-man Marine Detachment’s duties and responsibilities needed revisiting. AES home alarm systems needed to be installed in all the embassy and USAID residences. Peace Corps security issues had been neglected. During a review of Lee Sharon file, the USAID’s security officer, an American citizen and former U.S military non-com, I discovered that he had an arrest warrant out in his name in Canada for assault. He was terminated that afternoon. Getting a new RSO’s office up and running was difficult as embassy officers were not accustomed to the enforcement of many of the department’s rules and regulations concerning physical and procedural security.

Q: Yeah, well, Haiti is a troubled country.

BOOTH: We called it the nightmare republic. It was a broken country

Q: What were the major things you had to focus on in opening up?

BOOTH: No question, I had to focus on physical security issues. I had to worry about people’s homes and the embassy itself and getting people safely from their houses down to the embassy. Streets could erupt in violence, which it often did without apparent reason. Shortly after I arrived a young Peace Corps volunteer was raped in Jacmel. I had to interview the victim and Jane Schlendorf, had to decide whether it was safe for volunteers to continue and work in the countryside. We did a lot of work together to ensure the safety of the volunteers. got along well professionally with Jane. I heard later on that took an assignment in Africa and developed spinal meningitis from malaria and passed away. Jane was a competent, thoughtful and caring individual.

Other examples of violence affecting the embassy family included the political counselor’s wife, Debbie McGowan being stabbed in her back several times while leaving the consular office parking lot. We had a Peace Corps volunteer shot in the leg while house sitting a USAID residence. Another incident involving my local guards was truly bizarre home. Late one night, I received a call on my hand-held radio – phones barely worked – from my Foreign Service National Investigator named Gabrielle Georges. I believe he still works as the FSNI as he loves what he does. Anyways he calls me by my radio call sign and announces, “Washington, Washington, reports that a big fight is occurring outside the GSO’s house and machetes are being used.” We got

together and quickly drove to the GSO's house as we knew the Haitian Police would not respond at night. Long story short, two residential guards, one employed by the embassy and the other by another organization, got into a fight over a woman and one hacked the other up. Just hacked him right to death. I followed the blood trail from outside the GSO's house and found the victim laying to the side of the road...dead

There were other similar violent incidents including rock throwing at embassy and USAID vehicles. But some people did not see this as a real problem. Luckily for me a majority of embassy personnel were either single or did not have children at post. A few months after I arrived in Port-au-Prince, Brunson McKinley the new Ambassador took up his position and it was clear that his mission was to make Haiti whole again. He and I had totally opposite opinions about how safe embassy personnel were. Back then I was required to submit a Monthly Status Reports to DS Headquarters. The MSR is not cleared by any embassy officer. And every 30 days I would document what was happening in Haiti. The Main State individuals reviewing my MSRs were working out of the threat analysis group and Jackie Jones was the person responsible for my region. After a while she contacted the Haiti desk and asked for a meeting. Once there she explained her disquiet about Haiti by saying, "We're getting these MSRs from Robert Booth and it looks pretty bad down there." The Haiti desk officer said, "We're getting stuff from Brunson McKinley and his staff and things seem all right down there." As a result, I get a call from the threat analysis group who say "We want to come down and do an assessment and see what's going on. I said "Yeah, fine, bring Jackie down."

The first night she arrived most of Port-au-Prince lost electrical power. She offered to let me use her hotel shower, which had an emergency electrical generator, the next morning before we took off for work. Jackie is former Secret Service employee and I had worked with her on some issue in DC before coming to Haiti. First thing she says is, "Robert, I want to meet all your sources." I said, "Sure." I immediately called up Colonel Figaro the chief of police for all of Haiti to arrange for a meeting. Several hours later Jackie and I take an embassy car over to the police headquarters and park next to Figaro's office space. I speak French fluently and Jackie understands French, so the conversation was in French. I asked Colonel Figaro to provide Jackie with an over view of the crime and security situation in Port-au-Prince and he starts off by saying, "Robert, this is the crime we're seeing, we see this, and expect this," when all of a sudden, an officer burst through the door and said, "Who owns that small blue Chevrolet outside?" I responded, "I do.", as we all quickly run outside onto the balcony. Down below we spot this massive guy, on the ground, in handcuffs with cops all around him. Next to him was a baseball bat that he had used to smash the front windshields of all nine cars parked in the police parking lot. Jackie looks at me and says, "You just set that up didn't you to show just how insecure it is here"?" I said, "Jackie, I did not set that up."

And then we went to see Major Baigdy who the chief of police for Port-au-Prince was. He explained to Jackie that the situation in town was dire. Armed bands roamed the streets at night and many areas in the capitol were no-go zones. He related that not all his police officers had operable firearms and lacked vehicles. Jackie asked several questions and seemed satisfied with his answers. In the past I had provided the Major with non-

lethal items such as holsters, handcuffs, night sticks and .38 caliber ammunition that the Marines were discarding in favor of 9mm. He was good to the embassy and could be vaunted on for support. It was he who worked the Peace Corps rape investigation. After several days Jackie concluded her interviews and asked for a private meeting with Ambassador McKinley. I did not find out the substances of the conversation for several days but as it was related to me, Jackie told Ambassador and said, "I've interviewed all of Robert's sources, I've interviewed people at the embassy, and I believe what Robert Booth is saying. The other embassy reporting concerning the deteriorating security environment is being downplayed." Aggravating the situation was the upcoming elections and my sources were providing me with an outcome that was very different from what other members of the embassy were reporting.

Q: This is the election in Haiti?

BOOTH: Yeah, yeah. I had previously talked to Colonel Figaro who told me, "There's going to be no election, it's not going to happen despite public assurances to the contrary." At the embassy country team meetings, I would report, "My sources are saying....". And the ambassador would respond, "No Robert, I got my political counselor and my econ counselor and they all say...." I said, "I'm just telling you..." Up to the day of the election, the embassy reporting was all rosy about upcoming vote. On voting day by late morning, armed bands started to shoot up polling booths, then the army was called out and fired back at whomever, and hundreds were killed and wounded. By early afternoon the election was called off. Newsweek magazine had an article about that sad day.

Shortly thereafter I got a serious, serious staph infection and I was evacuated from Haiti and brought back to Sibley Hospital in Washington, D.C. It was a nasty case where the bacteria got in the lining of my heart. I was to learn later from the infectious disease specialist Dr. Bucky Davis who would tell me later, "You were pretty close, you were pretty close." In the hospital and for three months later I had a heparin lock in my arm which I used twice a day to inject a ½ liter of anti-biotic Ancef.

Obviously, I couldn't go back to Haiti to finish up my last six months. DS put me back in special investigations until a position in the Training Center became available.

One last funny story involving Haiti. The Community Liaison Officer, Nancy Price, who I am in contact with today, has a son named David who is currently a DS agent. When I retired from DS in 2012 there was a surprise farewell party for me in the Office of Counter-intelligence. It was a big surprise for me and the office had kept me in the dark. They did a fabulous job in disguising the event it. I was called into the main conference room and there were all these grinning people sitting and standing. And the mystery guest speaker is David. How they found him or knew about our connection I do not know. He starts out by saying, "All I want to say is, the reason I'm here today is that when I was a young 13 year old in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and I saw Robert Booth walk into these meetings and conference rooms and the way everybody looked at and talked about him, I told myself I want to be a DS agent." Everyone started to laugh, and I was mortified.

David's still an agent, in fact I reached out to him just a couple of weeks ago. His mother and I remain in contact.

Q: Right. Now, one quick question before you leave Haiti. The equipment you gave the police, what that just very small amounts that you just did as a courtesy or was that under a program?

BOOTH: No, no. Our embassy GSO warehouse had old or dated guard equipment like the wooden night sticks for the local guards which had already been replaced with batons. I talked to the Detachment Commander if the marines could use the equipment and he said "no". Maybe someone ordered them for the local guards. I have no clue and there was nothing I could find in the embassy files. I also found a case of handcuffs. I didn't want my local guards handcuffing anybody. No way. Local guards call the police for any handcuffing. Can you imagine a local guard holding someone down and cuffing them? You could not send these things back to DC so I decided that since it was non-lethal equipment, I would give it to major Baigdy. Anytime I visited him I always had a present or two to offer. And when I needed immediate assist in the rape case involving the Peace Corps Volunteer Baigdy was immediately on the case with me. By the way we believe the suspect fled to Florida. Never enough physical evidence to go forward and no DNA was recovered.

Q: Wow. Alright, so at least you opened.....

BOOTH: I opened Haiti. And it's been open ever since and now has an ARSO. In 1997 I went back.

Q: Alright so you spent some time in Sibley to get over the staph infection.

BOOTH: Oh yes, two weeks in Sibley and four months of taking intravenous Ancef to kill the staph. Yeah.

Q: Wow, that's remarkable.

BOOTH: Right now you and I have staph on our skins. It's only when you get a deep cut does the bacteria pose a serious problem. I had a deep cut develop on my chest and we never determined if it was from an insect bite or a laceration, I did not notice at first. To discover the intensity of the infection, the medical staff injected me with radioactive gallium. For some unknown reason the radioactive gallium is drawn to certain internal infection sites. They showed me the X-ray of my chest and the sac surrounding around my heart was almost totally black. Months later Doctor Bucky Davis informed me, "You know Mr. Booth, honestly, you were close. You were as close as anybody I ever seen." But he did not tell me that during the time frame.

Q: Wow, wow. Alright.

BOOTH: I was lucky.

Q: So, you're now in the U.S. and you have six months left on the old assignment.

BOOTH: Oh before I forget. While assigned to SIB in 1984, I was asked to be the security liaison officer on Donald Rumsfeld's peace negotiation team traveling throughout the Middle East. For 30 days in October and November we traveled aboard a USAF DC 9 military plane as Rumsfeld's team attempted to negotiate with all the Middle East players to obtain comprehensive peace treaty with Israel. In Iraq, Rumsfeld and I were driven to a secluded palace at 2 AM in the morning and met Saddam Hussain where the two conversed until 4 AM.

We were on the road for 30 days before taking a break. We stopped in London and I decided to take a week off and wait for the team to return to resume the negotiations talks. I asked the Investigation Director if I could take the next week as annual leave and he agreed. Unfortunately, the next day I was called to the embassy and directed by the RSO to fly to war-torn Belfast and conduct a misconduct case involving one of our American officers assigned to the consulate. I couldn't believe it. I never escaped, never could escape my reputation. War torn Northern Island was a real eye opener for me. Anyways, I finished the inquiry in two days and enjoyed a day of annual leave before the team returned. For thirty days visited every country in the Levant except Iran. On the return flight to London to catch a commercial flight back to Washington, D.C. Don Rumsfeld assembled the team in the rear of the USAF plane to talk. The one comment Rumsfeld made that I always remember was his saying, "You know, I don't see a solution to the Middle East problem." There is a book entitled Twin Pillars to Desert Storm written by Howard Teicher who was a member of the negotiating team. He was kind enough to include two vignettes about me in the book. In 1989 my wife and I purchased a house at 4303 Reno Road in Washington, D.C. Howard Teicher was my neighbor three houses up. We laughed about that when we first ran into each other.

Q: Oh for heaven sakes. Oh my God. Alright. So that was a little.....

BOOTH: A little side I'd forgotten about, yeah.

Q: But now you're back from Haiti and you've got six months to kill. Was it principally recuperation or were you also working at the same time?

BOOTH: Oh, I was working. To cope with the infection, all I had to do was inject myself with the Ancef once in the morning and once in the evening when I got home for work. I was back doing investigations and interviews, no travel. You know, backstopping, helping write reports of investigations, we call them ROIs, and assisting the agents in the office where I brought my expertise back to them. I would explain how we conducted investigations in the past and, if it works now fine, if not, do not do it. Several months later I was off to my new assignments.

Q: OK, so that gets you all the way into 1987 and what are they talking to you about, or finally you're back again in the US, your wife is working, and by now your kids are in high school?

BOOTH: No, I had no children at that point.

Q: Oh, ok. For some reason I, alright...your wife...

BOOTH: We married the moment I returned from Haiti. Otherwise she would fly down to Haiti visit me in every 60 days, and I'd visit her in Florida every 60 days. This is before we had all this electronic stuff. It's just amazing to think of how we coped back then.

Q: Wow. OK. What are you thinking about, or what are they talking to you about for the next assignment?

BOOTH: DS personnel advised me that, "We really don't have a lot of assignments open here, you are kind of off cycle, but we have a job at the training center and we think, given your background, you've been an RSO, and the branch chief of overseas training is available. You would be responsible for training ARSO candidates who are about to go overseas." My job was to go to the training center and develop a program, and when I got there the RSO class was five weeks. At the same time DS had hired the XYZXYZ corporation to design training modules and submit a Training Reference Manual for future ARSOs.

Q: Is this part of FSI or is it separate?

BOOTH: It's separate. Totally separate. If you wanted language training, you would attend FSI classes. If you wanted to learn how to write a good cable, you would go to FSI. My classes were designed strictly for RSO, ARSO and Post Security Officer training and how to implement a robust physical, personnel and procedural security program at post. Becoming a competent security officer required that you understood security regulations and rules and how to interpret them while working with other mission staff. We did not teach them how to work with people only, best practices.

Q: Alright. OK. So you did develop the program.

BOOTH: Yes.

Q: Now to do it did you need a lot of assistance, did you have a unit?

BOOTH: We had a company called XYZXYZ who arrived from California, I think, and who had been awarded a million-dollar contract for classroom content development. In the end, I wasn't particularly happy with the overall quality of the 14 Training Reference Manuals. They were all trashed within 10 years. My only staff consisting of one hard-charging former OSI agent named Hal Orbits. Just he and I were responsible for

monitoring the contract, providing classroom instruction and handling all administrative matters. I'm saying, "Wow, I have no background in education or adult training and I'm going to have to start teaching a variety of classes and I've got to develop an interim RSO course while XYZXYZ is developing their ideas." DS's response did was kind of interesting. My boss at the time was Jeff Bosworth, and Jeff said, "Robert, they've got a training specialist program at Georgetown University specifically geared for train the trainer scenarios. You've got to learn how to make needs assessments, how to create different styles of classroom presentations, develop good platform and speaking skill and prepare examinations. DS is going to sign you up for the Georgetown program." It is forty-five thousand dollars, it's a yearlong program." I said, "Well, if I'm going to be here two more years I guess it would help." Jeff's final comment was, "There's only one caver Robert. If you start and you don't finish, you owe DS forty-five thousand dollars. "I said, "OK."

I finished the program. That was very helpful because my classmates at Georgetown University were mostly from private industry and it was eye-opening to see how a university and how non-USG entities treated training. So that was very, very useful, very helpful. The program allowed me to go forward with skills and knowledge that I did not have when I first arrived at our Training Center. I was asked to create a security briefing program for FSNs, overhaul the FSNI (Foreign Service National Investigators, and a security awareness class for Ambassadors and DCMs departing for post. That went on for 3 years during which time I got married.

Q: OK, just a very quick question about the whole FSNI thing, FSNs that work in the consular section for sure, and I believe the rest of the embassy, after 15 years can apply for legal permanent residence in the U.S. Is that true of FSNI too?

BOOTH: Yes. Whether it exists today, I don't know. But back then yes.

Q: Yes, back then. Because I started thinking that when the FSNs get that skill and then they have some time in the field, and then they have that foreign language, you know, if they start thinking, "Wow, I'm 40 or whatever, and I've got easily another 20 years or so professional life in me, I can go to the U.S. and earn ten times what I earn here."

BOOTH: No, but you want to stay in the country you're at because the salary is good and retirement almost guaranteed. It all depends on many factors. Working in an embassy overseas as an FSN, or now LES, in most countries is very prestigious.

Q: OK. OK.

BOOTH: And so, Gabriel Georges, for example, gets health benefits on top of a U.S. Government salary and he's happy. His wife and kids are in Miami right now because of on-going violence and natural disasters. But for him, he does quite well as an FSNI.

Q: OK, OK. Alright. So '87 and it takes you all the way to '89?

BOOTH: '90.

Q: Oh, to '90, with developing and then being an instructor.

BOOTH: Implementing changes, handling finances, instructing in classes, doing admin work and finally getting additional help. After two years, DS assigned me two additional agents – Evan Dewire and Gary Gibson when we moved to our new location in Gallows Road, where it is today

Q: At the end, do you also ask the people getting the instruction to evaluate it?

BOOTH: Oh, absolutely.

Q: What, from them, did you, in other words, how much from them did you actually find useful that you then altered the course to address?

BOOTH: The courses did not alter too much because most of the topics concerned basic RSO functions. There was nothing esoteric taught. For example, we discussed the security violation program, the marine security guard program, how to trouble-shoot a AES home alarm system, exposed the students to technical security, residential security issues, when to contact SIB or SAS, how to conduct preliminary inquiries and on and on. In the end we discussed the best way to try and sell the security program to individuals who did not see such things as a priority in their professional lives. In the end it was one big briefing

Q: OK. And so the last little pieces, to what extent do you tell them, “Well, you do have a fair amount of discretion here, and you need to make the judgment about...”

BOOTH: Huge. I said the security answer for the embassy in Australia is not the right answer for our embassy in Borneo. I said that you must be level headedly in enforcing rules. In fact, rules are really guidance. If you start enforcing rule, rule, rule, rule, rule, rule, after rule you're not going to be successful at post. You must adapt to your environment. I tell them flat out, you've got to adapt at post.

For example, the RSO class had a writing exercise in which all students were given a sheet of paper listing 13 issues that hit the RSO's office that day. They were to take the sheet home and write up a three-sentence response to each issue and prioritize the responses. Issue eight describes a situation where the RSO is walking up the steps of the chancery with the Ambassador who says “Too many personal cars in the embassy parking lot, looks terrible. Something must be done.” The next day when all the students were seated for that class I said, “OK guys, you prioritized your responses, who put number eight as priority one?” Nobody ever did. I said. “Let's get something really clear here guys. If the Ambo looks at you and says something, he doesn't, the Ambo doesn't care if you're the GSO, the Admin, the Consular or whomever, you have just been told by the God, or Goddess at post that something is not right, and you are kind of on the hook. I would get these looks and comments, “Oh yeah, I am not a parking lot

monitor...it's the GSO's problem ...Marines shouldn't be involved". My response was that they should see the admin officer or GSO rather quickly and relay the ambassador's comments and certainly if it is a political ambassador who does not know how an embassy operates. The writing exercise was a great vehicle for students see how an embassy operates and the role of the RSO. The back and forth discussions allowed students to see that answers and priorities were different for the same problem had. I think that was one of the more valuable classes we had.

Q: Now, when they go out as an RSO, because you're instructing them and some of them may actually be going out as RSOs, not just assistants. How do you instruct them with regard to the difficult situation when the ambassador does not agree with your judgment and wants to go and do something anyway?

BOOTH: Depending how urgent or unusual the problem it is, you normally have time to contact DS Headquarters and seek guidance. Don't get into battles over one issue. You've got other issues to work with the ambassador, DCM or Admin Counselor. If this one crazy issue comes up that is new and problematic, just don't professionally die on it. That is stupid. And you know what, if you can hack it, you will come up with a resolution. When I was the DRSO in Paris in 1993, Ambassador Curley – a political appointee - called me into his office with an unusual request. Every year die-hard French monarchists marched down the Champs-Élysées and held a remembrance in the Place de la Concorde where Louis was guillotined, all the while chanting "We want the monarchy back." The small crowd would get rowdy at times over the years but there was rarely any violence. The ambassador announced, "Robert, I want to go this year, I want to be in that crowd." My immediate response was, "Mr. Ambassador, first of all think about the optics. The French press will probably be there who will probably spot your bodyguard detail and figure things out. Or the crowd could turn on you for whatever reason." He answered, "Robert, I want to do it." Despite my misgivings, he is the Ambassador and I work for him, so my answer was easy now, "OK, we're going to do it." It was right out of my RSO class where I told students, "Don't fall on your sword on procedural stuff, don't fall on your sword on a guidance thing. If it's a life safety issue, then you have to say, 'No sir, my professional opinion says 'no' to that question.'" I researched the issue, worked things out with the French bodyguard detail, the Ambassador dressed discreetly, didn't walk directly out of the embassy into the crowd and the local police who would be in the Place de la Concorde were notified Nothing happened at the monarchist's rally and the ambassador was appreciative.

Q: OK, because, ultimately some guidance from Washington could come in to the ambassador that says no.

BOOTH: Right. Or that the RSO is instructed not to do something. I've known many RSOs who've had to leave post because they did not along with an Ambassador. I would candidly tell an Ambassador on a rare occasion, "Well, I'm sorry about that but this request just violates common security sense or regulation." I can get along with just about anybody, even with Brunson McKinley. I didn't go head to head with him over all security issues and when he had me implement certain programs that I believed were

ineffective or wasteful of funds – like barbed wire for the local school where most embassy children were enrolled - I just simply wrote my reports and sent them to DS Headquarters. When he asked for my opinions, I gave him my opinions. He fully supported the armoring of embassy vehicles and DS/MSD training for our local guards. In fact several months later the MSG van, containing two marines was shot at as it exited the Marine House and the ballistic insert windshield held up. We had a bodyguard detail consisting of three DS special agents come down and protect him for 60 days when we thought there was a real personal threat to the Ambassador to his person being. Remember the Ambassador is the President's personal representative to that country. He/she is not the Secretary of State's representative to post. You've got to understand his or her authority. Chief of Mission authority. If he says to bend the rule, you do it.

Q: OK. That's what I was trying to make sure I understood.

BOOTH: That's the way I would do it now based off my body of RSO experience. Working for Brunson McKinley was a great teaching lesson in dealing with an ambassador who just saw things differently from me. I heard and saw things that he didn't see, and he must have heard and saw things that I didn't see. Luckily the DCM Genta Hawkins Holmes was the polar opposite. I would serve with her anywhere, anytime. Unfortunately, I was unable to convince him or his staff that the upcoming elections were doomed. And that's my fault because maybe I lacked credibility...I was not expected to be a political country analyst...I was just the embassy security officer, not a substantive officer

Q: OK, OK. Alright. So now we take it to the end of the training period. And that gets us to....

BOOTH: 1990.

Q: Yeah.

BOOTH: And Clark Dittmer called me up and said, "Robert..."

Q: And Clark Dittmer is...?

BOOTH: The director of Diplomatic Security.

Q: OK.

BOOTH: He said, "Robert, I want you to come and head up the Special Investigations Branch."

Q: Again.

BOOTH: I immediately said, "No." I said, "Clark, I'm done. I'm through with that stuff. I am not going to be responsible for those kinds of investigations anymore." John

Murphy, my old SAS colleague, was head of SIB (Special Investigations Division) at that point. I said, "Clark, I'm not doing it. I'm here at the training center and my next assignment should be in Overseas Operations to prepare me for an overseas posting in two years. I don't want to do that internal stuff." Clark said, "Robert you don't really have a choice." I said, "Oh, it's one of those deals." He said, "Yes. We've got problems, we've got lots of problems. I know you, I know your reputation, I know you handled this stuff before, and I want you to come over and take over SIB." It was clear that he had decided and that I had no choice but to accept.

Q: Yes.

BOOTH: So at that time our office was located right across the street from the rear façade of Main State in SA-2 or 3 on Virginia Avenue

Q: Right, right.

BOOTH: On the first day of the job I walked into the SIB office space to greet Bob and Mike and Carla and Justine and I can't remember if Jeff was there yet. There were five agents and one office staff now ready to work for me working for me. My predecessor John Murphy was there only long enough to hand over the "green book" and wish me the best. The "green book" contained the names and numerical designations for all the investigations conducted by SIB. All entries were by hand. We didn't have computers at that time. I never felt comfortable with computers as I felt they could be abused. After I was informed by OPM two years ago that my personnel files had been hacked by the MSS I believe I feel unfortunately vindicated. We started with Wangs in Tokyo in 1979. At that point, whenever any allegation was received it was logged in the "green book" in a coding system used identify whether it was an unauthorized disclosure inquiry, a criminal code violation such as a gun case or drug case, or whatever it was an administrative misconduct case. If the allegation included the name of the suspect, that would also be noted in the "green book". It was a sensitive document that never left my desk or safe. When John handed me the "green book" I started to flip through it and said, "My God. How many open cases do we have here? Twenty, 30, 40, 50 of them. Oh my God. This is not possible." John replied, "OK Robert, good luck and everything else." Then about 3 weeks later SIB received an allegation that an officer was gay...possible sexual misconduct or potential blackmail. Remember some homosexual activity was illegal in the States and overseas.

Q: And this is 1990?

BOOTH. 1990. I said to myself, "I thought by 1985, at that particular point one or two gays had come out, they'd been identified in the Blade newspaper, it was an open acknowledgment that several Ambassadors were gay back then." My response was relatively immediate, so I made an appointment with Clark Dittmer to discuss the issue. Once in his office I said, in a nutshell, "Clark, SIB not doing gay cases anymore. We're not doing them." His response was something to the effect that gays still represented a risk of blackmail. I said, "Clark, this is nuts. There is no evidence that any State gay

officer has been the subject of any blackmail. In the study by the DOD (Department of Defense) of the 112 espionage cases involving U.S. Government employees, only one officer's homosexuality a factor in the recruitment. We have more heterosexuals who get in trouble all the time." I repeated myself and said, "Clark, SIB is not going to investigate people to ascertain their sexuality and I am not having my agents so this anymore." And Clark just kind of looked at me and said, "Well, let's revisit the issue." I replied, "Well Clark, if you want to revisit the issue, fine, but I'm not authorizing the opening of any new homosexual inquiries." I'm very proud of the fact that in 1990, some months into it, that our office discontinued conducting or gay investigations. We closed out the outstanding homosexual misconduct cases rather quickly.

Q: Was it generally known in the department that you had stopped, or pretty much still within?

BOOTH: I think there was still some fear that it still existed. I mean there was some elements out there both in the Foreign Service and in Diplomatic Security who had a fear or a phobia about gays, and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was a medical concern. At some point State's gay community, and it was a very wired in community, realized that SIB and the RSOs were not calling them in anymore. Some overseas posts were very desired by the gay community and we became aware of these preferences. Athens was one such post. How that came about is anyone's guess. I think SIB figured that out and hey, it's the system, I get it. DS is not dumb, we really aren't. So now gays are slowly revealing themselves and nothing untoward happens. We're not interviewing State personnel about it. One gay officer nominated to be ambassador to Maputo came to my office some months later seeking personal guidance and help some months later. After his nomination was approved by the Senate some months later he invited me up to the eight floor of Main State for his swearing in ceremony.

Q: The first one I remember was the one to Luxembourg. Hormel?

BOOTH: Yes, Hormel.

Q: To Tanzania?

BOOTH: No, Mozambique. A good guy. So now gay investigations are finished, and we could concentrate on matters much more affecting the national security and the integrity of the State Department. Gays are not an issue. I mean in the early 1990's my wife and I had a number of personal and professional gay friends in Washington D.C.

Q: OK. So in your green book you still had some leftovers...

BOOTH: Oh yeah, yeah. I let them go. I 'administratively' closed the case. Most RSOs wanted nothing to do with gay cases. For example, you have an RSO let's say in a post like Nicaragua and SIB sends a message that says something to the effect that SIB thinks your political officer's gay, can you do an investigation? That's just what the RSO needs.

He's going to investigate the political officer for simply being gay? A waste of time. A waste of everybody's time.

Q: Yeah. Alright. But Clark Dittmer eventually just says, "Well, I..."

BOOTH: No, he just didn't bring it back up again. I was adamant. He brought me back to SIB and I saw nothing in the regulations that said that Foreign Service gays should be prosecuted or have their security clearances suspended, downgraded or revoked. That meant it's a DS internal fear that they can be blackmailed or exploited, yet the record was abundantly clear it was heterosexuals who are the problem, not gays.

Q: Alright. But you still have a green book full of other.

BOOTH: Oh God yes. Unauthorized disclosures, drugs, guns. And then...

Q: And very briefly, what are examples of unauthorized disclosures? Not specific cases, but...

BOOTH: Oh, read chapter three of my book "State Department Counterintelligence: Leaks, Lies and Spies. I talk about several cases and their resolutions. Almost every one of those cases comes from my two stints in SAS/SIB.

Q: I mean, obviously there are some that are intended disclosures given for, you know...

BOOTH: I make that very clear in my book. I wrote an article, an op-ed piece for the New York Times on October 22, 2003, about leaks. And it I list why leaks are done, the three categories of leaks, and the difference between political leaks and disclosures of classified information

Q: And then of course there are inadvertent ones which are violations or something like that.

BOOTH: Martin Indyk, the former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, as I mentioned in my book, left top secret documents in a U.S. air force plane bathroom that was found by the AP (Associated Press) reporter Sid Balman. That certainly was an unauthorized disclosure of very sensitive classified information, but it was not deliberate.

Q: Right. OK. So you have all these things.

BOOTH: And, on top of all of that within five weeks of my arrival in SIB, I was called to a meeting where Gerry Lopez and Ron Reams, the two seniors above me, who explained that the IG (Inspector General) was coming over to do an audit of DS's criminal investigative division, including SIB. I immediately asked, "An investigative audit, what the hell is that?" They had some vague response that assured me that something was not right. Instinctively I knew that the IG does not come over to DS to conduct investigative audits. I said, "Bull shit. I don't know exactly what is going on here, but something is

fishy here.” Eventually Beverly Lovelady and two IG agents show up to conduct their audit. The Investigations Division was composed of criminal investigations, special investigations, passport and visa fraud, and police liaison. Beverly and her two goons arrive and first interview the passport visa fraud section before proceeding to the other sections.

After a week or two of the audit, I talk with my Investigative Division counterparts to get a feel for what this IG audit is all about. In unison they all agreed that the IG inquiry seemed very bizarre and unfocused. I am not dumb. My section is going last and I have a bad feeling. Finally, Gerry Lopez tells me, “OK Robert, you’re up next.” I said, “OK, fine.” The next day the IG team arrives and says, “We want to look at all your files.” My reply was, “OK, you can look at all of them except the ones I’m sharing with the FBI. If they are FBI requests for assistance you are not authorized to see. I’ve got to pull those out.” They also said, “We want this memo, some cables some dated administrative documents and so forth. I said, “OK, fine.” As I am pulling out all the requested files, I noted that they wanted every internal affairs case involving a DS special agent. Everything became clear. I thought, “OK, I know what’s going on here now. There’s been a complaint by a special agent against senior DS and SIB. But not probably against me, but the people before me. But I see what’s going on here.”

After several days Terry Shea a senior DS manager, and Gerry and Ron’s supervisor, advised me that Beverly Lovelady was now prepared to interview me. I said, “Sure, let me get my lawyer and arrange a date.” Terry immediately responded “Oh, whoa, whoa, you don’t need a lawyer.” I remarked, “Oh yeah, I do and according to the regulations I have the right to have a lawyer present whenever interviewed by the IG.” Within short order I contacted Jack Feldman. Jack was a high school buddy with me in Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, Bethesda Maryland from 1968-1970. Jack was a Foreign Service officer for a couple of years, resigned and went on to earn a law degree. He previously had a T.S. clearance and as far as everyone was concerned he had a “residual” TS clearance.

Q: Stop a second. TS clearance residual?

BOOTH: Yeah, his TS had been gone for several years, but frankly we were not going to discuss classified. It is not as though Jack was a novice to the workings of the State Department. We were not going to discuss classified, we would be talking about internal operations.

Q: OK.

BOOTH: This demand by me that I wanted my lawyer present during the IG interview created much consternation among senior DS. My response to their comments that I really did not need a lawyer while being interviewed by the IG was, “No. First of all, you guys lied to me. You said it was an audit, it’s not an audit. The IG is investigating SIB, they are investigating my staff and my operations. And I don’t know whether I’m the

target of the investigation based off what can gather from talking to fellow Investigative Division agents and my own SIB agents who have already been interviewed. I know I'm being interviewed last of everybody in the Division because there is something about SIB." I said, "I'm not happy with this." Terry Shea, who was very senior DS said, "Well Robert, we can't deny you having your lawyer." I said, "Of course you can't deny me having a lawyer. You can't. It's in the regulations ...the 22 CFRs." Always blunt.

Finally, Beverly Lovelady and I agreed on an interview date and time. Now this is all before cell phones. When the IG team arrived, I advised them that I had just received a phone call from my lawyer who was having problems finding a parking space outside our building. I told them that I had to go downstairs and help him find parking and then escort him into the building. Jack and I had already arranged this little charade ahead of then. I went downstairs to greet Jack, who had already parked his car, and we went across the street for a coffee and discussed our interview strategy for twenty minutes. Once satisfied with our approach, we left the coffee shop, entered our building, took the elevator up to the ID floor, entered the conference room and sat down. Right after all the appropriate introductions are made, I turned to Beverly Lovelady and said, "Can I tape record the interview?" She immediately looked shocked and replied, "Oh no. You can't tape record this."

Beverly looked over to Jack, and with a big smile, and said, "So if this is your lawyer he is not authorized to give any testimonial advice. This is not a criminal case." And I returned the smile and said, "No, he's only here to memorialize everything that goes on here." She says, "What do you mean?" I replied, "Well, every question your team asks me, I'm going to write down the question on this paper tablet before I give you any answer. And every answer I give you, I'm going to record the answer on the tablet. And we will proceed that way. Jack will confirm the accuracy of each question and answer immediately. Right? Any questions or problems?" They were speechless, so I finally said, "Can I see your credentials?" I immediately started to write down on the tablet: Can.... I..... see your.... credentials? The two IG agents produced their credentials and I said, "Excuse me." I write down their names and credential identification numbers on the paper tablet, and said "I am ready." One agent asked, "Mr. Booth, how long have you worked in SIB?" Once he had finished I held up my hand and wrote out on the tablet: Mr. Booth.... how...long...have.... you worked...in SIB/....." And that is how the very. painful interview started off with me answering almost every single one of their questions with one or two-word answers. It was clear that they wanted to know exactly who had the authority to initiate an SIB investigation and how they were started. My standard answer was "According to the Investigations and Procedures manual (I&P)." I said nothing more or nothing less. When they asked for a specific procedure like how we closed a case, I would open the I&P, which was on the conference room table, find the answer and cite" According to page 24, paragraph 4 instructions." Every time they tried to engage me in conversation, I refused. Remember after each exchange, I wrote it down, showed it to Jack and asked, Is that their question and is that my answer? Inevitably he said "yes" and initialed the question and answer. It was clear the IG team was unhappy but were powerless to anything. Past experience had clearly shown me that if interviews written by agents occurred more than 24 hours after an interview they were riddled with

inconsistencies and inaccuracies. I had handled IG reports in the past when I worked in SIB from 1982-1986 and I was familiar with the quality of their investigative recollections. I was not going to be a victim this time. Besides I had done nothing wrong. The interview went on for about an exhausting two hours. Jack and I were laughing inwardly. When it was all over, they did not offer their hands and I did not offer mine. I wasn't going to shake theirs anyways because they'd lied to us about what it was all about. Eventually Terry Shea showed me the anonymous letter someone had sent to the IG complaining that Clark Dittmer was using the SIB office to harass DS employees, run a surreptitious gestapo-style mode of operations, punish hesitant SIB agents with hardship assignments and, finally, to assist "Bud" McFarland, a former senior White House advisor, to obtain a diplomatic passport. Not a single allegation was sustained. I have a copy of the anonymous letter and the IG's findings. I asked Terry Shea, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" "Well, we couldn't tell you Robert", he answered, "because the IG investigation is confidential." I said, "Well, you guys are idiots." So that was how the IG case ended up. That opened my first five months in SIB.

Q: Wow, that's rough.

BOOTH: The IG researched all the SIB records, they went through all our files, and concluded in their final report, "Upon review of all the SIB reports of the investigation we found no evidence of wrongdoing or misconduct except in one case where SIB agents did open up an investigation with the presumption of guilt against the officer in question." All that time and effort for what? At some point an IG must review anonymous allegations with a grain of salt. SIB was totally vindicated. My opinion of the State IG only got worse some five years later when I was the victim of a scurrilous unsigned letter alleging non-official, non-professional, Paris misconduct with my privately-owned vehicle. Which after their initial inquiry, - the flew to Paris of course to conduct the inquiry -refused to interview me, since the allegation completely baseless. And I know the identity of the author of letter because she had been reprimanded by the RSO for discussing embassy operations at a private party

Q: Wow, my goodness.

BOOTH: Jack and I still laugh about it today. We had breakfast with a few our Bethesda Chevy-Chase High School classmates last November and that interview was discussed with much laughter

Q: Wow. And Dittmer knew this was going on?

BOOTH: No, it was all untrue. It was all untrue.

Q: No, I mean knew that the IG was coming for an investigation.

BOOTH: Yes, but what he did was correct. I mean, he could have called me in and said, "Robert it's not you." As such, I would have approached the IG interview from a very different point of view. During those initial couple of months, I was thinking, "What case

have I handled that would cause this kind of IG reaction?" I reviewed only significant cases and there was nothing in the files suggesting reviewable issues, but I was not taking any chances. I strongly suspected the allegation it preceded me. But I still would not offer up my office like that to the IG witch hunt for what I assumed to be bogus. When I arrived in SIB, my agent staff consisted of Justine Sincavage, Carla Thompson, Mike Poscillo, Jeff McCredie and Bob Valente -- and they were agents I held in high regard.

Q: Now, this was the first five months. How much longer does it go?

BOOTH: Some ten months later about ten months later my Career Development Officer informed me, "Robert, it's about time for you to bid to go overseas." I told her, "I'm married, I have one kid about to start kindergarten, my last overseas post was a hardship and Dittmer forced me to accept my current position that was not on my bid list. So, the post I want is DRSO (Deputy Regional Security Officer) Paris, France."

Q: Wow. OK.

BOOTH: My CDO confirmed that I needed a 3-3 to qualify for the DRSO position and that I had to take a FSI language test to prove my proficiency, and therefore, my qualifications to bid on the position. I thought about that for a minute and was already tired of my 15-month tour in SIB, so I decided on a new strategy. I am a fluent French speaker and thought that if I passed the one-day FSI exam, I would return to SIB for five more months before going overseas. However, if I only scored a 2-2, I would then have to take a four-month refresher course in French at FSI. This was a no brainer. I proceed to FSI and obtained a 2-2. FSI informs my CDO of my score who informs me that "Well, you know, it's a 3-3, and post insists so Booth has to enroll in a four-month French class and immediately." My CDO cuts my orders in February and I am assigned tentatively to the DRSO position in Paris with a four month stop in FSI hoping to improve my French language capabilities. Within several days I assembly the SIB agents and said, "Bye guys, I'm out of here." I closed my SIB files and took off for four months of French language classes at FSI. SIB I'm done. FSI classes consisted of six-hour week days, half-day off on Wednesday and no pager calls at night or weekend work. My wife joined me for some of my classes. And then lo and behold, four months later, I am re-tested, and I score a 3+-4 in French.

Q: Oh, what a surprise.

BOOTH: What a surprise. What a surprise.

Q: Wow, you must have been a very good student.

BOOTH: Oh, I was a very good student.

Q: But now your wife and now your child are now going to accompany you?

BOOTH: Yes. And that's why I picked France. I was due for a good ship post. My CDO said, "But Robert, you've already been an RSO, why would you work as a DRSO?" I replied, "Why not. It's Paris. My wife can contain her law career. I know how the RSO's office will work. The RSO will be responsible for all related embassy/DS policy issues and the Marines and I will be responsible for all embassy security operations. I am fine with that." And that's exactly how it worked out.

Q: But of course it's a big post, it's a complicated post. I imagine it kept you very busy.

BOOTH: It did.

Q: Perhaps then this could be a good time to pause and we can go on to Paris in the next session.

BOOTH: It is what distinguishes the Foreign Service from the Civil Service. Every couple of years you must bid on an overseas assignment. Before I arrived in SIB, I knew upon completion of that tour I would be up against the five, six-year domestic limit. I had begun my research back in 1991 and quickly settled on Paris. I had lived there as a child and spoke the language. My wife Lori was a partner with a large DC law firm and was a French speaker. Our daughter would be able to attend a high quality international school. Lori decided that she could make the transition and work for an American law firm located in Paris. Also, she was ready to leave that law firm and try something different. Paris made sense for both of us.

Q: Great. Alright.

Q: Today is December 16, 2016, we're resuming with Robert Booth. He's just about to leave for his assignment in Paris as DRSO (Deputy Regional Security Officer), and Robert, what year was that?

BOOTH: That would have been the summer of 1992. It was scheduled for a three-year assignment with a possibility of a fourth year. I was looking forward to the posting as I had lived in France from '60 – '64 when my father worked at the American Embassy. My daughter Chloe who was barely one year old, I hoped she would learn French and I looked forward to the onward assignment, both professionally and personally, as France is a wonderful country.

Q: Sure, Absolutely. Alright. You arrive there and as I understand it, the division of responsibilities between you and the RSO (Regional Security Officer) is going to be that you would take on more of the operations and the RSO would take on more of the policy. Is that how it worked out?

BOOTH: Not initially, we didn't think about it that way. Gary Caldwell had already been there two years and given the fact that I had previously served as an RSO, it wasn't as though I was new to the game. Gary spent an ordinate amount of time in Paris attending

innumerable meetings and coordinating working with the other agencies under the embassy roof. Within a very short period, I focused on working with the two ARSOs (Assistant Regional Security Officer) and, because I was fluent in French, supervising our five-person FSNI (Foreign Service National Investigator) office. Most of my day was taken up with monitoring the day-to-day operations of the marines, the local guard force and staying current with our French police and security services protecting the embassy grounds and the Ambassador's residence. Gary worked directly with the Ambassador, Detachment Commander, OSAC, DS in Washington, D.C., and agency heads trying to make sure that all the agencies' needs were met and that were compliant with embassy security rules. Gary and I shared duties with the four separate buildings in Paris that received Marine Security Guard protection. The Consulate was separate from the embassy, the Marine House was located on the top two floors of the "D" (Administrative) building and the OECD office space and all required daily RSO attention. I was always assigned responsibility for liaison with the U.S. commercial air and aerospace industries during two Paris Air Shows.

Q: OK. In 1992 was there a great deal of concern, as part of your work, for the individual safety and security of anybody in the embassy wandering around France? In other words, did you have to give people warnings about locations, or particular individuals, or so on that had come to you as part of your job, to let people know about that?

BOOTH: The RSO's office had a newcomer's briefings, which included the officer, his/her spouse and children over the age of 16. It was a mandatory briefing and your temporary issued embassy ID card was not made permanent (it was deactivated) after 30 days upon arrival at post if you failed to attend the briefing. The briefing focused on three areas of concern. The first low-level concern was crime, which consisted mainly of pick-pocket activity around tourist areas and while traveling on the metro. The newcomers were also warned that certain parts of Paris could be unsafe. They were warned to be careful what they were carrying on their persons or in wallets. I enjoyed pointing to a newcomer in a briefing and saying, "Excuse me mam/sir, can you open up your wallet? Or break out your purse?" Out would come library cards, Costco membership cards, ACE reward cards, health cards, insurance papers and other useless stuff. I'd say, "Do you really need to walk around with all that?" Now it was a bit embarrassing and I did not mean to put them on the spot, but it was an eye opener for all participants. I also reminded them to be careful about wearing flashy jewelry and other similar tempting items. During the time I was there, we had a couple of instances where a passport or a wallet was stolen from embassy personnel. But there was not a single case where an official American or family member, in the three years I was there, was physically accosted.

The second concern obviously, and this is the one you worry about a bit, is counter-intelligence. You generally would not think that would be an issue in Paris, but the French intelligence services did target us. Just prior to my arrival, two FSNs, Isabelle Le Blanc and her daughter, were terminated from embassy employment as they had been identified as assets of the French intelligence services. During the interview before being

fired, they admitted their culpability. A year later I received a letter from Isabelle asking for consideration to come back to work. I still have the letter. They eventually fled to the United States and had to be deported back to France. Newcomers were reminded that there are certain areas in the embassy where you could talk freely and other areas you could not. Employees were told in no uncertain terms that they had to be very careful what they were talking in the presence of Foreign Service Nationals. As a specific example I insisted that they be careful and circumspect when talking in the cafeteria where they may inadvertently expose intelligence officers.

The third and final concern was terrorism. During my three years there we never received a credible piece of information that the embassy, the consulates of USG personnel were targets. We reminded people that they needed to be careful about traveling to areas where there could be potential for violence, especially social and political demonstrations, which occurred on a seemingly daily basis in Paris. Licensed or approved demonstrations could be checked daily on the French telephone Minitel system or announced in the daily newspapers. One job of the FSNI staff to identify which upcoming demonstrations could potentially turn violent so that embassy staff could be notified in advance and I guess that is one kind of terrorism. The other kind of terrorism is international terrorism, but that just did not happen to us while we were there. We just reminded people to pay attention to their surroundings and just be conscious about where they were going and how they acted and looked.

Q: Now, once again, in terms of the size and the scope of your job, there were two consulates in France at that time?

BOOTH: There was a consulate in Strasbourg, Marseille and Bordeaux. Bordeaux was constantly being closed and reopened, depending on funding. There was a joint French/US agricultural project in Montpellier that required oversight from our office as was the OECD (Office of Economic and Co-Operative Development) office space in Paris which had Marine Security Guard protection. The OECD U.S. Ambassador's residence also had local protection.

Q: Right. Right.

BOOTH: The American diplomatic presence in France was reduced from four to three while I was there. Strasbourg's American presence remained stable because it did support the international organization based in the city.

Q: The European parliament?

BOOTH: Yes, the European parliament.

Q: And when you were there we were not in UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)?

BOOTH: That is correct. We were out of UNESCO. We had to visit our consulates at least once every six months, and I would normally accompany one of the ARSOs and teach them how to conduct a good security survey. I would use these trips to judge ARSOs writing, analytical skills, and security skills and seeing how they could best enhance the physical security around a specific consulate. We would also meet with the French police counterparts who were responsible security for the mission and personnel.

Q: How did that work at the embassy? Because each of these large countries has a somewhat different approach to embassy protection. And I imagine with your French, you were also in contact very regularly with French counterparts.

BOOTH: Yes. The French gendarmerie, which is quasi-military, was responsible for the physical protection of the embassy in Paris. They performed admirably, and we had little interaction with them. At the same time, a four-person Paris police body guard detail always accompanied the Ambassador outside the residence or office. I had a lot of interaction with the chief of that detail.

Q: So in other words, separate from the gendarmerie was the Parisian police who were providing this?

BOOTH: Right. Well, it's kind of an elite unit. It's not their SPHP (Service de Protection des Hautes Personalities, a Secret Service equivalent), it's a little bit distinct from them. There was a unit set up to do that. And then also I had to deal with the individual police chiefs, the préfets in each arrondissement in which American Embassy people were living. My schedule with them was to meet once a year at a minimum at the commissariats (police precinct station) and meet the senior police officials and talk to them about any embassy concerns they had and let them know where the Americans were living, because they needed to know. I asked them to let me know when there were any indications if American embassy personnel were under any kind of threat or if the apartment they lived in was an issue. I reminded them that if they ever had contact with or detained an American diplomat for whatever reason they could call me any time any day.

Q: Now the interesting thing about that, about establishing that kind of relationship with the police is that typically, when an American citizen is arrested, the only requirement that the country has is to notify the consul. But you actually took the initiative to make contacts with the police, and did it work? Because in other words, what you were saying was, before we even get to the level of official notification to a consul, could you call me and let's see if we can possibly just work this out at a police level.

BOOTH: The reason I did this was because I always kept in the back of my head the incident in Tokyo, Japan, when the GSO's son took his father's car for an unauthorized ride and left the scene of an accident he caused. The Tokyo police came to the RSO's office rather quickly. The lesson I learned from that incident was that that I needed to be proactive. My pitch was, "Look, here in Paris, France, it's possible that American

diplomats could be targeted by terrorists or criminals, so we have an obligation to resolve these things.” I would end up by saying something to the effect. “And oh, by the way your police officers could interact with a U.S. diplomat, so I am ready to resolve any questions whatever.”

I know this for a fact because I was pulled over by the police while driving my car in Paris. Embassy officer’s cars had normal license plates (Paris) and we kept the diplomatic plates out of sight and only to be shown when necessary. This was done to keep our cars in low-profile mode. I was driving on a Saturday with an embassy friend headed off the American School gym for a game of basketball when I was pulled over by two French motorcycle gendarmes. A little gruff, a little unfriendly, they asked for my driver’s license and registration and I am talking in my 4,3+ French, all polite and all. Once I handed him the papers he and his buddy go back to their motorcycles to do whatever they needed to do. Finally, both gendarmes returned, and I asked, “What’s the matter?” One says, “There is a real problem. Your Volvo station wagon has the brake light in the middle of the back window, and you can’t register those kinds of cars in France.” And I was stunned at this technical thing. Both are eyeing me suspiciously. So, I took out my diplomatic ID card and removed my CD plate from the console for inspection. One of them looks at the ID card and license plates and says, “Why didn’t you do that earlier?” And I said, “Well, I didn’t know why you pulled me over, I’m not going to be rude about this.” They returned both items, gave me a casual salute and roared off. And that had happened literally in the first 60 days I was there, so I knew that embassy officer and police contact was inevitable and most things like that could have the potential to spiral out of control.

That incident was in the back of my mind when I meet the police officers. These incidents would happen. But yes, you’re right, the last word is, if you do detain an Americans, and I hate to say, many of the officers do not speak police French as well as they should, I am always available to resolve issues. So if a police officer is confronted by a person claiming to be a U.S. diplomat or displays a diplomatic ID or a U.S. Embassy ID, and that the police are having problems contact the RSO’s office. Someone will be there to help. Let’s stabilize it, and let’s make sure everybody’s happy at the end of the event. And we surely want to keep this out of the press.

Q: Did it work?

BOOTH: Yeah, I mean I got one phone call once involving an embassy officer, and beyond that, the American diplomats obviously conducted themselves as they should. Or maybe the rest of an incident never got to my desk. Any incident where a police officer in Paris may have stopped an embassy personnel, it was resolved amicably on the spot, and nothing went further than that.

Q: And of course, obviously it’s a different story with just regular U.S. citizens. In that case you really could not become involved in every single one of those issues.

BOOTH: They would call me only when it was serious. Paris police senior management knew me. For example, there was a case where an American tourist was flying back from Tunis and had an 18 hour wait at the airport for her connecting flight back to America. She decided to go down to the Eiffel Tower and do some sight-seeing. Long story short, she claimed she was raped. The French police brought her down to the police station and made an arrest within hours. The police were having difficulty interviewing her, so they called me at my house and they sent a car to come get me at my house. We raced through the middle of Paris, with sirens blaring, to the commissariat and so that I could help translate for the young American woman. It was not a consular issue at this point, it was strictly an investigative one. She was distraught and a frightened. She did not know what was happening. The French interrogation of this young American woman was a little, how shall I say, I want to be diplomatic about this, was not as gentle as I would have been. The male suspect was literally in the next room and you could hear raised voices and it was clear that they wanted a confession or for the girl to give conclusive evidence for an arrest. Ultimately it took about three hours to finish up the interview, he was charged with rape and I explained to the American that I would now put her in contact with a Consular Officer. The next morning an ACS officer and I reviewed the case so that Consular would be up to speed.

Q: It's very interesting because in a lot of other embassies, a DS agent would not necessarily involve themselves.

BOOTH: Oh, I agree, this was highly unusual. And frankly, rare.

Q: Yes. And once again, it's a question of the individual agent's willingness to, you know, sort of put himself out there a little bit more than would be exactly within his lane, let's say.

BOOTH: I would say extraordinarily rare.

Q: And that's what makes it interesting because in other words, it is possible for DS agents to do a bit more if they are inclined.

BOOTH: And comfortable doing so. You're correct. I think the critical thing is language. And DS has done a great job of ensuring that DS officers assigned to most posts, including Moscow and Beijing, to speak the language. And it also allows the RSO to interact better with the police, especially those services providing security for the embassy ground. After a time, I had attended numerous official functions and had come to be acquainted with many French police officials. There were one or two other occasions, where the French police asked for my assistance and I was more than happy to. Do you remember the case of Bradford Bishop, the FSO who killed his wife, two young children, mother-in-law and the family dog in Virginia before becoming a fugitive? He speaks Serbo-Croatian and had been on the run for more than 20 years. While I was in Paris, information was developed that Bradford Bishop was hiding in Burgundy, France. I traveled to Burgundy and working along my police contacts tried to confirm that he was staying with one of his American cousins at a rented property.

Although the town's boulanger was fairly certain that the face in the photo we had was similar to the man who had bought items in his store, that man had left about three earlier. Not wanting to do any more alerting, we advised DC of our findings. Bradford was featured on America's Most Wanted some years back

Q: This Foreign Service Officer who had fled?

BOOTH: Yeah, when I was looking in France, it was almost 20 years later after the murders.

Q: Wow. OK. Now, just to go back to this language question. So over the years now that you're looking back on your career, has DS become more aware of the importance of the language issue in terms of recruitment, in terms of training, and so on? Have they begun to do more with training agents?

BOOTH: On language, absolutely. It's abundantly clear that you cannot be an effective RSO in most countries if you don't speak the language. OK, Australia, New Zealand, you're OK. Canada, you're OK. I've got it. But no. Even in France. Gary Caldwell my boss, his French was a 2-2, which pretty good. But I think that the more fluent you are, the more you can professionally and culturally appreciate your post. For me, anyways, it was. If you speak Spanish, you've pretty much got South America covered except for Brazil. If you speak French, you've got Africa covered and parts of the Caribbean and the Middle East. The only places where you learn a language for only one posting is Arabic speaking Middle East, China and Russia. We are lucky that in Europe English is the second language. In Scandinavia, they all speak English. DS (Diplomatic Security) focuses on the Spanish and French languages, as they are the most useful in a long career. Gaining professional proficiency in Arabic or Mandarin is a bit tough.

Q: That's where I begin to wonder with the more difficult languages if they're looking at recruiting legacy speakers.

BOOTH: I don't know that specifically. I know that we do have Mandarin speakers. We do have Russian speakers. I mean for example, Andy Korpecki was the RSO in Moscow and he's a fluent Russian speaker. I forget that young man, a Harvard grad, he's a fluent Mandarin speaker. He was the RSO in Beijing. I debriefed him when he came out.

Q: Don't worry, it's....

BOOTH: They do. My generation of officers understand that language is critical. You just don't want the embassy senior staff looking at the RSO saying, "Oh, I've got to send one of my officers with you, when you meet your counterpart, because you can't speak the language." That just simply doesn't work. It's not going to work. And for me, Geneva, Haiti, Paris, and Cameroon (TDY), four of my long-term postings overseas, were all French speaking countries. As for me, most of my posts that I served were French speaking, so my skill helped enormously.

Q: OK, so now to go back to Paris. Were there big cases or big issues that you faced there or was it more of just making sure all of the routine things worked reliably?

BOOTH: Most of the routine security matters ran smoothly, on the other hand we had the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, and the 50th anniversary of D-Day. In the latter, President Clinton attended ceremonies in Paris. These were high profile, very nerve racking situations. Those two events along with two Paris Air shows kept the RSO's office busy. We always had the huge July 4th celebration at the ambassador's residence with hundreds of invited guests. Always worried about that.

And then there were little things that just happened periodically where U.S. international positions were the talk of media. The French police are very good. The protection they gave to the American Embassy was excellent. We never experienced an incident in Paris against any of our facilities. Bordeaux or Marseille. We just were not on anyone's radar scope. They were kind of left alone. All our assets in France were protected in a pretty low-key way. The French police had to block a road on one side of the embassy and the road behind the Talleyrand consular building which made the local citizens unhappy. We worked out a reasonable solution. Otherwise I would come to the office every day to, manage ARSO training, work with the marines, preparing drills, and supervising other operational security facets around the embassy. I am not even talking about all the paperwork that Washington required. Every now and then people arrived announced at front gate receptionist's desk requesting asylum, demanding an audience with the Ambassador, wishing to drop off a petition or whatever. Trust me, my days were full. I never went home before five, that's for sure.

Q: No doubt. What about changing technology? In other words changing security technology? Was that a big part of your job?

BOOTH: No, Gary's wife Linda was an IT (information technology) guru, genius. And one of the things Gary came up with was an ID (identification) card system back in the 90s that had a coded magnetic strip on the back. Prior to that the poor marine behind the protective glass had to determine if the card holder's face matched the one on the ID card. Way too many FSN and American employees for that system to work. Gary contracted with a British company which created a card ID and gate opener like what State has today in Main State. This is in the early 90s. So when embassy staff arrived at the front gate house, they would take out their RSO issued ID card and swipe it through a tray. If the card was valid, it allowed for one turn of the turnstile. All under the watchful eye of the Marine watch stander on duty. The embassy staff was now responsible for making sure they gained access to our facilities. It took the onus of the Marine to judge people's faces with their cards. To me that was fabulous and was way ahead of the time.

The Marine at Post 1 was in a high tech room surrounded by screens accepting images from numerous CCTVs (closed circuit television) functioning in all our buildings and with all the buttons and alarms to safeguard our premises. There were many technical countermeasure programs that we managed but I cannot talk about those.

Q: No, no, I didn't mean to get into But I mean, as more and more attention is given to security of embassies and embassy employees, sometimes even the grounds, things on the grounds have to be changed, berms are built, you know, all kinds of things like this.

BOOTH: Yes. The anti-vehicle pop up barriers were in place, ballistic glass any Mylar sheeting was applied but the one embassy innovation I really liked was RSO issued ID card. I really appreciate the fact that when the poor marine sitting behind the desk was relieved of the responsibility of reviewing as many as 300 cards in one hour in the morning. And if we had any issues, we could deactivate the card from our office in a second flat. Which we had to do on several occasions.

Q: That's beautiful.

BOOTH: The other thing is, the moment you departed post or retired people were told people you had to turn in your ID card but they did not because they liked them as souvenirs, the card was deactivated. To be honest, I don't remember a single complaint, about the ID card system, except at our residential compound in Boulgong where the vehicle gate always seemed to be problematic. And this was way before State Department had electronic access.

Q: Did you ever run into a situation, probably unlikely in France, but where the ambassador wanted to go somewhere and you really didn't want that.

BOOTH: There was only one. Shortly after I arrived in Paris Ambassador Curley called me to his office with a request Every year in the Place de la Concorde, and right next to the embassy, protestors would appear demanding that the French monarch be restored. It was all relatively harmless; however, one could never say that some counter protestors would not appear. Once in Curley's office he said "Robert, I want to go see this. I just have to go see this. I want to be in the monarchist crowd." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, you know it could get a bit dicey, especially if you are recognized by the crowd or the press." He replied, "Robert, I want to go." He is the boss, I was just given a directive and I left his office to talk to his French police bodyguard unit. I told them about the Ambassador's wishes. They said something to the effect that, "Well, just make sure he doesn't wear a tie, nothing remarkable about his clothing, and we won't walk directly out of the embassy, we'll walk from his residence which is around the corner." I said, "Fine, I need one of your radios so I can monitor your conversations." And they agreed. I returned to the Ambassador and told him of our plans and he was so delighted. I don't know why he wanted to attend. I did not ask. I still harbored some trepidation about it but the bodyguard chief said, "We'll have all four of us, we'll have one or two of the gendarmes, we will be monitoring the event for any problems it, and we will know who the good guys are." It went off fine. But that was the only time I had that issue with an ambassador.

Normally I would get the ambassador's weekly schedule from the executive secretary, and I'd sit down with my French police officer friends and then I'd sit down with the American intelligence and we'd look it over for the week and we'd see if there were any

official plans that might cause concerns. Seriously, most U.S. Ambassadors in Europe would go unnoticed in a crowd of two. It is just when bodyguards jump out of cars and surround a protectee that unwanted attention is generated, and people start staring and trying to engage in conversation. We discussed this with the bodyguard detail and insisted that they be discreet. And as beautiful as Pamela Harriman was, she would walk around like all the other beautiful French women from age 20 to age 70. None would stare twice. We never had any incident involving Curley or Harriman you would never notice her.

Q: Now from the point of view of your family also, they were happy in Paris?

BOOTH: Well, my daughter was unhappy when we first enrolled her in the bilingual school and for the first four months, she tried to understand suddenly there were two words for a single object or action verb. Luckily, young kids' brains just clicks in and all of a sudden they get it. Once she overcame that educational hurdle, she just loved it. My wife was able to start working fulltime as counselor with a law firm called Hogan Hartson. My daughter was going to school and learning to be fluent in French. I liked my job and we enjoyed traveling throughout France. If it was Friday night, we were normally in the Volvo station wagon headed off somewhere. The fact that we all spoke French made it easy for us. We just loved it.

Q: Well great, alright. And so did it end up being four years?

BOOTH: No, it ended up being three years. I bid on the RSO's slot in Rabat, Morocco in the fall of 1994. The Rabat DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) traveled through in February 1995 to Paris, on his way to Washington, and wanted to interview me and personally verify my language credentials. I must have passed because my CDO Bill Trites, my former shift leader on the Secretary's detail, confirmed in March that I was penciled for Rabat

Due to circumstances way beyond my control and having nothing to do with me, my assignment to Morocco was cancelled and another individual was 'hard selected' for Morocco. Worse, I was told, "Robert, you have to come back because now all the other overseas postings are filled." I very annoyed about not being able to serve another overseas posting. As such, I had to inform our renters in Washington, D.C. they had to decamp our house, Lori prepared to return with her new law firm whose main office was Washington, D.C. and Chloe flew home with my wife to interview for private schools in the DC area. Then in May, less than 45 days before I was scheduled to return to Washington, my CDO calls and says, "Robert, the Morocco position is now back open." Of course, I was livid. My wife had contacted Hogan Hartson to advise she was returning to Washington DC, the tenants were already moving out of our house and we had paid a down payment at the Washington International School for the start of Chloe's school year. Long story short is, I said, "You can keep Rabat, I'm coming back and, by the way, what domestic assignments are available?" His response was that all the positions in Washington at my grade were filled except for a position in DS counterintelligence. Never in my career had I ever submitted any bid for counterintelligence. It was a branch

chief position. So not only was I not going to Morocco, I was going to an office that I had absolutely no interest in going to.

Q: Well, OK, that would be 1995?

BOOTH: That would be the summer of 1995. We left in July. I remember it well because when the embassy driver came to pick us up to the airport it was a gentleman – whose name I do not recall now- who loved country and western music. Sometime during my tour, he had approached me - I knew a lot of the FSNs, they knew I spoke French - and said, “Robert, can you help me get some specific country and western CDs?” He wanted about five or six CDs that simply were not available in France. I told him that I could get them, but I could not accept payment because that would violate APO mail rules. I believe the total cost was under \$20. And then two years later this gentleman picks us up at the airport and said, “Robert, we’re going to do a final grand tour of Paris.” We all got in the and I, he had for the next hour and a half we toured Paris on a Saturday morning with no traffic. His timing was brilliant as he dropped us off at Charles de Gaulle Airport for our trip home with time to spare. That was a very nice send off from the Foreign Service National. It was very sweet of him to do that because he said, “I normally don’t work on Saturday but when I saw it was you I volunteered to do it.” My wife, however, was getting a little nervous during our extended tour and said, “Robert, shouldn’t we be headed to the airport at some point?” I said, “Lori, we’ve got our black passports, we will be fine.”

Q: Yeah, there was still sort of a moment in the ‘90s when you could still show a U.S. diplomatic passport and somehow get yourself to the front of the line.

BOOTH: At de Gaulle, there was a diplomatic line, but worst of all my wife and I had very expensive 12 Laguiole steak knives and we had to show them to French customs to get our huge tax refund. And so...

Q: You were carrying them with you?

BOOTH: We were carrying 12 steak knives. The Customs officials insisted that that the aircrew take possession of the knives during the flight. I believe the pilots had them in the cockpit. When we were deplaning at Dulles Airport, a stewardess gave us the knives. That will not happen today. That’s courtesy is over.

Q: Alright, so you’re back in Washington now and although you might not like it, you’re in this office of counterintelligence.

BOOTH: I would say you’re being very diplomatic. Not only did I not like it, I said, “How can I get out of this assignment as quickly as I can?” I remember the first day I got into the Office of Counterintelligence, as the branch chief for East Asia, Africa and the Pacific region. It was the biggest branch in the office and had a staff of two. My deputy, Steve Jenkins was a dear friend who I had known since 1980. He said, “Robert, we need to go and have a cup of coffee. Over a cup of coffee, he was frank and said, “Robert, this

office is broken, the branch is broken. Nothing goes on in this office, we're backwater." I said, "This is exactly what I thought, not only is the cart broken, there are no wheels on the cart." Steve continued to reconfirm my suspicions and beliefs about the office, and I said, "Steve thanks ...OK, I'll just do my 18 months and bid out, and get the hell out of here." I said, "It appears that our organization does not care about this office and leadership is lacking." I decide to do the best that I could and be ready to bid out in 18 months. It was sixteen years later that I finally said goodbye to DS/CI.

Q: So at this point you have a lot of accumulated experience. You have been teaching DS agents, you knew how an office needed to be run. What happened?

BOOTH: I was in the branch for maybe 30 days, doing absolutely nothing, when I received what's called a CIOL (Counter Intelligence Operational Lead) from the CIA. This top-secret document explained that a named State Department officer had in fact violated the Intelligence Officer Identity Protection Act. I looked at the document and said "Hey, wait a minute. There is a named State Department officer in the memo, the allegation is that there is a violation of federal law. Why is not the FBI involved, why us?" I took the TS memo and showed it to David Harrison the DS/CI Investigations Chief, who, after reading it, said, "Well, what do you want to do with it, Robert?" I replied, "Let me reach out to the FBI's Washington Field Office to get some clarifications."

After at least a dozen phone calls, I was finally put in touch with Lauren Anderson a supervisory special agent in one of WFO's espionage squad. I started off by introducing myself by saying "I'm Robert Booth, I'm the branch chief in DS's Office of Counterintelligence and I have a CIOL of interest." She said that she had never heard of DS but knows what a CIOL is. In short order we realized that there were many counterintelligence issues we should be working jointly. In this immediate matter, we discussed the CIOL in detail. While the CIOL alleged that a State Department officer had violated the law, the CIOL had a caveat that the CIOL, nor any of information it contained, could not be introduced in a criminal or administrative proceeding. Talk about catch -22.

Lauren and I both knew that this case would never be prosecuted, but the CIA's concerns needed to be addressed. It was ultimately resolved but not to anybody's satisfaction. She was never confronted for her alleged transgression. Afterwards Lauren told me, "You know Robert, we've got a couple of other CIOLs in our files with almost no priority and we had no idea DS/CI existed." No wonder DS/CI was broken, the FBI CI folks had no idea we existed. We agreed to have members of her staff meet with mine at our office to review outstanding CIOLs and other counterintelligence and espionage concerns

Within six months of my arrival in DS/CI I discovered that both David Harrison and the office director were being reassigned. Since the investigation's chief was the de facto deputy of DS/CI, I decided that instead of spending the next 14 months as a branch chief I could spend 24 months as the de facto deputy. I bid on and was given the position. Once there, all sorts of possibilities presented themselves. DS/CI needed to be more actively

engaged with the CIA, and with the FBI. We needed to be very aggressive in our CI pre-departure briefing program for FSOs, DCMs and Ambassadors. DS/CI officers needed to be teaching to the RSOs classes at our Training Center and de-briefing FSOs coming back from certain high-risk CI posts. DS/CI agents needed to coordinate better with DS/CI analysts. Finally our office needed to review our pass-through program which vetted officers who had bid on first tier counterintelligence threat posts. Should they be allowed to go? This program required close monitoring

It seemed to me, that ten years following the Clayton Lonetree MSG debacle in Moscow and Vienna, all was forgotten and few, if any, in senior DS was willing to take the DS/CI mission or message seriously. My initial impression was that most of whom proceeded me in DS/CI was, "I'll do my two years, I'm getting out, I don't want to create waves, I don't want to deal with the FBI or CIA." My new attitude was, "No, we are going to be engaged. We are going to beef up our briefing and debriefing programs. We are going to prosecute if warranted. If a State Department officer is committing misconduct, from a CI point of view, we're going to react aggressively in downgrading, suspending or denying security clearances." I intended to be aggressive, consistent and as transparent in all aspects. I made it a point to meet with my intelligence community counterparts to offer DS/CI resources to help them with problems involving their personnel serving overseas. A year into my job as deputy I was approached by the DS Director, Peter Bergin...who I had replaced in Beijing in 1975...who asked, "Robert, who do you want to be the director of the office?"

Q: Interesting. So he's asking the deputy. Interesting.

BOOTH: I immediately answered, "There's only one choice, it's John Tello." John had replaced me at the training center in 1989. He had completed his tour there, served overseas and returned to the training center. Peter was laughing at my choice and said, "Well, I have a candidate named David who I..." I cut him off. I knew he was goading me as, I did not hold this special agent in high regard. I just told him flat out, "If you nominate him, I'm leaving as soon as my 8 months are up." I think Peter really cared about having the right candidate for the job. John had served in the office of counterintelligence in the '80s. He had served at a tier one counterintelligence post overseas. I knew John, he has the perfect temperament, he is highly skilled, he's got great management skills, is well respected within DS and the IC and I said, "He's the one who needs to come in." Peter agreed.

As the story was told to me Peter Bergan returned upstairs and had his executive assistant Davey Hass - passed away three years ago of cancer - contact John Tello with the news. John told me later what happened. Davey called him up and said, "John, have you put in your bid sheet yet?" When John replied that he had not Davey said, "Well, don't bother putting it in, you're going to DSCI as the director." And of course, John must have said, "Gee, not only do I not have a choice with my onward assignment, Robert Booth will be my deputy. What did I do to deserve this?" My well-deserved corridor reputation for being very outspoken on policy issues must have given John a few white nights.

The day after John arrived to assume the directorship of DS/CI we went for a long walk around the George Washington University campus. I gave him a quick review of my last two years in DS/CI and told him we were slowly emerging from a lost wilderness. I explained that I was desperately trying to raise the status DS/CI in the IC (Intelligence Community). He listened quietly. To show him how far we needed to go I said, "What you're going to find out John, is that you are not going to get any phone calls from the IC at your grade level. No one's going to call you. At your grade and title level, your IC counterparts don't know we exist, and the reputation of this office, is either non-existent or terrible. I explained that from an operational level DS/CI was slowly getting involved with the FBI on joint espionage investigations and we were trying to upgrade our connections with the CIA. Working with the DIA had commenced and as far as the NSA was concerned, we were starting our baby steps. Those members of the IC were willing to work with me operationally but when it came to the policy stuff, they were a little nervous about sharing or working with the State Department.

Three weeks after the talk, John called me into his office and announces, "Robert, there are two things you need to know. One is that you are certainly correct about one thing. I have been in this office for three weeks and no one calls me from outside the State Department. Apparently, the person I replaced just had no IC contacts. Secondly Robert, I cleaned out the safe, and at the bottom, the absolute last piece of paper at the bottom of the safe was Dave Harrison's Superior Honor award nomination for your work in DS/CI." For whatever reason the former director of the office did not sign and forward the nomination. In front of me John signed the nomination and submitted it and I was awarded a Superior Honor award three months later. The comment in the award that I appreciated the most said, "The differences that Robert has brought into this office, have been significant."

Q: Let me go back one second. In the procedures such as they were when you came into the office of counterintelligence, in terms of identifying people who could be considered a security risk of some kind, without going into sources and methods... Every Foreign Service Officer's worst nightmare is a security violation that actually has some impact. Forgetting a confidential document in a public bathroom, or something like that. Were most of the cases that were referred to you, did they end up being actually guilty, or were there some that were just simply suspicious and ended up being not exactly what was thought? So what I'm trying to figure out is how well did the suspicions end up matching the reality?

BOOTH: Unfortunately, way too many security infractions for such a small federal organization. Some Foreign Service Officers had resigned in the middle of our investigations. Our investigations had nothing to do with security infractions and violations. I do not recall a single case where the number of security violations and infractions incurred by one officer resulted in the initiation of a counterintelligence or counter-espionage case. To be sure, on some occasions State Department officers who were candidates to serve in first tier counterintelligence threat posts, were denied that assignment via the DS/CI pass-through program where our adjudicators reviewed that candidate's security file and determined the officer simply had too many security

infractions given where he/she was proposed to serve. Our adjudicators knew that at certain posts the FSNs are totally co-opted by the security services, and we could not afford the risk of an inattentive officer compromising classified. Yes, security infractions have consequences. But as far as initiating a counterintelligence inquiry because of such violations, absolutely not and never under my watch. With rare exception all counter-espionage investigations DS/CI conducted found their genesis in information derived from the IC. Unfortunately, a little more than I would have liked or thought possible before I came to DS/CI

Q: OK, that was what I was wondering. But the other thing also I'm wondering now. Over these two years or so now, you're working in CI, and you're improving the...

BOOTH: Well, I wouldn't say improving, I just changed the office's goals. I know what you're saying, I'm just trying to be gentle here. It was my opinion DS/CI had to more aggressive in managing our counterintelligence programs and working counter-espionage cases. That is what I thought my job required me to do. Remember I had no intention of staying in DS/CI more than two or three years. However, in a very short time frame, I attempted to introduce new concepts, especially in education and briefings, on how I thought that DS/CI could both better serve the Department and the IC.

Q: No, but the coordination that you created, was it sustained?

BOOTH: Absolutely. And here's the reason why. Every year before I was ready to submit my onward bid list, the director would ask, "Can you stay one more year?" There were always a number of sensitive joint DS/IC operations that were on-going, and the seniors preferred that I stay. That's how I ended up staying seven years.

Q: Wow.

BOOTH: Highly unusual. I had to get all sorts of HR waivers, I had to appeal once to the 7-8 committee but again, the seniors prevailed. The assistant secretary of state signed off on two waivers. I remember the 7-8 committee waiver well. The head of the committee was Vince Battle, who had served with me in Haiti in the consular section in the mid-80s. Late one November he called me up on the telephone and said that he needed to see me in his office in short order. I walked over, and he immediately said, "Of course I'm going to recommend another one-year waive, Robert. I knew you in Haiti, you did good under dreadful conditions and if the seniors want you to stay one more year domestically, of course I'll give it to you." And then we started to tell war stories about our time in Port-au-Prince.

Because I was in CI for such a long period of time that eventually I represented State in numerous settings including two at the White House. Most of the IC officials around me at those counterintelligence meetings were senior to me in grade but I was accepted by the IC as the CI operational representative for the State Department

Q: Well, and that's the stuff of awards.

BOOTH: I was the recipient of numerous awards during this time frame including three State Superior Honor awards – one for work on the Robert Hanssen – one CIA National Intelligence Meritorious Unit Citation award and one Meritorious Service award from the Department of Energy. My name was submitted in a nomination for the prestigious FBI Director's Group Award, but we lost out to the FBI group handling the Russian sleepers. Despite my earlier misgivings about CI, I was awarded a Superior Honor Award for my stewardship of Embassy Paris' counterintelligence program just before I arrived in DS/CI. There were two significant counter-espionage cases that I handled alone that resulted in the identity of two American citizen, U.S. government employee penetration agents of the KGB who had been assigned to the embassy Paris

Q: You're absolutely right. Other agencies don't even take the time or trouble to nominate you. So to actually give you an award is very rare, and it does speak to a level of initiative and....

BOOTH: Acceptance I think is the word. I mean the CIA and I clashed at times. On occasion I was attempting to protect my DS/CI and State Department officers, from a little bit of overreach by the CIA. They seem to have a looser standard when running operations overseas. My standards are a little more law enforcement like. Sometimes my CIA contact would say, "Well, we have the CIOL that says your officer has done x. What are you going to do about it?" I would reply, "Well, can I use your CIOL for attribution?" The answer was always "no". I would explain that if we had opened a preliminary inquiry they could not be informed of the results. On other occasions they would advise me that the FBI did not get a copy of the CIOL because no violation of federal law had happened but the State Department officer, in their opinion, was in counterintelligence cross-hairs. What is not well understood is that the FAM (Foreign Affairs Manual) authorizes DS agents to investigate all activity that may negatively impact an officer's suitability to maintain a top-secret clearance. Any officer engaged in any kind of counterintelligence misconduct, especially violations of the contact reporting policy, will allow DS/CI, to initiate a preliminary investigation on almost anything. FSOs have a tough time understanding that administrative inquiries can be opened for all misconduct, a word, by the way, that covers a lot of water front.

Q: Well, I understand that. Trust me.

BOOTH: I would explain to my counterparts that we have the authority to investigate many issues but for DS/CI to get involved in a specific matter there had to be a CI nexus to the allegation. I remember several times when my CIA counterpart would report about an embassy officer who is drinking and talking too much. Normally I would ask them if they had alerted the RSO to the problem and mostly they would respond that the RSO had done nothing. When I would tell them that suspected alcohol abuse is a medical problem and should be handled strictly according to medical protocols their inevitable response was that alcohol could lead to CI issues. I appreciated their concern, but I was clear when my office would intervene and when we would not. There were times where the CIA and I did not get along. They are an intelligence agency and DS/CI is a law

enforcement agency. Our cultures and goals are different. Ultimately, we answer to the Department of Justice for our investigations, the CIA does not. I did not want to be in the cross hairs of any future Church committee hearings which exposed CIA/FBI misbehavior in the US. Yes, there were times when I had to inform my FBI counterparts that a proposed operation involving the embassy or its staff was not possible. I said, “No, we just can’t do that. That’s just not possible.”

Q: Now, all of that is true. Everything you’re talking about is true now in the pre-9-11 era. Your seven years took you up to 9-11.

BOOTH: I was in my office when the plane hit, and I heard the hit on the Pentagon. The State Department building blocked my view, but I saw the smoke. What had happened was, I was in the John Tello’s office when one of the agents walked in and said, “Hey, the television in the conference room is reporting about a plane hitting a New York City skyscraper.” My first thought I was thinking about the military plane that struck the Empire State Building back in the ‘30s, and I said, “Oh God, some poor idiot hit the building.” I walked in conference room with John Tello, sat down to discuss some issues with the television blaring in the background. Some minutes later as we are glancing at the T.V. screen we watched as the second plane hit. John said immediately, “We’re under attack”, and we called all DS/CI staff into the conference room.

As far as I knew DS/CI agents were the only ones who had their Sig Sauer pistols, the only agents that I knew who were armed in the building. I always had my agents carry their weapons. To and from work. They could have called at any time to support the Secretary’s detail, a foreign dignitary detail or assist with something going on at our Washington Field Office. I was dead set on that. Because our building was across the street from Main State, I quickly had one of the agents go downstairs to be with the local guard downstairs to report on anything suspicious via radio. I also instructed him to force any trucks, whose drivers were visible, away from the front of the building. It was John and my initiative that we had to start shutting operations down. I first instructed agents and staff to reach out to family members and if they had to leave the office for whatever reason, pick up a spouse or be with their children, whatever, they had my permission. I lived in the District and took the metro and volunteered to stay until official closing time. At five o’clock, except for the uniformed DS guards I believe I was the only other person in the building.

Q: Sure. Because they evacuated.

BOOTH: I’ll never forget walking on the deserted streets of DC late that evening and getting into the metro at Foggy Bottom. When the metro train pulled into Metro Center at 5:45 there were a total of three people on the platforms. It was a very uncomfortable feeling.

Q: Yeah, yeah. But as a result of 9-11, you were still in the office of CI, so you’re going to see now, the beginnings of the change in the entire interaction within the intelligence

community, counterintelligence community, the justice community, and so on. How much longer were you in the office to begin seeing those changes?

BOOTH: Not much. I left in 2002. It is interesting to note that there is a common tactic directed at Department employees by both terrorist groups and hostile intelligence services. Both must surveil employees to learn about personalities and activities to decide how they want to strike.

I always reminded agents, officers and staff, that when they left their homes or embassies that they needed to practice situational awareness. People following you overseas have only two outcomes in mind. It's terrorists trying to figure out your living patterns in order to kill you, or it's counterintelligence people from their side trying to figure out if you are actually an US intelligence officer under diplomatic cover, and if yes, what are you up to and who are your local sources. A third possibility, however rare, is criminal activity. That is mostly random

The only time and place where those two concerns presented themselves was when the State Department was trying to staff up our embassy in Iraq. There was much nervousness about hiring the next generation of applicants for the Locally Engaged Staff jobs that were slowly becoming available for the new American Embassy in Baghdad. There were serious terrorist and counterintelligence concerns. We had to vet all the Iraqi applicants, and DS/CI vetted them hard.

Q: Yeah. And so towards the end of your tour....

BOOTH: As an agent, yeah. I came in as a consultant but ...

Q: Did you begin to get very heavily involved in the Iraq Embassy?

BOOTH: Only in the vetting program for Locally Engaged Staff who wanted to work at the embassy. It was like background investigations for FSNs on steroids.

Q: Wow.

BOOTH: We used polygraphs. Highly unheard of.

Q: Oh, wow. OK. Because obviously, in that particular situation with so much damage to background information, even the trustworthiness of background information, there were so many doubts about so many things, at least at the very beginning.

BOOTH: Absolutely.

Q: So alright. This is the longest tour you had.

BOOTH: Of course. I mean, it will never happen again since no special agent will ever want to sit in one office for seven years as it is not career enhancing. I got promoted to FP-1 in the Office of Counterintelligence. David Carpenter was Assistant Secretary of State at the time and he was obviously very happy with the work I was doing. At every request, I kept saying, "Ok, I'll extend, I'll extend." I was very happy with the work I was doing. I was very happy with our relationship within the IC community.....mostly. John had been my boss for four years and in February of 2002 he retired, and I became the acting director of the office from February until I retired in September 2002. John's successor Rich arrived the week before I left for FSI's retirement seminar.

Q: Alright, but now so looking back, just once again the creation of your interagency work and the reconfirmation of all of those connections that you had made, they continue to this day?

BOOTH: No. Less than a year after I left, Barry Moore, who was the Director of the Office of Investigations and Counterintelligence called me up and said, "We want to bring you back into the Office of Counterintelligence as a contractor." I said, "Well, no, I'm really kind of happy not doing anything these days." I explained that if they wanted me to come and do some briefings ever now and then that would be fine but anything beyond that and the answer would be "no". Barry insisted and offered, "Well, what can we do to have you come back to the Office of Counterintelligence?" My reply was that I would work part-time on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursdays but I had to be able to take my daughter to school and pick her up. Barry agreed and brought me back to work as three day a week contractor. The first two days after my return to DS/CI, I was devastated. I was informed by agents and staff that once I was gone, that Rich new DS/CI director, held an all hands meeting and declared that "... the era of Robert Booth and John Tello is over..." and the office reverted to the same old ways that I discovered in 1995. Under Rich the office became totally risk adverse. Under Rich it was no contact with the FBI, no waves and limited or no aggressive counterintelligence operations.

Q: Why?

BOOTH: The person who was picked, and I know him, just was a risk averse individual. Under his 7-month leadership he office reverted to the 1986 - 1995 years. My aggressiveness was, for whatever reason, was not his style or manner. I showed up less than one year after I left to a dispirited and disheartened staff. None of the agents were asking for extensions. Within one year no one wanted to stay. While I was there, many agents requested a third year, others came back for a second tour. We petitioned with senior management for agents in my office got the CI posts when they bid on overseas assignment. We worked with Dignitary Protective Services so that my agents who participated at UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) were assigned to provide protection to foreign dignitaries of countries of great interest to our office. The agents enjoyed those and similar operations. I had a very aggressive concept for the operations that DS/CI should be doing and the DS/CI leadership after me just simply said, "We're not going to do it." Almost all the initiatives that John and I had implemented in DS/CI were abandoned

Q: That's very odd.

BOOTH: That's why Barry Moore brought me back one year later. He assumed his oversight over DS/CI and quickly determined that it was broken. Within weeks of my return, I started to have serious one-on-one discussions with the deputy, who had worked for me before. The new director was not hesitant to call me into his office and say, "Well, how did you do it in the past Robert?" I explained what John and I did in the past. Slowly I started making phone calls to my old IC contacts and they universally said, "Oh Robert, we're glad you're back." I had to remind them that I was not an agent but a retired contractor. To the community it was fine. Then Barry and I pulled a stunt to get John Tello, who was working a contractor at the DS Training Center, back as a contractor to DS/CI. About one year after I retired and some 18 months after John retired we were both back working in DS/CI. John Tello advised the director on policy issues and I advised the deputy director on investigative options and techniques. That would endure for the next 10 years.

Q: So let me see if I can draw a conclusion.

BOOTH: It's a terrible one to draw but go ahead.

Q: An office that had built up very good interagency relations, had a good....

BOOTH: We had a great relationship with the IC, especially with the NSA, FBI, DIA and the Energy Department.

Q: Can literally flip overnight based exclusively on a new office director's comfort level.

BOOTH: Yup. Absolutely.

Q: It seems odd, but...

BOOTH: And you'd have to know the officer, but that's for history and that's not for me to name, but you can find out who it is. Just had been returned from his previous post in Europe for indecisiveness.

Q: OK. But obviously higher-ups were not happy with that change. With the change where, in essence, this office that had taken initiative, had become, you know, very aggressive about fulfilling its mandate, and then suddenly stopped. The higher-ups noticed and wanted to fix it.

BOOTH: I can only assume some of the very senior FBI people specifically reached out to senior DS to ask what had changed in DS/CI. I checked our correspondence file and noticed that not one single 811 referral had been sent to the FBI since I left. I knew that John's successor disapproved of joint DS/CI CE and CI investigations. It would not take long for the IC community to sense DS/CI's lack of engagement

Q: OK. So you come back as a consultant and you continue the consulting for some time. Would this be a good place to break because I think now we're into another era?

BOOTH: Absolutely.

Q: Today is January 18, 2017, we're returning with Robert Booth as he returns as a contractor to the Department in, was it in CI?

BOOTH: Shortly after I retired in 2002 I was contacted by the DS training center out in Dunn Loring (Virginia), who asked if I would like to do some small work as a 20 hour a month contractor. I had been assigned to the training center years from 1987-1990. While not interested in working full time the idea of working five hours a day for one or two days a week was appealing. I was interviewed along with several others and told that I was the top candidate. They wanted me to help identify speakers – outsiders - who would then come to the Diplomatic Security main headquarters and talk about management. I agreed to accept the position and quickly got the CEO of Hogan Lovells law firm, the biggest law firm in Washington DC to come and talk about management and leadership. I persuaded Suzanne Patrick who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for planning and acquisitions at the Department of Defense to come and talk. These were friends of mine and my wife's. I was able to convince others to come and talk. They would arrive at SA-20, I would escort them upstairs to the 23rd floor of the building and they would give a presentation for about 45 minutes. I was responsible for the paperwork and logistics for these presentation, but it was simple work.

About five months later Barry Moore gave me a telephone call. Barry Moore was the head of Investigations and Counterintelligence. He said, "Robert, why don't you leave the training center and come on back to your old office in CI? You've been gone about a year and we're not happy with what's going on in the office." I said, "Well, you know, I'm not coming back full time. If I can take my daughter to school, and I can leave to pick her up, I can do this three days a week." Eventually Barry agreed. I forget what title I had when I reported back to DS/CI but my mission was clear, advisor to the Branch Chiefs concerning investigations.

Q: In the last session you had mentioned that after leaving the Department from this particular office, you had built up a very good rapport with your interagency counterparts at FBI and other agencies.

BOOTH: I was a lecturer for an organization called Capps - Majors and Associates shortly after I retired. It's an organization made up of, believe it or not of retired KGB (Russian Committee for State Security) General Kalugin, one retired RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) member, CIA and FBI officials. This group was contracted to give lectures to the IC. There was an office and two lecture halls located just off I-95 at Tysons Corner where this organization provided classroom instruction on CI and CE to literally thousands of members of the IC and the law enforcement community. Sometimes to private industry. My primary courses were "Spies at State" a six-hour class, the

Squallicote case a two-hour class and a two-hour class of Chinese intelligence operations against U.S. assets overseas. I was also asked to provide presentation to the NSA and the Joint Intelligence Training Academy. OPM contracted with me to provide instruction to member of the IC. The Treasury Department asked me I talked to the Treasury Department attaches before leaving to work at embassies overseas. So within the IC community, even though I had retired, I still maintained contact.

Q: But then, subsequent to your departure from the Counterintelligence Office in the Department, that office had kind of lost the interagency contacts that you had developed for a very long time.

BOOTH: And that's because every 18 months the agents must submit a bid list in preparation for onward assignments. That is no way to build up consistent IC relationships. I had seven, almost seven and a half years in that office of working with the same members of the IC. I had established my credentials within the IC over a long span of time. It will never happen again. It's not a perfect storm, I hate that analogy. It was just a conundrum of circumstances where every time I was about ready to move along, Peter Bergin the director, and Dave Carpenter, the Assistant Secretary, would say, "Robert, would you stay one more year?" I would agree to one more year. The next thing you know, it was seven years later and suddenly I am approaching 50 years of age and 28 + years of service.

So that barely a year after I was gone, the person who replaced me, nicknamed "Train Wrecka" - and the DS/CI director were gone. Within a year, it was kind of a clean sweep of the senior DS/CI management. It was clear as I examined the office's chronological files that neither officer reached out to the IC to announce that John and I were gone. When I talked to the agents about who their contacts were in the IC, they mostly gave me blank stares. I said to myself "Whoa. This is bad. This is really bad."

Q: OK, so now you're back in this office part time and do you begin to kind of reestablish all those contacts that were lost, or what?

BOOTH: Absolutely. I start talking to the agents and said, "Let's set up a meeting with FBI contact A, CIA contact B, NSA contact C and DIA contact E". I insisted that they re-establish contact with the FBI. Criminal investigations are conducted by the FBI and not the CIA, NSA or DIA. Counterintelligence inquiries can be jointly reviewed with other agencies, but the real deal is working with the FBI on counter-espionage cases. I had worked closely with the FBI for more than six years and accepted the fact that the big dog in these cases were the FBI. It was now time to call up our contacts on the STU-III, the secure telephone unit, and suggest, "Oh yeah, let's get together, come on down and let's review what's on the table." I immediately began reestablishing my contacts with the IC, and it was easy. My former IC colleagues would say, "Robert, you're back, this is good." I had to remind them that I was not a special agent, deputy director but a simple contractor and that we needed to proceed carefully in our new relationship. They were much more accepting that I would have thought. I still had my TS (top secret) and SCI

(Sensitive Compartmented Information) clearances. To them that was all that was necessary to welcome me back to the fold

Q: And if you have the clearances.

BOOTH: My IC colleague's comments in general were, "We don't care if you're not an agent now. You can guide agents in your office in how to do counterintelligence investigations involving State personnel. You know what we can do, you know what we cannot do. You know that you can't act as our agent, however, you know bright line legal and administrative investigative limits." They were just happy to have me back. Very quickly my unclassified phone and classified email started to "ring" a lot.

Q: OK.

BOOTH: And I was prepared to work with all the DS/CI agents on all of their questions.

Q: Alright. Now, back in this office what were your key responsibilities? I realize part of it was to reestablish the old connections, but it's now under a new director, but a director who needs your help in reconnecting and everything. What then, were ...?

BOOTH: If I remember correctly, the director at that point was Scott Bultrowicz. He had served brilliantly as the RSO Moscow. He understood CI completely. Unfortunately, he spent most of his working day involved in policy concerns such as the pass-thru program, contact reporting requirements, foreign family concerns, inter-agency issues, and vetting problems among others. He did not have time to focus on investigations as much as much as I believe he would have liked. As I related earlier, when John and I served in DS/CI together I focused on operations and investigations and John focused almost exclusively on policy or with rare exception on some investigative issue. One program that required an inordinate amount of our attention was the pass-through program. For FSO candidates identified to serve in first tier hostile counterintelligence countries their personnel and SY files were sent to our office to determine if there were any vulnerabilities or specific CI concerns about that candidate's proposed assignment. DS/CI had established a template which focused on many social and professional concerns that was used to guide our recommendation of approval or not for the proposed assignment. DS/CI approved 98.9 percent of all pass-thru candidates. In Chapter Two of my book I go in great detail about one such recommendation. Despite that ratio, every now and then a proposed candidate caused enormous concerns for everyone. For example, Paul Doumitt, a communications officer assigned to Beijing in 1988 was the target of a Chinese Ministry of State Security blackmail operation based on his indiscretions in Beijing. Confronted by the Ambassador and the RSO he departed post shortly after the interview in which he admitted making numerous mistakes. Years later when he was proposed to serve overseas again, DS/CI recommended that he be allowed to serve overseas again. Whenever pass-thru issues came up while I was a contractor, I would be consulted for "historical context"

As for serving back in DS/CI, the first the agents were a little nervous about me, as a contractor, because I was brought in by the assistant secretary and the director, and for

young agents, they just did not know where I fit in. I would patiently earn their trust by reminding them I was not working on promotions, traveling to conduct investigations or in any fashion professionally competing with them. I knew I was accepted when agents and supervisors brought me draft ROIs to review, ask operational questions and asked me to sit in on joint FBI/DS investigations. They would show me a cable from an RSO describing some incident and I would say, "You need to do this, and you need to do that, and you need to contact the RSO, send an e-mail." For me, I could just dissect these things using seven years of historical context. For me it was easy. Sometimes they said, "Well, can I actually just send a cable or e-mail to the RSO?" "Yes, you don't need to get it approved except by the office director or immediate supervisor."

Q: Interesting.

BOOTH: One case I distinctly remember was when a very unusual situation develop in China and I recommended sending a classified email to Shanghai to be forwarded to Chengdu authorizing an interview. The agent handling the inquiry was incredulous and asked." "Can we really just reach out to the RSO in Chengdu via RSO Shanghai and ask her to perform the task?" I replied, "Yes! This is your mandate and all you're doing is interviewing." They had no clue, some had never served overseas before. 95 percent of what DS/CI did was to conduct interviews and prepare reports. My primary job was to advise who to interview, help structure the interview questions, sometimes sit in on the interviews and help write up the interviews. That's pretty much what I did.

Q: OK. And of course for these for these relatively new officers who didn't know exactly what the outer edge of their ability to act within the bureaucracy, you counseled them, you mentored them.

BOOTH: Well, I helped write the telegrams for them. These young agents are terrible writers, they really are. This is kind of an aside but what I found was that after four years as a full-time auditor at Dartmouth, the students write like they text. Same for the young agents in the 20003-20012. Writing to inform and influence is a skill.

Q: Correct.

BOOTH: College research papers are like reports of investigation. They had to be precise, concise and untainted by bias or prejudice. I saw very sloppy work. I would return the draft documents with red marks all over them pointing out grammar mistakes, misspellings, run on sentences and just terrible prose. I was like an English teacher. I'd say, "Guys, this stuff is terrible."

Q: I found the same thing among new FSOs, and you don't really have time as a manager of FSOs to rewrite their work. So all you can really do is correct the language that makes no sense. And then pass it on.

BOOTH: Yes, it's sad. The oldsters knew how to write. I remember as a young RSO in Beijing and reading some embassy reports. I mean, even Don Keyser, who later became a

little bit infamous, submitted reports that everyone wanted to read. The DCM Harry Thayer was another. Their insight and writing skills were brilliant. You still do see great cables but not as often.

Q: Of course. But sort of on average what has happened is, people who are coming in now write the way they speak.

BOOTH: Yeah. Or text.

Q: Or text, yeah. It's not, it doesn't have the formal care that you would want in a...

BOOTH: It's not polished. I would remind them by saying, "Look guys, one thing is that your signature is on this ROI. Everybody knows it is your product. Secondly, it's going to...

Q: And an ROI is...

BOOTH: A Report of Investigation. "You own it. Your name is on there." I added, "Worst of all, think about this ROI being submitted as evidence in trial." Now, redactions will occur, but the body of the ROI will be seen by the whole world. I'll never forget one case, and I'll just give the initials SB. Involving an FSO targeted by a Russian intelligence officer under diplomatic cover in South America, it was an urgent case, high profile and needed to be submitted in an expeditious manner. The signed and approved Ds/CI ROI was submitted forwarded to senior DS management for adjudication. It happened late one Thursday and then Ds/CI asked me to look at it as an afterthought the following Tuesday. It was dropped off in my cubicle and I remember conducting a cursory examination. The first major flaw I noticed was that the marking "Top Secret" was misspelled on the top and bottom of the each of the 19 pages. I am not kidding you. This ROI had been signed by the authoring agent, cleared by his supervisor, approved by the office director, and now the original sat on the desk of the Director of Investigations and Counterintelligence.

Q: Wow.

BOOTH: It got worse from there. I made another copy which I laid down side by side with the ROI provided me and used a ruler to go through both line by line. We lacked computer software to do a line by line comparison on the classified system. We could not do that on the classified system. This operation took me days to conclude and there were mistakes galore. This investigative report concerned an FSO who was forced from post and he was now was in the process of filing a Freedom of Information Act request to get DS/CI's files related to him. I advised office management that it was a good bet that the FSO would hire a lawyer who would then get to read most of the files, including the flawed ROI. Sure, there would be some redactions but 95 percent of the submitted ROI would see public daylight. Reviewing draft ROI's took up a lot of my time.

Q: Were you able to impart any basic writing improvements to the people you were counseling or mentoring? Or were you able to talk to the leadership in the office to say, "Look, we need to give them a little bit more training in how to write at least this kind of report."

BOOTH: I tried to get out of the English language education program. To the extent possible, I asked the agents to prepare one page memos using "bullet" and two sentences format unless they had to write up an interview. You kept the sentences as simple as possible in the synopsis, and you bullet form it until you must produce an interview. We dummy down the English language and cut it to short notes/sentences until you got to the interviews. But even in the interviews there were problems with inattention to grammar and details, so out would come my red pencil. However, that is where I got dinged by my boss when he told me, "You know Robert, the reason why you get sloppy stuff is because the agents know you're going to take all the time necessary to fix up. The word is out. Just give it to Robert, he'll clean it up for you." My lame reply was, "I know they are taking advantage, but then again they are not taking advantage. They know I care about such things" Besides the agents have million things do and as long as I have time why not a help produce a polished ROI?" So it's kind of a catch-22.

Q: Yeah, I get it.

BOOTH: I love the agents. I don't think I had a negative relationship with any of the agents while I was a contractor

Q: Alright. So how long overall do you spend there as a contractor?

BOOTH: 2003 to 2012. Nine years.

Q: Oh OK, wow. Alright. Well, let's continue a bit then.

BOOTH: Again, as every new director came into the office they approved my contract for one more year. In fact, Dave Hall who became the DS/CI director a had worked for me in that office eight years before. All the senior officers who arrived in CI were agents who knew me, or who I had supervised, except one. I assume they asked around and the answer was "Just keep Robert."

Within a year of my arrival back in DS/CI I developed information that maybe John Tello's job out at the training center was at risk. I called him up and I said, "John, I understand that the contracting positions out at the training center are going to be under tough review this next time around and you may be in some cross hairs and, if interested, there is an opening here." He immediately answered "No." He liked the training center, he lived out in Virginia and his commute time was tiny. About two months later he called up and said, "I'm ready." I quickly went to see the director and said, "Hey, John's available." Within weeks John was hired on as a DS/CI contractor. Within two years of our departure as director and deputy director of DS/CI we were both back. He sat right outside the director's office, I sat right outside the deputy director's office. Our missions

were simple. Whenever the director came across a policy issue, he would call John into his office and ask for either an opinion or an historical context. John was able to explain why and how most DS/CI rules, regulations, policies were promulgated. For example, the directors asked why do we have the pass-thru program, why do we have one kind of counterintelligence policies for Marine Security Guards at some countries and not others or what is the basis for this MOU with the CIA? So instead of trying to reinvent the wheel or search through files, John would give a small history lesson. His memory was great, and he knew where the pertinent documents in specific cases were located.

I remember one instance, when I was the deputy director, where I had to explain the pass-thru program to Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, EAP (East Asia and Pacific) because of a problem concerning one of the post's under his jurisdiction.. A tiny number of FSO candidates were not given DS/CI country clearances and the rumor circulating around the State Department was that DSCI was denying country clearances for all sorts of people. Billy Armor was the Director of Investigations and Counterintelligence at the time and was dear professional friend of over 20 years. He called me into his office and said, "Robert, Assistant Secretary Kelly wants to know about this pass-through program that we've been running, and I want you to come to a meeting and explain it to him and his staff." I agreed, as I knew he knew next to nothing about the mechanics of the pass-thru program and on the appointed day we went over together. To my surprise two of Kelly's staff were officers I had worked with in embassies in the past. Chris LaFleur who used to be the DCM in Tokyo, who was a young political officer with me in 1978 in Tokyo. Don Keyser who I had served in Beijing sat to the right of Kelly who was flanked on the left by a person from HR (Human Resources) is there. Once seated Kelly said, "Explain this pass-thru program. It's kind of bottling up things and we want person "x" to be assigned to country y and at the last-minute DS/CI denies country clearance." It took me about 15 minutes to give the history of the pass-thru program starting with Cold War realities and explaining how the program operated now. The HR person had one specific case she wanted reviewed and I answered to her satisfaction. Neither Kelly or LaFleur had any questions and Keyser asked if I could provide the same briefing that I just presented to other country desks. I agreed and said, "There's a bit of a fantasy going out there. There's a conspiracy theory amongst the FSOs, which as I understand it, DS/CI has this little cauldron of alchemy in their office and they use it to target specific people. It would my pleasure to lift the cloud about pass-thrus". Billy Armor did not utter a word during the meeting except for the salutations. So, whenever a question about the pass-thru program came up, John or I could give historical context and with specifics

In addition John and I worked with Sharon Papp, an AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) lawyer. We had worked with her in explaining the intricacies of the pass thru program because on occasion FSOs would approach her and say, "This is my State past, yes, I screwed up a bit with violations, or have been in trouble with SY/DSI may or a little careless about things." The FSO would seek an opinion about the advisability of bidding on certain posts. Do you think my chances of surviving a pass through is good?" Because Sharon was so knowledgeable and worked with us on such issues in the past, she could advise the FSO that, "Well, why don't you wait maybe another bid cycle or two so that your previous conduct can be mitigated by time and circumstance." Or "Bid away."

This prevented all sorts of uncertainty, wasted bid time, teeth gnashing and butting of the heads.

Q: Was there any way that you could codify it, that people could read about it, or was it too classified?

BOOTH: No, not at all. I'm trying to remember back then, I don't know what it's like now. Back then, if you were married to a national of certain tier one countries, and the spouse's relatives were first generation blood relatives and still lived in that country, DS/CI was concerned about potential blackmail to the officer or physical threats to the officer's parents. Now I am not so sure. Another rule was that you could not serve more than twice in any ten-year period in some tier-one countries. Another one was if you are currently a U.S. citizen but were an adult citizen of another country you would not be assigned back to that country of origin. This applied to only some countries. If you had been a U.S. citizen for more than eight years, a waiver was normally granted. If you had an undue amount of violations during a specific time frame or were otherwise sloppy about filling out contact reports or following security regulations, assignments of some countries could be problematic. Finally, personal misconduct that had the potential to be used as blackmail was almost always a deal breaker. However, if the conduct had occurred some years ago, the adjudicator for the pass-thru program would make the final recommendation. And that was pretty much the template. Only the worst proposed candidates did not receive the country clearance. At times the DCM at a post where a candidate did not get DS/CI clearance would personally come to our office and ask for an explanation. And I remember one case where everyone liked the candidate, but he had screwed up big time in the past. So, after talking to the DCM, we worked out a unique, post specific RSO and DCM briefing program for the candidate and DS/CI eventually granted a waiver.

Q: So you spend a relatively long time in this CI office.

BOOTH: As a contractor and as a special agent, it was almost 15 years.

Q: How would you describe how it changed over time? Not just how the office changed, but how the concerns changed?

BOOTH: The insider threat was something we never really talked about. We never devoted a lot of time or energy looking for penetration agents, that is State Department moles. We were concerned about a hostile and friendly intelligence service attempting to compromise our classified or co-opt an officer. We had not developed a template to look for spies at State. What personal or professional patterns could betray a mole? How do we engage the FSOs to help us in this task? During John and my tenure in DS/CI we went from being a very passive organization to a very aggressive office. Our analytical staff was expanded and given new objectives. We had our training staff flying out on quarterly security briefings to as many posts as our budget tolerated, we participated in the Ambassadorial and DCM FSI seminars and we provided briefings to all USG agencies who assign their personnel to embassies overseas except the CIA. We briefed the Post

Security Officer's class. We briefed all contractors headed out to Russia and China who worked on new embassy/consulate buildings. From the electrician to the guards. We ran two classified programs in Russia which the intelligence community absolutely loved. We had a program where when FSNI's would come to the United States, which was paid for by DS, DS/CI would conduct private debriefings of certain FSNI and pass the results to the RSO. Training would occur at our training center in Gallows Road and I always provided a counterintelligence briefing. After I was introduced, I would start the 1-hour class by saying, "Good afternoon, how many of you here have been approached by your own intelligence services to give information about the embassy? The looks on most of their faces were priceless.

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Q: Yeah.

BOOTH: No one ever raised their hands or spoke out, and I would say, "No, no, no, come on." Eventually one or two would. I remember the FSNI from Kenya and Turkey in two different classes who eventually talked about the issue leading others to also disclose contact with local security services. Sometimes I needed to push a little more and say, "Guess what? If the security services are not coming out and talking to you, something's wrong. Because we know they are. So tell us about it." After numerous disclosures, we would discuss defensive strategies on how to handle such approaches. By the end of the class the FSNI's became more open more open about their contacts with the local security services. DS/CI started learning about the intelligence environment in many countries. Before the FSNI's returned to post we carefully selected two or three to come to DS/CI for a post specific debriefing. Prior to my arrival in DS/CI, this had never been done. These were the kinds of aggressive programs that I believed in. We also had a debriefing program, conducted in Washington, D.C. for embassy staff who were returning from certain selective posts. It allowed us to have a snapshot of the counterintelligence environment in the country they had just departed. We shared our results with the RSO and advised officers of our findings in pre-departure briefings. None of these briefings were done before I got there, and they were being done up until the time I left.

Q: So in general there were ways to retain a Foreign Service National Investigator, even though you knew that individual got debriefed by the local government?

BOOTH: Sure. It is inconceivable that a local security service will not reach out to an FSNI. If they're not, the local intelligence service is not doing their job. Most of the FSNI's are retired police or security officials. During the FSNI class we would have practical exercises. One of the practical exercises discussed how three months into the new FSNI's job and all of a sudden, your former police buddy says, "Hey Amil, can you get me copy of the embassy telephone directory?" and they were asked how they would respond. After a good give and take they were advised to tell their buddy that you first had to clear the request from the RSO and if he says 'yes' then you would give it to him. They were reminded that the embassy had rules and the RSO needed to know about any requests. We worked out exact word responses for different countries right there in class with input from all the FSNI's in class. Later, some RSO's advised that the FSNI's who

attended our class had increased contact reporting. I believe the FSNI's felt a bit more empowered now that they didn't have to hide suspicious events and could comfortably report such contacts with the RSO.

Q: Right. Interesting. And let me ask a different kind of question. Because you've been there for such a long time and you've seen so many new agents come in. DS agents. Blue sky. What would be the ideal background for an agent? What are the skills you think agents today need to hone that maybe they don't have as strongly as they need?

BOOTH: It's interviewing skills. It's the ability to sit down and elicit information. Friendly, not confrontational. That comes a bit later. Knowing how to get someone to trust you and talk to you. How to establish rapport and write a good report. It's listening. Because we all like to talk like I am right now. But you must learn to ask a question and listen carefully to everything because sometimes up to 90% of the content that's coming back to you is not essential to your interview. That and thinking quickly and correctly in stress situations

Q: Right. It's static.

I remember debriefing Danny Russel who had just departed Moscow as DCM. I knew he did not want to sit for the interview and that Danny had skipped out of the mandatory pre-departure RSO briefing. Once we sat down in his 7th floor office I conducted the interview as professionally as possible. Slowly and grudgingly he revealed some incredible counterintelligence insights which we relayed back to Moscow. Patience and listening is an acquired skill

Q: And what these days does an average DS officer need to do to get promoted?

BOOTH: DS/CI unfortunately does not have a good record. So much of what a DS agent does in CI is frankly not competitive with an ARSO or RSO. Only the Deputy and Director positions in DS/CI are competitive. For example, an FS-3 in DS/CI might be a good investigator but compared to his brother or sister overseas who are managing programs, resources, budgets, personnel, the local guard force, the FSNI staff and working directly for the DCM in hardship posts, the work is totally different. It is hard to compare a FS-3 in DSCI with an ARSO FS-3 ARSO in Burma. In DS/CI FS-3 agents are not managing budgets or programs and may supervise two agents. You don't have a budget, you're just not competitive. And very few agents get to stay more than the two years. From entry level grade to FS-3 is relatively automatic. To get promoted above the FS-3 grade, go overseas

Q: Now what about also as these years have gone by, have the demographics of agents changed? Are there more women? Are there more minorities? Or not?

BOOTH: Well, when I first joined DS in 1974, the agent population was almost exclusively white and male. In the Washington Field Office there was Clarence Stafford, who was African -American and Nancy Lestina a Caucasian female. To the best of my

recollection Bill DeFossett in the New York Filed office was the only other African American and Patty Morton was the only other female agent in DS at that time. Today I believe DS is diverse, certainly in DS/CI where the number of minorities, specifically females, who have passed through has been significant.

Q: And what sorts of backgrounds do DS agents usually come from?

BOOTH: From the best I can tell most have military, police and some MSG background. I remember a young MSG (Marine Security Guard) named Terry Cobble who served in the Paris Detachment in 1993. Then in 1997 he calls me up out of nowhere and says, "Robert, I'm here in Washington DC, I'm trying to become a DS agent can we have coffee? ' We did and we talked about DS and what it was like to be a special agent as he already knew what RSOs did. We shook hands and I did not hear from him again. Two years ago I had some professional work to do and had to reach out to the American Embassy in Bucharest and I go online to the State Department's Key Officer list and I see that Terry Cobble's is the RSO. I couldn't believe. I call him up, we quickly reacquainted ourselves. When I first arrived in DS there were a small number of agents who were recent college graduates like Burley Fuselier, Billy Armor and myself. That would not happen today. They would not have enough life experience to pass the oral examination.

Q: I see. Now you concluded your period of time in CI as a contractor. How did they determine that they were ready to let you go?

BOOTH: They did not. My wife had accepted a position as counsel in Dartmouth College's Office of the General Counsel. Let me be very candid here. I would still be working in DS/CI today, had my wife not accepted that position in Hanover, New Hampshire. The real funny thing was that just before I left there was a little anxiety among DS/CI seniors that the office was about to submit to a full review the IG (Inspector General). Not an investigation review or audit but a full program review. Piece of cake for John and I so we sat down with the director and reminded him that we were ready to assist with any questions or problems. Hanging outside my cubicle was a piece of paper with the pictures and dated of times served of all the DS/CI office directors for the last twelve years. Unfortunately, there were nine photos, including mine, John and Rich among others, indicating that most directors served less than two years before being re-assigned or sent off to language school at FSI. It was an inside joke. Then the retired Ambassador and his team arrived to conduct the review. Three weeks later the Ambassador poked his head in my cubicle and told me he was ready to conduct my interview. I was the last person he interviewed in DS/CI. We went into the conference room and he said, "OK Mr. Booth, tell me what's going on in DS/CI." I did. When we left the conference room he asked for a photocopy of my rogues' gallery of former DS/CI chiefs photographs and time of service in DS/CI. Three weeks later he appeared at my cubicle handed me a draft document and asked me to review the contents. He said, "These are the recommendations Robert. Review them and tell me what you think." After a careful review I told him that I agreed with every single recommendation and had none to add. John and I were able to answer all the IG team's questions with background and a combined insight of 27 years' experience. If the seniors or agents did not know the

answer, we did. One of the recommendations was that the DS/CI Director must serve out a full three years assignment. That recommendation went out the door for the then current DS/CI director and to the best of my knowledge has never been enforced.

For me the professional disappointment was that I promised my wife, that if she accepted the job at Dartmouth, moved up to Hanover, New Hampshire and liked the position after one year, I would retire and join her for four years. After a year she said, "Robert, I really love it up here." So I retired from DS/CI in 2012, rented out our Washington, D.C house to the U.K. Embassy and moved north. Four years later we returned to DC where my wife continues to telecommute for Dartmouth full-time. As we talk, John Tello still works in DS/CI

Q: Now where are your kids at this point?

BOOTH: I only have one. Chole had graduated from Washington International School and spent four years at Vanderbilt. Graduating in 2013 she took two years off from academic to work in a D.C. law firm to decide whether she wanted to go to law school. My wife is a lawyer, my brother is a lawyer at the Department of Justice, technically I am an officer of the court and legal talk normally dominate dinner conversations. After two years at the law firm, she said that she was prepared to attend law school. She is currently at Boston College Law School and graduates in April 2018.

Q: Wow, Good school. It's an expensive school.

BOOTH: They're all expensive. She's got some scholarships but we ended up paying quite a bit out of our own pocket. But this is the thing. If you read the Washington Post yesterday, parents and grandparents owe 66.7 billion dollars in college debt for their children and grandchildren.

Q: Right, right.

BOOTH: 66.7 billion.

Q: It's amazing. So now, as a graduate of DS, and basically, I imagine you still have some connections.

BOOTH: Oh absolutely.

Q: But you're up in Dartmouth, let's go to the Dartmouth chapter.

BOOTH: My first question to myself was, "Now, what am I going to do up here?" Beautiful area but in the middle of nowhere. Hanover is a tiny town which is located two-and one-half hours by bus from Boston. The first thing I did was become a full-time auditor since I could attend classes without paying. I became a full time undergraduate auditor. My wife would send e-mails to the professors, identifying herself and who I was, and sought permission for me to attend classes. I remember the first reply from Dr. John

Scott whose microeconomics class I wanted to attend in which he replied, “I would love to have someone in my class who is older than me.” Thirty-two teachers said “yes” and two said “no”. The understanding, sent out in my wife’s email was that I would not raise my hand for questions but sit, learn and enjoy. I did all the readings assignments, special work in the audio center, took all the pop quizzes, participated with group work and took some final examinations.

When I started to audit some of the government classes taught by professors Brendan Nyhan and Jeffrey Friedman, among others, they talked to me after class and then asked if I would mind speaking to the students about specific topics. One asked me to explain how State Department handles minority opinions and I ended up talking for 30 minutes including an insight to the Dissent Channel and how that started. I talked right after a CIA office talked to the class about how his agency handles dissenting views. Another asked me to talk to her class about the Benghazi incident and I had to start with a primer on how the SETL (Security Environment Threat List) listings impact the creation of diplomatic missions. In one or two other classes I provided what I and the professors jokingly referred to as background about the home environment in the 60s about Vietnam. I connected with Eviyana Seidras, the diplomat in residence at Tufts in Boston, who, when she participated in the Jobs Seminar at Dartmouth, I would be part of her speakers corps. That was how I was introduced to many Dartmouth students who were considering working for the U.S. Government. When Jake Tapper, a Dartmouth grad, visited the campus in 2013 to promote his book The Outpost I was introduced to Chris Wren following Tapper’s talk. Chris Wren, who is the former New York Times reporter was teaching a graduate program up there at Dartmouth and shortly after our first meeting had me teach a two-hour class on media relations with the State Department and unauthorized disclosures to his graduate class for years until I departed for Washington, D.C.

Amid all that my wife said, “You know Robert, this is the time for you to get your book published.” My manuscript had been with State FOIA for two years under pre-publication review protocols. The slightly redacted version and approved version arrived in Hanover about five months after we arrived. My wife said, “You’ve got to do it now because when we return to DC there will be too many distractions and it will not be done.” She was right, and I knew it. The first thing I did was edit and shorten the approved manuscript. After about one year of rejections and dead-ends I connected with a publishing company in Dallas, Texas and the publishing process began. The book was published two years ago last November. Previously I had provided a Smithsonian Associates lecture at the ISP (International Spy Museum), under the auspices of Amanda Ohlke, the museum adult education director, who told me that if I ever published a book about counterintelligence that she would be happy to debut it at the museum. Once Brown Books gave me a firm date when the first batch of books would be available, I contacted Amanda and a premiere debut presentation was arranged. On November 13, 2014 I traveled down DC and provided a 50-minute presentation to 130 paying guests at the ISP on getting published and what is spying. News of the book slowly got to New England and I provided presentations at Dartmouth, Colby College, the University of New Hampshire and others, including private organizations and other interested groups.

The next thing you know, it is spring 2016 and it is time to sell our mid-century modern home located on 11 acres of land in Etna, New Hampshire and return to DC in August. Shortly after my arrival, I was contacted by CNN, who advised me that they wanted to create a one-hour episode for their 'Declassified' series based on Chapter One of my book. I agreed, and the production team arrived in December to conduct interviews and outside takes. The episode entitled "Fidel's personal Spies: The Myers" was shown in August 2017. That episode was well received, and CNN returned for another round of interviews and filming so that another episode based on Chapter Four of my book will be aired in July 2018 during the third season of CNN's 'Declassified'.

Q: Wow. Fantastic. And this is chapter one?

BOOTH: Chapter one concerns the investigation and conviction on espionage charges of Kendall Myers a former INR employee. Using my book CNN will have me as lead narrator. This episode can be used in the future to sensitize people to the insider threat that exists when USG employees betray their country. Last year I provided insider threat CI briefings to DS's San Francisco field office, Boston field office, New York field office, and to USUN personnel. I used these opportunities to remind State Department people assigned to the United States that there is only one country in the world that does not have a SETL rating and that is the United States. I believe what lulls them into a full sense of security and that they do not have to worry so much about CI here. They say, "Well, I'm back home, I'm safe." Unfortunately, I identify specific cases, which I am uncomfortable talking about in an unclassified setting, concerning, specific State Department officers in Washington DC and New York who were targeted. What I can say is that when the FBI arrested the Russian sleeper group, which included Ana Chapman, in New York six years ago.....

Q: Yes, some of them were eventually deported.

BOOTH: Yeah. What a lot of people don't realize is that once they were deported, six State Department personnel contacted DS to report one time or casual with one of those individuals. I'm sure they were stunned when they saw their photos on the news. None of the reporting indicated other than gentle conversation. It reminds us that us that even here in the United States there can be danger in social settings when clandestine cultivation occurs. This is the theme of my current presentations. If you still have a TS clearance you must be extraordinarily careful, because here in DC and in New York there are any number of individuals, including journalists, who actively wish to talk to you. I explain all of that to them

Q: Interesting. OK.

BOOTH: I am prepared to offer such a presentation to the Washington field office here. Rich Ingram, the Special Agent in Charge, is trying to get back to me with a good time and date to talk to his personnel.

Q: So you're based now back in the DC area?

BOOTH: Absolutely.

Q: OK. And any chance you might be going back as a contractor once again?

BOOTH: No, I don't really think so. The position I had in DS/CI as a special agent and as a contractor was unique. I was brought in by the DS seniors and now very few people now know me. John Tello is still there. All the directors except for Chris Schurman have retired. The last one left is Bill Miller, the current acting Assistant Secretary, worked for me in CI. I would be an unknown entity to not only DS personnel but most of the IC contacts I had who have retired as well. So that's fine. I'm 65 and done.

Q: You're active enough with everything else you're doing and you put in your time in CI.

BOOTH: Yes. In my 10 years as a contractor I only suffered one disappointment. When Assistant Secretary of State Eric Boswell called for a meeting at DS/CI to meet Kendall Myers DS investigative team at which he wanted to know exactly how we had identified the Cuban mole. At the meeting was Barbara Shields, myself and special agents Bill Stowell and Karen Terry. He sat down in our secure conference room and asked, "How did you guys do it?" Proudly I said, "It was me." I explained how Karen used her exceptional computer software skills to use the matrix points that I and the FBI had developed to pare the list to 27 possible suspects. Barbara was then able to procure the 27 security files and find an out of the way space for me to review them. From that stack of files, I positively identified Kendall as the suspect and alerted the FBI. At that point Bill Stowell became the FBI's only State Department liaison in doing the real investigative work. At one point I had to assist the FBI by providing additional information for a FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) application for an electronic and passive search warrant and attended FBI meetings with Bill to discuss investigative strategy. Boswell, as a security novice and counterintelligence outsider, had a real tough time understanding what I said. He asked each of the participants about their contributions and their impressions about the investigation. In the end he thanked us for our work and said that an award would be forthcoming. The only bad thing was that although my name was included along with the three others for a Group Superior Honor Award, my name was ultimately deleted because I was a mere contractor.

Q: So at the award ceremony?

BOOTH: So at the award ceremony I stood in the back of the room while Bill, Karen and Barbara were honored. It's fine, those are the rules. I am pleased that Barry Moore brought me back because he believed I could add value to the office and I believe I did. I was instrumental in bringing John Tello back to DS/CI and he continues to serve up to this day providing guidance and advice to office personnel.

Q: OK. So now, as we sort of close the interview, looking back what advice would you give now to DS based on everything you know?

BOOTH: In order for DS to be successful it must be able to explain to State personnel what we do and why we do it. Remember, when I walked into the conference room where Assistant Secretary Kelly and his staff and I had to explain a program dating back to the '50s, it was something new and foreign to them. Once explained they were satisfied with that DS program. Briefing the A-100 class about DS's mission and their security responsibilities is critical. For example, the contacting reporting policy still is misunderstood by the majority of Foreign Service Officers, just look at Assistant Secretary of State Don Keyser. DS should explain why it is so critical. Their response is the DS is meddling in diplomatic reporting. In any case DS should have the opportunity to explain our policies. It is all about salesmanship.

It is our mission to make Foreign Service Officers sensitive to DS/CI's mission especially because it is misunderstood. However, DS/CI and the RSOs lack time. We barely get 10 minutes in any briefing to talk about CI. It is not a life or death issue to most. They understand physical protection, guard forces, walls, safes and locks, but counterintelligence and counterespionage are one of those funny little topics that is rarely discussed in the Foreign Service.

I mean when was the last time you heard about a spy case? You just heard about General Cartwright getting two years for leaking information to the press. In fact, he is going to jail for lying to the FBI and not for leaking just like Keyser went to jail for lying to DS agents not for the unauthorized transmission of classified information. Therefore, I emphasized in training classes, the need for FSOs to be discrete in all their conversations with all people in all walks of life.

So that's what I did and continue to do when I have the opportunity. In the Ambassadorial and DCM classes the candidates are provided with a ½ day of security orientation, especially RSO relationships, but I think DS needs to be given at least 20 minutes briefing for A-100 classes. That would be it.

Q: So I think then we will conclude your interview here and we will send you the transcript as soon as we get it done.

BOOTH: Thank you Mark.

End of interview