

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

PHILIP C. BROWN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: January 18, 2012

Copyright ADST 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background

Born in Massachusetts; raised primarily in Pennsylvania
College of Wooster, Ohio; Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
Operation Crossroads Africa
Marriage

Washington, DC; Voice of America; Africa news room 1965

Entered the Foreign Service, USIA 1965

State Department: Foreign Service Institute (FSI): 1965
French language training

Dakar, Senegal: USIA: Junior Officer Trainee 1966-1967

President Leopold Senghor
French presence
Lebanese
Festival of Negro Arts
John McKesson
Ambassador William R. Rivkin
Environment
Cultural Center operations
Recreation
Islam

Douala, Cameroon: Branch Public Affairs Officer 1967-1968

Environment
Cultural Center operations
Religions
French “cooperants”
French influence
Institute of International Education
Biafra War

Voice of America Birth of daughter	
Yaoundé, Cameroon: Cultural Affairs Officer	1968-1970
Environment	
President Ahmadou Ahidjo	
Tribal influence	
French presence	
Relations	
Political climate	
Ambassador Robert Payton	
Embassy staff	
Living arrangements	
Jim Bishop	
Recreation	
Visitors Program	
Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker	
Secretary and Mrs. Rogers visit	
Algiers, Algeria: Branch Cultural Affairs Officer	1970-1972
American Interests Section, Embassy of Switzerland	
1967 Six Day War	
Economic relations	
Political relations	
US Export-Import Bank loans	
El Paso Natural Gas	
William Eagleton	
Scholarship/Visitors' program	
Berbers	
Tuaregs	
Wall paintings	
Eldridge Cleaver	
Airplane hijackings	
Soviets	
Local Americans	
Local press	
French language	
Roman ruins	
Housing	
Cultural programs	
Family illness	
Malcolm Kerr	
Princeton University: Russian studies	1972-1973
George Kennan	

State Department: Soviet Union Affairs Desk Officer Personnel Jack Matlock Ambassador William Luers Watergate Relations with Soviet embassy Operations Work environment	1973-1974
Washington, DC: USIA: Office of Eastern Europe Affairs Personnel “Photo USA”, Budapest Hungary James Keogh	1974-1976
Washington, DC: USIA: Staff Assistant to Officer Director, 88 Jock Shirley	1976-1977
Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute; Russian language Training	1977
Discussion of visits to Eastern Europe	
Garmisch, Germany: U.S. Army Russian Institute; Russian Language Study Personnel and Course content Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)	1977-1978
Moscow, USSR Information Officer/Press Attaché Ambassador Malcolm Toon American press SALT Treaty Soviet radiation of Embassy Operations Family Housing Recreation Environment Exhibitions Robin Knight incident Pentecostals Tom Hutson Secretary Vance visit Jamming of VOA Travels <u>America</u> magazine	1978-1981

Radio Moscow
Sakharov
American movies
Cultural environment
US-Soviet prisoner exchange
Ambassador Thomas Watson
International Visitors Program
New Chancery construction
Soviet press
Local Contacts
Television
Teheran Embassy hostage taking
Soviets invade Afghanistan
Vienna Summit
Yuri Zarakhovich
Embassy Foreign Nationals
KGB
Religion
Relations with allied Ambassadors
Soviet leaders
Politburo
Armand Hammer
VIP visitors
Cultural presentations
Biological weapons
Moscow Olympics
Soviet leader funerals
Anglo-American Canadian School
Official entertainment
Spaso House
Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr.
Soviet education

Paris, France: Assistant Information Officer

1981-1986

US-Soviet relations
President Francois Mitterrand
Reagan/Mitterrand relations
Pershing Missiles
NATO
Ambassador Arthur Hartman
Brussilovsky's violin
Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith
Ambassador Joseph M. Rodgers
Embassy personnel
Charlie Wick visit
French Communist Party

French view of Soviet-style communism
French intellectuals
French press
Le Pen
Housing
Contacts
Local staff
Chargé Christian Chapman assassination attempt
Lt. Col. Charles Ray assassination
Terrorism
G-7 Rambouillet meeting
President Reagan visits
Henry Kissinger visits
Grenada invasion
Secretaries of State visits
State Department press corps
Visiting VIP's
France/US relations
The French Left
Schooling
Pierre Salinger
Soviet boycott Los Angeles Olympics
Galbraith and Foreign Service
Casper Weinberger visits
Cultural life
TWA plane hijacking
Rock Hudson visit
French battlefield communications technology

TDY: National Security Council, Washington, DC 1985
Public Diplomacy Task Force; Geneva Summit, 1985
Reagan/Gorbachev
Jack Matlock
Operations
Oval Office visit

Paris, France: (Continued)
Challenger catastrophe
Operations
Security
Arab World
Education of French political leaders
French government
Official functions
Superior Honor Award
Statue of Liberty

Russian Jews Wife's English language teaching Home leave	
Garmisch, Germany: US Army Russian Institute: Russian language training Instructors Environment Radio Liberty Nicholas Daniloff East European travel	1986-1987
Reykjavik, Iceland: Reagan/Gorbachev Summit Arms control	1987
Garmisch, Germany: US Army Russian Language Institute East European travel Environment Recreation Student body	1987
Moscow, USSR: Counselor for Press & Cultural Affairs US/Soviet relations Sergeant Lonetree Affair Withdrawal of local laborers Working environment Moscow environment Jamming Refusniks "Controlled" change Ambassador Jack Matlock Staff Visiting VIP's Chautauqua exchange US press corps US/USSR information talks President Reagan visit Billy Joel US cultural programs US Speakers programs Embassy building reconstruction Security André Gromyko death Russian cultural life Armenia earthquake National Symphony Orchestra	1987-1990

Ambassador's access to Soviet leaders	
Local employees	
Travels in USSR	
Soviet media	
Robert Redford	
Travel restrictions	
Ambassador press briefings	
USIA Director Wick	
Cultural Exchange Agreement	
VOA Director Richard Carlson	
Raisa Gorbacheva	
Sakharov death	
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy: Edward R. Murrow fellow 1990-1991	
Student body	
Academic program	
Teaching	
Foreign students	
Washington, DC: USIA Headquarters: Director, Foreign Press Centers	1991-1994
Office organization	
Madrid Middle East Conference	
Foreign Press Center	
Lexus Nexus	
Nashville press visit	
Press Centers' operations	
G-7 meetings	
President Bill Clinton	
Clinton visit to Riga, Latvia	
Vienna, Austria; Regional Public Affairs Officer	1994-1996
Housing	
International Atomic Agency	
Operations	
President Clinton area visits	
Ambassador Swanee Hunt	
Office reorganization and reduction	
Retirement	1996
Post-retirement career	
Reflections	

INTERVIEW

Preface

At a Public Diplomacy Alumni Association luncheon in late 2011, a colleague asked me if I had done my oral history. I had to admit that I had not. In fact, I was not that familiar with the project. I went to the ADST website and was impressed by the collection of oral histories, including those done by many people that I had known and served with.

Soon after, my attention was drawn to the December 2011 issue of the Foreign Service Journal. Devoted almost entirely to the years of my second tour in the Soviet Union (1987-1990), it convinced me that I needed to stop procrastinating.

I sat down with Stu Kennedy for the first time on January 18, 2012. Before he turned on the tape recorder, I told him that if he was looking for someone who had spent the bulk of his career in high policy positions, we could get by with one or two sessions.

But if he was interested in someone who had spent 20+ years overseas in a variety of posts and who could recollect a lot of unusual experiences, ranging from walking across the Tassili Plateau in southern Algeria to walking across Red Square in Moscow with Bob Hope, my hand was up.

Between January and June, 2012, I had 12 separate oral interviews (some 24 hours) with Stu. For every hour of conversation, I spent several hours preparing. This meant going through a journal that I have kept almost daily since 1972 and occasionally looking at folders full of mementos from those years. (I did not touch the myriad slides, photo albums or programs from virtually every cultural event I attended.) The journal provided an enormous amount of raw material but also presented me with a challenge of organizing and structuring that I did not always meet to my satisfaction.

In July, I began editing some 300 pages of transcript. As I did, I was constantly reminded what a privilege it is to be able to take advantage of this project. I would never have done something like this on my own.

But as I went through the transcript, I had to be careful not to fall victim to one of my most serious weaknesses, i.e. making the perfect the enemy of the good. During the interviews, I was often talking off the top of my head and not for the printed page. I began to notice overused words and expressions. And I discovered that the beginning of one session would overlap the end of the previous, resulting occasional repetition.

It has been no easy task cleaning up the syntax and punctuation, taking out words and occasionally entire paragraphs and relocating some portions simply for continuity. Even with this, the now-final product often reads like an oral interview. It is not a finely-polished piece of prose. It is not perfect!

All of the above notwithstanding, I am very pleased to have undertaken this project. It gets a monkey off my back. It reminds me of what an interesting and rewarding career I

had. Thanks to the Internet, it has allowed me to revisit some of the people I met and experiences that I had. And just in case someone should ever want to know something about me after I am not around, this memoir will be a good place to start.

Thanks to the ADST.

Q: Today is the 18th of January, 2012. This is an interview with Philip C. Brown. What does the 'C' stand for?

BROWN: 'Chace', spelled 'C h a c e'. It's a family name.

Q: And you go by Phil?

BROWN: I do.

Q: Ok, we will start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

BROWN: I was born November 7th, 1941, exactly one month before Pearl Harbor, in Springfield, Massachusetts though my family lived in the nearby town of Chicopee, Massachusetts. I was the first child of Charles W. and Alice E. Brown.

Q: Let's get a feel of where the family came from. Your father's side, what do you know about them, his family history?

BROWN: My father's grandparents, James and Isabella Johnston Brown, emigrated to the United States, to Pittsburgh, in February, 1882. They were Protestants from Northern Ireland. There were six children; the youngest, William, born in 1871, was my paternal grandfather.

Q: What were they up to?

BROWN: I honestly don't know. I have been to the town in County Down in Northern Ireland that they left but I don't know what motivated them. Isabella's parents (the Johnstons) were already in Pittsburgh. I don't know what my great grandfather's profession was. He was 61-years old when he arrived; early records list him as a janitor and later as a grocer and a clerk. I have been to the Homewood Cemetery in Pittsburgh where all but my grandfather are buried. Remember that there were six children; five boys, one girl. Of those six children, my brother, sister and I are the only offspring so there aren't too many sources.

My paternal grandfather, my father's father, attended Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, and became a Presbyterian minister. There are a lot of Presbyterians in western Pennsylvania and my father followed him in the Presbyterian ministry.

Q: Did your father go to theological school?

BROWN: He did. He was an only child (an older brother did not survive infancy). He was born August 24, 1912, in Clinton, Massachusetts, lived later in Providence, Rhode Island, and went to Geneva College near Pittsburgh. From there, he went to Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary which is now Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

I might note parenthetically that a few years ago, based on the fact that my paternal grandfather was born in Ireland, I obtained an Irish passport. I was able to go back in the records, get my grandfather's birth certificate, marriage certificate, all the other certificates and documentation I needed to prove to the Irish Embassy that I had that link and I got an Irish passport. I have never made use of it but at least I can claim that I am a citizen of Ireland.

Q: This is your grandfather who is a minister?

BROWN: My paternal grandfather.

Q: How about your father?

BROWN: He was also a Presbyterian minister.

Q: I am not quite sure I am right but I am thinking coming out of a Presbyterian Northern Ireland a very fundamentalist. Do you recall?

BROWN: I wouldn't call them fundamentalist; for me, that implies something else in today's world. No, not fundamentalist but they were strict. We didn't have alcohol in the house; TV watching on Sunday was frowned on. My grandmother on my father's side was a member of the WCTU, the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

In his late years, my Grandfather Brown came to live with us. By now we were living in Washington, Pennsylvania. If there was an advertisement on television for beer, perhaps cigarettes, my brother and I were under instructions to turn the sound down. We were not prevented from watching television on Sunday but it wasn't encouraged.

Again, fundamentalist is a word I wouldn't use – we believed in evolution! -- but strict.

My father's mother, Clara Fisher, was born in Clinton, Massachusetts, the only child of Abial Fisher. That side of the family goes back many generations in Massachusetts. Grandmother Brown died in 1950 and Grandfather Brown in 1956. They are buried in Clinton.

Q: Let's take your mother's side of the family.

BROWN: My mother came from Cambridge, New York, a village north of Albany up near the Vermont border, a lovely part of the world. One part of the family was from the

McGeoch family, Scotch-Irish. There is an extensive McGeoch family history that goes way back on both sides. Both my maternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother's family go way back in America.

Q: Do you know what they were up to?

BROWN: Farmers. My mother's father ran a small grocery store. Nothing high brow. They were not lawyers, doctors, business people. They were small town folk.

Q: Your mother, how far of an education did she go?

BROWN: High school. My mother was born June 24, 1915, the youngest of six children. The story I was told was that higher education for her simply wasn't affordable. She graduated from high school during the Depression so her formal education stopped at high school. She was always self-conscious about that. She compared herself unfavorably to other people, to my father in terms of formal education.

Q: We are still talking about a period. The people I am interviewing now are often of your and my age and most of their parents were not college graduates. A college education was rather limited in those days.

BROWN: Neither of my mother's parents went to college, I am quite sure. She did have older siblings who went to college, who continued their education beyond high school, but in my mother's case, it ended at Cambridge High School in Cambridge, New York.

Q: How did you mother and father meet?

BROWN: One of my father's first churches was in Coila, a little village next to Cambridge, New York. This was in the mid '30s and he met my mother and fell in love with her. They were married in Cambridge, New York on September 30, 1940.

Q: Were you the only child?

BROWN: No, I was the first child, born in 1941. My brother, Paul McWhorter Brown, was born on Christmas Day 1944 while we were still living in Massachusetts. My sister, Jannet Elizabeth Brown, was born ten years later, December 26, 1954, by which time we were living in Washington, Pennsylvania.

Q: What was your father up to in Massachusetts?

BROWN: Again a Presbyterian church in Chicopee. He was a Presbyterian minister from the time of his graduation from seminary and ordination and his first church near Cambridge, New York in the mid-'30s. He left his last church in Ben Avon, Pennsylvania, in 1978 but remained very active in church work in retirement.

Q: I would think in the family the Depression loomed rather large, didn't it? Are there stories or not?

BROWN: I don't recall many stories. I believe that one of my paternal grandfather's brothers lost a lot of money in the Depression in Pittsburgh. If I am correct, he had a number of stocks and investments. He was the one member of the family who, I won't say amassed a fortune but, had some resources.

Other than that and the references of my mother about not being able to go to college, no, I don't recall stories of the Depression.

Q: How long were you in Chicopee?

BROWN: Three plus years; I was born in 1941. We moved to Washington, Pennsylvania early in 1945.

Q: So really basically you really grew up in Washington.

BROWN: I did. When I went overseas, people would ask, "Where are you from?"

And I would say, "Well, I am from New England" and by that I wanted to say something about myself. My roots are in New England or close to New England, upstate New York. For me, it also conveyed an image of that part of the United States that is full of intellect and thought and a certain pace, style of life.

So my roots are in New England. My father was born there, I was born there. I have great interest in my father's mother's father, my great grandfather Abial Fisher who was born, like my father, in Clinton, Massachusetts and served in the Civil War in the 36th Massachusetts regiment. I have nearly 100 letters that he wrote during the Civil War, and that provide a Massachusetts perspective on my background.

But with all of that, I really spent my formative years in western Pennsylvania from 1945 until I left for college.

Q: Let's talk about Pennsylvania. Where again was this?

BROWN: We were ten years in Pennsylvania. They call it 'Little Washington', Washington County, way down in the southwest corner, home of Washington and Jefferson College. We lived in East Washington. I walked to school every day from first grade to eighth grade. There were in my class never more than 15 to 20 students. To this day I can remember the names of many of them. I remember the names of my teachers from Miss Imes in first grade to Mrs. Nichols in eighth. It was a very close knit community. My father could walk in the other direction to his church.

I mentioned Washington and Jefferson College because as a kid, it was fun to go to W&J football and basketball games. Washington was also, at one time, a center for manufacturing, glass manufacturing in particular.

When I was in ninth grade, 14 years old, we moved to Ben Avon, a close-in suburb of Pittsburgh. Washington, PA, is only 26 miles from downtown Pittsburgh but nevertheless, it was a driving trip. We'd go to baseball games and things like that but it was special. With the move in 1956 to Ben Avon, we were much closer to the city. You could take the streetcar into Pittsburgh.

Q: When you were in elementary school, early on, I have talked to a lot of people who were 'PKs', preachers' kids and they usually got into trouble. How did you find being a 'PK'?

BROWN: Sorry to disappoint you. I don't have any of those special stories about getting in trouble or things that would have driven a minister crazy because he preached about it on Sunday and his kid went out and violated it. Not that I was a goodie, goodie but I don't have any of those delicious stories.

I wasn't terribly self conscious about it. Some of my classmates went to my father's church but there wasn't too much overlap.

I was perhaps more conscious of it when we moved to Pittsburgh because my high school from ninth to twelfth grade was on one side of the street and my father's church on the other side of the street. So everybody knew that Phil's dad was the minister of that church. They got over it too. Some of them probably, when they first met me, said or thought gosh, your dad's the minister of that church over there. But we went beyond that. We became school friends and played softball together.

Q: Let's take first Little Washington. What was the ethnic mix or was there an ethnic mix?

BROWN: The address was 315 East Chestnut Street. It was a big house. My mother was awestruck by it. When she moved in, she had never been in such a large, brick house plus she was the minister's wife. That's something of a fishbowl.

The neighborhood was ethnically white but there was an area behind us, easily accessible, where the 'colored kids' lived. One of my closest friends was a 'colored' boy named Charlie Duncan. He went to school with me from first grade on. When he was asked what his name was, he said, "H. C. Duncan."

The teacher said, "Well, we can't call you H. C." His name was Hershel Charles and he became known as Charlie Duncan. Charlie occasionally would spend the night at my house. We would walk home from school together and I think my parents took particular pride that I was walking with a 'colored' boy and that I had a 'Negro' friend.

Charlie lived in a ramshackle wooden house up there. It must have been a terrible fire trap. He had a mother and an uncle named Fletcher but no apparent father, a younger brother named Bert and a younger brother named Welcome and then there was another brother who was born later. The fact that I can so easily remember those names says something about how close a friend he was.

I tracked him down a few years ago. He is a physician in Cleveland. We went to a baseball game in Cleveland a few years ago but we haven't stayed in touch.

With that exception my classmates were primarily white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

Q: When you weren't in school, what were the sports or amusements? What were you up to?

BROWN: Little League baseball. I played for the Indians. We had all the Major League names (it was 16 teams at the time) and I played with the Indians as an outfielder from ages 10, 11, 12.

I did pretty well as an 11-year old and the town newspaper, the Washington Reporter, would report on the teams as they got ready for the next season. There was one year they wrote that the Indians' outfield of Phil Brown at left and Terry Sherrick and Sandy Parisi in right is "a manager's dream." Before the season was out, my batting average had slumped. I must have gone into a 12-year old slump. The other two guys were playing different positions so it wasn't really a manager's dream.

One of the most memorable Christmas presents I ever received was a radio. Of course it was a radio you plugged in and turned the dials. AM was much more important than FM and there was static and whatever. But that radio was a constant companion for me. It was a vicarious means of traveling. Late at night I would fall asleep listening to either Fibber McGee and Molly or the Great Gildersleeve or one of those travel programs. You could hear radio stations in Detroit or KMOX in St. Louis. You could listen to a basketball game in St. Louis, the St. Louis Hawks.

We weren't doing a lot of traveling but I think vicariously, the idea of travel entered my brain at the time. To this day, I cannot get along without a radio – or radios – close by.

I also remember driving my mother crazy by taking magazines like National Geographic, clipping out those little coupons, filling in my name and address and receiving packets of travel material from all over the United States. The idea that it was free was wonderful; I could collect all these materials about Florida, California, places I had never visited.

You asked earlier about the Depression. I was never led to believe that, as a minister's kid, we were poor but I was also conscious that there were people who had a lot more money than we did. The term "jet setters" was used. There were certain things that were well beyond our means.

Today I love to ski. I was introduced to skiing much later on in my Foreign Service career. I was 36-years old. Growing up in western Pennsylvania, aside from the fact that the terrain didn't lend itself to skiing, skiing was like a Caribbean cruise. It was beyond our wildest dreams.

But every summer, in August, we would take a long, two-day drive to Cambridge, New York, where we would see my mother's family, my grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. We might stay on Hedges Lake near Cambridge or farther away at Lake George. There were also summers when we vacationed at the Jersey shore. Cambridge was a village of maybe 2,000 people so I felt like a big-city kid when visiting there.

Q: What about western Pennsylvania. What about sort of the coal miner culture and all that? John O'Hara wrote from that part of the country.

BROWN: I was intellectually conscious that coal mining was done in western Pennsylvania. In Washington, PA, there was still a commercial laundry down the street. It must have used coal in its furnace because my mother would run out in the back yard and pull down all the laundry off the line when the smoke started coming out of the plant and all that soot and whatever would settle on the clothes.

My father tells about living in Pittsburgh in the '30s when you would have to change your shirt twice a day.

Q: Pittsburgh was something. I recall that.

BROWN: But other than that, I wasn't terribly conscious of it. I can't claim that I had coal miner friends or anything of the sort.

Q: Did you family fall politically anywhere?

BROWN: I am going to guess that my father was a Republican (when that meant something far from today) but not actively so. What I remember myself is that I became interested in politics and journalism. I enjoyed anything that had to do with politics, talking about it or broadcasting it or informing people. One of my earliest memories is the 1952 presidential election.

Q: That was Stevenson and Eisenhower.

BROWN: Adlai Stevenson's vice presidential candidate was a senator from Alabama named Sparkman; he came to Washington, Pennsylvania and did a soapbox speech. I stood there and listened to John Sparkman speak when he was out campaigning in western Pennsylvania. Obviously he didn't succeed because Eisenhower won the election.

I can also remember being on my little soapbox out in the back yard pretending to be either a spokesman or a journalist, I am not sure which, reporting on the Eisenhower and Nixon candidacy. I did become very interested in politics.

I also remember listening and watching in 1952 to the conventions; back then, it really was decided on the convention floor with the delegate count. Alabama would cast so many votes for Eisenhower and so many votes for Kerr of Oklahoma and all that. Somehow I thought it was always going to be that way. I miss that horserace aspect of political conventions.

1956, the Democratic convention was in the summer. We must have been at the Jersey shore on vacation. Adlai Stevenson had locked up the nomination but the vice presidential nomination was still up for grabs. I had a portable radio and my brother and I were listening to it. We walked into a restaurant and they told us we couldn't bring in the radio but when they realized we were listening to the contest for the vice presidential nomination which eventually was lost by John Kennedy, one of the few elections he lost, they allowed us to come into the restaurant with our radio. People were actually interested in knowing what was going on.

I don't recall my father being politically active.

Q: Well, as a minister too.

BROWN: He probably walked a fine line and most of his congregants were probably more to the right.

We had a U.S. Senator from Washington, Pa. I would have to go back and research to remember what his name was (Note: Edward Martin, U.S. Senator 1946-1958).

Q: What about the outside world? We are talking about the '50s now, aren't we? The Cold War was going hot and heavy and Korea and all that. Did this grab your attention?

BROWN: Sure, I remember the Korean War.

I think my first conscious memories are of the Mayflower moving vans that delivered our furniture to our new home in Washington, PA, in early 1945 and our vacation in August, 1945. I was almost four years old and there was a parade in my mother's home town, Cambridge, New York, to celebrate the end of the war. These are the first conscious memories I have.

I can recall the beginning of the Korean War but without any specific memories. When we moved to Pittsburgh in 1956, one of the first things I learned was that our neighbors, Tom and Ina Bole, had lost a son in the Second World War in the Battle of the Bulge. They were extremely bitter about it, blamed Roosevelt for the loss of their son, and blamed Roosevelt for most everything. That was part of my political education. I would

be straining to come up with other memories of the time. Of course, we all think of the drills going under our desks, nuclear weapon kind of thing.

Q: When you went to Pittsburgh, you were in Pittsburgh from when to when?

BROWN: Moved there in January, 1956. I was a freshman in Avonworth High School. In 1959, I left to go off to college. I kept coming back to visit my parents through college and graduate school. My parents lived there, the Pittsburgh area, through various stages of their life until they died. Pittsburgh was my home year round until I graduated from high school in 1959.

Q: From your perspective what was Pittsburgh like?

BROWN: I would start by saying I grew up a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball and a Pittsburgh Steelers football fan. The Steelers were a terrible team in the '40s. Today they have become one of the premier franchises in the National Football League. I was not a Johnnie-come-lately to the Steelers. I grew up on the Pirates. I remember so vividly their 1960 World Series win against the Yankees. I have a ticket stub from game seven, the famous game. A baseball fan would recall the Mazeroski home run that ended game seven against the Yankees. I remember their later World Series victories, by which time I was overseas. These days, I am turned off by the Pirates. They have the longest losing streak of any franchise in baseball history. I have to say sports are a memory.

One was also taught at that time about the transformation of Pittsburgh, from a smoky city to the Golden Triangle, a city remaking itself. I can recall the slag heaps along the Monongahela River. The steel plants would dump out the cinders, the slag, and at night, they would be glowing piles, very vivid memories of the steel industry. But we also knew it was a transition period.

I mentioned an interest in journalism. In 1961, I got a summer job at the Pittsburgh Press, a Scripps Howard newspaper. I worked on the city desk and the editor was a man named Leo Koberlein. He gave me one of the best educations in the use of the English language that I ever heard. Aside from doing what all bottom-of-the-rung reporters do, obituary writing, I was occasionally sent out on reporting assignments.

One day, Mr. Koberlein sent me to the Pittsburgh Zoo. It had some new animal. Maybe I rode the animal, I can't recall. I came back and I wrote that it was 'one of the most unique experiences of my life.' Instead of calling me over, Mr. Koberlein came to my desk. He said to me that an experience is either unique or it's not unique. There are not degrees of uniqueness. Every time I hear someone talk about "the most unique restaurant" or whatever, I react. That was only one example in a wonderful education in the use of the English language he gave me.

Aside from that, I learned to write. I learned to write a journalistic article; put the five Ws in the first paragraph.

Q: Yes, when

BROWN: Who what, when, where and why. I also learned to take a little bit of initiative. There was an article one time in the morning paper, the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and they said, "Here Phil. We need to have our version of the story."

I could have simply rewritten it but I looked at a couple of names in the article, people at Penn State University, and got on the phone and talked to them and got a new angle on the story. They put my by-line on the story. Mr. Koberlein was very complimentary not only to me but to my father. It pleased my father to hear from Leo Koberlein that I had done well. So those two summers with the Pittsburgh Press were certainly part of my education.

Q: Going back to knee britches time and later, were you much of a reader?

BROWN: I wish I could say yes and list all the books I read. I did my basic assigned reading but I can't develop the answer beyond that. I will just add that in my Christmas letter this year, one of those inevitable letters that you write to family and friends recounting all the wonderful things that happened in the past year, I concluded by saying that I don't read enough. To this day, I wish I could say I was more of a book reader.

One of my Foreign Service colleagues, a fellow named Jim Bradshaw, came up to me back in the 1970's and instead of saying, "How are you?" or "What's new?" said, "What are you reading?" I felt embarrassed that I couldn't cite a book because this man was famous for reading a book a day. This has always been an area of self-criticism. I don't read enough now. I do read a lot of magazines and newspapers and some books.

Q: Up through high school, was there anything in world events, a country or area that particularly engaged you?

BROWN: If we could go to my college years, Africa became the answer to that question and that led to my Foreign Service experience.

Q: Was Pittsburgh in high school a different ethnic and cultural mix than when you were in little Washington?

BROWN: Slightly different ethnic and cultural mix. I lived in Ben Avon and there was Ben Avon Heights as well. We were a primarily Protestant, predominately white community though there was the area under the bridge where a number of the African Americans lived, including a family, last name Morris and that family produced a famous professional football player named Mercury Morris who set all sorts of records with the Miami Dolphins and of course, was part of our high school football team.

I went to Avonworth High School. The name Avonworth came from Ben Avon and Emsworth. Emsworth was the next suburb down the Ohio River. Emsworth in my mind had many more Catholic kids, including a parochial school, and there was also a

perception that -- I can't remember which way it worked -- that the better, smarter Catholic kids went to the parochial school or the less competent Catholic kids went to the parochial school. I think the better Catholic kids came to the Avonworth and the lesser ones went to parochial school. I guess for the first time in my life, I was at least becoming conscious of Protestants and Catholics and a few African Americans.

I can't say the ethnic mix was much more complicated than that. There were no Jews to my knowledge. If there were, I didn't even think in those terms.

After I had been several years in the Foreign Service and had some experience in Eastern Europe, maybe I was serving in the Soviet Union, I drove home through the north side of Pittsburgh. I drove by the Slovak Savings and Loan Association and for the first time in my life I thought, "Oh, now I know what they were talking about." Growing up, I knew there were people like Slovaks and Czechs and Hungarians and Poles. They worked in the coal mines. They had these long complicated names of football players. I wasn't really conscious of their ethnicity. You asked about coal mining. I wasn't conscious of those people in my neighborhood. But that reaction to Slovak Savings and Loan says to me how isolated I was at that time.

Jumping ahead, when I went to graduate school in Boston, I had a Jewish roommate and it was the first time I thought about Jews and their role in the United States. That I had a Jewish roommate was quite a surprise to me.

Q: Did the troubles in Northern Ireland affect you at all?

BROWN: No.

Q: That was too far away.

BROWN: I don't think until I went to Northern Ireland a few years ago was I even brought face to face with the distinction between the Protestant north and the Catholic south. I used to say my family was Scotch-Irish and I never knew quite what that meant until I got up to the northeast corner of Northern Ireland. You could look over and see Scotland. I realized that Scotland was closer to Northern Ireland than that point in Northern Ireland was to Dublin. I began to understand what I meant by Scotch-Irish heritage.

You asked me about growing up in Pittsburgh and the impact it had on me. Aside from those two summers at the Pittsburgh Press, the previous two summers, 1959 and 1960, I had a job working at the Civic Light Opera in Pittsburgh. This was done adjacent to the Hill District, a big African-American neighborhood, and it took place under a tent. I got a job with a local catering company going out there selling soft drinks and hot dogs at the intermission. Well, I quickly discovered how much I loved hearing that music. It was "South Pacific," "Most Happy Fellow," "Guys and Dolls." The shows would run for one or two weeks at a time. As much as possible, I would get away from our trailer where we were selling the Coke and hot dogs at the intermission to get down and hear that music.

It had an impact on me. To this day, I love light opera and grand opera. I was also fortunate enough in grade school to have enough of a music education that I could read music and sing a bit. So music is a central part of my life and a lot of it began right there with those summer jobs at the Civic Light Opera and of course with the musical education in grammar school.

Q: I have always been a musicals, the same as light opera fan. I have records of most of the major productions.

BROWN: Moving forward, it was at the end of summer, 1961, that I went to New York City for the first time and saw my first Broadway show which was “Camelot” with Robert Goulet and Julie Andrews. I bought the record and I must have driven my parents crazy playing that record, constantly singing the songs of “Camelot,” which of course later on became an icon.

During that same visit to New York, I went to Yankee Stadium for a doubleheader (back in the days when they played doubleheaders) between the Yankees and the Cleveland Indians. This was the year that Mantle and Maris were both vying to break Babe Ruth’s home run record. On this day, September 11, 1961, only one of them hit a home run but there was another event which made it memorable. This Indians’ center fielder was a flamboyant player named Jimmy Piersall and during the game, a fan came onto the field and went towards Piersall as if to attack him. Mantle was on second base and when he saw what was happening, he raced to Piersall’s defense. Piersall may have been on the other team but Mantle didn’t want anybody coming onto the field, especially not onto center field. I still have newspaper clippings from the game. The New York press had a field day with the event.

Q: In high school what were you favorite and least favorite courses?

BROWN: It was pretty clear I was not into sciences. We had a new science every year; biology, chemistry, physics. I think botany was included in biology but that was not going to be my long suit so I dutifully went through the classes but I did not distinguish myself.

I actually did pretty well in math; I liked math. I think without knowing it, I liked a world in which there were absolute answers. There are clear-cut formulas and answers.

I wasn’t strong in literature but I was good in English language, in the written word and whatever passed for political science, social studies we must have called it.

We had a teacher along about tenth grade who taught us a lot about the United Nations, so much so that she incited the antipathy of some right wing, John Birch, anti-UN groups. Poor Miss Clark.

Q: What was her name?

BROWN: Miss Clark. She was a very dedicated teacher of social sciences and put a lot of emphasis on the United Nations and actually believed in the United Nations.

Probably the most influential teacher I had was a man named Benjamin Bast. He was a product of the Catholic schools of Pittsburgh. He got us involved in forensics club and weekend after weekend, my classmates and I would go to forensics competition with other schools. One of the competitions was debate and you and your partner would debate against two people from another school. You would argue the pro or the con of a given issue. It was good training in public speaking or the importance of public speaking. Where Benjamin Bast is today, I have no idea, but he was an influence on me.

So history, political science, social studies, we called it. Those were the areas that excited my interest.

Q: You graduated from high school when?

BROWN: 1959. I had been elected president of my senior class to the surprise of my parents because we didn't come to the school until half way through the ninth grade.

The school had something called assembly club. It was a student group that would try to plan weekly or bi-weekly programs, bring in speakers and that kind of thing. I was nominated for that in 11th grade and lost what was essentially a popularity contest to a well-liked classmate. I was disappointed I lost that election but it meant that the next fall, I was elected senior class president. Maybe I got the sympathy vote or something.

Come June of 1959, at graduation, I gave the senior class speech. It pleased my parents. I was a parent pleaser. I was the first child. Nothing gave me more satisfaction than to give my parents satisfaction.

Q: Where were you pointed? I assume by this time it was assumed you would go to college?

BROWN: Yes. This was a time where in my orderly world, one stage of life naturally led to the next stage. In that respect, I always say that people who are only six to ten years younger than I am came of age in a world that was 25 years changed from the world that I grew up in. The late 60's changed everything.

So I applied for college and was accepted at the College of Wooster, Ohio, not coincidentally a Presbyterian school that, I think, gave scholarships to the sons and daughters of Presbyterian ministers, a three-hour drive from my home in the farmlands of Ohio, Amish country, west of Akron. A very fine school. To this day, look at any listing of excellent liberal arts co-educational schools in the United States. Wooster is high among them.

Q: Let's talk about it. What was it like? What was your impression when you went there?

BROWN: It was the first time I had been away from home. I had a box where I still sent my laundry back to my mother.

Q: One of those cardboard boxes with a strap around it?

BROWN: Yes, sure. Off would go my dirty laundry and a couple of days later it would come back clean. I was in a dormitory, Douglas Hall, with two roommates, a single bed and a bunk bed but one of those roommates didn't last for very long so there were really only two of us. I was frustrated because I naturally took my radio and those fluorescent lights in the bathroom would create a terrible static on my radio. I couldn't hear it very well.

Over the course of four years I received a quality liberal arts education. Freshmen had a required course called Introduction to Liberal Studies. It was divided into four quarters. The entire faculty participated so you might have for the first quarter the math teacher, the second quarter you'd have an English teacher, the third quarter you'd have a chemistry teacher, the fourth quarter you'd have a French teacher or something but they were all teaching this broad general introduction to liberal studies.

I don't think I fully appreciated at the time but in retirement, I have often commented that I now understand the advantages of a liberal arts education; there are very few subjects, ranging from architecture to history to geology that don't at least have some interest for me. I feel as though a liberal arts education gave me a very wide exposure.

Q: I think this is true for most of us in the Foreign Service because we are called upon all of a sudden to deal with completely opposite ends of what can be called culture and all and you have to learn on the run too.

BROWN: As I said, the sciences were not my long suit but the science course that I took in college was geology. I don't retain much of it but every time I see stratified rock, whether it be in the Grand Canyon or the middle of the Sahara Desert, I think about what I know about that from the college course in geology.

So as I say, it was a very solid, quality education. It was based on two semesters and of course, the first semester did not end until exams in January so you came home for Christmas vacation with all those final exams hanging over your head or papers or whatever. What a torture that was.

I took a lot of courses in political science with the same professor, Gordon Shull, and he always gave me an A. I guess I probably merited the A but it certainly did bring up my grade point average. You had to take required courses in religion; Old Testament, New Testament and I probably should have hidden my grades from my dad on those because I didn't do particularly well.

Q: How did you find, here you came from a very solid religious background but did you find yourself questioning when you got into college?

BROWN: I probably did but it was not a conscious memory. I wasn't one who went completely the other way. Our campus was dry. You were not allowed to drink beer on campus. You had to go off campus. I didn't go off campus to drink beer. I was still respectful of my father and grandfather. There were enough ministers' kids there that you weren't singled out as one. After the initial smile or whatever, that wasn't a subject.

We had the required religion class. We not only had that but we had required chapel four days a week. This wasn't religious but four days a week the entire student body assembled in the chapel for a talk and it might have even been preceded by a hymn but I am not sure of that. It was a required talk. Attendance was taken. It was an important and valuable component.

Q: I went to a small liberal arts college in New England, Williams and we had chapel and attendance was taken. We had chapel. You were allowed four cuts in a year but you had to hand in a card that you went to chapel.

BROWN: I look at my alumni magazines these days and they are walks down memory lane. They talk about the year in which was chapel no longer obligatory and how was attendance taken; for those of us who went there during that era, it is still a memory.

I am a sports fan; I became the statistician of the college football team and the sports writer for the college newspaper and eventually the editor of the college newspaper, the Wooster Voice. Those are vivid memories of college.

By senior year, we had to write an independent study paper, a senior thesis. Somewhere along the line, I discovered nearly 100 letters written by Abial Fisher, my father's mother's father during his two plus, almost three years in the Civil War with the 36th Massachusetts Regiment. My college years, 1959 to 1963, were the centennial of the Civil War and for my senior thesis, I took these letters, transcribed them and recreated Abial Fisher's Civil War experience. It was a fascinating experience.

Q: Where did he serve?

BROWN: Coincidentally, we are marking the sesquicentennial so it is exactly 150 years ago this year, 2012, that he left Boston by ship and landed in Washington, DC at the Naval Yard. They marched north through Maryland (not far from where I now live). His unit was too late, fortunately for my sake, for the Battle of Antietam of 1862 and for the Battle of Fredericksburg later that same year.

Q: Which were two slaughters.

BROWN: Two slaughterhouses. By 1863 and Gettysburg, he was in Vicksburg. They went on down the Mississippi River and he was in Vicksburg in 1863 which was more of

a siege than a battle. In 1864 they were back up in this part of the world and after some battles with ill health, he was wounded in the siege of Petersburg, south of Richmond, the summer of 1864. Using his letters and regimental history, I have been able to stand on the spot outside Petersburg where I can imagine he was struck by a sniper. He went into a hospital and returned to Clinton, Massachusetts, just about two years service.

Q: Have you published this?

BROWN: No, I haven't published them.

Q: Why not? I think it is important.

BROWN: It is one of those things I will get to. What I did in the summer of 1962 was to take these letters with me to my work at the Pittsburgh Press newspaper. The second summer I was on the evening shift. It was a little less active and I would sit there and type 'Dear Mother' or 'Dear Susie, Today we marched 16 miles to such and such'. Within the past year I gave the copies to a neighbor and she retyped them for me so they are in digital form.

I have also scanned my senior thesis so publishing is one of those good intentions things. They are there; they are available. They certainly won't be lost after me. The letters themselves, the originals are in a safe deposit box and in remarkable good condition.

Q: I find that fascinating. My grandfather was a latecomer in the family so my grandfather was an officer in the 26th Wisconsin and the first battle of the Potomac. Every time I go out west from here on Route 66 we go past Thoroughfare Gap and their first assignment was to cover Thoroughfare Gap. Nothing happened there and they came back and they were at Chancellorsville. It was a German regiment and then at Gettysburg. He was wounded at Gettysburg and a prisoner for a day or two and then when Lee pulled out, he left the wounded prisoners behind.

BROWN: In a way it is a little frustrating because my great-grandfather didn't say the battle raged and we ducked and all that kind of thing. On the other hand if he had been in that kind of frontline combat situation, perhaps he wouldn't have lasted as long as he did.

I have been fortunate enough to visit almost all the spots he was in. I have driven up through the hills of Maryland where he hiked. I have been down to Petersburg and even to Vicksburg. I haven't been to the areas of Kentucky where they were. It is certainly part of my heritage.

We have not been very good at reproducing ourselves and so I am along with my brother and sister the only descendants of that man and neither my brother nor my sister have children so I remind my five grandchildren that they are the only descendents of Abial Fisher born in Clinton, Massachusetts. Anyway, that was my senior thesis, the Civil War experience with my great grandfather.

Q: This sort of overlaps high school and college. In your area what were the dating situations?

BROWN: I didn't date very much. It wasn't the fact of girls' dormitory and the boys' dormitory; I certainly had my eye on a lot of girls. It was a personal self-confidence issue. I was never good at dancing and I felt self-conscious about that. To this day, if I go to a wedding and it comes time to dance, I wish that somewhere along the line, I had learned to enjoy dancing. Now my grandchildren go out and dance and everyone focuses attention on them. It was purely a self-confidence thing. I had occasional dates but I didn't have a lot of serious steady girlfriends.

The situational thing was of course freshman girls had to be in the dormitory I think by 9 o'clock at night. It was a fairly strict code. But that wasn't the impact on me.

Q: An election that really caught young people at the time was the 1960 Kennedy versus Nixon. Did this engage you?

BROWN: Very definitely, yes. I had good friends who were respectively heads of Young Republicans and Young Democrats. I was into politics, sure. It grabbed my attention going back to the 1950's. I can recall John Kennedy not winning the vice presidential nomination in 1956 so by November of 1960, my sophomore year in college, I remember the election very vividly.

Moving ahead and thinking about my decision to go into the Foreign Service, my interest in international affairs, I call myself a product of the Kennedy era. I am not quite sure I idealized him then though I did after November 22, 1963 but he was very definitely my inspiration.

I have one specific political memory from that time and that goes back to the fall of 1962. It involved Sherman Adams of the Eisenhower administration.

Q: He was an aide to Eisenhower.

BROWN: He was Chief of Staff. He was from New Hampshire and he was a man of great rectitude but he got caught up in something called the 'Vicuna coat scandal' and he had to retire under a cloud. He went back to New Hampshire. He wouldn't speak to anybody but by some means, the College of Wooster invited Sherman Adams to come and speak. He was to be there for six weeks in a Dialogue in Politics program. One of the conditions was it would be off the record. No journalists would be allowed in and so Sherman Adams did come.

I did interview Mr. Adams after the November, 1962, election and wrote at least one story for the college paper, The Wooster Voice, on the tenth anniversary of President Eisenhower's election and the naming of Sherman Adams as Chief of Staff. I described him as both "abrupt" on the one hand and "personable" and "cordial" on the other.

Even before this, a New York Times journalist named Gay Talese came to Wooster to cover Sherman Adams, even though Sherman Adams had these set these particular conditions. Talese located me because by then I was editor of the college paper and I think he intended to use me as a way of interviewing Sherman Adams but it was to no avail. It did not work.

At exactly that time, the Cuban missile crisis came, the Kennedy speech, all the rest which we watched on a black and white television in the dormitory so Talese gave up trying to cover Sherman Adams and said, in effect, "I have a new angle I am going to pursue. I want to interview these Amish people." We got into his bright red rental car and went to an Amish farm and knocked on the door. The story I know he wanted to write was: "The world is on the brink of nuclear catastrophe. The missiles are primed to strike America but out here the Amish people know nothing about this. They go about their lives simply as they have for hundreds of years, unaware of the pending catastrophe."

I have searched The New York Times and I haven't been able to find the story but I think that is the gist of what he wanted to write. I recounted this to Professor Schreiber, the German professor at the college who knew the Amish people very well. He wrote books about the Amish and he laughed and said, "Of course they knew what was going on. The Amish people do not live with their head in the sand or behind a plow. They were aware; they just didn't want to share it with some New York Times journalist in a fancy red car."

So Talese went back to New York. I don't think he had a very good story about Sherman Adams or about the Amish and the Cuban missile crisis. Again, that is sort of a long way of saying one cannot fail to remember October 1962 and the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: Then you are going to graduate in what, '63?

BROWN: 1963. I had been partly influenced by the Kennedy Peace Corps idea. I went abroad for the first time in my life for nine weeks during the summer of 1963 on a program called Operation Crossroads Africa, the brainchild of a New York African-American pastor named Dr. James Robinson. It sent young, idealistic kids off to Africa for a summer, nine weeks of volunteer work.

We assembled in New Jersey, got our training and then took an Air France charter plane from New York and landed in Dakar. Little did I know at the time that I would be coming back to Dakar a few years later in the Foreign Service. We headed on down the coast. We spent some time outside Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Our group flew on to Lagos, Nigeria, and from there, we took a mammy wagon to Ibadan, the capital of the western region. Then we went to a little village called Ifaki where we assembled mud bricks. We got the mud and the water and made it into bricks and piled them up on top of one another and called it a school. That was part of the summer.

We went next to what was then becoming the Midwest region. They had had a referendum, created a Midwest region with the capital at Benin, one of the historic cities

of Nigeria,. We were in a little village called Uwessan where we did the same thing. We assembled mud bricks and called it a school.

It was an eye-opening experience for me. There were about a dozen of us, evenly divided between young men and young women, a couple of African-Americans in the group. A professor, Roy Craig, and his wife Jane from Texas were our leaders. Our Nigerian leader was a fellow named Dejo. It was the first time in my life I had been outside the United States. I took a lot of pictures. I was even so daring as to package them up and mail them, slides, from some little post office in Nigeria to my father. They came through. I still have the slides from that summer. In fact, I have an entire file with letters, a diary, programs, even a booklet on "Yoruba Cookery."

There were two major events of that summer that I missed. One was the March on Washington, August of 1963 and Martin Luther King's famous speech. The other was the birth of the Kennedy child; the baby boy who survived for two or three days before succumbing. I returned at the end of the summer back to my home in Pittsburgh before going off to graduate school.

Q: What was your impression of Nigeria?

BROWN: I came back very idealistic, very impressed. It was a summer where you were a little nervous about the water you drank, a little reluctant to go to that man-made outhouse and sleeping on straw mattresses in schools and all the other things we put up with and probably I was counting the days until I could come home to all the comforts of home but nevertheless, what I told people was this was a wonderful experience and that we met these wonderfully kind people.

We were in simple villages. When the sun went down, it was pitch dark. There was one time during the summer when we heard a loud clamor in the village. We went to see what was going on. It turned out a policeman from Lagos had come back to celebrate his father who had died. His duty was to organize a big party with a lot of palm wine and firing of guns in the air. I was having experiences and seeing things, such as going in dugout canoes on the Niger River, that were very new for me.

One of the things we were supposed to do on our return, part of our commitment for having this experience, was to make a number of speeches so you would look for occasions to speak to a church or school or community groups. The message I brought back was independence had come to Africa and this was certainly going to be the flowering of wonderfully vibrant countries. I don't share all that idealism today but that was how I felt at the time.

Q: The State Department went through this, the discovery of Africa. I volunteered to go to Africa in the late '50s, was in Frankfurt and volunteered and of course, the luck of the draw, Africa also included the Middle East in those days and ended up in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.

BROWN: When I joined the Foreign Service, I said I would be interested in serving in Africa. You can imagine the door was wide open.

Q: Looking back on it, how did the Nigerians react to a bunch of Americans, young Americans bouncing in there?

BROWN: They were very welcoming. These were small villages. We may exaggerate but I don't think they had seen many white people before and they had not seen very many young American college kids full of idealism so they were very welcoming. They probably hoped to benefit from it in any way possible and that meant that when we left, any scrap of paper or anything we left behind they grabbed up as potentially valuable. They danced and sang for us and they did all those wonderful African things. We spent very little time in Lagos which was a very different environment.

The things you associate with Africa today, ranging from AIDS to the proliferation of weapons to drugs, were not on our minds at the time. They were not concerns.

At one point that summer, I had some little ailment or illness so I went to a local doctor and he prescribed a couple of things for me. I gargled and drank them and overcame my illness. I survived ill health which was probably the uppermost concern on anybody's mind, much more so than personal safety or that kind of thing.

At the end of the summer, we got on the train in Enugu, the capital of the eastern region, and took the train all the way up to Kano, the capital of the northern region. There of course, we saw a totally different environment from the tropical rain forest of the south; we were now in the arid north and the Muslim part of the country.

I can remember going up in a building in Kano and as far as you could see, there were mud buildings and minarets. Either on the train going from Enugu to Kano or on the train trip coming back from Kano, we had a locomotive that burned coal. When I awoke in the morning, you could see the outline on my sheet of where I had slept during the night. It was clean and everything around it was covered with smoke from the coal fired engine.

Q: Had you graduated from college?

BROWN: The summer after my senior year in college.

Q: Had you made up any future, what were you going to do?

BROWN: I had already been admitted to the Fletcher School, Medford, Mass, Tufts University. I knew even in my senior year in college that I would go to graduate school. In my orderly world, everything built on top of the previous stage. Once you finished high school you went to college. When you finished college, you were going to go to graduate school. I applied to several graduate schools of international affairs -- Syracuse, Columbia, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, and Fletcher. I was rejected or was not admitted to SAIS and I was keenly disappointed. I

thought I would never get to Washington, DC. It was little consolation at the time that I was admitted to the Fletcher School until people began to explain to me that it was a well thought of graduate school and that Boston was a fine place to be going to graduate school. So off I headed in the fall of 1963 to the Fletcher School where I spent two years.

Q: Fletcher is on the campus of Tufts University. What was it like then?

BROWN: Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy on the campus of Tufts University and their letterhead said ‘Tufts University, administered in cooperation with Harvard’. It was another eye opening experience for me.

My Wooster experience represented good quality education but it was not ethnically diverse. We had any number of African-Americans and international students but it wasn’t a world opening experience to me. Fletcher had I think close to 40% foreign student body. My roommate was Jewish and from Long Island. The first question he asked me when he learned I had grown up in Pittsburgh was, “Is this the first time you have been east?” For him anything west of the Hudson River, certainly on the other side of the Appalachian Mountains, could not be considered east.

I said, “Richard, I lived all my life in the east.” As far as I was concerned, Pittsburgh was part of the world that included New York and Boston and Philadelphia. That was just one example of a different perspective.

1963 was the heart of the civil rights discussions. We were in a dormitory. The dormitory had eight different entrances and my entrance and my floor included a fellow who had graduated from Sewanee University in Tennessee and someone who had graduated from Emory College in Georgia. Both these fine guys represented the views of the south. We were all fairly uncompromising. We were going to talk about the civil rights era from our own particular perspectives. They were anything but racists but they were going to certainly going to defend the honor of the south.

We also had a student in our unit from Liberia. Lami Kawah was his name. To have a Liberian so close by was part of that whole context.

It wasn’t just a school; it was a community. After hours we played sports together and we had parties together. There was a lovely young woman who walked past the dormitory every day because she was studying for a master’s degree in education. She dated an awful lot of guys before I was felt confident enough to ask her a date and she became my wife. Only late in the school year 1963 to 1964 did I date her.

I spoke of my interest in music. We would go on Friday afternoons to performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. They were very low cost. I was there on Friday afternoon, November 22, 1963, and they had just completed the first work on the program when conductor Erich Leinsdorf came out and said we have a press report “that the president of the United States has been the victim of an assassination.”

We all gasped. They changed their program. They pulled out the second movement of Beethoven's third symphony, the Eroica Symphony, the funeral portion of that symphony. I will never hear that symphony or that movement without thinking of that moment, the first news we had of the Kennedy assassination.

After that point, my friends and I left the concert and we all went back to the Fletcher dormitory and watched the news nonstop on television that weekend.

Back to school itself, it was a very much more diverse student body than anything I had been exposed to in college, a good quality education, excellent professors. The dean during my first year was a man named Robert Stuart. He was replaced by a retired Foreign Service officer named Edmund Gullion, Dean Gullion.

Q: Had been ambassador to the Congo.

BROWN: Yes. That was the experience he brought to the school.

Dean Gullion early on asked how many of us were thinking of a career in the Foreign Service. It wasn't uppermost in my mind; I didn't ever want to exaggerate. My interest was still in journalism so I didn't hold up my hand which meant I missed a free dinner at Dean Gullion's house because those people who held up their hand and said they were interested in the Foreign Service were invited for dinner. He was dismayed at how few people were interested in the Foreign Service. Even at that time, the job possibilities in the international sphere were expanding to include World Bank, journalism, business, that kind of thing. One of his ambitions was to encourage more people to think of a career in the Foreign Service. That was my second year at the Fletcher School.

So Fletcher represented two years of high quality education, traditional education, classroom seminars. There wasn't a lot of field work or that kind of thing. I wrote a master's thesis on Nigeria and on its economic development plan which was not a distinguished piece of scholarship. It just kind of talked about how Nigeria thought it would achieve economic development in these various spheres.

The first year was on the campus in the dormitory and that was really a shaping experience because you were not only in the classroom with people but 24 hours a day you were together.

The second year I was off campus in a rented place in Somerville, Mass. During that second year, I decided to take the Foreign Service exam. I had colleagues, classmates, who were dead set on the Foreign Service. I remember one fellow in particular. He knew from the day he was toilet-trained that he wanted to go into the Foreign Service.

The Foreign Service wasn't my first ambition. During the course of that year, following an interview in Boston, I had been invited to visit the NBC affiliate in Seattle, a possible job in journalism but I took the Foreign Service exam. You didn't have to pay for it so off

I went. Given my interest in journalism, I checked the box for USIA but I am sure that the exam was the same for both State and USIA candidates.

I had a 1953 Buick, a big tank of a car. This was one of these Boston winter mornings where we had an overnight freezing rain and the streets were slick as could be. I wasn't more than a couple of blocks from the house, I hit the brakes and my '53 Buick slid right into another car, did considerable damage to the rear bumper of that car but little damage to my car. I left my name on the windshield, went off and took the Foreign Service exam. I wasn't nervous. I wasn't under a lot of pressure. In fact, I was probably thinking more about the damage to the front bumper of my 1953 Buick. But I passed the exam and then subsequently took the oral exam which led to my Foreign Service career.

Q: When you took the Foreign Service exam, do you recall any of the questions that were asked?

BROWN: No. What I recall is that it was similar to the graduate record exam and other types of aptitude tests that you took at the time. Unless I am mistaken, there was not any requirement of an essay. It was more fill in the blanks, more like the English and math portions of a graduate record exam, the aptitude test. I was pretty test savvy at the time.

Q: It probably was. I took it back in '54 when it was a three and a half day exam and there was a lot of writing.

BROWN: I may have gotten away with a less demanding Foreign Service exam.

Q: Where did you take the oral exam?

BROWN: In Boston with a panel of three and I don't recall their names or much about it. I do recall one specific thing. We were talking about USIA Foreign Service and about speakers and that sort of thing and they asked me, who you might want to invite to come abroad. They threw a name at me and asked me, "Would you think of inviting this particular individual?" Rather than admitting I didn't know the individual was I said, "Well, yes."

Of course, I learned afterwards when they told me the results of the exam that this person was "anti-American" and that the message, they didn't have to say it, was if you are going to be representing the United States in the Foreign Service you certainly don't want to bring out people who are anti-American.

I think I was told that only two of the three panel members voted for me but that was enough to get me over the hurdle and so I would go on to the next stage.

Q: What about the background of your wife?

BROWN: When I was growing up in western Pennsylvania, Roberta Kaesemeyer, better known as Bobbi, was growing up in eastern Pennsylvania near the town of Bethlehem,

where she was born. Her father was not Bethlehem Steel. He was a businessman whose company, Fuller Company, did a lot of work with Bethlehem Steel. She also lived for several years in Western Springs, Illinois, outside Chicago when her father's business took them out there. From there, they returned to Emmaus, Pennsylvania.

Like me, she was the oldest of three children; she is one year older than I am. She was born in 1940. Like me, she had a younger brother and a younger sister. Like me, she went to college in Ohio. She went to Oberlin, I went to Wooster. It is conceivable that our paths crossed but we are not aware of it.

Bobbi's family was Moravian. That is a Protestant Episcopal denomination that has many members around Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. If you want wonderful music or wonderful Christmas service, go to Bethlehem's Central Moravian Church for the Christmas Eve service.

While I was spending my senior year in college, 1962 to 1963, Bobbi went off to a Moravian orphanage in Kwethluk, Alaska, way up in the tundra where she tended to orphan Eskimo kids. She could tell you a whole story about that experience.

She came back and was accepted for graduate school in education at Tufts University. It might have been Columbia but she opted to go to Tufts. So we arrived on the campus of Tufts University at the same time, 1963. I am going to the Fletcher School; she is walking past our dormitory from the apartment house she is living in to her classes on the Tufts campus. She was a very attractive young woman with long blond hair. Not many of the guys missed her. She was frequently asked for dates by Fletcher students.

She spent 1964-1965 teaching in a private school in Abington, Pennsylvania. We became engaged over the Christmas holidays (while she was recovering from knee surgery) and we were married in Bethlehem on July 10, 1965.

Q: You graduated from Tufts in?

BROWN: I got my Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from Fletcher in 1965, after two years there. The summer of 1964, I applied for and got a job at the Voice of America. Remember my interest in journalism.

So I came to Washington, the first time I ever lived in Washington. I lived not far from where we are today and worked at the Voice of America building on Independence Avenue on the Africa desk of the newsroom writing news copy for their four times a day news broadcasts. This is one summer after I had been in Nigeria, there was a lot of news emanating from Africa and the Voice of America was broadcasting in French and English and multiple other languages to Africa. So I was tearing copy off the news wire and other sources and rewriting it for the broadcasts.

Q: What was your impression of the Voice of America, at least the part you were dealing with?

BROWN: I loved it. It was sort of miniature United Nations. You had all these different language services. The language services hired people of those countries.

Curiously, on the Africa desk, several of the people were Jewish -- Moses Than, Frank Feinberg, etc. On a Jewish holiday, I came in to find I was the virtual chief of the Africa desk of the newsroom that day and could hardly find time to go out to have lunch to be able to write all the news broadcasts. I did that summer of 1964.

It was a summer in which interns would be invited maybe once every two weeks to hotel ballroom and somebody from the administration would speak. One of the speakers was then Vice President Hubert Humphrey. What an inspirational speaker, what a liberal in the best sense of the word, what a warrior for good causes. That was certainly part of my idealism, part of my formation.

So I got my Foreign Service invitation appointment. I was accepted into the Foreign Service but I didn't have a date to report. I got married in the summer of 1965. I had a brief fling with one of those left-wing student organizations, Students for a Democratic Society perhaps. I am not trying to hide this from anybody. I just don't remember which organization. I quickly found myself uncomfortable with them, not so much politically but because I wanted to prove to my businessman father-in-law that I was going to take good care of his daughter, earn a good living which I wasn't going to do with Students for a Democratic Society.

So I contacted the Voice of America and sure enough, they would be happy to have me back so I found myself by the summer of 1965 back working on the Africa desk of the newsroom. The great thing about it was they told me I could stay there as long as I wanted, right up to the Friday before I would begin my Foreign Service career.

Washington (1965-1966)

I was invited to come into the Foreign Service in September of 1965 and was about to accept until someone, I can't remember who, pointed out that if I waited until I was 24 years old with a Master's degree, I would come in not as an FSIO-8, the bottom of the rung at the time, but as a 7. I wouldn't turn 24 until November so I asked if I could postpone my Foreign Service appointment until December of 1965. And so I came in as a 7. I always thought that helped me a little bit along the promotion process, coming in one grade above what I originally expected.

Q: We will pick it up the next time in 1965 when you come into the Foreign Service.

Q: Today is the 25th of January, 2012. Phil, where did we leave off?

BROWN: We left off at the end of my pre-Foreign Service experience in the fall of 1965; I am newly married. Coincidentally, my wife and I were living half a mile from here, at 4801 North George Mason Drive.

Q: This being the Foreign Service Institute, Arlington Hall.

BROWN: So I got married the summer of 1965, came back to Washington and resumed the work I had been doing the previous summer at the Voice of America, on the Africa desk in the newsroom. I was a journalist writing news bulletins for the daily broadcasts to Africa.

I had been advised that if I delayed joining the Foreign Service until December, 1965, I would come in one step higher than if I accepted the initial invitation to come in September, 1965. That was because by December, 1965, I was 24 years old and had a master's degree.

One thing I have found in preparing for these conversations is that I have retained an awful lot of papers and notes pertaining to my life experience. I recently came across a letter dated September, 1965, inviting me to join the Foreign Service. The salary was \$7,010 per annum, quite a generous salary at that time.

It invited me to report for duty on Thursday, December 9, 1965 which I believe I did. I came across a picture of my A-100 Foreign Service class taken on December 9th, 1965 at the Foreign Service Institute at the Arlington Towers in Rosslyn.

Q: What was your class like?

BROWN: I can describe them fairly well because I have a picture of them right here.

There were 26 of us, 25 white males and one woman.

Q: Who was the woman?

BROWN: I don't think she stayed in the Foreign Service for very long. Her name was Jane Whitney. So there were 26 of us -- five USIA Foreign Service, including me, and 21 State Department.

I can say immodestly that of the five USIA Foreign Service officers, I had by far the most distinguished career. I don't think any of them stayed beyond one year. I remember one fellow in particular who had Spanish and Portuguese and got as his first assignment Vietnam and that was the end of his Foreign Service career. One fellow may have gone to Iran. I think two others never went overseas. I was the only one who stayed in USIA beyond one year.

Q: Why? Normally the Foreign Service, once someone joins the thing particularly after the first assignment abroad, it is like the Venus fly trap; they are stuck. It is so attractive and so much fun. Why would there be such attrition?

BROWN: I can't speak for the other four. In my case, I didn't necessarily think at the time that this was going to be a 30-year career.

Parenthetically, I tell people these days when we talk about pensions and that kind of thing that on December 9th, 1965 the word pension was not part of my vocabulary, part of my thinking at all. I had no idea that after 30 years, I would be able to retire with a comfortable pension and that it would give me the comfortable lifestyle I have today.

I came in motivated by the concept of public service. As I said last time, I was a product of the Kennedy era. I wasn't a Peace Corps volunteer but I had been a summer volunteer. I knew the part of the world where I wanted to serve and that was the word we used, "serve." It wasn't just a term; it was something people really meant. Public service was the uppermost thought in my mind when I joined.

I came across the document I signed back in December 9th, 1965 affirming that I would support and defend the Constitution. I had forgotten but I also swore that I was neither a Communist nor a Fascist and had no intention of striking against the federal government. That was the document you had to sign at the time to join as a reserve foreign service officer, class 7.

Q: At that time you came in as a reserve officer and then your name was sent to Congress.

BROWN: Five months later, May of 1966, I went through the same process and by that time I was a Foreign Service officer of class 7, consular officer and secretary in the diplomatic service. I never did any consular work.

Q: How did you find the training of your basic officer course?

BROWN: I don't have many specific memories. It was pretty straight forward. We had the normal introductory sessions, welcoming sessions, introduction to government. I think there was one trip that we made. We went over to the harbor in Baltimore and visited McCormick, the company that makes the spices. We toured their facility with the idea that this is something that you, as a Foreign Service officer, might be doing overseas. As a commercial officer or an econ officer, you might be visiting a factory. To this day I can remember those delightful smells. I had no idea at the time that McCormick was over there manufacturing spices in Baltimore.

There were a few special programs for USIA types, perhaps one day a week or something like that, but that's very vague. Our headquarters building was 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. We were very proud of that address, even if many of the offices were at 1750 or in another building on New York Avenue. "1776" had a special ring.

Early on, we were invited to indicate that part of the world where we'd like to serve. I said clearly I would like to serve in Africa. I am sure the response back then was the same as it is today; we are looking for people to serve in Africa.

I think the USIA people were given their assignments separately but I still remember someone standing in front of the room, reading off names and telling people where they had been assigned and of course this was a gut-wrenching experience for some people.

Q: Where did you go?

BROWN: I was assigned to Dakar, Senegal. The only other thing I remember about the assignment process is that there was, I don't want to call it tradition but, a practice of voting which guy had the worst assignment and who had the best assignment. The majority opinion was that the worst assignment was Blantyre, Malawi and the best assignment was Paris, France. The guy who was assigned to Paris had to buy a bottle of champagne for the guy who was going to Malawi.

I was in the minority. I felt then and I would feel the same way today that it was exactly 180 degrees opposite the truth. The best assignment at that point in your life is to a small, out of the way post where the stakes are not very high, where you know the entire gamut of embassy operations, you are a big fish in a little sea and you can learn. The worst assignment is to be put into some mammoth institution, probably in Western Europe or Tokyo or a place like that.

But it was a while before I went to Dakar. The A-100 class lasted one or two months. I was then put into French language training. I had rudimentary French from high school and college but I needed the intense Foreign Service experience. I remember 16 weeks, a new teacher every four weeks, struggling, feeling I would never get the language and those little ah ha moments when you realize you are making progress. I came out of that I guess with a 3/3.

By now, my wife was five months pregnant and I asked if there was some way I could delay going overseas. USIA was extremely accommodating and they assigned me temporarily to the African Area Office so I must have gone to the African Area Office around May or June and worked there over the summer. It was a very good experience. I got to know some of the people in the area office. The office director was a man named Mark Lewis; he had a fiery temper and I laid low when he exploded. I got to know how things were operating in the area office before I went overseas.

One thing I recall, and I will talk about this more when we get to Dakar, was that the entire U.S. government was being introduced to and told to implement something called PPBS, 'Planning, Programming Budget System.'

Q: This was a matrix system.

BROWN: Exactly. It was something I believe that Secretary McNamara introduced to the Defense Department. We were going to try to make government operate like a business and we were going to match activities to resources. You were going to evaluate what was valuable and what wasn't and how much money you were spending, etcetera. So when I was in the area office I heard a lot about PPBS. I did other things that benefited me in my overseas experience.

Meanwhile, our daughter Sarah was born on September 25, 1966, born in the now torn down George Washington University Hospital on Washington Circle. It was now time for me to go overseas. So on October 25, 1966, we packed the little Chevrolet that my wife had brought to our marriage and drove to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where Bobbi's parents live. She was going to live there for six weeks before coming to Dakar.

I went to Pittsburgh to say goodbye to my parents. I didn't think about it at the time but I would not see or talk to my parents for almost two years. That was pretty much the case when you were going to Africa in those times. They didn't travel and we didn't make international phone calls so I would not see or talk to them for another two years, until June of 1968. But I did write letters and as you can imagine, my mother was very proud of her son. She kept those letters and I still have a few of them.

More recently, but long before I heard about this oral history project, I began to think that I would like my children and others to know about what we did during those years in Africa. So drawing simply upon my memory and scraps of paper, I started writing down my memories from the six years we spent in Africa -- one year in Dakar, one year in Douala, Cameroon, two years in Yaoundé, Cameroon and two years in Algiers for a total of six years in French West and North Africa.

Q: What was the situation in Dakar, which is the capital of Senegal.

BROWN: Before I get to Dakar let me just add an item or two. I traveled to Dakar via Paris, the first time I had been in Europe, had never set foot in Europe but I went there for quote, unquote consultations. I learned over the years in the Foreign Service that consultations allowed people to travel to interesting places. I think I talked to one or two people in Paris who were involved in regional support for Africa programs. For me it was an eye-opener just to be in Paris.

I came across a letter the other day I wrote on the airplane from Paris to Dakar with a number of stops en route. I will read two sentences here; "I saw many of the regular tourist spots in my walking tour of Paris but I left plenty to explore in greater depth at a later date." Little did I know at the time that I would serve in Paris for five years.

"I changed to a 'left bank' hotel and got a room for \$4 a night plus breakfast that was just as satisfactory as my right bank room which cost \$12." I know prices were lower back then but reading this I was still astounded.

Q: There used to be a book

BROWN: Europe on \$5 a Day.

Q: I was looking at that the other day. Things have changed.

BROWN: We later on took a month-long R&R trip through Europe with two children, so there were four of us and we came pretty close to Europe on \$20 a day. It is just amazing that that was possible.

Dakar, Senegal (1966-1967)

So I took this long flight; Paris to Marseilles to Las Palmas to Dakar, Senegal arriving on November 2, 1966.

I didn't even begin to appreciate at the time that Dakar was a wonderfully comfortable place to live 10 months out of the year. Two months out of the year, the rainy season, it was quite humid but for the rest of the year, it is a vacation spot and a lot of French travel there to this day.

Dakar is a peninsula on a peninsula and the most western spot of the continent. Most flights to Africa were from Europe but Pan Am flew a direct route from New York to Dakar; that was the first place you could land in Africa.

The president, Leopold Senghor, who was married to a French woman, was a poet and intellectual and had French citizenship. He was a member of the French parliament but was Senegalese born. Within the society, there was a hierarchy and the Africans, as I looked at it, were at the bottom of that hierarchy. The people who lived there most comfortably were the thousands of French people. They often occupied the position of technical counselor (conseiller technique) in the ministries.

The second level in the hierarchy in terms of how well people lived were the so-called Lebanese. They were not necessarily from Lebanon but that's the term that was used. People who were merchants, second level professionals doing things like plumbing, accounting and whatever.

The third level were "the Arabs." There was a considerable number of Arabs in the country. And the fourth level were the Africans.

Dakar was a beautiful city, a modern city in some ways with many amenities. I almost said all of the amenities but there were things we missed or that we found strange. You didn't have to go too far inland to find children with distended bellies and that loss of color in their hair to show you that it was in many respects a poor country, maybe not like Niger or Upper Volta or Mali but you didn't have to go too far from Dakar with its skyscrapers and French restaurants to find poverty.

I was initially put into a hotel with a terribly uncomfortable bed. Of course, I was missing my wife and newborn daughter. Before I left Arlington, Virginia, we held our daughter under a lamp and took some pictures of her with high speed black and white film. It produced nice photos. I would look at those multiple times during the day with such a longing for my wife and daughter. I really did miss them. I sometimes say I might have had a short Foreign Service experience had it not been for the political officer, a fellow named Allen Caswell. I had met him and his wife briefly in Washington and they had two sons and they invited me to stay with them in their very lovely house. I accepted and I could not have had a more life-changing type of experience; playing croquet outside on their lawn.

I probably should be embarrassed to admit it but my reading material was a Sears Roebuck catalog. I was reassured to see how much one could order out of a Sears Roebuck catalog and receive via the pouch. Somehow my material needs were assured through the Sears Roebuck catalog.

I would ride to work with Allen. He lived along the coast. There were areas where foreigners lived in quite nice homes and I would ride in with him and he'd pick me up in the evening. This went on for several weeks. I was not in the embassy. The embassy was in an office building in a central square in Dakar. We were in the American Cultural Center and it was easy to tell anyone where we were. We were on the Boulevard de la République, directly across from the cathedral. At the end of the boulevard was the President's palace.

After a few weeks, an apartment became available in what was called the 'water building' (the Immeuble des Eaux) at 70 Boulevard de la République, just a couple of blocks from the American Cultural Center and across the street from the Daniel Sorano Theater. Daniel Sorano (I learned later) was a Franco-Senegalese actor and the theater had just been opened in 1965. It was notable at the time because just one year before I arrived, President Senghor had organized something called the Festival of Negro Arts.

Q: It was negritude in those days.

BROWN: Exactly. They brought in black or Negro artists from all over the world and organized a big international festival. This was typical of Senghor. He wanted to celebrate negritude, celebrate the black cultural experience; many of the activities had taken place in that Daniel Sorano Theater.

So these were standard landmarks. Even the building where we lived, the water building, right next to it was the residence of the Grand Marabou of Dakar, a leading Muslim figure in this very Muslim town so if I wanted to tell anyone where I lived, it was the water building, right next to the residence of the Marabou, across the street from the Daniel Sorano Theater. My work was across the street from the Cathedral on the Boulevard of the Republic. These were pretty easy to locate, notable landmarks.

As I said, I walked up the street from my apartment to the cultural center. The cultural center had big windows with exhibits and a library on the ground floor and offices on the second and third.

I had met my boss briefly in Washington, a man named Jim McGinley. Jim was a delightful fellow. He was married with small children, a hard working and serious guy but also easygoing outside the office. We could talk sports, we could play tennis. Jim taught me a lot of things about the job.

I can recall very clearly going into his office and he asked me a question and I began my answer saying, "I assume" and Jim looked at me with a scowl but a smile behind it saying, "Phil, as long as you are working with me in Africa, don't begin any sentence with "I assume." It was good advice. You didn't take anything for granted.

In December of 1965 my wife arrived. Jim took me to the airport. That was pretty exciting, the Pan Am plane coming in with my wife. He is standing next to me and says, "Is this your wife?"

"No."

"Is this your wife?"

"No."

"Is this your wife?"

"No, oh, it is my wife." She had cut her hair; I hadn't seen her for a couple of months. I didn't even recognize her. Maybe too it was still the early hours of the morning or something. That was one of the brightest moments.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

BROWN: We didn't have an ambassador when I arrived. The Chargé was a man named John McKesson. I remember very little about him except that to me, he was the quintessential Foreign Service officer; very correct, he probably had lots of white hair, tall, dignified. I called him Mr. McKesson. I don't remember very much about him.

The ambassador who arrived a few months after I arrived was William R. Rivkin. He had been ambassador at USEC in Brussels. A very nice gentleman. I believe he had a young son, although I am not certain of that.

The Ambassador was accredited not only to Senegal but to the Gambia. The Gambia is this tiny little country, inserted within Senegal on the Gambia River. You could drive down there in a few hours. If your car survived the road and the ferry boat going over to Bathurst, you found yourself in a very English colonial environment. I went down there with Ambassador Rivkin when he went to present his letters of credentials.

As I recall, he climbed up on some structure to look around and I noted how red his face was. It was only a few months later, on a Sunday morning that Jim McGinley called me and said that Ambassador Rivkin had very tragically died of a heart attack.

He is the Ambassador Rivkin for whom one of the State Department awards is named. The reason I mentioned his son is a few years ago, while visiting my daughter who lives in France, she showed me a copy of Paris Match magazine with an article about the new American ambassador to France, son of Ambassador Rivkin, Charles Rivkin. I wrote him a letter saying that I had known his father in Dakar. I am sorry to say I never heard back. I thought I might just get a little note saying “glad to hear from you and glad you remember my father.” No such luck.

Q: I am interviewing Al Fairchild and Al talks in very glowing terms of Rivkin.

BROWN: Al would have been closer because he would have been in the embassy but I do recall favorably my interaction with Ambassador Rivkin.

Among other things, the ambassador had a lovely residence up on a point where you could look out at the sea. We would be invited there for receptions and activities.

Q: What was your impression of Senghor, I mean sort of professionally? You were in the cultural field.

BROWN: I recall him as a man with one foot in France, one foot in Senegal, an intellectual, the head of a nominally independent nation but hardly a man of the people, the masses. Everyone knew that the real decisions were being made, the strings were being pulled by the French. Senghor knew and understood that this was the way the country was going to run for a while. He not only tolerated it but benefited from it personally.

By the way, I have a picture of myself with Leopold Senghor. I can't remember any of the specifics but there was a small international exhibit, it wasn't an expo but it was an international exhibit. We didn't have the resources to devote to it that some countries did but somehow we got posters, put them up on the walls and I was the person standing by when Leopold Senghor made his official visit. I am standing there next to him looking quite young. My French was good enough that I probably welcomed him and told him something about these posters of America.

I also think there was an attempt on his life while we were there. He probably was riding in an open vehicle and maybe a shot was fired but I don't remember much about it. There may have been some news reports.

The memory is vague but I did see him when he welcomed Emperor Haile Selassie to Senegal. I think Selassie was on his way to the United Nations and came thru Dakar. I have this vision of these two men, one from the western side of the continent, the other

from the eastern side of the continent, two of the great old men of Africa. Whatever you say about their contributions, their successes or failures or the fact that their names are forgotten today among young Africans, Leopold Senghor and Haile Selassie were two major African figures of the 20th century.

.Q: How stood our USIA contingent there? Was it just you?

BROWN: The PAO was Jim McGinley, a great guy. The cultural affairs officer was Kintzing Emmons. He had come out of academia. I remember my wife coming home one day all excited because she had gone sailing with his wife, Carol. Carol had said something about the private school she had gone to and the fact that they played soccer rather than football. My wife picked up on that and it turned out they had gone to the same private Quaker school, Westtown Friends School outside Philadelphia.

If you are new in the Foreign Service, on a new continent with a new baby and all of a sudden you find someone with whom you share not only the school but all the values associated with the school, it gave my wife a lot of warm, fuzzy feelings.

Kintzing Emmons, the CAO, went back to academia in Atlanta and in 1972 he tried to talk me into going down there to take a position at Georgia State University. I didn't. To tell the truth, the position was not offered to me but that would have been real career change for me. To this day we are very good friends with Carol Emmons. Carol did a lot of work in Atlanta with the International Visitors' Council. Kintzing died of cancer many years ago.

They were our close friends in Dakar. They had a very nice apartment with a big open balcony. I recall going there one night when they showed a movie, "Twelve Angry Men," a black and white movie about a trial when there is one courageous holdout on the jury. The movie was in English but they invited in Senegalese guests.

The assistant cultural affairs officer was a man named Jack Simmons. Jack had just come into the Foreign Service, though he was older than I was, out of Baptist missionary work in the eastern Congo. It would not be the last time I would be exposed to someone who was in the Foreign Service with that kind of background. We know what was going on in the eastern Congo at that time; rebellions and people going back and forth evacuating across the lake over to Tanzania. They left that and came to the Foreign Service, to Dakar. Jack had a wife, a lovely family of four children.

We had an executive officer, a woman named Harriet Love and myself. There really wasn't a need for an information officer or a press attaché. There wasn't enough press or radio/television media there. To the extent it was done, I did it.

I was on the third floor of the cultural center building. I was fortunate, I have always said, to be surrounded by a Lebanese secretary, Madame Houdrouge, and African employees who spoke virtually no English. Not only did Madame Houdrouge not speak English, but

she couldn't even try to come up with a word if I was struggling. It was great because it forced me to use French all the time with her.

The same with our films guy who had been there a long time, Papa Diaw who drove a Citroen, lived a bit out of town in Rufisque. He was the photographer. When we got news that Ambassador Rivkin had died, my job was to drive out and get Papa Diaw, no phone, get hold of him so that he could come in and start developing some pictures and put up an exhibit in a window, that kind of thing.

Q: We were going through our civil rights, opening up civil rights period at that time. Were you able to get fairly good representations of one form or another to pass on to the Senegalese?

BROWN: Do you mean speakers?

Q: I am thinking of pictures. It was sort of all consuming in the States.

BROWN: I have to say it wasn't the dominant memory that I have of what we did. We would get these two or three page printed materials from something called IPS, the Press Service of the USIA and they were quite often on civil rights. There was a magazine published out of Paris in French and it had a lot of focus on civil rights activities, movement. But that is not my dominant memory.

What I recall doing a lot of was packing up a Land Rover, and this is where I learned to drive a Land Rover, and taking one of the African employees. I did this in both Dakar and in my next assignment in Cameroon. We would drive for two and three days at a time. We would go up along the coast to St. Louis, go into the interior to some of the villages where there were Peace Corps volunteers. We had a multimedia approach. We would take movies; we had books that we could give away. The American publishers could donate excess books, take a tax write off and then we could give them to schools. We would take posters and magazines, that kind of thing.

There were two basic films that we showed. One was on President Senghor's trip the previous year to the United States. There was an image of him sitting down in the White House next to Lyndon Johnson.

I hope somewhere in the archives these things are maintained because USIA produced a lot of this kind of products during those years.

The other was a film about the Festival of Negro Arts that was a very sensitively done film. The problem with it was they decided to be creative in Washington. They weren't going to do a color film; they weren't going to do a black and white film. They were going to do something called 'sepia'. So this whole thing had a brownish tint to it.

Back in the United States, this was thought of as artistic creativity. But our audiences, thought we had a defective film. They thought that something had gone wrong. This was

during the cold war. The Soviets produced a color film that was much more favorably received than our sepia film on the Festival of Arts.

Another place I visited was a town called Ziguinchor in the very south of Senegal, south of Gambia. I recall sitting down there with one of the Lebanese. He ran a movie theater. We had contracted with him to use his movie theater to show our films and do a reception afterwards. I will never forget sitting outside in the courtyard where he lived eating mangoes, or *mangues greffés*. They were mangoes grafted with another fruit, how delicious they were. It is one of these things to this day you can almost taste the sweetness of the fruit.

Most of the travel was along the coast. You had to go a little bit inland to Thies to get to the road to the coastal cities but we didn't really go much further than that. There was a game park in the eastern part of Senegal but I didn't go there.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Senegalese?

BROWN: Sure, through schools, through some of the contacts with the very small media, the press journalism group, through the ministry of culture, through various receptions and through these travels.

Do I remember individual people? I remember especially the FSNs like Papa Diaw whom I mentioned. The woman who ran the library was named Mae Diagne. Mae was from a very prominent Senegalese family. During the course of the year an American named Leo Sarkisian who worked for the Voice of America and who was a musicologist and really understood African rhythms and African music extremely well, came to Dakar.

In addition to being a musicologist, he was a very gifted artist and he did portraits of Mae Diagne and many other African women. The African women were very, very beautiful, especially as portrayed by Leo Sarkisian, very tall, erect, good looking women. I would have purchased these portraits if he had been willing to sell them. We had an exhibit of paintings by Leo Sarkisian in an exhibit hall in Dakar. The Africans flocked to that. Somehow they could much more easily understand that American cultural presentation that either of those two films I talked about; Senghor in the United States in the Oval Office or our sepia film on the Festival of Negro Arts.

Through vehicles like that, I had a lot of contact with Africans.

We had a houseboy named Mamadou Diallo, a wonderful Muslim man. When we would go out in the night, we would quite often leave our daughter in his charge. We would leave the building and Diallo would be sitting on his prayer rug in front of our building right next to the residence of the Grand Marabou. Our daughter would be on the prayer rug next to him. I am not sure I would have that faith to do that these days but in those days it seemed very natural.

Q: We were going through the last part of the Vietnam War and of course, Senegal had a significant connection with Vietnam in the fact that a lot of Senegalese troops were there. In cleaning up after the war the Vietnamese Senegalese mating left a number of children. How stood things with the Senegalese?

BROWN: No memory. This was 1967 and by that time we are deeply involved in Vietnam. But I don't recall it being an issue. Maybe it was just I wasn't aware of it but I don't recall being aware of Senegalese who had been in Indochina.

Q: Was it an issue? I mean, were you getting questions?

BROWN: No. I don't think it was that I was naive or unaware but I don't recall either Vietnam or civil rights being something that caused much either tension or was raised. Perhaps it was with other people but not at my level.

But in other ways, those were the years when Vietnam dominated our lives. I did not serve in Vietnam, not because they were not looking for me. I received a draft notice somewhere in the mid-60's and had a deferment, an education deferment. Then I had a marital deferment and then a deferment because I was a father. Someone said to me "you should tell them you are going in the Foreign Service" and the retort was "they won't understand that. That's what they think they are trying to get you into," another type of Foreign Service. So I didn't serve in the Army or in Vietnam but I do feel strongly that I served my country well and faithfully for 30 years.

I'll try to recall some of the other things that do come to mind when I think of that year in Dakar, special memories.

I mentioned traveling into the interior. There was an American singer who came out of Paris named Steve Waring, a folk singer. USIA had this office in Paris that would find talent in Europe, Americans living there, and send them to the African posts. I made several trips with guitarist Steve Waring to Saint Louis and other places. He was not a great folk singer but it was a way of flying the flag a bit and finding some cultural presence.

I also mentioned that when I was in Washington before I went to Dakar, I was introduced to something called PPBS. One day Jim McGinley called me into his office and asked, "What was that program you told me about that you had worked on in Washington before you came out?"

I said, "PPBS" and he looked at me and basically his thoughts must have been "poor kid" or "just the person I was looking for" because the overseas posts had now been assigned this project and I was placed in charge of it for Dakar. I had to look at all of our programs, speakers, IVs, exhibits, the library and attach a point value to them, and then decide what audiences they were reaching, how much money we were spending. This is the matrix that you talked about. I took this thing so seriously and I thought "how am I going to measure this and that?" I was anguishing over it.

One day at home, I just sat down and arbitrarily attached numbers to it, took it in to Jim and thought well, if he doesn't like it, he can either fire me or change it. So I put down my best thoughts, took it into Jim, he tweaked it a little bit, he sent it in to Washington and I got commended for our presentation which was one of the first and one of the best, etcetera, etcetera. I never told anybody how I had gone about it.

We were very fortunate that year to have a visit from my wife's parents. They had three children. At that point, their son and his wife were in the Peace Corps in Peru. Their younger daughter was with her husband teaching in India. And their older daughter was living in Dakar, Senegal. Their friends back home must have wondered what they had done right or wrong to have their three children on three different continents. They came, stayed in a local hotel, visited us, and went on to India, back through Europe, back home. It was a great to have visitors from back home, to have them see what life was like.

There are a couple other things I recall from my time in my one year, almost exactly in Dakar. I celebrated my 25th birthday there before my wife came out. That was 1966. Looking back, the period from 1963 to 1968 was probably the most formative five years in my life. It happens to all of us, I suppose. It was the time I graduated from college, I completed graduate school with a Master's degree and I met the young woman who would become my wife. I choose a profession that, unbeknownst to me at the time, became my life's work for the next 30 years and I saw the birth of my two children. Nothing was more formative to the rest of my life than those five years -- education, job, wife and children.

After Ambassador Rivkin died, John McKesson was no longer the DCM. There was a man named Allan Lukens. Allan Lukens had lost his wife and children in a terrible plane crash. Because of that, he loved company, loved people and didn't ever want to be home alone at night. His new wife was the same age as my wife.

We lived in an apartment building. Before I left for work, there would often be a knock on the door. We would open the door and there would be a young man there with a platter on his head full of fresh shrimp. There was a large fleet of small fishing vessels that would go out every night and you could be quite sure what they brought to your door the next morning was fresh off those boats.

There was a restaurant in Dakar, there were many, but there was one in particular that was built on a pier over the sea with crashing waves below. I went there only once or twice but when I did, I would see French people dressed in their bathing suits having a meal, jumping in the water, coming back up, continuing their meal. That was a lifestyle that I didn't know at all. This was my first overseas assignment. I was more inclined on Saturday morning to go in to work and try to clean up my desk. Probably I could have done just as well had I spent a little more time on some of the hedonistic pleasures of Dakar.

We did go out quite often to a beach near the airport where the embassy had a little hut or beach house. We enjoyed many, many afternoons, particularly on the weekend on the beach.

Unfortunately, to get to the airport, there was one place where there was an open sewer and for as long as you could, you would put your hand over your mouth or hold your breath or try not to breathe in.

Beautiful sunsets. Our apartment did not afford us a view of the sunset but of course, being close to the equator, the sun set almost the same time every day and this was one of the joys of Dakar.

I was also introduced to Muslim holidays. This is a very Muslim country; a lot of Catholics but primarily a Muslim country and we were introduced to Ramadan and various other aspects of the Muslim calendar.

There was also the Island of Goreé. It had been used as a slave holding site. In more recent years, American presidents and others have visited Goreé Island. It is now something comparable to a national historical site.

And we used to visit a lot of the Peace Corps volunteers. I remember one in particular in a town south of Dakar on the coast called Mbour. We went down to visit her; we being my wife and daughter and I. There was no place for our daughter to sleep so we put her in a dresser drawer. We pulled out the drawers and put her in there. She was safe.

We had no major health problems associated with living in Africa. My wife did have to go back to the States for a tooth problem, and I began to realize the inadequacies of the French and African dental care. And we were taking the anti-malaria medicine, taking it as we would our entire time in Africa in a way that we might not be comfortable doing these days, just popping pills without knowing what the consequences might be.

So after exactly one year in Dakar, I got the word that I had been reassigned. Dakar was my JOT assignment. I understood all along that I would only be there for one year. I got word that I had been assigned as branch public affairs officer, branch PAO in Douala, Cameroon. I am sure I had to go to a map to try to figure it out. I knew Africa pretty well but Douala was not exactly one of the places that popped into mind, the largest city in Cameroon, a port city but not on the ocean, on the aptly named Wouri River. I had been assigned as branch public affairs officer there.

En route to Douala we stopped in Monrovia, Liberia. I think the justification was consultations at the Voice of America facility. Liberia, for all intents and purposes, was an American colony in Africa. It was the place where we had the largest presence and they had this very large Voice of America facility.

By chance, we happened to know the regional doctor there, Doctor Ron Hilty. He was a college classmate of my wife's and he confirmed that my wife was pregnant with what would be our second child. That made that stop in Liberia an indelible memory for us.

There was another facet to our stop in Liberia. Back in graduate school at Fletcher, I had had contact with Liberians, both Americo-Liberians from the Tubman family that ruled Liberia at that time and an Afro-Liberian, a fellow named Lami Kawah, a fellow with whom I was very close. He was an usher at my wedding and as we drove around Monrovia, there was a route around the city, as I recall, and along it you would find these huge antebellum homes built by the Americo-Liberians, the people who had come back from the United States and sort of recreated the America that they recalled from the American south. They lived much better than the Afro-Liberians, the tribal Liberians who are farther in. Of course, those were the seeds of conflict that have plagued that country more recently.

Douala, Cameroon (1967-1968)

We arrived in Douala on a Tuesday. I know it was a Tuesday because Pan Am flew three flights a week from New York to Dakar and from Dakar, each of them took a different route. The one that left New York on Monday night ended on Tuesday afternoon in Douala. It puddle jumped down the coast; Monrovia, probably Abidjan, Cotonou and then Douala. It arrived on Tuesday afternoon and left the next morning and to go back to the U.S.

We were met on arrival by my boss from Yaoundé, a man named Fred Quinn, and the cultural affairs officer, Charles Dawson. Charles, like Jack Simmons back in Dakar, had left the Baptist mission field in eastern Congo to come into the Foreign Service. He was now in Yaoundé with his wife and children.

Q: Douala was a consulate?

BROWN: Douala was a consulate.

Q: And Yaoundé was the capital?

BROWN: Yaoundé was the capital, yes. There was a two-person consulate in Douala.

The house that we lived in was barely a couple of miles from the airport, right along the road leading out to the airport. It was a single-level dwelling that had air conditioning only in the bedrooms. In the rest of the house, including the kitchen, not only was there no air conditioning; there weren't even screens. We discovered right away that if you left a light on or went in there at night, the bugs, the critters were everywhere.

Douala was not a pleasant place to live, extremely hot and humid with annual rainfall totals defying description. In some places, you might say that Europeans simply couldn't

get used to the heat. I always felt in Cameroon that the Cameroonians never got used to the heat. A lot of the work they did was labor intensive and the sweat would be pouring off them.

Not far away as the crow might fly is the largest mountain in West Africa, Mount Cameroon, an active volcano but you'd barely ever see it. Once in a while you would say, "Oh, look. There's the mountain" because it had cleared just long enough. There had either been a massive thunderstorm or something and it would be visible briefly and then it would disappear into the clouds.

So it was not a comfortable place for living. I could talk about my work but to be honest it was not a full time job. It was a place where I invented things and didn't have a real challenge. I think if I had been there for more than a year, I might have really given second thoughts to the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, why did we have your job there?

BROWN: I suppose the answer is that we could afford it at the time. It was the biggest city and we had a consulate. There was a cultural center with exhibit windows and a library and film programs and some decision makers there.

Let me talk for a second about Cameroon, a most interesting country, Africa in miniature. The north was Muslim, the south was Christian and all of it had a heavy animist overlay. Arid desert in the north, tropical rainforest in the south. It had been one of four German colonies in Africa, along with Tanganyika, Togo and Southwest Africa (now Namibia).

Under the Germans, it was 'Kamerun'. After the First World War, it was divided into two League of Nations trusteeships called French Cameroons and British Cameroons. You can always tell someone who has never served in Cameroon because they will call it "the Cameroons." By the time we were there, independence had come and it was the Republic of Cameroon. We were accredited to West Cameroon, the Anglophone part of the country. Most people there spoke Pidgin English but there was an educated class and a regional capital in Buea and some of our programming was directed to the schools.

A lot of what I did involved traveling, much of it on dirt roads, to the towns along the road north from Douala through Nkongsamba and Bafoussam to Fomban or into West Cameroon toward Bamenda. From Bamenda and its comfortable guest house, there was a circular route through small towns. We would fill a Land Rover full of books and movies, visit schools and some of the Irish priests who ran the schools up in West Cameroon where, by the way, the climate was much more pleasant. I remember Americans coming out there, seeing some of the longhorn cattle and saying "this reminds us of Wyoming." I did a lot of those kinds of trips; I would be gone for days at a time on dirt roads.

Q: Was there any receptivity? Was there really much interest?

BROWN: Oh, yes. There was receptivity because there wasn't much else.

I used to think we were competing with the French and being a very proud American, I was hoping a day would come when we could displace the French and be the dominant influence in the country. I don't think anyone feels that way these days. When things go awry in some African country, it is great to have the French go in and try to resolve things. So they were and still are the dominant foreign presence in Francophone countries.

Receptivity? No one ever objected to us coming out and doing our programming. The schools loved to have us. Typically we would take along a projector with a generator and a big sheet and hang the sheet between trees or something like that and project the movie on that. If you didn't have the sheet, there were these portable screens. They come in a big box and they unfold. We had Bell and Howell projectors with the big feeder reel on top and a take up reel at the bottom and the film would be wound through all these connections. I knew how to set up that projector and if you didn't leave the loops big enough, the sound wouldn't be in sync with the image on the screen and I knew exactly how big to leave the loops.

We'd wait until the sun went down. Africans were extremely patient; there was no hurry. They didn't have any deadlines to meet so if things were delayed a little bit, they didn't worry. Once the film started, 90% would be looking at the picture on the screen but 10% of them would be looking at that camera, that machinery, that complex series of loops and twirls and whatever the film did going from the feeder reel down to the take up reel.

We had a standard group of films. One was about Cameroonian boxers in the United States and they knew some of these people. These school kids just loved to see their countrymen; anytime you can identify with somebody in a movie, it means so much more.

We also had films on the Apollo space program. We had a Charlie Chaplin-like movie, no sound track, just stuff for laughs. The African students howled as they watched this.

Then we had what we called the "freight." This was a film featuring life in Wisconsin. It showed farmers, students, manufacturing and people going about their daily lives. This was to show everyone a typical American heartland state. I must have shown it "The Life of Wisconsin" or whatever it was called a hundred times if I showed it once.

That was our package along with giveaway books, posters and that kind of thing. Much of what I am describing about Douala, I also did in my next post which was Yaoundé.

Let me talk more about the Douala experience. You asked if we had a consulate. We did and the consul was an African American named Jim Parker and his wife, Odessa. Jim was a generation older than I am. He had a wonderful sense of humor but he was also very old school in terms of manners and protocol and correctness and I was always very careful to do the right thing and to shake hands in the proper order and that sort of thing.

Jim was old enough to remember when the State Department cafeteria had a separate section for “coloreds.” He had a son whom we never met. Jim was very protocol conscious, quite formal but at the same time he had a hearty laugh, he did a lot of representational activities at his residence. Not long after we were transferred to the capital, Yaoundé, Jim was transferred there as well as the DCM.

Jim was replaced by a man named Michael Phelps Evans Hoyt, Michael P. E. Hoyt, whose name had been in the news because he had been the consul in Elizabethville in eastern Congo.

Q: Yes, I have interviewed Mike.

BROWN: Mike probably talked about eating the American flag.

Q: Yes.

BROWN: Well, he was just off that experience when he came to Douala with his very lively wife.

Q: She wrote a book, For the Love of Mike.

BROWN: More memories of life in Douala.

Let’s talk about travel to Victoria, the largest town in west Cameroon; it was a very short distance away but there was no road because it was all swamp land and marshland so you had to go all the way up one side of a river, put your Land Rover on this little ferry that went at unscheduled times and then come all the way back down the other side of the river. That was at least a half a day trip.

Or you could take a little puddle jumper airplane that would make three round trips a day. I was over there one time with a visitor and I wanted to come back on the last round trip of the day from Victoria back to Douala. I arrived at the airport only to find there were no seats available; the plane was sold out. So I said to the gentleman, “I know that sometimes when this happens you fly an additional flight. Is there any chance that there will be an extra flight today?”

And he looked at me very seriously and said, “Oh no, sir. We have been advised not to fly an additional flight because of the bad condition of the aircraft.”

Of course I was so trusting that when the seat opened up I said, “Sure” and I got on it and the plane, despite the “bad condition of the aircraft,” landed and I never heard more about it. It was just one of those ways they were just so open, so honest. They didn’t try to hide anything. There was no FAA looking over their shoulder.

Douala was the first time I was exposed to Asian and particularly Vietnamese cuisine. This was part of the legacy of the French in Indochina that there were some wonderful

Vietnamese restaurants there. There were French Peace Corps volunteers, “*cooperants*,” in west Cameroon side teaching French. On the weekends, they would flock into Douala to have a meal in these Vietnamese restaurants.

There were quite a number of French business people. There was the Hotel Cocotier where the Pan Am crew would stay. One could go and sit on the veranda, have a nice drink, perhaps swim in the pool. There was a resident Pan Am representative, an American, but that was the extent of the American community in Douala.

We hosted a performing arts group from Chicago, black musicians called the Junior Wells Singers. The group performed in Douala and then I took them upcountry somewhere where they did another performance. We came back to our house. They were sitting outside on my porch, which wasn’t very comfortable because it was hot and humid, and suddenly they came dashing inside with their eyes just wide open.

Well, we had a guard, which was standard, someone who came at night and watched over the outside your house and he happened to come up the driveway that night wearing his long robes. These guys were from Chicago and probably had seen much worse in Chicago but boy, they thought the end of the world had come. They were not at all comfortable. I cite that just to say that cultural shock can be experienced by African Americans as easily as it could be by anybody else.

The Germans occasionally came. Remember that this had at one time been a German colony so they had a few more cultural activities there than we did or as many as we did. But they didn’t adapt. If they had a group come out, it would be chamber musicians performing in full formal garb. They were performing one night in a nondescript building that had a corrugated metal roof on it when the kids outside decided to start throwing stones that would come crashing down on that roof as these musicians played away. If you think musicians are interrupted these days by cell phone sounds, you can imagine the sounds of these rocks crashing on the roof as they played. I can’t recall whether or not they stopped their performance but the rocks on the roof were the memory we took away.

Africans would come into the cultural center every day and ask about study in the United States. We did too good a job of advertising the United States as the land of opportunity so they all wanted to go there to study. All I could say was “Well, there are some books out here. Maybe you could get a scholarship” and there was something called the Institute of International Education, still very active today as a source of scholarships. I doubt if any of them ever succeeded.

One day a Chinese man came into my office and he had the same question, “How can I study in the United States?” I started to go through my same explanation, “Well, there is an address you can write to but you will need a scholarship” and he said, “No, I have the money.”

At that point I sat up in my chair and my eyes opened up wide. His name was Winfred Shen. So I inquired a little bit; Winfred was from Hong Kong, he was one of

approximately 30 men working at a porcelain enamel pot ware factory on the outskirts of Douala. Even at that time, I guess it was cheaper to import labor from Hong Kong or this was their investment and these 30 gentlemen worked round the clock producing these little enamel pots that the African women would use in the markets. They allowed themselves one luxury and that was a cook. Otherwise, they would repatriate their earnings back home to families. In Winfred's case, he put money away so that someday he could go to the United States to study.

We had a nice conversation and I invited him to our house for a meal and then he invited us to the factory. We went there, sat in these long tables, no adornment, nothing; flypaper hanging from the walls but when it came time for food, it was a delicious Chinese meal. I stayed in touch with Winfred Shen. I tracked him down a few years later. He had come to the United States. We went to his wedding in New Jersey. I lost track of him for years before I relocated him in California. He had a daughter and is quite a successful businessman. It all began in 1968 in Douala.

This was also the time of the war in Biafra. At night, we would hear the planes that had taken off, I think, from the island of Fernando Po and were flying supplies into eastern Nigeria. At least that was the story we heard. Of course, there were many refugees from eastern Nigeria coming into west Cameroon; a very open border there. West Cameroon was more politically close to eastern Nigeria than it was to the rest of Cameroon. So the Biafran war was not far away, but the news of it was brought to us by the voice of America.

And then there was a day in March when I turned on the radio and the news was that Martin Luther King had been assassinated. You might think that to be in an African country when Martin Luther King was assassinated, you would feel fear or whatever; I did not. We immediately reacted. We had a condolence book. I went to a local stationery store and bought a book, set it up in the cultural center and in a little courtyard out in back, we started showing a film about Martin Luther King and the "I Have A Dream" speech on the wall just over and over and over. People came in great numbers responding to the death of Martin Luther King. For me it was just a horrible sinking feeling. I think it had more of an impact than Vietnam. What has my country come to? Martin Luther King had been assassinated. Of course, the source of the information was the Voice of America that we listened to every day.

Through all of this, especially the heat, recall that my wife was pregnant. She had given birth to our first child by caesarean section and she knew the second child would be born by caesarean. She had a doctor in Douala who provided consultations but she was not going to give birth in Douala and so she departed in April to go back to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in anticipation of giving birth in early June.

So by early June, I was due for home leave; almost two years overseas, my wife was about to give birth and boy, did I look forward to going home. I got on the Pan Am plane on Wednesday morning, June 5. The first of several stops along the West African coast was in Cotonou and I think it was there that I first heard the news that Robert Kennedy

had been shot. We stopped again probably in Abidjan and at Robertsfield and Dakar where I tried to try to get news. It was very vague. And then we flew from Dakar to New York where I heard that indeed Robert Kennedy had been mortally wounded. This was now very late on the day of Wednesday, June 5th. He had been shot on Tuesday, June 4, primary day in California. He was alive but barely alive.

I went from the airport to the East Side terminal in Manhattan, across Manhattan to the West side terminal where I got the last bus to Bethlehem and in the very wee hours of the morning a man in the bus station there said, "Oh, you need to get over to the place where your wife is staying because her father has already taken her to the hospital. She is in labor."

I was supposed to be there a week ahead of the caesarean but she had gone into labor early so I went almost directly to the hospital and saw my second daughter, Christine, only hours after Robert Kennedy had been assassinated.

That daughter is now living in France; her two children were born one year before and one year after 9/11 2001. We have conversations about who brought their children into a more threatening world; the world she was born into in the 1960s, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, riots, Vietnam, Nixon, inflation etcetera or the world of 9/11/2001 terrorism. It is an interesting discussion. It usually ends up with me saying, "Well, I was born one month before Pearl Harbor. My parents brought me and my brother into a time of mass genocide and killing."

Q: It is an interesting period, I think; World War I, II, the Depression.

BROWN: I don't think anyone should ever necessarily decide to have children based upon whether it is a safe world they are coming into.

So summing up Douala, the memories are the heat, a not terribly challenging job, lots of travel on bumpy roads. I was constantly looking to see if there was some assignment or project I could carry out. The Junior Wells Band or something like that. I think we had some boxers come once upon a time. There wasn't enough to keep me busy. The frequent travels over to West Cameroon, meeting with tribal leaders, a man called the Fon of Bafoussam. Meeting Winfred Shen from Hong Kong. My wife going shopping in the open markets there. We didn't have anything resembling a commissary or PX. We were completely dependent on the local environment except for what we might order from that Danish firm called Peter Justesen. An American doctor passed through every few months. A very small American presence. The news of the assassination of Martin Luther King and then the assassination of Robert Kennedy, terrible punctuation marks toward the end of my year in Douala.

So I went home for the birth of my daughter. I came back again ahead of my wife and daughters and soon after, I got a message that Charles Dawson, the cultural affairs officer in Yaoundé would be leaving and would I be interested in moving to Yaoundé to replace him. I did not hesitate. I jumped at the opportunity to go to Yaoundé so we used

newspapers and packed our household effects ourselves and flew to Yaoundé for the next stage of our lives. There would be no question of going there by any other means than flying because there was no train and the road was paved only for a few miles outside Douala. It would be foolhardy to consider driving. It was a very short flight up to Yaoundé.

Douala was the international airport so all international flights came in there. Yaoundé had just a small airfield.

Yaoundé, Cameroon (1968-1970)

So in early fall of 1968, with my two small children, a daughter who was two and an infant, we moved to Yaoundé. Yaoundé was basically created by the Germans. They were no dumbbells. They knew you needed an upland place with a more temperate climate. It wasn't cool by any means but at least when the sun went down, there was some relief from the heat. It was at a higher elevation and a much more pleasant living environment. I think it is not an overstatement to say that Yaoundé saved my Foreign Service career. I found almost everything about Douala negative but as I look back on the 30 years, that was the only negative assignment I had, the only time I questioned being in the foreign service. All that changed in Yaoundé.

Q: Let's talk about the government and the country itself. How was it run, Cameroon?

BROWN: I told you that I would take these trips to the interior. That meant driving from Douala north along a road that was paved for maybe a couple of hours and then it was dirt road. I mention that because not long before we arrived in Cameroon, that road was dangerous and people had not been allowed to drive along it. We heard stories of tribal clashes and people's skulls being placed on spikes along that road.

By the time we got there, that was apparently a thing of the past; there may have been conflict but it didn't emerge into the public.

The country was governed by President Ahmadou Ahidjo and he was the president the entire time we were there. It was, I suppose it is fair to say, a police state; there was a nominal assembly but it was not a democracy by any means. Ahidjo ran the show. He was a northerner, a Muslim. The conventional wisdom was the southerners might have preferred a southerner but there were so many tribal differences they couldn't agree on who that person would be and so they compromised on Ahidjo from the north.

There were other prominent well-to-do families. One of those families, Biya, succeeded to the presidency. Another prominent family was the Noah family that has produced the tennis player and now the professional basketball player for the Chicago Bulls. It was a prominent Cameroonian family.

The country was really ruled by tribal leaders and in the cities by some families like the privileged elite. Really the only individual we ever heard about, knew much about, dealt with for official business was President Ahidjo.

Q: Was Cameroon in any particular camp in as far as the West, the East or not?

BROWN: No, it was not a radical state by any means. They were not playing footsie with the Soviet Union. The Soviets had an embassy there but we didn't think of Cameroon being in that camp by any means. You might think of Sekou Toure in Guinea who was considered, to use the terminology of that period, a leftist. Who else might have been I don't know. Some of the socialists in Tanzania, people like that but there was no worry about Cameroon "slipping into the communist orbit."

Again, if anything, the French were in control there; not in the way they were in Senegal which had been a French colony but still they had a dominant presence there. French was the national language.

The Chinese Communists were there. I think that during that time, Cameroon may have shifted its recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. I recall going to a dinner hosted by the Taiwanese. By the time we left, that had changed and there was perhaps a Chinese embassy.

Q: You were there from when to when?

BROWN: 1968 to 1970.

Q: Did the events in France in '68, June of '68 student revolt and sort of the overthrow of de Gaulle have any reflection?

BROWN: No, again at the risk of sounding as if I had my head in the sand or was just unaware of these kinds of things, maybe I have forgotten it but I don't recall people talking much about the events of 1968 in France.

Two years later I was on a trip in the Algerian desert when someone heard on the radio that Charles de Gaulle had died. I was with a group of Europeans. That was an occasion for reflection and thought and mourning but I don't recall people in Cameroon talking about 1968 in Paris.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that news was not in your face back then the way it is today. We didn't have television so you heard it on the radio but you didn't see dramatic pictures. I do recall the Six Day War and the dramatic Israeli victory.

I was still in Douala and I remember following that rather intently on the radio and looking at the pictures when they came and I was in the camp of those that were glad that the Israelis had won that war. Fearful of their existence being threatened.

Even what was going on in Vietnam was not in our face.

Having said that, I was aware that this was not an easy time to be a representative of the United States. There just wasn't very much good news coming out. I try to remember where I was in November of 1968 with the extended uncertainty about who had won the election; Nixon versus Hubert Humphrey. It is hard for me to place exactly where I was at the time. Perhaps just because we were Americans, we were on tenterhooks about who our next president would be.

The one really positive at that time was the Apollo space program. I was in Yaoundé in December of 1968 when Frank Borman and his crew did their Apollo-8 flight around the moon. We all recall Frank Borman reading the Christmas story as his crew made that flight. With each successive Apollo mission, we would receive a film, albeit several weeks delayed, that showed the latest accomplishment leading up to Apollo 11 in the summer of 1969.

USIA and the U.S. government supplied us richly with films, rocket models, posters, printed materials in French describing the Apollo space program. We had a model of the Apollo Saturn rocket. You could go to Cape Kennedy these days and see one for yourself. It was probably two or three feet high and you could take it apart. I was very capable of standing up in front of a large audience taking that rocket apart as the various boosters were no longer used. I took that space capsule to the moon and I landed it and brought it back safely. I could do that in French and then we would show a film.

Some of these films were beautifully produced. You'd have the music of Bach in the background and there was the spacecraft on its way to the moon or on its way back. Anyone who lived during that period knows what a booster that was for our morale. What a good feeling that gave us even if some of the Africans disbelieved or didn't have any comprehension of what we were doing.

Then came the day when we were told that wow! We are going to get a moon rock. An actual piece of moon rock will be put on display. It was going to be brought in by the courier. We announced it; we told people where they could come to see it. I distinctly remember the ambassador saying, "Is it going to be here on time?"

And me rather jokingly saying, "Mr. Ambassador, don't worry. Even if the moon rock doesn't arrive, believe me we will have a moon rock." By that I meant we would go back out behind the embassy in the clutter and find a piece of rock.

But indeed it arrived. It was under a hemisphere of plastic. The Africans came and looked at it and said to themselves, "That doesn't look any different from any other piece of rock." I guess they thought maybe it was going to glow in the dark or give off special rays or something. But we had our moon rock.

I mentioned the ambassador, a wonderful man who really boosted our morale both from a professional and personal level. He was one of these guys that you were so proud of.

Q: Who was this he?

BROWN: His name was Robert Payton. He was a political appointee although he didn't like that term because he said political appointees were people who have been big donors. He was a protégée, I think, of Senator Symington of Missouri. He had been at Washington University in St. Louis. Ambassador Robert Payton, his wife and his three handsome sons. He was a very outgoing ambassador. I think he spoke quite respectable French. One of the things he did was to travel extensively around the country and one of my regrets was I never went on one of his trips. It just didn't work out. He even went down to my old area and climbed Mount Cameroon.

He enjoyed black and white photography and he would take literally scores of pictures of people with whom he met, bring them back. We would develop them. USIA had a little photo lab there. We had a Cameroonian on the staff who did nothing but photography, who developed these pictures and then the ambassador would send them back to the local officials with whom he met.

You were asking about how the country was governed. Ambassador Payton would meet with the local governor, prefect or other local officials. We would send these pictures out and they had a wonderful impact. I would go to a town after the ambassador had been there and the first thing they would show me was the picture that they received from "your ambassador."

Ambassador Payton was also a backer of one of the local soccer teams and it wasn't just nominal. He would attend the matches. This was a country where there weren't a lot of high stakes issues. He didn't have to be running over to the foreign ministry with demarches. It was made for personal public diplomacy before we used the term "public diplomacy." Ambassador Payton was a real practitioner.

The public affairs officer when I arrived was a man a generation older than me named Howard Calkins. I am going to say he was in his 60s and some people wondered why at that age, he was PAO in Cameroon. It just didn't seem to be the pinnacle of your Foreign Service experience. Tragically, not long after we arrived, he received word that his son, my age, had been killed in an automobile accident back in West Virginia. I remember the ambassador telling me one day how difficult it was to go to Howard Calkins with this news which had come out in a cable, I guess, and inform him of this terrible tragedy.

What it meant for me was that for several weeks I was the acting public affairs officer.

I should back up a little bit and explain that the PAO when I arrived in Yaoundé was Fred Quinn, the same man who was the PAO when I arrived in Douala. Fred was a Foreign Service career officer but he was also an academic. He loved the world of ideas, art, African art. His wife Charlotte was a lovely woman, herself an intellectual. They treated us very kindly. Even when we were in Douala, they found some reason to bring me up to

Yaoundé for a TDY assignment and I brought my wife and daughter along. We stayed with them; at the time, they did not have children of their own.

Fred and Charlotte left soon after we arrived in Yaoundé but we stayed in close touch with them. Charlotte was among Bobbi's closest friends right up to her tragic death; she drowned off the coast of North Carolina

I am thinking back to that anecdote about the Foreign Service assignment, about who got the best assignment and who got the worst. Well, this was an example of my thinking. Yes, Cameroon is a small country, not exactly on everybody's radar screen, but I was the public affairs officer so I was dealing with the ambassador, I was going to country team meetings, I was seeing the big picture. That's why this type assignment is great for a young person.

I remember very clearly the Foreign Service national staff. David Lobé was secretary to the PAO, my assistant was Paul-Henri Nkot. There were about eight or ten others and I have a picture of them in our yard and their names are all written down. A great bunch of guys. They were very devoted to the American embassy. Sure, they had a job, a very respectable job, a very prestigious job but they were very loyal and very committed to the work.

I mentioned our house. We were again in a single level, colonial-style house but in a much nicer environment than in Douala; we had a big fenced-in yard. We now had a baby. I can remember our younger daughter learning to walk in that house. We got a dog, a big German shepherd that we called Pele-Pele from people down the dirt road we lived on.

We had a record player. I mentioned earlier I loved music, loved light opera. By this time, we had a recording of Puccini's La Boheme which ends with the words "Mimi, Mimi" as the heroine Mimi dies. My children called their grandmother Mimi and I loved to pick them up and dance around that living room singing Mimi to them; they were laughing as they couldn't quite figure out what I was doing. I was quite vicariously through the record thinking about their grandmother.

We did a lot of entertaining in that house. We would have people in to show movies or for dinner.

Back to the embassy, in addition to Ambassador Payton and the DCM, Jim Parker, who came up from Douala, there was a guy my age who was head of the econ section. His name was Jim Bishop. Jim I am sure is in the Washington area these days.

Q: He is. I have a long interview. He is the one who was in Somalia. Wherever our embassy was under siege, he ended up.

BROWN: A lot of people used their African career -- I could be one of those -- to parlay it into jobs in other parts of the world, Europe or elsewhere. Jim was an Africanist

through and through. Quite often in staff meetings, the question came up whether anybody had seen such and such person or whether anybody knew about this or that individual. Jim would consistently say, "Oh, I know him. I had lunch with him the other day or I met him somewhere."

This was not a situation where you had a lot of representation lunches but Jim, I quickly realized, had his ear to the ground. He was my age, with a wife and three young kids, but he was almost like a role model for me. I said to myself, "Ah, ha. This is a guy who is taking full advantage of this opportunity. He is out there, meets people, knows who people are and it is not by coincidence when the ambassador asks, does anybody know this person, Jim is right on the mark."

I can say on my own behalf that I modeled myself after Jim all through my Foreign Service career. I really tried to get out and meet people.

Let me back up also to Dakar. I mentioned Papa Diaw who was the head of the film section. He drove this old Citroen. He was a few years older than I was. We would go home at lunch time and I'd come back after lunch. On one particular day, I went over to Papa Diaw and I asked, in French, "Do we have a film for his project?" He looked at me and said, "Phil, here we say 'bonjour' and then we start our business."

I took that to heart. To this day, I'm no longer in an office situation but I do a lot of projects these days with international visitors and we get on the bus in the morning and I start out by saying, "Good morning. How are you? How are your families?" It is a very personal approach that is important, was important in Africa. It didn't take any time and it just made a big difference.

Q: In the Arab world too.

BROWN: Very important, very important.

As long as we are on anecdotes, another comes to mind. In Moscow, I had a wonderful secretary named Anne Edwards. She recalls another time and another post when it was lunch time and Anne was alone at her desk. The head of the office comes back to the office and he looks around and says, "Nobody here?"

Ann looked up and said, "I'm here."

It was a reminder to me that your colleagues are not just your work partners. The FSNs, the administrative staff, the secretaries were not a lower class. They are extremely important people. I would always say hello to them and that kind of thing because I liked them as friends but also because it was professionally wise to do.

Back to the embassy staff in Yaoundé, we had the normal cross section including other agencies and departments. We had a military attaché. He even had access to a plane. A few times I got on that plane. I think it might have been a DC-3.

Q: DC-3 was pretty much

BROWN: They were ubiquitous. We would take trips to the northern part of Cameroon. We had a small AID mission. And a CIA guy, a guy named John Stein.

We had a small American recreation site where there was a pool, a volleyball facility, a place where you could get hot dogs and such and a school. We played a lot of volleyball on Sunday afternoons. I always tried to position myself on the opposite side of the net from John Stein because he was so mercurial, such a firecracker that if he would miss a shot, you knew he'd get so mad at himself that he would miss the next two or three. John was much more successful in his professional career. He went very high in the ranks of the CIA.

We also had on the USIA staff an English teaching officer and we did a lot of programs for English teachers. I remember one time we offered a seminar for English teachers; a woman named Ruth Montalvan came out from Washington. We must have thrown the invitation open a bit too widely because if we thought 20 were going to come, 200 came. The question arose how we were going to accommodate them all? We went back to Washington, got some money and it was a roaring success.

I shared an office right across from the library with a young woman; it was her JOT assignment. I was in my late 20s and she was even younger than I was. Her name was Cynthia Frasier. She went on to a very successful career in USIA; public affairs officer in Rome, special assistant to the director. At that time she was unmarried, almost like a younger sister. She loved my two daughters. She was a very fine professional colleague.

It was a happy embassy and Ambassador Payton set the tone. I saw him years later. He had only that one diplomatic assignment. He became President of Hofstra University and he taught philanthropy at Indiana University.

He had three handsome sons and he tragically lost two of those sons in Africa; one in an accident and one to disease. It must have torn their hearts out.

Very soon after I arrived in Yaoundé, I was told that we had the possibility of sending somebody to the United States on an international visitor (IV) grant. This was a program for French speaking journalists but we were going to lose it because the deadline was coming up. I went out and found Daniel Mongué, the editor of the Weekly Cameroon, *La Semaine Camerounaise*. I think it had some religious backing and asked him if he would be available to go. He was available and we sent him off.

That was my very first overseas involvement with the IV program. To this day, I still do contract work with the State Department escorting IVs on their travels around the United States. Now I am on the receiving end; back then I was on the sending side and throughout my Foreign Service career, I was very conscious of looking for good people to send on the IV program.

I have a picture of Daniel Mongué and his old Mercedes and his wife and kids, a delightful guy. I wish I could track him down. If we had had Facebook back then, I would have immediately made him a Facebook friend.

So things like the IV program, programs related to Apollo, going out in the field with a Land Rover full of movies and books and posters, representational events at home were an essential happy part of the job.

It wasn't a representational event but one night we had a visiting fireman from Washington and my boss, Howard Calkins, just the two of them in for dinner. My wife went out to the kitchen to check on the meal and I heard this boom and the windows rattled and the house shook. My wife started shouting, "My eyes, my eyes, my eyes."

What she had done was to try to light the gas in the oven. It didn't work. She came back in to get a match in the living room, went back and didn't realize the gas had been running all that time. We were very fortunate that all she suffered were scorched eyebrows; didn't lose her sight or some terrible damage. We had an embassy nurse across the street and she came over and provided some immediate first aid.

We didn't contract diseases. Our kids had the occasional high fevers but no chicken pox. It was good because if you really needed serious medical attention, you were a long way from it.

On one occasion, our older daughter fell and badly cut her lip at the swimming pool. It was a Saturday afternoon. We left our younger daughter with friends and dashed into town and just by good fortune the Peace Corps doctor, a woman, was there. She was a hard-line gal. She didn't take care of embassy people; she was there to deal with Peace Corps volunteers but in this case she saw that it was her talents or nothing and her oaths took precedence. We held our daughter down on a table and she screamed as this doctor managed to sew the lip back on. To this day, there is a small scar on our daughter's lip but I am so grateful that on those two occasions -- when the oven exploded and when our daughter fell -- that we didn't suffer anymore than we did.

Ambassador Payton left part way through our assignment and was replaced by Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker. He was a career Foreign Service officer. When Ambassador Payton left, we had a big farewell reception. I still have the little brochure from an exhibit of his photos of Cameroonians. The brochure is in French and English. The Africans loved it. They came and stayed long at the reception and looked and said there is that person and they smiled and whatever. By the way, African faces are not easy to take pictures of. You have to have the proper setting to get the light and these were really good pictures.

Ambassador Payton left and I remember thinking, gosh. How are you going to replace him? I feel sorry for poor Ambassador Hoffacker coming out here. But I learned an important lesson from Ambassador Hoffacker. When you replace somebody, especially a

really capable person with a fine reputation, don't try to do things the way your predecessor did it. One of the cheapest things I would occasionally see people do was to complain about how poorly their predecessor had performed. Maybe that was the case for some but it wasn't the case with Ambassador Payton.

What Ambassador Hoffacker did was to go about doing what a career for Foreign Service officer knew how to do well. He interacted more with the Cameroonian government on the official level. He was involved in an aid project to build a railroad east from Yaoundé. Perhaps there was more reporting; he just did what he knew how to do best. That was a lesson to me later on. If I replaced someone who had done a really good job, don't try to be like that person but have confidence in myself and try to do what I knew how to do well.

Just to recall again that in preparation for this conversation, I have gone back and looked at notes and as I do, it is tempting to pick up my iPhone and do a Google search. I was able to do that in this case.

Not long after Ambassador Hoffacker arrived, and this was a big deal in Cameroon, we had a visit from the secretary of state, Secretary William P. Rogers. This was the first visit by an American secretary of state to Africa. He visited something like eight countries on the continent.

Secretary Rogers was very much a gentleman. I say that because he was later, as we used to say, big footed by Henry Kissinger and the conclusion was that while Secretary of State William P. Rogers may have been on paper the country's leading foreign policy official, in fact, he was anything but that.

Before he came, I remember worrying (why I was worrying?) that we were calling him the "*secrétaire d'état*." In French bureaucracy, secretary of state is a sub-cabinet official. I was very worried that the Cameroonians would think that the secretary of state was a sub-cabinet official and I kept thinking we need to call him the *Ministre des Affaires Etrangères* and not the secretary of state in French. I didn't need to worry; they knew who he was.

I think he came in a military plane to Douala. He arrived on a Sunday night; I remember that because he came out to our embassy swimming pool/volleyball court and had a hamburger and hot dog with us. Mrs. Rogers was along. I was very fortunate to be named Mrs. Roger's control officer. I say very fortunate because I was the cultural affairs officer and they gave her a cultural program that I loved.

One of the individuals with whom we dealt with quite often was a Cameroonian priest named Father Mveng. In addition to his clerical duties, he was deep into African art, a particular type of art called abbia. These are carved shells; there is a whole academic literature on abbia and how to interpret them. With Mrs. Rogers, I saw a cross section of African cultural activities.

A tangent: By 1988, I was PAO in Moscow. President Reagan was coming out. The entire USIS staff was involved. A woman, an assistant cultural affairs officer named Susan Robinson, was designated to work with the White House as Mrs. Reagan's control officer. She came to me to complain. This was sexism. She wanted to be involved in something with President Reagan. Just because she was a woman, she didn't want to be assigned as Mrs. Reagan's control officer.

I said to her, "Susan, I know how you feel. We will make it up to you somehow. I don't have any control over this. Believe me you will have a much more interesting experience." She came to me afterwards and said, "I am so happy I was Mrs. Reagan's control officer because I got to go to the ballet school and to art galleries and we saw icons that the rest of you will never see while standing around at those boring presidential activities." The memory of that relates to my time with Mrs. Rogers when she came to Cameroon in 1970.

To repeat, Yaoundé was a happy environment. A young American couple lived across the street, Mike and Judy Phelan. She was pregnant. The Presbyterians were very active in Cameroon as missionaries. They did standard missionary work through a church in Yaoundé and they also ran a hospital in a place called Ebolowa; the number of lives they saved in that hospital probably far exceeded the number of lives they "saved" in their mission work. Mike and Judy got on a plane one night to go down there for the birth of their child. They hit one of these tropical storms and the plane turned around and came back and the baby was born in Yaoundé but we always remember that harrowing night for them.

There were a number of other American families along our dirt road. A Greek gentleman named Vrouvakis who worked at the embassy. He was in the category that people called "Lebanese" at the time, people from the Levant or the eastern Mediterranean. He was an accountant of some sort; Mr. Vrouvakis had a son, Aki, who was a good friend of my children. They had a goat. They were not Muslim but they had a goat. One day, our dog got out and chased their goat and it ended up in front of a car coming up the road. We had to replace the goat. It is one of those little memories you have of life in Cameroon.

There was an older American businessman whose name was Henry Boguslawski, Polish born; he was there with ITT, International Telephone and Telegraph. He managed to put in an early satellite that would allow you to call from Yaoundé to France. We didn't have a phone in our house so we couldn't even call to the embassy. We didn't make personal phone calls of any sort. But lo and behold, before we could make a local phone call from our house, people could call by satellite from Yaoundé to Paris. Henry Boguslawski was really the toast of the town for that accomplishment.

We met him and his wife Dorothy later on when we were in Princeton and they were in New York City. He was a lover of Chopin. I think he ended up in Spain on the coast there. We never went to his home but I can imagine him having his very cultivated friends in for a Chopin piano festival.

I did not see my parents for two years from 1966 to 1968. This happened again, 1968 to 1970. I did not see my parents, didn't talk to them. The only communication was by letter mail. I think we also did these little tapes that we sent. My wife was fortunate. Her parents came out in December of 1969 and with them we went to the Waza Game Park in northern Cameroon and entrusted our two children to a couple in the consular section who had no children, a couple our age, Paul and Nancy Dekar.

We went to the park, we had a car and driver, saw local villages, saw giraffe, elephants stood on one side of a watering hole. It probably was somewhat risky. As these elephants came closer and closer, we got some pretty good pictures. I remember realizing I had the wrong setting on my camera. Back then you had to adjust your camera setting to the speed of your film so my elephants were pretty bleached.

At the end of the trip, we were waiting ready to fly back from a town called Maroua. We were on the plane taxiing and realized there was a flat tire and had to go back to the terminal. This was Air Cameroon and they no back up plane and no back up tire. We sat there for 24 hours as planes flew overhead. There was a French military mission up in what was then called Fort Lamy, Chad, that eventually brought us a tire. Meanwhile, we had no way of communicating with our friends back in Yaoundé to let them know that all was well; we just wouldn't be back as scheduled. It was one of those things that you lived with, one of those anecdotes that you can tell people about for years and years later.

I mentioned Father Mveng who was a Cameroonian priest but really more of an intellectual scholar on African art. There was also a Swiss priest named Father Luitfrid Marfut, a Benedictine, and he too was very interested in African art and in ways of preserving it from being commercialized and sold. He established the Benedictine Museum on Mount Febé in Yaoundé as a home for Cameroonian art, especially the abba carvings. There was a rivalry between him and Father Mveng but Father Luitfrid had a wonderful collection of art that was preserved for the benefit of Cameroonians.

Many days, when I came home for lunch, there was a trader on the other side of the fence peddling some piece of African art. Like many people who served in Africa, we have a considerable collection of masks, carvings and you name it. I used to say to my children that I would someday pay for their college education by selling these pieces. They are now looking at educating their own children and the African art is still hanging on walls or up in the attic or has been given away. We ended up with a lot of it. A dozen or so pieces were held by the Smithsonian African Art Museum for several years and from that, we have curatorial descriptions of what they are.

Overall, Cameroon, especially the Yaoundé portion of it, lived up to its reputation for being Africa in miniature. Not only did I learn much about Africa and its diversity but I really benefited in terms of my long term Foreign Service experience.

In spring of 1970, I received word that I had been reassigned as branch public affairs officer, BPAO, in Tangier, Morocco. So we packed up after four years in tropical Africa,

sub-Saharan Africa and headed back to the United States for home leave and to get ready to go to Tangier, Morocco.

Q: We will pick this up next time in 1970 and we are off to Tangier.

Today is the 14th of February, Valentine's Day, 2012 with Philip Brown. We got to 1970. How did you get assigned to Tangier?

BROWN: The assignment to Tangier was just what some cable said. I was completing four years in tropical Africa. I don't recall whether I applied or indicated I wanted to stay overseas longer but I was assigned to Tangier, Morocco. But I never went there and that's where I will pick up today.

I want to add one story to the three years in Cameroon, one that was certainly a life changing experience for all of us.

It was September, 1969, my children were three years and 15 months old, and we were due for R & R. We left Cameroon from Douala, the international airport, flew to Rome and spent four weeks traveling around Europe. It was the first time I had ever traveled extensively in Europe. We went to Rome, to Athens, out to the island of Hydra, on to Vienna and back to Rome. I kept a detailed multi-page diary which I may introduce for the record later on.

I don't exaggerate when I say it was a life changing experience. We certainly got to know each other better as a family. We celebrated my daughter's third birthday on the island of Hydra and we came back with a great deal of recreation. I am not sure how much rest. It was rigorous but it was just one of those memorable experiences.

While in Vienna, we went to the Prater, the great amusement park and bought our children gas balloons. One of the girls let her balloon go and it flew up and lodged itself under one of the cars on that enormous Ferris wheel. We watched and laughed as it went round and round with the balloon still there. I titled my diary of that trip "The Balloon under Car Number Ten."

Q: So you go back to the States in 1970 after three years in Cameroon.

BROWN: Yes, we went on home leave to Westtown, Pennsylvania, a small town west of Philadelphia. We went there because we had lodgings on the campus of Westtown Friends' School, a Quaker school where my wife, her brother and younger sister had all studied and where her brother at that point was teaching. We had access to a house there, a beautiful campus, a lovely place in which to spend the summer.

I also had the opportunity that summer to see my parents for the first time in two years. Not just to see but to talk to my parents for the first time in two years. We were closer to my wife's parents, got to see her brother and sister-in-law who was pregnant.

All was going along smoothly and then, just about one week before we were to go to Tangier, I received notification that my assignment had been changed and I had been assigned as cultural affairs officer in Algiers, Algeria.

This was upsetting, disconcerting. Our household effects were already en route to Tangier. We were thinking in terms of Tangier. We just weren't ready to change. I made some efforts to resist but did not succeed and so we were reassigned to Algiers.

The lesson is "go with the flow" because Algiers turned out to be a much better assignment. I am really glad that I did not succeed in changing the assignment.

Algiers, Algeria (1970-1972)

Q: Let's talk about Algeria. At the time you went there, this was 1970, wasn't it?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: What was the situation in Algeria?

BROWN: The situation was tense. I went ahead to Paris, to consultations in Paris. Consultations were a wonderful way to spend a couple days in a place like Paris. My wife and daughters linked up with me there and we flew two hours to Algiers. No one met us at the airport. Apparently communications had failed and so we got a taxi, took it to the embassy and announced ourselves. I'm not sure how we managed with four people and luggage but our self-sufficiency impressed the people at the embassy.

We called it the embassy but we had a very unusual situation there. We were the Americans Interest Section of the Swiss Embassy. To back up a bit, in the early 1960s, the Algerians were struggling for independence in a bloody war against the French. No one had spoken out more on their behalf than President Kennedy. He was very moved by their struggle for independence and so there was a great feeling of gratitude towards the United States.

But by 1967 and the Six Day War, Algeria followed many Arab nations in breaking diplomatic relations with the United States. They broke diplomatic relations with the United States but they still wanted to have relations; they wanted to have it both ways. We accommodated them because it was in our interest to have a presence there.

If you go back to that earlier period, the '50s and '60s, the oil and gas industry had a thriving relationship with the Algerians and many young Algerian men went off to the United States, particularly to Oklahoma and Texas, to study oil and gas technology. Many of them, incidentally, returned with American brides.

And we had a presence in other ways. After Algeria became independent in 1962, we had a library or cultural center. But by the time I arrived, 1970, we were flying the Swiss flag.

It is the only country where I served where I never met my ambassador. We never really had contact with the Swiss Embassy. We were the American Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy.

The Algerians had this schizophrenic relationship toward the United States. If you read the public newspapers, especially *El Moudjahid*, which was their daily newspaper, what was there for public consumption was that we were a capitalist exploiting nation, terrible race relations, Vietnam, anything that they could pin on us they did. Their president, Houari Boumedienne, had very close relations with the Soviet Union; close economic and other ties. When they were talking to us in that vein, the head of our mission there was the *Chef du Service*, chief of service, chief of the American Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy.

But they were equally interested in loans from the Export Import Bank. They wanted to sell natural gas. El Paso Natural Gas had a big presence in Algeria and the Algerians wanted good economic relations with us so when they addressed us in those terms, my boss, the head of the interest section became the Chargé. He was accorded that honor.

That reflected things overall. They wanted to have it both ways. For public consumption, they wanted to appear very much at odds with the United States politically and to be seen as cozying up to the Soviets. But behind the scenes, they wanted money, loans, technology and exports.

Q: You say student relations were going on then?

BROWN: I was the cultural affairs officer. There were two USIS positions in a very small mission and one of the things I was charged with doing was renewing a scholarship program. I must have worked for the better part of two years to send something like six or eight Algerians to the United States on full scholarships. I cannot recall the details now. That sounds so small but it was symbolically so important and bureaucratically so laborious that it took the better part of two years to get these guys recruited, all the processing completed to send them off to the United States. It had symbolic value; it was the direction we were trying to go.

Q: You were located in the city of Algiers.

BROWN: We lived right down the street from the building that I believe had always been the American Embassy. It was not an office building. It was a rather attractive, small villa and it was just down the hill from the ambassador's residence named 'Montfeld'. Montfeld was a beautiful villa overlooking the sea with a swimming pool, tennis courts. The embassy complex also included land across the street, a little compound that had a snack bar, school and that kind of thing. The house that we lived in was in easy walking distance.

The head of the Interest Section when I arrived was a man named William Eagleton, Bill Eagleton, quite well known at that time in Middle East. He had spent almost his entire

career there and he went on to spend quite a bit of time, I believe, in Syria and other places in the Middle East. He had a wonderful collection of Middle Eastern artifacts, particularly rugs. I think he even wrote a book on rugs. Bill and his new wife Kay were very cordial, very friendly with my wife and me and our children.

At work, we had a daily meeting in Bill Eagleton's office. No more than eight people, virtually the entire staff, attended that meeting. More than once in our earlier sessions, I talked about what constitutes a good or a bad assignment for a relatively junior person. I had been overseas now for four years but was still relatively junior. This was a perfect example of a really good assignment being a small mission where the stakes are not that high but you see the whole operation from soup to nuts.

A bad assignment is one of those big Western European assignments, Paris, Bonn, Rome. Every day in Algiers, I went to the staff meeting with Bill Eagleton; the political officer, a fellow named Fred Galanto; the economic officer, Bill Keller; the commercial officer; a station chief; the head of the consular section, Richard Castrodale; the PAO, David Burns; the admin officer, Oscar Reynolds, and myself. The fact that I can remember many of their names now 42 years later says what an indelible impression it made on me.

We met every day. We talked about what was on the docket. Bill Eagleton would quip that each day, we were "one day closer to restoration of full diplomatic relations." The meeting didn't last more than 20 or 30 minutes but it exposed me to the entire gamut of embassy operations.

Q: As the cultural officer, what did this mean for you?

BROWN: Aside from the scholarship program I spoke about, we had did have the occasional opportunity to bring in performing artists. We relied on the office in Paris that could recruit American talent living in Europe and send them out. I developed a working relationship with an Algerian named Mr. Bel Hadj who ran a little theater, a performing arts venue downtown. We could bring programs there. We could bring folk singers and other kinds of performing artists there.

We also had the occasional speaker. Again, this was still that Apollo space period I mentioned in Cameroon.

There wasn't an information officer because there wasn't that much you could do with the press and media but if we did have a visitor, we would try to expose him to at least the cultural writers and whatever in the news media.

As an example of the type of program we were involved in, I accompanied a man named Donald Bullard, a retired American with many years of experience in international educational exchange. He called on the directors of training and a wide cross-section of Algerian companies and ministries to learn more about their foreign training programs and to answer questions about opportunities for training and study in the U.S.

Over a week, we probably visited 10 or 12 different Algerian companies and institutions to talk about professional training in the United States. Again, it doesn't seem like much but it was one of those openings we had. It took me not to a university or newspapers, the traditional kind of USIA contacts, but to companies and ministries.

At this distance it is hard to recall some of the other specific projects that we had except that I knew that I was fully busy and I really enjoyed the assignment.

One of the things I did a great deal of was travel. When we traveled, Washington was always interested in reports that we could write.

Q: I think of Algeria now as there was a long period where you didn't want to get outside the compound because you'd get your throat cut by Islamic fundamentalists. This would happen to Algerians too. It wasn't that we were being particularly picked upon but what was the situation then?

BROWN: If I had thought that was the situation, believe me, I would not have been willing to do the travel we did. No, it was a period in which the Algerians were unsmiling, perhaps fearful. We always contrasted them with the Moroccans and the Tunisians who were much more hospitable to foreigners, who had received their independence through a normal transition process rather than through a war. The Algerians seemed to be an angry, inhospitable people but I never really felt that I was going to get my throat cut. My wife and two small children often traveled with me.

Q: One of the attributes I have heard ascribed to Algerians as opposed to Moroccans or Tunisians is dour.

BROWN: Yes, dour would be a good word. I think they were also scared of their own government. They were scared of the implications of having too close contact. In that respect, Algeria was good preparation for my later assignments in the Soviet Union.

Q: How long were you in Algeria?

BROWN: Exactly two years.

Q: What about the tribal situation there?

BROWN: We never referred to it as a tribal situation such as we experienced in Cameroon where there is a multiplicity of tribes. There were the Berbers. In fact, one of the most enjoyable day trips we would take would be east from Algiers to a town called Tizi-Ouzou, up in the Kabylie Mountains. There you would meet the Berbers who were much more gaily dressed, who produced beautiful jewelry. Sometimes we called them, and I am not sure it is accurate, the Jews of North Africa. They were separate from the Arabs. They were very enterprising people. So it was just the opposite of having your throat cut. Look, you say to a visitor, do you want to go out and really have an interesting

day trip? Let's go out to the Kabylie Mountains, have lunch in some restaurant there, meet some of the people. They were extremely hospitable.

Another group of tribal people whom we really had to go a long way to see and meet were the Tuareg in southern Algeria and that gives me the opportunity to talk about one of the most interesting experiences that I had in my lifetime. It took place in Algeria.

The political officer was a fellow named Fred Galanto and at one of these morning staff meetings soon after we arrived, he said that he was going to be taking a trip in the near future way down to the south of Algeria, a tourist trip. I don't recall the circumstances, whether somebody had dropped out or what, but there was room for another person and would anyone be interested in going? I checked with my wife and got the okay.

Fred and I went off with no more than 12 or 14 people. We flew from Algiers to an oasis town called Djanet, way in the southern part of Algeria. Mind you, Algeria is one of the largest countries in Africa. At its easternmost point, it is farther east than all of Tunisia and at its westernmost point, it is west of much of Morocco. So we were way down in the very south of Algeria in the oasis town of Djanet, not too far from the border with Libya.

After a night there, we hiked up to what is called the Tassili Plateau. For a week, we hiked around this plateau. We had Tuareg guides and donkeys which carried all our supplies. We went out in search of paintings done some 5,000 to 10,000 years earlier. These were not cave paintings; they were on walls, recessed walls, not deep in caves. They were done when this area was tropical. You knew that because some of the paintings were of long-necked animals, giraffe, elephants and the like.

These beautiful paintings had been discovered only a few years earlier and had been written about in Horizon magazine of May, 1959. I have the article called "Surprise in the Sahara." A Frenchman named Henri Lhote had gone there and discovered the paintings. An artist named Georges Le Poitevin, who was part of the team, had reproduced the paintings. There was some controversy about whether reproducing them had done any damage to them. I later met Monsieur Le Poitevin. He lived west of Algiers and we bought reproductions which we still have of some of these paintings.

I say paintings. They were done by mixing crushed stone and water and they were overlaid, maybe different periods, different time periods one on top of another. Our guides wore blue so we called them our "*guides bleus*." They knew where the paintings were and could help us interpret them.

We slept out under the stars, under little overhangs in one of the most remarkable weeks I can recall. By the way, I know exactly the timing of that trip. Most of our fellow travelers were French or West Europeans and somehow we got the news, maybe someone had a shortwave radio, of the death of Charles de Gaulle. De Gaulle died November 9, 1970, so I know that I celebrated my 29th birthday (November 7) on the Tassili Plateau in southern Algeria.

Q: How was de Gaulle viewed by Algerian colleagues?

BROWN: For the French, this was like the death of Churchill or Roosevelt. Even if people did not admire everything about him, there was acknowledgement that he was one of the major figures of the 20th century. I am not sure how the Algerian people viewed de Gaulle. We didn't talk too much about that. It was only a few years earlier that they had won a very bloody revolutionary independence from de Gaulle's France.

Back to your theme about being afraid, I never felt fear but sometimes I look back and think gee, was I naive to go off to this country with my family, small children and no security. You walked into the embassy right off the street, nobody asked any questions.

There is that very famous movie, "The Battle of Algiers," that they would show regularly. The scenes of the Casbah suggested the use of terror as we know it today. It was during this time that four airplanes were diverted to the Jordanian desert which leads me to another facet of life in Algeria.

We had a very small American community, a few business people, oil workers and a number of American women married to Algerians. We had a neighbor up the street, Eldridge Cleaver, the famous Black Panther. He represented the other side of how the Algerians dealt with the United States. They wanted to provide hospitality to Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panthers, anything to poke their finger in our eye.

Q: He was a fugitive of the United States.

BROWN: Yes, he was a fugitive. He jumped bail in California and fled to Algeria via Cuba. His presence was well known. One time he came into the embassy, ostensibly for some consular business. When the consul, the poor fellow, had his back turned, Eldridge Cleaver stole or walked off with the seal. Whatever he did was terribly embarrassing. Otherwise, we weren't very conscious of Eldridge Cleaver but he was there and we were barred from contact with him..

Another incident came late in my two years in Algeria but since we are on that subject, in June of 1972, there was an American airline called Western Airlines. They were flying somewhere on the US West Coast and the plane was hijacked and can you believe it, American authorities gave in to the hijackers and they took that plane all the way across the United States, released the passengers and forced the crew to fly all the way to Algiers with \$500,000 ransom money.

One of the pilots told our political officer that this was the first time he had ever been out of the United States and here he was in Algiers. I think it was the same pilot who was flying between Seattle and Los Angeles who ended up flying this plane all the way across the United States and all the way to Algiers. That was June, 1972.

Two months later it happened again. A plane was hijacked out of Detroit en route to Miami. The hijackers demanded ransom money. The FBI provided it. There was some

insistence on the part of the hijackers that the FBI people come to the plane wearing nothing but their underwear so they couldn't be hiding any weapons. The money was delivered, the plane flew on to Boston and then to Algiers.

On this occasion, I was the duty officer so I got the call. I went to my boss, Bill Eagleton, and informed him there was a plane en route. It was a Saturday, so Bill Eagleton and I decided to play tennis on the lovely clay courts at Montfeld. After each set, Bill would check, call the authorities to see where the plane was, come back out and say, "No, we've got time for another set." Eventually he had to go to the airport.

In both cases, if you had read the Algerian press, you would have imagined they provided red carpet treatment to these hijackers who were fighting the American system. In fact, what they did was put them in the back of a police van and turn most of the money back over to the Americans. They didn't provide any real encouragement to the hijackers though they did let them go.

The person who got the red carpet treatment on arrival in Algiers was the President of the Export Import Bank. He had what they were really looking for but symbolically, the plane hijackers, and there were two hijackings to Algiers, June and August of 1972, received publicity.

In the case of the second plane hijacking, I was listening to the news last year (2011) and heard that a black American had been detained in Portugal; he had been fingered by the FBI as one of the hijackers in that 1972 plane hijacking. Sure enough, this individual has since settled down in Portugal, married, has a family there but the FBI tracked him down. They are trying to get him extradited to the United States.

When I read that, I said, "That rings a bell. I remember that particular plane hijacking."

Q: What about the Soviet and maybe the Chinese communist presence in Algeria?

BROWN: I have no recollection whatsoever of the Chinese presence. They probably had an embassy but I don't recall. The Soviets yes were there and we would occasionally meet some of their officials.

Q: Did you feel in competition?

BROWN: Yes, I did, but that was the mentality of that period. Again, I go back to my four years in French Africa. The French were dominant. The French were not our enemies or adversaries but they were the dominant foreign power in those countries. And as a good, young, patriotic American, I looked forward to the day when the United States would be the leading influence in those countries.

Of course, today, you look at French Africa and something goes badly you think "thank goodness" the French are there to send in troops to the Ivory Coast or somewhere to try to restore stability.

Certainly in the 1970s, this was my introduction to the Cold War. We would hope that the United States would be able to replace the Soviets and their influence there. The Soviets were after a foothold in North Africa. There was a big port down at Oran where we had a consulate. We had two consulates, Constantine in the east and Oran in the west. The one in Oran had as its primary mission observing activities in the port. The Soviets would bring military vessels in there. I wasn't directly involved but I do recall that we were very conscious of growing Soviet presence and influence.

Boumedienne would make frequent trips to the Soviet Union. Eventually, I think Boumedienne died in the Soviet Union while getting medical treatment there; if not, he died in Algeria soon after seeking medical treatment in the Soviet Union so we kind of thought he got his comeuppance.

We had to heat our in the winter. It got pretty cold and believe it or not, in this country with its great supplies of oil and natural gas, we had a coal furnace. I used to go down in the basement, throw coal into the furnace; I think some of it came from the Soviet Union, if I am not mistaken.

That's pretty much it for their presence there.

Q: Did you have the chance to socialize with the Algerians?

BROWN: With selected people, yes. I mentioned this man, Mr. Bel Hadj who ran the performing arts center. That's too fancy a name for it. Let's call it a cultural center. For some reason or other, he was quite comfortable working with us when we could bring in performers. Before I completed my two years there, I was able to send him to the United States on an international visitor grant. I was in the United States when he came to Princeton.

There were a number of American women married to Algerians. Remember, I said a lot of Algerians went to Oklahoma and Texas in the '50s and '60s to study oil and gas technology. These were handsome guys, good looking men who came back with American wives. Quite often these American women found that life in Algeria was not very comfortable. The man they had known in Oklahoma was not exactly the same man when they got back home; especially if they had children, it was going to be very difficult to take those children out without the husband's permission.

One couple whom we got to know very well and with whom we are still in contact were Dr. Zachary Brahmi and his wife, Fran. They now live in the US. He was not in the oil and gas field. He was a physician but we got to know them, socialized with them, went out east of Algiers to his hometown of Bejaia or Bougie. He had to be very careful and there were times when we sensed that we ought not to have contact. They and a few couples like that were windows on Algerian society.

Q: How about the papers, the newspapers? They took pretty much an anti-American stance?

BROWN: I am not sure we can even say papers, plural. The only one I can recall of any significance was this *El Moudjahid* which was in French.

Which leads to another subject. The Algerians thought of themselves as Arabs but French was the language. The French that I had learned in my four years in Senegal and Cameroon was all I needed really to do business in Algeria. The Algerians were importing Arab language teachers from Egypt. They just didn't have them themselves. The French language and French culture were so strong that French was the *lingua franca*. Algerians, many of them, struggled themselves with Arabic.

Q: The interview I did a long time ago with Dick Parker who was our ambassador there said he was at a meeting with Boumedienne, the president and his cabinet and they were talking and he very pointedly said, "You know, it is ironic that the American ambassador speaks better Arabic than you all do."

BROWN: They were painfully aware of that. I can imagine that they might have joked about but in other circumstances they probably found it pretty awkward.

I mentioned in the past that well before I thought of doing these interviews, I prepared for my own satisfaction written summaries of my years in Africa. I am going to read three sentences from one because it goes back to that question that you asked;

"We traveled frequently. In retrospect given Algeria's recent bloody war of independence, its overt hostility toward the United States, the dawning of the era of hijacking, the lack of even basic services on many desert routes, the ages of our children and Algeria's later civil war, we made some remarkable trips. We certainly did not live behind high walls."

That was the case. We took many day trips in and around Algiers. One of the things we really loved were the Roman ruins. There were sites within an hour or two drive of Algiers where you could see wonderful Roman ruins. One of them was west of Algiers, a place called Tipaza. For others you might have to take a longer trip, to go east to the area near Constantine; Djemila and Timgad had remarkable Roman ruins.

In the fall of probably 1971, my parents-in-law came for a visit. My wife was fortunate. Her parents came to visit us when we were in Dakar, again in Yaoundé, Cameroon and a third time in Algiers. Each time it was an opportunity to take a trip so we went with them out to the east beyond Constantine, stopping to see the Roman ruins. I know it was an eye-opener for them and of course, our children loved seeing their grandparents. It was very special when my wife's parents came.

Q: Were you dealing with the press at all?

BROWN: No. As I say, there was really only one daily newspaper. I was a cultural affairs officer. If there had been an opportunity to deal with the press, I wouldn't have been hung up on titles but only when we had a performer, you'd try to get a little article in the newspaper about guitarist Steve Waring performing. Or he might give an interview to radio or television.

There was a black jazz player named Hal Singer who came from Paris. I remember my children called him the "singer man." Hal Singer came out on a couple of occasions. Even at that time, he must have been in his 60s, a black American who had gone to Paris because he had found the cultural scene there more hospitable. He was recruited to go out to perform in Africa.

But no, as far as dealing with the press, certainly nothing compared with what I would later do in Paris.

Q: Was then the equivalent of sort of the intellectuals a mirror of the French intellectual class and all?

BROWN: There were and I can think of another couple and exactly how we got to know them I am not sure. But I can see these people, I can see their apartment, I can recall them inviting us on many occasions for dinner. They would serve elaborate Algerian meals; when we reciprocated, they would come and she would hardly eat any food. She was so slender, so conscious of her size.

There was an Algerian educated class; most of them had pretty close ties to France. If they hadn't been educated in France, they traveled there. That was their fallback position.

Were there a lot of occasions like that? No, but there were enough to give us a window on Algerian society.

On the subject of travel, I did take a lot of observation trips. The consul in Oran was a fellow named Glen Cella. Glen and I got along well. We both liked sports. We hit it off well, although we had very different backgrounds.

Glen and I decided to take a lengthy trip. These were reporting trips, go out, observe and write your report when you got back. So he came to Algiers and we headed east to make a big loop. We decided we were going to share the driving so I drove much of the first day, then Glen took over. Right away, I realized I was not particularly comfortable. I talked a little bit to Glen. He had grown up in New York City where he didn't have a car, didn't learn to drive until he was probably in his 20s.

I said, "How about I do all the driving?" He said, "Fine" and it was a wonderful accommodation. I was much more comfortable doing the driving and he was much more comfortable being a passenger.

We went east, probably stopped in Constantinople and then down into the desert into the oasis towns of Ghardaia and Laghouat. I left Glen there. He was going to take a plane to a place way down in the south called Tamanrasset and I drove back alone.

I remember very clearly that it was May first. I remember because May 1, International Labor Day, was another way in which the Algerians let their socialist or their leftist credentials be known.

So Glen Cella was a good colleague. He was replaced in Oran by a fellow named Bob Maxim. I mention that name because when we were in Dakar, Bob Maxim and his wife were in Nouakchott, Mauritania. That was the time of the Six Day War. The Mauritians broke relations with the U.S. and Bob and his wife had to pack up all their stuff, using paper towels and other things and evacuate to Dakar.

So here, four or five years later, we were going to run into them again in Algeria.

Q: Let's pick this up again. This is Phil Brown on the 14th of February.

BROWN: Despite the restrictions and no diplomatic relations, I felt productively busy in Algiers. I never went to work feeling bored or feeling "gee, I don't have a job here." I really thrived and it wasn't just the travel and it wasn't just sending these six or eight fellows to the United States on a scholarship program.

We lived in a marvelous house that had three different levels plus a basement and it was situated above a garden. To just get from the street up to the main living level, you must have come up 30 steps. The house was shaped like a boat. Whoever built it was probably a well-to-do Frenchman who built his house of dreams because from the top level on a clear day, you could see the mountains in the distance, you could see snow capped mountains, you could see the harbor of Algiers. This house also had a huge and dank basement where that furnace was. It also had the contents of the now-closed American Library. We had an American library in Algiers before the break of diplomatic relations.

I don't recall that I ever visited the former library but all the books were in the basement and one of the things I was able to do anytime I went out to a school or made any kind of official visit was to give away some of these books. They were in good condition. They weren't getting in any better condition but we knew if we ever reopened the library, we wouldn't be using these books so we gave away as many as possible.

Q: What about contact with universities, colleges, academic places? Were we able to get anywhere?

We had a Fulbright professor, a very interesting man; Elton Smith from Florida. He was, I believe, an ordained minister but he was teaching American literature. He must have been in his 60s which meant he was 30 years older than I was and a mean tennis player. I don't think I ever beat Elton Smith on the tennis court. Just when I thought I was about to finally win a set, he would grit his teeth and win. Elton Smith was replaced by a man

named David Stryker. I believe they had the position of Fulbright professors of American literature.

We also had an English teaching program. On the other hand, I cannot recall any intense interaction with people at universities. It would have been more with the minister of higher education.

Not to sound defensive but it wasn't because I was not outgoing or initiative taking. We were not given that opportunity. We were not encouraged to do that. Everything had to go through the ministry. If I had gone to the faculty of American studies, if there was such a thing, directly to a dean at the university, it would have been frowned upon and he probably would have not received me. We just didn't have that kind of contact.

Q: Were the Soviets able to do anything?

BROWN: They probably tried but I can't imagine they were terribly successful. My guess is despite everything else, a lot of teachers, professors would have been French or French educated.

USIA had a program under which they would send out sports figures. On one memorable occasion in June of 1971, they sent out a group of basketball players headed by none other than Lew Alcindor, as he had been known up to that point. He had just changed his name to Kareem Abdul Jabbar. Seven feet two inches tall and his coach, Larry Costello of the Milwaukee Bucks. The group was also supposed to include Oscar Robinson but at the last minute, he cancelled. There was a fourth person who played pretty good basketball, I think at UCLA, a white American who in addition to being a pretty good basketball player spoke French. So they came out as a sports presentation.

Well, it was stressful. Lew Alcindor/Kareem Abdul Jabbar, was not going to take any chances at that point and start playing basketball with Algerians. He was a highly paid NBA talent and what he did was run a couple fast break drills up and down the court and he would dunk; a dunk at that time was something pretty special. Everyone oohed and aahed and that was it.

He had recently married a woman named Janice Brown. She called herself Habiba. He had become a very devout Muslim. We had a greasy spoon snack bar but Kareem Jabbar would not go near that snack bar because something might have been cooked in the same frying pan as his food was going to be cooked in.

We decided to have a reception at the ambassador's residence in his honor. He didn't want that. I can perfectly well understand why because all you were going to do was go and gawk at this man who was so tall. He finally did come, came reluctantly and didn't stay for very long.

Then the sports presentation went on to some other country. It was memorable but I am not quite sure what it did to enhance U.S.-Algerian relations.

I guess I should say a little bit more about our personal life in Algeria. Our children were small but they started school there. This was the first time they went to any sort of formal school, nursery school.

My boss was a man named David Burns. David was an avid jazz player. He went off one time on a trip and came back with a string bass instrument. He bought two seats on the airplane, one for himself and one for Mr. Bass because he didn't want to put this big stringed instrument in the hold of the airplane. I think Dave's mind was on jazz as much as anything else. His wife, Sandy, taught at the school, a dear friend with whom we are still in contact. My children looked at Mrs. Burns like an aunt. In addition to their little formal schooling, they just loved Sandy Burns. They lived not too far from us in a very nice house and they did quite a bit of representational work. We did minimal representation just because there weren't that many opportunities. We used the ambassador's residence and the PAO would host the occasional representational event.

In the summer of 1971, my sister who is 13 years younger than I am, which means at the time she was about 16 years old, was entrusted by my parents to come visit us. She had never been outside the United States. My parents took her to New York, put her on the plane. She was going to fly from New York to Paris, Paris to Algiers. I went to the airport around mid-day to meet her. There were four flights a day from Paris.

You could stand on a deck and see people coming off the plane and I looked and I looked and I looked. My sister was not there. My parents had dropped her at the airport in New York and gone on vacation. There was a telephone strike in the United States at the time, not that telephone calls were very easy anyway. I couldn't reach them and I was distressed.

I went out to meet the second flight and the third flight of the day and still no sister. Only by chance, 24 hours later, did I decide to make one more try. I went to the airport and there was my sister. Just an example of the way things can sometimes go awry. When my parents spoke of the date, they spoke of the date she would be leaving the United States. Somehow I put that date in my head as the date she would be arriving in Algiers. If she was leaving New York on August 16th, let's say, she would arrive in Algiers August 17th. It is just a small anecdote but I mention it because today with e-mail, there would be no confusion. At that time, with our limited means of communication and a telephone strike in the United States, there was total confusion and a great deal of fear for 24 hours.

My sister came. I can remember walking with her through the Casbah of Algiers.

Q: What was the Casbah like when you were there? I remember I have seen the movie Pepe Lomoco and

BROWN: It fits the stereotype; narrow, twisting streets, laundry hanging out everywhere, Algerian women wearing the traditional face covering and long white attire.

Q: Were their faces covered?

BROWN: Yes, not everyone but these were not people influenced by the French, very traditional. There was an open market. You would see animal parts and I mean every part of the animal hanging out there. Music playing, trash in the streets, it wasn't clean. It wasn't fancy and it probably wasn't that large an area of Algiers either. It was very much that image.

I can remember going to Tunis with my wife. I am not sure what took us there. There is a little part of Tunis, Carthage perhaps, that visitors go to, known for birdcages and that kind of thing. My goodness, it was clean, well painted, everything maintained in an attractive style to please foreign visitors. The Casbah was 180 degrees different. There was no pretense, no dressing it up for visitors. It was narrow twisting streets, paint peeling but lively.

Back to the summer of 1971, when my sister came, we took another one of these memorable family trips. We drove west from Algiers, spent the night in Oran, crossed the border beyond a town called Tlemcen and into Oujda in Morocco, went to Fez for several nights. We visited the famous ruins at Volubilis where I saw mosaics for the first time. We visited Tangier, recalling that I had once been assigned there, and then we went all the way across Spain, through Seville and Cordoba, to Madrid, where I took my sister to a bull fight before we put her on a flight back to the U.S., and then on to San Sebastian to visit friends of my wife's. We came back through Granada.

We spoke very little Spanish and I joke that we survived on three words – gazpacho, paella and sangria.

We cut costs by traveling to Europe from Spanish enclaves in North Africa. En route, we went from Ceuta past Gibraltar to Algeciras; returning, we crossed the Mediterranean from Malaga to Melilla. These were internal Spanish sailings and so our travel costs were much reduced. After a month long trip, we came back to Algiers with a lot of recreation and not too much rest but it was part of our total educational experience.

Early on in Algiers, we got a dog. We met a Frenchman who had a kennel. He was very reluctant to allow us to take the dog we immediately focused on but finally, when he realized we were going to be a good family, he let us have her.

Q: It is dangerous to take a dog to an Arab country.

BROWN: You would think and not a lot of people had dogs but we hadn't been there a month when we got this wonderful little black cocker spaniel whom we named 'Tar'. This was 1970 and Tar was with us for the next 15 years -- Algeria, back to the United States, the Soviet Union and eventually we buried her in the back yard in France. A much traveled member of the family.

I'm reminded that in 1972, I had a chance to go to Rome on a pouch run. For some reason, they were looking for someone to carry the diplomatic pouch to Rome. Of course, I used my free time there for a day or so to look around Rome. One of the people I was in touch with was Henry Boguslawski. I mentioned him as an American businessman when we were in Yaoundé. He came out there with ITT, International Telephone and Telegraph, installed satellite ground stations. Henry Boguslawski was Polish-American.

I learned through meeting him on this trip to Rome and then in New York that he was a fabulously wealthy man through his art collection, had an amazing life story of being arrested by the Russians during the Second World War, was freed, spent some time in Iran. I don't believe he had any children. I wish I could find out more information about him because I think his story must be a very interesting one. He has passed away. The last time we saw him was in New York in 1972, '73 period.

When I came back from that brief trip to Rome, we took another family trip within Algeria. Again I ask, was I foolhardy? Was I naïve? We drove almost 2,000 miles over eight days, just my wife and me and our two children down into the desert from one oasis to another. I have extensive notes on that trip and I would describe going from oasis X to oasis Y not really knowing whether we would see anybody along the way, hoping the road would be open, that sand wouldn't be blowing across it.

Much of the desert, by the way, was not sand. Much of it was just barren, flat, and rocky.

Q: Was there any residue of the Foreign Legion that you ran across?

BROWN: Not that I recall, no. What we would see would be the camel caravans. On this trip, I recall at one point stopping and there, several hundred yards off the road, was a tent and a man gesturing to us. We got out of the car and went over. He was a nomad, I guess, took us into his tent, and gave us milk to drink. I let it collect on my upper lip so it would look as though I was drinking a lot of it. He had small children running around. And then we went on our way.

The unfortunate part of that trip was that after all these years in Africa, we got careless at one point and I asked for bottled water by asking for water in a bottle. I think all they did was run some tap water into a bottle and very quickly my wife and both children were seriously ill, almost life threateningly in the case of the children, ill with diarrhea and infections.

We got back to Algiers and I thought we would get medical attention and rest there. We did go see the doctor but the kids kept getting worse and we had to evacuate them to the American Hospital in Paris. I was really at that time torn between my job and my family. I reluctantly went along to the American Hospital, got them all installed there and then turned around and came back.

This is all in the form a confession. This was not an easy point in my professional life or my personal life. I really should have spent more time with my wife and children at that

hospital. But I felt that I had to get back to the office. My job was important. I was always very, very dedicated to my work. I would go in on Saturdays and this kind of stuff and I couldn't let my job not be done.

My wife and two children were in Paris for about three weeks. Her mother came out from the United States to help and they came back, my wife and two children at the end of those three weeks. We had some hard talks about priorities and that kind of thing. It was a very difficult period and it was sad that it came at the end of our six years in Africa where we had the normal ups and downs but nothing this serious. So it taught me a lesson. Happily I am still married to the same woman and my two daughters have grown up and are very happy mothers themselves. We survived it but it was a tough period.

Q: You left there in '72?

BROWN: 1972. One of the last things we did was sell the trusty Volkswagen straight back that we had purchased in 1966 just before we went to Africa. That car had taken us through six years, really a reliable vehicle.

Again, just another couple footnotes.

One of the most interesting American families we met during our stay in Algiers was the Malcolm Kerr family. He and his wife I think were on a Fulbright scholarship traveling through North Africa when they stayed with us. Malcolm Kerr eventually became President of the American University of Beirut; he was a very astute student of the Arab world and one of the best friends the Arab world could ever have had. He was assassinated in Beirut somewhere in 1984.

Among their children was a son named Steve, who went on to become a National Basketball Association star with the San Antonio Spurs and is still today involved in the executive part of the NBA. We knew him when he was just a little kid, running around that big house we had in Algiers.

Malcolm Kerr's father was a professor at Princeton and we saw them for the last time at Princeton which is the next stage of my life.

I was in Algeria from August 1970 to August 1972; on March 10, 1972, we had a visit from a man named Nicholas Katzenbach. He had been Attorney General under President Johnson.

Q: He was number two in the State Department.

BROWN: Yes, after serving as Attorney General. I don't know exactly why he came out, what brought him to Algiers, except that by that time, he was a high-level lawyer for IBM. So after meeting him at a reception, I said to myself, "Gosh, I am meeting these interesting people. I should make a note about this" and beginning March 10, 1972, I began keeping a journal. I have kept a diary virtually every day since, sometimes writing

down simple memories, nothing more than that I listened to a baseball game but in other cases, making rather interesting notes about my experiences. It was all inspired by the visit of Nicholas Katzenbach.

Princeton, New Jersey (1972-1973)

So after six years in Africa it was time to come home. I had had four years in French-speaking black Africa and two years in North Africa and I was due to return to the United States. I do not know what the process was, whether it was suggested to me or that I applied for it, but I was put up as a candidate for mid-career training. I had been in the Foreign Service for only six years but I guess I was now considered mid-career and I was given this rather prestigious opportunity. I was selected to do mid-career training at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.

In 1966, when I joined the Foreign Service and was looking for an assignment, Africa was what caught my fancy. That was the Kennedy era with a focus on the third world and they gave me Africa.

By 1972, this was the Nixon détente period and without a drop of Slavic blood and no background whatever in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union, I said I'd like to do Soviet studies. I was told that somebody in the European area office who was responsible for clearing on these assignments didn't turn over the piece of paper where my name was. If they had done so, they might have questioned my lack of Soviet credentials but somebody missed that and I received the Princeton assignment.

Compared to some places, Princeton did not have great Sovietologists but they certainly had plenty of people for me to interact with. This was not language studies; I didn't speak a word of Russian. I remember some people remarking that Princeton didn't have a big Soviet staff but listen to the people who were there: Fred Starr, who was teaching Russian history, went on to be president of Tulane University, then Oberlin College and is still in Washington doing a lot with Central Asian Republics. He had musical talent and had lived in Moscow and actually played with little factory orchestras and that kind of thing in Moscow.

There was a fellow named Steve Cohen who taught Soviet political history, lived in New York. His wife is today the editor of Nation magazine. Steve, Jewish and an expert on Bukharin, knew enough certainly to teach a solid course on Soviet political history.

Probably most notably, there was James Billington, who is today the Librarian of Congress; he was the author of "The Icon and the Ax" and was teaching a course on Russian cultural history.

Q: An icon. Well known Russian scholar

BROWN: It was an idiosyncratic course, one he shaped entirely himself.

We moved into something called Magee Apartments, faculty apartments on Lake Carnegie; we could walk right up to the campus. It was a really great way to come back to the United States. We were an hour or so from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where my wife's family was and she could go there with our children to visit them frequently. We developed a large number of friends our own age in Princeton.

The Magee Apartments were junior faculty apartments. There were 12 mid-career fellows. I think three were from State Department but the others were a cross section of Washington executive agencies.

We couldn't have a dog and so I imposed upon my parents; would they take the dog? And we drive the dog out to Pittsburgh. I heard later my father was pretty resentful they were going to have to put up with this dog for a year. He didn't really think it was appropriate for us to ask him to do it. At the end of the year, he was so attached to that dog he could hardly give her back to us.

The dog, by the way, stayed in Algiers after we left and a friend put her on a plane; Algiers to Paris and Paris to New York. I will never forget going to Kennedy Airport and finding a friendly person in the air freight office there. We went out on this dark night on the tarmac at the international arrivals area to find our dog. There was no question when the dog emerged from the cage that I was the rightful owner. She was just delighted to see me and vice versa.

I guess under any circumstances people love their dogs. I was recently in Key West and was reminded that Harry Truman said if you are in Washington and want a friend, get a dog. Well, certainly there is the Foreign Service attachment to animals; when we hear about people being evacuated from various places, they leave behind photo albums and everything else but they must take the dog. We were very happy to have the dog safely back with us.

Q: Let's talk about Princeton. What was your, what were you getting about the Soviet Union at that time? This would be '73.

BROWN: The mid-career program was headed by a man named Jay Bleiman, a very good guy who was very attentive to the needs of mid-career fellows.

It was a mixed emotional experience in some ways. It was a great way to reenter the United States, to come back after six years abroad but in a way it was also a little hard on my confidence. Number one, I didn't have a background in Soviet affairs. My experience had been in Africa. I guess I interacted with some people who were teaching that part of the world but as you know, the experience of a Foreign Service officer who has been out there doing a particular job and the perspective of an academic are very different. I can remember feeling a lack of confidence. I didn't know how to address the questions that academics might put to me even if I'd lived and worked in Algeria for two years or in Africa for six years.

I took classes on Soviet cultural history, Soviet political history and Russian history. I gave myself a free ride in that I only monitored them. I didn't take them for credit. I didn't take the tests. It wasn't a demanding academic experience the first semester.

But I felt the need for a project of my own and I interacted with a man named Robert Tucker. He was on the faculty of the Woodrow Wilson School and had been at the American Embassy in Moscow in the late '40s; if I recall correctly, he had married a Russian woman and because of that, he had had to leave and come to the United States. It was a U.S. government requirement that he come back and I think it was touch and go whether he would be able to bring his Russian wife with him but he did. I don't think he continued on with Foreign Service. He was teaching some aspect of Soviet studies and he became my adviser.

I said I would like to do research on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges. Out of that, I produced what I thought was quite a good paper on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges from 1955 to 1972, from the first formal cultural exchange agreement during the Eisenhower Administration. Rather than simply list programs, I looked at them in a political context and that was the beginning of wisdom for me as far as the Soviet Union.

I saw cultural exchanges not as just an end in themselves but as part of the political relationship. Cultural relations were the first thing you suggested when you wanted to imply a warming relation, the first thing you tried. It might be the New York Philharmonic performing in Moscow or later, ping pong diplomacy with the Chinese.

On the other side of the ledger, when things went badly and you wanted or had to indicate a deteriorating relationship, you didn't immediately launch missiles. You suspended cultural exchanges. This was your way of showing that you were upset with the behavior of the other country.

So in 1972, I was writing about it in an academic context. I covered a fairly short period, but you could continue it on almost through the end of the Soviet era. I would see it in practice a few years later. Come 1980, the Soviets were hosting the Olympics but they had invaded Afghanistan so we suspended cultural relations.

So I wrote this paper for Professor Tucker on U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges in a political context and I got a very nice, very positive reception from him. I still have the note he wrote. It said: "A careful, thoughtful scholarly review, informative and demonstrating again the uses of history. I enjoyed reading it."

Q: Was George Kennan there?

BROWN: George Kennan was there. Kennan came twice, my diary says, to speak in classes. Professors would invite Kennan to come in and speak to the class. He would have been in his late 60s and was held in very high regard. He was resident in Princeton and his word was gospel. I never got to know him personally but I did have a couple of

chances to hear him speak. A very thoughtful individual. Parenthetically, I am currently reading the biography by George Gaddis of George Kennan.

Midway through the year in Princeton, I had a call from a man I had known in my Dakar assignment, Kintzing Emmons. He was by now out of the Foreign Service. He was teaching at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He said, "They are looking for someone to head the foreign studies program at Georgia State University. Would you be interested?"

I was mildly interested, thought about it, read up on Atlanta. My wife was pretty much thinking maybe we had done our time in the Foreign Service so I went to Atlanta in January of 1973 and interviewed for this job as the foreign student adviser at Georgia State University. I was so serious about doing it that I looked around and made some inquiries about cost of living and housing. The man I interviewed with said, "Don't burn your bridges. I have a lot of other people looking at this job."

I stayed the night with my friend in Atlanta and the next morning, he said "I've got some bad news for you. They don't want you in that job. They think you are too interested in material things of life like housing and salary and don't have enough passion for the job."

Well, it told me something about myself. I guess I need to show more rah, rah passion. I should have gone in with my school sweater on and not worried about practical things like my children's education, whatever. But that wasn't then my nature, nor is it now. I have a New England reserve that sometimes works to my benefit and sometimes works against me.

In retrospect I am really glad they did not accept me because it might have provided a few years of interesting work but nothing would have given me anything like what the Foreign Service gave me. I am very glad.

One other note back on those Princeton years, my mind operates this way. One day I said to myself, "Gosh. It has been exactly one half year, 26 weeks since we came back from Algeria. Will I ever again have an opportunity, an experience like those six years in Africa? Will my life ever again be as interesting as it was during those six years? I have been back for six months. I guess I am just fated to live out the rest of my life in boredom or something."

Well, that would not be the case. The best years were still ahead.

Washington, DC (1973-1977)

Q: Were you getting any feedback or contact with USIA during this time?

BROWN: Princeton is only about three hours' drive from Washington and I could come down and talk to people. Since I was changing areas, I didn't know many of the players. I

knew some of the people from my African experience but my entire Foreign Service career for all practical purposes had been overseas so I didn't know too many of the people in Washington.

I don't know exactly how it happened but I learned there would be an opportunity to spend a year in State Department. I don't know what label they gave to it but it seemed like part of your overall liberal education in the Foreign Service. State Department liked it because they didn't have to pay for me. They would provide an assignment and USIA would continue to pay my salary.

At the time, it seemed logical that I would go to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (CU) and perhaps be the Soviet desk person for cultural affairs. Somebody, I can't recall who, suggested that that would be a pretty narrow slice. I could perhaps be assigned to the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, EUR/SOV, in the Bureau of European Affairs. And so, after a lot of back and forth, I ended up being assigned to the Soviet desk in the State Department.

In the spring of that year, 1973, we bought a house in Chevy Chase but the house would not be ready until August. My job began in June and so for the entire summer I left my family in Princeton and I would commute; take the train down on Sunday night and come back on Friday night.

I very clearly remember my first day on the job, June, 18, 1973. We were all invited to go to the White House because President Nixon was receiving Leonid Brezhnev on the White House lawn. I stood in a long line and was way back but I could see the ceremony.

The hierarchy in State Department at that time was, I believe, as follows: the assistant secretary of state for European affairs was Walter Stoessel. The deputy assistant secretary was Jack Armitage. More practically, the office director was Jack Matlock. His deputy was Bill Luers. And then, the office had four sub-units; bilateral, multilateral, economic and exchanges. I was assigned to the bilateral office headed by a man named Bill Dyess.

I didn't realize it at the time but this was a lineup of people, many of whom I would be interacting with over the next 18 years or so until 1990 when I left the Soviet Union. Jack Matlock was the hard-charging office director. I first knew him there. I would know him later when he was briefly the chargé in Moscow in 1981. I would know him again when he was on the NSC as the Soviet affairs adviser to President Reagan in the mid 1980s. And most directly I would know him as my ambassador in Moscow from 1987 to 1990.

But there were many other people in that office who became colleagues. A fellow named Dick Combs was a political officer and then DCM in Moscow. Dick Miles became the consul general in Leningrad. The head of the multilateral section was J. Stapleton Roy, Stape Roy. I read a newspaper piece by him just this week about U.S. relations with China.

My slice of the pie was rather narrow but much of what we were doing during that time involved answering these piles of congressional inquiries. Every day, we would have a stack of “Congressionals” to answer, correspondence forwarded by members of congress. Much of it had to do with Jewish emigration. This was long before computers but they did have some sort of technology that allowed you to crank out boiler plate responses.

Q: Oh, yes. You could have boiler plate paragraphs and all that.

BROWN: Right, anyone who would see it today would laugh at it. We answered mountains of congressional correspondence.

I had a couple of other little portfolios that fascinated me. One was working conditions of journalists in the Soviet Union. This was before the Helsinki agreements but I discovered in that office that there were files going back to the 1930s (and I sure hope they exist in the archives somewhere today) about American journalists working in Moscow, the conditions and some of the interesting personalities who had gone out there as journalists.

One congressional inquiry had to do with sending mail to the Soviet Union. I looked around and there was no boiler plate language so I took a little bit of initiative. I called, it must have been the postal service and maybe the Justice Department, and I got information that was really more than just boiler plate and put this into a letter back to the congressman that he could share with his constituent.

I would go to these weekly staff meetings presided over by Jack Matlock. I will speak more about him later; I have the highest regard for him professionally. He knew his subject in 1973 and he knew it even more in 1990. He has written one of the great books on the collapse of the Soviet Union. I was privileged to work for him in various guises. There were many times when it was wonderful to have such an extremely competent, knowledgeable boss and ambassador.

But there were also times when he was a terror to work for. He had no patience for the slightest foible and I used to go to these staff meetings wondering if today might be my day to be singled out for some sort of demerit or something I had done wrong. My boss got called on the carpet regularly at staff meetings. If something wasn't being done on time, something was done in sloppy fashion, you heard about it publicly.

On one particular day, I can remember I heard my name and I thought “oh, what have I done wrong?” I was going to shrink under the desk. But lo and behold, I was being singled out for this letter about postal deliveries that I had prepared because I hadn't just gone to boiler plate; I had actually gone gotten on the phone, taken some initiative, come up with more than just standard verbiage. I had gone the extra mile and I was being singled out in this rather embarrassing way.

It wasn't put quite like this but the message was “he not only did this but he is a USIA guy. He is not even a State Department officer but he was able to think and reason and take initiative.” It was somewhat condescending but I accepted it.

I will say immodestly I got a lot of nice plaudits that year, most notably from a man whom I really admire and that's Bill Luers, the deputy. If I had prepared a draft that Bill Luers had some question about, instead of writing "please see me," Bill would come in and sit across from me and put his feet up on the desk and say, "This draft you have here, did you ever think about maybe approaching it this way?" and I'd say, "Ah, I see what you are talking about." He was like a friend, a mentor and I retained a couple of memos he wrote to people over in USIA in which he sang my praises. I really appreciated it. Bill Luers is just a wonderful man, went on to become ambassador to Prague, president I think of the Metropolitan Museum.

Q: One of the two presidents of the Metropolitan for a long time.

BROWN: Many years later, I was visiting Prague. I went to the opera one night and I met this very nice couple and started talking with them. Then I said, "Have you ever heard of William Luers, Ambassador Luers?" Yes, certainly, they had not only heard of him but felt the same way that I did. Well, I wrote him a note and said, "You probably don't remember me but blah, blah, blah" and of course I got a personal letter back. I hoped he would remember me and he did; he wrote a very flattering letter.

Q: This was '73, was it?

BROWN: '73, '74

Q: How stood relations with the Soviet Union?

BROWN: On the surface, this was a pretty good period. Brezhnev received on the White House lawn by Nixon and I think this was one year after Nixon had gone to Moscow and a couple of years after Nixon had gone to China. These were pretty heady times in our relations with communist countries.

Now of course, it was also the Watergate era, the seeds of Watergate had already been planted. Nixon had won the overwhelming victory in '72.

Q: Were you feeling on the Soviet desk the hand of one Henry Kissinger?

BROWN: Oh, indeed, yes. Henry Kissinger was the secretary of state. I really loved watching Kissinger press conferences or Kissinger's extemporaneous remarks because unlike his predecessor, William Rogers, who was pretty bland, Kissinger was interesting. I admired his ability to analyze, to articulate.

We sent a lot of memos to the secretary of state. I recall one in particular. Our Moscow embassy suggested that a certain member of the politburo might be invited to the United States and said that at age 54, he was one of the youngest members of the politburo. I was in charge of drafting the paperwork. The substance was easy. The paperwork was what

was hard. It would have to go through so many different layers to get cleared and then to the secretary to decide.

There it was decided that it wouldn't be to the secretary with an attachment but to the president for a decision and it went back and forth and back and forth. I started out writing that "at 54, so and so is one of the younger members of the politburo." I joked that by the time I got done with it, I would have to say "at 55 he is one of the younger members" and the person who takes over for me will be saying "at 56 he is one of the younger members of the politburo."

It was very, very frustrating to try to move paper up through the system. If you only had to get it as far as the deputy assistant secretary of state, that was okay but to get it up to the seventh floor. Mr. Kissinger's right hand man at that time was a young guy my age named Paul Bremer.

Q: I have interviewed Paul. Jerry

BROWN: Jerry Bremer, right. He did Kissinger's bidding in a very efficient manner.

On a beautiful fall weekend in October, I was the duty officer. That's funny to say because everybody came in on weekends but I happened to be duty officer on this perfect fall weekend of the Yom Kippur War. I remember being in there from early morning until late afternoon and then coming back in the evening because Mr. Kissinger reportedly wanted a list of all U.S.-Soviet activities, interactions, any meetings, exchanges, whatever so that we would know what tools we might have if we wanted to suspend something to indicate unhappiness.

So we worked hard but it was a very valuable year. I am so glad that I didn't end up in that job in the cultural exchange bureau. The value was in meeting these people with whom I would have continuing contact and in seeing all the issues, bilateral, multilateral.

And just getting a feeling of how State Department worked. These were the days you could just walk in the front door of State Department.

I did have some contacts with people at the Soviet Embassy. I was careful but it was all right to accept luncheon invitations with them. I tracked down a couple of them years later when I went to Moscow.

Q: Well, they were trying to make a book on you, I guess.

BROWN: I'm sure. If they wanted to know that I enjoy symphonic music and am a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, they could write that down in their book.

Q: Did you get a feel about the influence and importance of Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador?

BROWN: Not so much there as when I went to Moscow in 1978 and worked for Ambassador Toon. Ambassador Toon never let a day go by in which he did not remark on the failure of Washington to make full advantage of its ambassador in Moscow. Dobrynin was just taken for granted. I didn't have any direct dealings with him, probably I shook his hand or something at a reception at the Soviet Embassy.

Q: Did you find that you were, I won't say discriminated against, but the fact that you didn't speak Russian and hadn't served in Moscow, was this a hindrance?

BROWN: No, it might have been my own personal hang-up for a while but as I say, without being immodest, I pulled my own weight. You didn't have to speak Russian on the job as long as you just kept drafting. I went beyond drafting Congressionals. I was asked to draft some speeches. I drafted a speech for Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania and was commended for that.

After a while, it felt like a football team. We were down there in the trenches. If you did your blocking and everything else, they didn't care what your religion was, whether you were USIA or State or whether you spoke Russian or not.

I do remember one time, some outsider came in and he was asking me all these questions. He was getting ready to go to the Soviet Union. He was thinking about going to Novosibirsk and the question was whether to travel there by train or by plane and when he discovered I had never set foot in the Soviet Union, he sat back in his chair and decided my thoughts on the matter were not really worth listening to.

Otherwise, no, I didn't feel a hang-up.

Q: Did you feel the effects of Watergate and the evolving demise of the Nixon presidency?

BROWN: No. As we all know it was in the news, not quite as much in '72-'73 as in '73-'74 leading to the resignation. I guess like a lot of people I took a fiendish delight in seeing Nixon squirm but I don't recall it had, maybe historically we now know that it did, that much of an impact on our relations and certainly not on our workload.

Q: After that you spent one year at Princeton and one year on the desk and then what?

BROWN: By the way, beginning with this assignment, I would spend four years in Washington. This was the longest period I spent in Washington during my Foreign Service career; 31 years and I spent a total of ten years in the United States. Those four years were the longest stretch I ever spent in Washington. I used to joke that I couldn't keep a job because every one of those years I did something different. The first year was on the Soviet desk.

It was understood, since I had this experience and was now well known in USIA, that I would go work in USIA's Office of Eastern Europe. So I got the job of desk officer for

Romania and Czechoslovakia. There were four desk officers and it was divided so you had one big country and one small country. The big countries were Soviet Union, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia. I say big in terms of the amount of activities and programs we had. The small countries were Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Once again, I ran into a group of people that I would interact with quite a bit over the next few years, although not as much as those people from the Soviet desk. The person I have to cite head and shoulders above everybody else was John W. Shirley, known to all as Jock, who became a mentor, a friend and a man I really admired.

Jock was the office director. His deputy was a man named Gifford Malone who was a State Department officer. Giff's father was the well-known biographer of Thomas Jefferson. I remember Jock trying to convince Giff to convince his father to go out to some USIA activity in Eastern Europe, to be the speaker at some ceremonial event. My fellow desk officers, John Kordek, Bob Coonrod and Mike Hoffman, were good guys. They had good experiences in USIA as well. So we were a pretty happy group.

Here I have to say, no disrespect to my State Department friends, that while working on the Soviet desk was professionally to my great advantage, it was never a relaxed, happy environment. People were workaholics, working late in the evening, working weekends.

When I got to USIA, it seemed as if people had a more balanced life. Jock Shirley on weekends went horseback riding. By the way, I found out that his wife, the special assistant to Assistant Secretary of State Stoessel, was a woman I had gone to Fletcher with. I knew her as Kathy Horberg; now she was Kathy Shirley.

So USIA was an easier, more fun environment. We did our work seriously but I am sure I relaxed. Jock Shirley took a liking to me. I was very fortunate. I did my job well. I was careful. I crossed the 't's and dotted the 'i's and I drafted well and Jock liked that.

He was responsible for my first trip to Eastern Europe. Jock had grown up in Hungary during the war, is a fluent speaker of Hungarian. As early as October, 1974, soon after I arrived at USIA as a desk officer, Jock sent me out on a two-week trip to Eastern Europe, specifically to Bucharest for an exhibit opening, "Photo USA."

The ambassador there was Harry Barnes, a very effusive outgoing ambassador. Everybody knew Harry Barnes. We went from Bucharest to Ploesti for a performance by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. I don't know whether Ambassador Barnes did it deliberately or not but he worked it in such a way that I was sitting in the limousine in the normal position for the ambassador, back seat on the right. I didn't mistakenly get in that seat; he maneuvered it so that I sat there. We arrive. The door swings open and I step out and people think I am the ambassador. Harry Barnes emerges and of course, ahhh, Mr. Ambassador.

I continued on in that trip, thanks to Jock Shirley through Budapest. He must have liked me or he wouldn't have had me go to Budapest, Vienna, Bratislava, Prague and Warsaw.. It was my first ever exposure to Eastern Europe.

I still have a two page memorandum, random impressions of the visit to Eastern Europe.

Q: What were we doing in Romania, for example because this is Ceausescu who was both on our good books and a rather disgusting person?

BROWN: A disgusting person but he was our good guy. Remember, Nixon visited Romania; Ceausescu never joined the Warsaw Pact. He allowed a certain amount of economic freedom and he poked his finger in the eye of the Russians. Most importantly, he allowed us to open a library. We had a big American library. That was major symbolic presence in Eastern Europe.

A colleague of mine named Steve Chaplin was the library director. We had a very active, high profile cultural exchange program in Romania with a library. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra was performing there and in other eastern European cities. We, my wife and I, had heard them at Wolf Trap during the summer so I had a chance to talk with some of the performers, flutist Carol Wincenc and a Wooster classmate named Skip James, both about that concert and about their tour.

Q: What was your impression of Bucharest?

BROWN: I remember distinctly one impression I have shared with a lot of Hungarian and American friends. I was there, it was fall, late October or early November. I was there over a weekend and it was Sunday night and Hungarians were coming back

Q: You are talking about Budapest now?

BROWN: Yes. Hungarians were coming back from their weekend trip to the countryside. They were coming back in droves by public transportation. They were coming back with flowers and mushrooms. This sounds so corny, so cliché but I am saying to myself, these are just normal people like all the rest of us. These were families with cares about getting up tomorrow and going to work, putting their kids through school and visiting grandma in the country and coming back with flowers and mushrooms. As I say, it sounds corny and cliché but it was breaking down my images of this communist-controlled robotic society.

Q: How did you find Romania, particularly under Ceausescu, how were things? What was your impression there? There you had a tighter society.

BROWN: For Romania, I went back in 1986 which would be 12 years later, and I remember going back to that big central square in Bucharest and having the feeling that there was no life. If not a ghost town, it was a very sad lifeless spiritual desert. That's the impression that hit me in Romania. I don't recall I noticed it so much on my first visit.

We had the cultural program so it didn't hit me in 1974 the way it did 12 years later in 1986.

Back to Budapest, I was just amazed by the architecture, standing on the Buda side looking down and across the Danube at the Parliament Building. It wasn't something I associated with communist Eastern Europe. Our PAO there had a beautiful residence. It was used quite extensively for cultural programming.

I went on to Warsaw and I don't know quite how it happened but I met with a Polish couple, Steven Garczynski and his wife Zosia. They took me out on All Saints day, November 1, to a cemetery; as far as you could see, there were candles burning. It made such an impression upon me. The religious atmosphere wasn't a godless communism.

I went to their apartment. They were an older couple, intellectuals. They had been through the war. I am afraid they gave me too much food, more than I realized. They had very little food to give and what they put out there probably came from their very limited supply of food.

So in that and many other ways, it was a very good year as the desk officer, working for Jock Shirley, a man I not only respected professionally but liked personally.

Q: Do you know where he is now?

BROWN: He is in Stonington, Connecticut, retired in his early '80s.

USIA's director at the time was James Keogh. Mr. Keogh decided that it didn't make sense to have separate Eastern and Western European offices. He combined them into a European office to parallel what the State Department had and he tapped Jock Shirley to be the director for Europe and Jock asked me if I would take a position he created called staff director. It was a little bit controversial to some people who were senior to me because Jock had a deputy for Eastern Europe and a deputy for Western Europe and a policy adviser and an executive officer. I was above desk officers but beneath all these other people.

Again, without being immodest, it was Jock's way of saying he respected my work, my attention to detail, my ability to draft. I was very flattered to go work for Jock Shirley as his special assistant, his staff director.

That year, which would have been 1975 to 1976, I was the staff director in the European office of USIA. Jock decided to have a conference in Vienna of all the European PAOs, all 35 public affairs officers. My job was to make sure that the conference was put together with all the proper preparation and documents and boy, did we ever amass a mountain of paper. It came off and I got to go to Vienna and meet all the players. Jock would quite often point to me and it was very flattering and good for my career.

Somewhere during the course of that year, I was assigned as information officer in Moscow and Jock again was instrumental in that. It would mean a year of Russian language training. I would go out to Moscow in 1977 as the IO, information officer.

Well, lo and behold, during the course of that same year, they decided to extend the incumbent information officer, Jack Harrod, by one year so the job wouldn't open up until 1978. Jock at that point could have said it was all down the drain. "You will have to do something else" but he didn't. He arranged for me to have not only a full year, 44 weeks, of Russian language at FSI in Rosslyn but to have a second year at the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch, Germany. So I had two full years to prepare for my Moscow assignment. In addition to the language training, the spinoff benefits, the people I met, were extremely valuable.

My wife wasn't keen on going to the Soviet Union. She thought when we came back from six years in Africa that I might change careers, that we wouldn't go back overseas again, but she reluctantly agreed to two years in Moscow. When I came home one night and said there had been a slight change of plans, we were going to have not only my language training here but a year in Germany followed by three years in Moscow, I was invited to sleep out back in a tent. She wasn't too happy. The story turns out much better; she thrived in our Moscow assignment.

Q: We will pick this up in, when did you go off to Garmisch?

BROWN: To complete the Washington saga, I did that year as staff assistant for Jock Shirley. It was 1976 to 1977. In August of 1977, I reported to FSI to begin my 44 weeks of Russian language training.

Q: Today is the 23rd of February, 2012 with Phil Brown. We are continuing.

BROWN: I thought this might be a good point to review.

I spent 30 plus years in the Foreign Service and for me, it was the Foreign Service. I spent more than 20 years overseas so rounding off, let's say 30 years in the Foreign Service and two-thirds overseas.

Of the other ten years, two were outside Washington. They were university assignments; one that I have already mentioned, the year at Princeton and one that will come up later at the Fletcher School. That leaves eight years that I spent in Washington, including the year I joined the Foreign Service.

Four of those eight years were 1973 to 1977. That was the longest stretch I ever spent in Washington during my 30 plus years in the Foreign Service. Each of those years I had a different assignment. The first year we have already discussed, 1973 to 1974, we had come back from Princeton and I spent it on the Soviet desk at the State Department. Professionally very arduous but a lot of rewards and it was a year that really benefited me in my later assignments in the Soviet Union.

Then I had a two years working in USIA headquarters building, the only time I ever worked in the USIA headquarters building. It was 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue. The building is no longer a U.S. government building.

Which reminds me, when I came to Washington in 1966 and was working in the USIA headquarters building, our address was 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. How that rolled off the tongue for a young, idealistic Foreign Service officer to be at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. It was a wretched old building; they tore it down. It is now a World Bank site but it was a great address. It reflected the idealism of the era.

During those two years in USIA, 1974 to 1976, I was a desk officer and then when they created the European area, I worked as staff director.

My boss, my mentor, the person who really had more influence on my Foreign Service experience was John W. Shirley, or Jock as he was known, a professional colleague and a friend.

I should mention quickly that during those four years, any number of things in our personal lives impacted on our Foreign Service experience. Just to list them: We purchased a home, the same home we still occupy. For the first time in our lives, in 1973, we became home owners in Chevy Chase using money we had saved when we lived in Africa to make a down payment.

Our children walked to a neighborhood school, the same neighborhood school that kids walk to today, Somerset in Chevy Chase. Our kids were in second through fifth grade and kindergarten through third grade during those four years.

We joined a church, Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, where we established lifelong friendships; some of our best and closest friends to this day are in that church. I also joined the church choir under the direction of a fellow named Ken Lowenberg. Singing both anthems on Sunday and special concerts a couple times a year became part of my musical education, something that had a profound impact on me when I was overseas. Music and the Foreign Service went hand in hand for me.

One year we decided to take a vacation and we went to Maine and fell in love with Maine. In 1976, we purchased a small cabin on a lake there.

Q: Where?

BROWN: Pitcher Pond in the town of Lincolnville Center, Maine. We usually link it with Camden, Maine, because that is a better known spot. That cabin in Maine became the place we headed for anytime we had home leave. It was very comforting when we were overseas to know, when we were coming on home leave, that we would not be staying with family or friends or looking to rent a place. We had the cabin in Maine. As I will mention later, it had a direct impact on a couple of our Foreign Service experiences.

We were for the first time in six years closer to our parents and to our siblings. My wife taught at Sidwell Friends School, at the lower school. That was very consistent with her educational experience; she had gone to a Friends school. Her brother by that time was headmaster of a Friends school and later on our daughter would come back from overseas and attend a Friends school.

During that time we did not do any personal overseas travel. I took two trips, professional business trips. The first thanks to my boss, Jock Shirley. I was the desk officer for Romania and Czechoslovakia and so he said to me early on, "Go out there, travel three weeks, and get a feel of the area." I was delighted to follow that instruction. I went to Bucharest, Budapest, Vienna, Bratislava, Prague and Warsaw as my first exposure to Eastern Europe.

In 1976, Jock Shirley put together a conference in Vienna of all the PAOs. I did a lot of the administrative and donkey work on that. We met in Vienna and following that, I went to Budapest and met Jock there. Jock had very close ties to Budapest and so it was fun meeting him there and professionally very interesting.

On that trip I also went for the first time to Moscow and Leningrad. I didn't know I would end up spending many years in Moscow and Leningrad. Of course, I had friends there from my year in the State Department. There was a cultural presentation by a folk singer. Roy Clark was performing and I had a chance to attend a reception at the ambassador's residence, Spaso House and go to an apartment where Roy Clark performed for a small group of invited guests. It was a little slice of something I would be experiencing in much greater depth later on.

Q: What was your impression of, start with Eastern Europe during this when you went around both to Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Soviet Union? What was your impression of things at that time?

BROWN: I had a whole variety of impressions and I listed them one time in a memorandum and I am not going to bother you with them right now. It is 17 different impressions of Eastern Europe.

I would point out one because it kept coming back to me during all the time I was in the communist world. There was no question we were monitored. Our activities were subject to surveillance but I never for one minute worried about it. I never really felt that anything I was doing was illegal or inappropriate; the only concern I ever had along the line was that my contact with local people might be dangerous to them.

On the first trip, I visited a couple in Poland whose names we had been given by friends back here in Washington; I went to their apartment. They took me out on All Saints' Night, November 1 to the cemetery in Warsaw, a highly Catholic country. I didn't feel the least concerned for my safety but I always wanted to make sure the people we talked

to I wasn't going to in any way endanger them, put them in an awkward or embarrassing situation.

Even later on, when I traveled through the Soviet Union with colleagues and someone would say, "See that guy over there? He is monitoring us," I usually didn't see it. I know it went on but it didn't affect me that much. As I used to say so often in Moscow, if they want to write in their files that I have a deep interest in classical music, so be it. Let them do it. So I guess that is just one of the impressions I had.

Not to underestimate the controls that existed in those countries but I didn't feel any danger or jeopardy.

Q: Did you see this as a society that was a threat to the United States?

BROWN: You knew intuitively from everything you were told and read that they had nuclear weapons and they had massive military strength but anytime you looked at the shortages, saw people lined up for food just made any physical comparisons of standards of life, you just knew that they weren't living as well. It was very hard to believe that they could threaten us in an economic or quality of life sense.

And yet, face it. 1974 we were only a generation removed from the Second World War and there was the barbed wire and the Berlin Wall and all those things and so it was a very different world you entered into.

Q: You were the desk officer. Was Romania high on our list at that time?

BROWN: Romania was and I think we discussed this a little last time. In an odd sense, when you look at it from the perspective of today with Ceausescu considered one of the most atrocious leaders ever in that part of the world and what he did to that country was awful but at the time, this was the country we favored in Eastern Europe. Nixon had visited Romania. Romania never joined the Warsaw Pact. The Romanians allowed us to open a cultural center. We had a very active USIS program and presence in Romania. Romania had diplomatic relations with Israel. Romania was the odd country out in Eastern Europe.

We had a very high profile ambassador there, Harry Barnes. I am repeating something from last time but we went from Bucharest to a town called Ploesti for a cultural activity and I went along. I don't know if Harry Barnes did it deliberately or what but he positioned me so that I was seated in the normal ambassadorial spot in the limousine, back seat on the right. We got there and somebody opened the door and we stepped out and for a moment they thought I was the ambassador until Harry Barnes stepped out, a tall, very distinguished looking man and there was no question who was the ambassador. But he was a very high profile ambassador. I guess we would have described our relations with Romania as good, certainly better than with other countries of Eastern Europe. It was a place we were allowed to do certain things we couldn't do elsewhere, public affairs things.

Q: What were we doing public affairs wise in Romania?

BROWN: Well, we had the library. That was the major presence. During my visit there, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra performed. There was a flutist with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra named Carol Wincenc who had East European heritage. These people were very warmly received. Their concerts were immediately sold out.

On this same trip, I went to Bratislava and we had an exhibit. I don't remember the theme of the exhibit but it was comparable to the large traveling exhibits we had the Soviet Union. We had a geodesic dome, we had guides speaking the local language. Locals would line up at great length to travel through the exhibit. Just before I went, there was a big windstorm that did severe damage to the exhibit in Bratislava. It took away some of its show time there.

Q: Were you slated to go to Eastern Europe?

BROWN: I don't recall exactly when I got my assignment to Moscow but it was somewhere during the year 1976-1977 that I was assigned as information officer, IO/press attaché, Moscow.

It was understood that I would then start language training in mid-1977. During the course of that year something happened with the personnel situation in Moscow and the slot I was supposed to occupy would not come open until 1978. My boss, Jock Shirley, could have been hardnosed and said "well, we will have to find some other assignment for you or your language training will be delayed for a year." Instead, he suggested I have a full year of Russian language training at FSI and then go on for a second year at the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch, Germany. The *quid pro quo* was that instead of a two year assignment in Moscow, I'd have a three year assignment.

At this point I was having a little trouble convincing my wife even to think about two years and when I came home and said that we are going to Garmisch for a year and then three years in Moscow, she wasn't all that thrilled. To give her credit, she threw herself into life in Moscow, took full advantage of our three years there and was with me when I opted for a second three-year assignment in Moscow.

Maybe I could turn quickly to the year at FSI. 1976, the year of the bicentennial. I remember July 4, 1976 celebrating 200 years of American independence and soon after I headed off to the Foreign Service Institute where I walked into a small room and a lady looked at me and said, "*Zdravstvyte. Prisazhivite pozhalusta*" and I had no idea what she was saying. Her gesture indicated I should sit down and I sat down in a room with probably six other neophytes totally new to the language.

As I said before, I had no background in the Slavic world. I didn't speak a word of Russian. I had the advantage at least of having one foreign language under my belt, French. So for the next 44 weeks, and anyone who has been through language training at

FSI knows what I am talking about, I went over to Rosslyn for five hours a day of oral and one hour a day of reading Russian, sitting around a small table with five or six other fellow students. It was arduous, with homework, emphasis on speaking, learning how to communicate in Russian.

I was taken under the wing of a woman named Nina de la Cruz. Nina, I don't know what her maiden name was, was born in Russia, pre-revolution, lived in pre-Leningrad, St. Petersburg. I wish I knew her full story but at some point with her family they left the Soviet Union. She ended up I believe in Brazil where she married Senor de la Cruz and became Nina De La Cruz. She was head of the Russian language program.

She was a true Russian intellectual and a believer in not only the language but in the importance of the culture. She made some snap judgments about people, about whether they were good language students or not. Fortunately, I impressed her as a good language student and along with a couple of others I encountered her not only during the week but she would occasionally invite me and a couple others, including a USIA colleague of mine named Barbara Allen, to her apartment on Sunday afternoon. We'd have tea. I wouldn't realize fully at the time how often that would be replicated in Moscow in much less elegant apartments -- going to someone's apartment for tea and simple conversation.

I can remember Nina saying to me and to others, "Are you here to learn the Russian language?" And of course, we all said, "Yes, we are here to learn the Russian language." She'd in effect say, "Oh, you couldn't learn the Russian language. You have to be born into the Russian language. The Russian language is an entire culture unto itself. We are here to teach you how to communicate using Russian as a tool."

Those were not her exact words but it was a good lesson because I tend to think if I can't do something in its entirety, then I have failed. It taught me if I could at least learn to use the Russian language to communicate, I was achieving the ends set forth in that program and I would be able to do my job in Moscow. Many times in my years in Russia, I said to myself "If I only knew Russian," that is if I had grown up with the language, if I had greater oral comprehension, then I could understand the jokes, I could understand these plays, I could understand these movies, etcetera.

I did well in Russian. At the end of that year, I tested 3/3 and later on tested 4/4 but I was always more conscious of my deficiencies than of my abilities in Russian. But it was thanks to Nina De La Cruz that I did as well as I did, Nina and other very serious teachers.

An anecdote about the year. We were always studying Russian verbs of motion.

Q: Where you are going, coming.

BROWN: Yes and whether you were going one time or going frequently.

Q: I am a graduate of the Army language school in Monterrey in '52.

BROWN: We were driving little vehicles around the table and studying Russian that way. To get from my home in Chevy Chase over to Rosslyn, I had to take three buses and on the return, one of those buses picked up every school child in Georgetown and we limped our way through Georgetown and I was exhausted. This is public transportation before Metro so against the better judgment of many women in my life -- my mother, my wife and my daughters -- I bought a motorbike and I found a way to drive that motorbike on safe routes all the way from my home to FSI.

I didn't realize but that would become my verb of motion and so often, when we were invited in class to speak extemporaneously, we used my motorbike for verbs of motion, for driving. It was a convenient means of transportation but also a tool in the classroom. For me it was very uncharacteristic. I was never a motorcyclist. This was not a motorcycle. It did not require a license and I drove it very carefully and only a couple of places along the way was I competing with a lot of traffic. It sure did make life simpler as far as getting from my home to FSI.

Garmisch, Germany (1977-1978)

So summer of 1977, we rented out our home, packed everything and headed off to Garmisch, Germany to the U.S. Army Russian Institute. I went ahead of the family. I took Tar; the dog that came into our lives in Algiers in 1970 was now going back across the Atlantic. My wife came along later with our children. I didn't realize at the time but this would be a life changing year. We had never lived in Europe, we had traveled in Europe but this was our first experience living in Europe. Not the typical living situation, but nevertheless, we were living in Western Europe.

It was a great year to be there with our children. They were young enough that they were still very much part of the family but old enough that we could do things together.

Let me emphasize first of all that this was an academic year. I spent a lot of time studying and in two ways, it was a much more difficult year than the year I spent in Rosslyn. For one, when you are in a tower in Rosslyn, you have no other distractions. When you are in Garmisch, Germany trying to study Russian and you look out the window and you see the mountains and the snow falling, it is very hard to keep your mind on academic work.

Secondly, I encountered a very different teaching method. The method I had experienced in FSI focused on oral communication. My colleagues in the two-year program in Garmisch -- I was in mostly with the first-year students -- had spent their previous year at Monterrey at the Army Language Institute with much more of an emphasis on the written language and what endings to put on words and passing written tests.

For much of the year, I did very poorly on those written tests simply because this was not a method I was familiar with. When it came to speaking the language, I did by comparison much better. Not many of my colleagues there were destined for American

Embassy Moscow. Many of them were going to be going into situations where they might be listening to the Russian language or other types of intelligence assignments. My preparation was on the spoken language and this is where I did better.

One Friday (the exams often came at the end of the week), I took one of these written tests and basically failed it. I did poorly. I was discouraged. That same afternoon, I went over to the ski area where there was a ski competition and I noticed at the end that a Russian skier was fumbling with her equipment and I decided I am going to risk this. I walked over and I said to her in Russian, "*Mozhno vam pamoshch?*" May I help you? Three words and without hesitation she replied, "*Da.*" Yes. She handed me her skis and I walked with her a few hundred yards down to some transportation and we chatted in Russian. I came home ecstatic. I said, "This is what it is all about. I actually used my Russian to communicate."

She didn't ask me where I had learned my Russian. She didn't ask me what endings I put on my verbs or nouns or anything of that sort. I used Russian to communicate and I was thinking back to the advice I got at FSI from Nina De La Cruz. That was pretty exciting but that went along with many moments of self doubt and discouragement.

The program there was demanding. There were lecture classes, occasionally in English but mostly in Russian. There were one-on-one arrangements they made for me. There were grammar classes. I spent a lot of time in this lovely, wonderful environment of pure academic study trying to improve my Russian.

When I said they made special arrangements for me, the head of the institute was Lieutenant Colonel Roland Lajoie, another of those persons who really had an influence on me. Roland Lajoie went on to become Major General Lajoie. He was head of the Liaison Mission in Potsdam and the On-Site Inspection Agency that monitored START agreements. He had a very distinguished career but he was for me a friend. We were very close friends with him and his family, his children. One of his daughters was a very close friend of our daughter.

In a more general sense, not having served in the military myself, this was an interesting exposure for me to be living in a military community. They all assured me it was atypical because they were all officers and many of them in military intelligence so it was not exactly a cross-section of the U.S. army. But it was a chance to meet some really wonderful people. No better way of saying it, some of my best friends, some of our best friends came out of that class.

Besides Roland Lajoie, then Major Greg Govan, who was a fellow student, went on to a distinguished career in the army. Likewise, a marine major who went on to become Colonel, George Connell. They were all involved in monitoring the US-Soviet arms control agreements and we would see them frequently in Moscow.

So it was a life changing family year -- the first time living in Europe, a rigorous academic year and interaction with the army community

Q: Are any of those people involved in dealing with the Soviets regarding arms control, are they retired?

BROWN: They are all retired.

Q: Are there any in the area?

BROWN: I believe Roland Lajoie lives in New Hampshire where his roots were. Greg Govan lives in Charlottesville, Virginia and George Connell lives in Naples, Florida. They are all good friends, although we have lost touch with Roland Lajoie. They would have a wealth of memories of their experiences. They would all go out to this spot in the Ural Mountains, Votkinsk, where Tchaikovsky was born but which was also the place the Soviets manufactured their SS-20 missiles; they were part of the monitoring team out there.

Q: While you were taking this course at Garmisch, was this about the time the Soviets introduced the SS-20?

BROWN: I believe that was later. My recollection of the SS-20 versus Pershing debate was during the 1980s when I was at the embassy in Paris. I don't recall it being an issue at that time. I would have to go back and look but there were not, as I recall, big East/West issues. I don't recall major crises.

I knew I was going to Moscow so naturally, events in Moscow or that were related to Moscow were very much on my mind. In August of that year, I had barely arrived in Garmisch, there was a fire at the embassy in Moscow. Somebody should write a book on that subject alone; fires at American Embassy Moscow. There was another during my second tour there. They were an all too frequent occurrence and they had an impact on how we did our job there.

That fire, the one I just referred to, August 26, 1977 impacted when we eventually arrived in Moscow. Certain apartments were lost. I don't know what went on behind the scenes but instead of going into Moscow in early summer, 1978, we didn't go until later on. It was something we kept wondering about, when we would be able to go. When is the apartment going to be ready? Every section had to take a hit because there were fewer apartments available.

During the year, the hope was that the whole first year class at the institute would be able to go to Moscow on an observation trip. We were all set to go in December but the visas fell through. We didn't get to go as a group but I did go later in February with a smaller group and we were there for several days with the instruction just to observe, walk around, see what life was like, get in line for Lenin's tomb, go to a concert, that type thing.

When we came back and debriefed (a good Army word), a couple of the guys complained to Roland Lajoie that the hotel wasn't good quality and that the food wasn't up to standards, something like that and he hit the roof. He said, "I didn't send you there on a tourist trip. I sent you there to observe and if everything was not comfortable, that's exactly what I wanted to do to find out." He said it much more convincingly than I just said it. It was a point very well taken.

I was also invited, instructed, to go to Moscow in April of 1978 for a visit by Secretary of State Vance. It was an opportunity for me to go before my assignment began to see how the embassy handled a secretary of state visit and particularly, the press aspect of it. I was in Moscow for four or five days dealing with the press.

One of the journalists in that Vance group was Strobe Talbott; Strobe Talbott who was involved in the Khrushchev memoirs, then had a high position in the Clinton administration and is now, I believe, head of the Brookings Institution. He was a very personable fellow and I recall having interesting conversations with Strobe Talbott as we waited for some aspect of the Vance visit to take place.

The only downside to this otherwise opportunity was that it coincided with my parents' first-ever trip to Europe and the first time that they were able to visit us overseas. We had had several visits from my wife's parents. I was in Garmisch when my parents arrived but had to leave for Moscow after a couple days. I am sure they felt very proud of me.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this was probably the most physically active year I have had. I never felt physically in better shape than I did at the end of our year in Garmisch. We regularly took these 10 or 20 kilometer hikes that the Germans organized, called volksmarching. We did it with our children. Their reward was a medal or a pin at the end of each hike. We climbed. We took rather demanding walks up the mountains all around us.

We learned how to ski. Roland Lajoie rather wisely said, "I know you guys are all going to try skiing on your own. You are going to fall and stumble. I am going to lose time as you recover from your accidents." So he closed the institute for a week in the fall, ostensibly to repaint the library or something and we all had a chance to go up to the Zugspitze, the tallest mountain in Germany, 3,000 meters and learn how to ski.

Well, I stumbled and fell plenty of times at the beginning but skiing became and still is a wonderful part of my life. I tried rappelling one time but I was not very good at it; I'm not good at tying knots. There were a lot of opportunities. Garmisch was an R&R spot for the U.S. Army in Germany. A lot of young soldiers came to try hiking and skiing.

Q: I know when I was in the air force as an enlisted man we went to Garmisch and went to ___ to ski a little.

BROWN: They had hotels such as the General Abrams with inexpensive meals. One of my diary entries says that we went out for dinner one night and both our children came

along and actually ate full meals, which they weren't doing very much of those days. It was a good family evening. It cost me \$25 but it was a good investment, I wrote! Not only were things less expensive back then but in this environment, the army environment there, things were even less expensive.

We did a lot of travel. As beautiful as Garmisch was, it was also very tempting to go out and see parts of Europe. Munich, of course, was the consulate. We'd go down there occasionally for business, use it also to go to a musical event or theater.

We went to Rothenburg, a beautiful medieval city on the Tauber River. My wife took an art class. We went to Salzburg and to Zurich and Lucerne and in Lucerne we met one of the priests, Father Luitfrid, whom we had known in Cameroon years earlier. He was now working with the blind and disabled in Switzerland.

Before my family arrived, I went to Oberammergau for the passion play. Normally it is only done every ten years -- 1970, 1980 -- but they were preparing a new version for 1980 and so in 1977, I got to see a full presentation of the passion play.

Q: Were they cleaning up the Jewish aspect?

BROWN: I believe that was part of it, yes.

Q: It had reflected a Catholic view of Jews.

BROWN: It had a rather anti-Semitic flavor, yes. My German, of course, was not good enough to detect that but we were told that was what was happening.

We went to Prague over the New Year. The PAO there had been my boss back in Africa years earlier and he invited us to come into Prague so we got permission, got the visa, drove from Garmisch through a terrific snowstorm into Prague.

We went down into Italy on USARI-organized ski trips to the Dolomites.

We went to Venice, Florence, Berchtesgarden and Vienna. It is hard now even in retrospect to imagine how we found the time for all these weekend trips but we did.

I also went a couple of times to Bonn on briefings for army types and in June, I went to Bonn for the G-7 meeting. This was one of the early G-7s and Jimmy Carter's first. I didn't think much about it at the time. I didn't know it was a G-7 meeting, I don't think. I got on the G-7 circuit later on during my years as press attaché in Paris.

There was a lot of music. You could go to the opera in Munich or to choral concerts in these churches throughout Bavaria. On a given day, there might be a wonderful performance of the Verdi Requiem in a church somewhere in Bavaria or the local oompapa bands marching through the streets of Garmisch.

And we had family visits. My wife's brother and husband and seven-year old daughter came. My parents made their first ever overseas trip to Garmisch and a few other spots and friends who knew we were there either made special visits or spun off from a trip they were taking in Europe to come see us.

So if I paint a picture of a really wonderful year that is exactly how we remember.

Q: Let's look at the job. One of the things I am told, you have a very serious defectors or whatever you want to call them from the Soviet Union giving lectures and all that. Were you getting much of a feel for the Soviet Union that was sort of above and beyond the normal reading the newspapers?

BROWN: I don't recall that the staff were defectors. They were more likely people who ended up in Bavaria at the end of the war as displaced persons. A couple I particularly remember were Mr. and Mrs. Posdeev; they taught courses on Russian literature and Russian history.

That's, of course, how the U.S. Army Russian Institute was established after the war using refugees and displaced persons from the war. It was more a perspective that looked back on almost pre-revolutionary Russia and people who had a love affair with the pre-revolutionary Russia, its Christianity, its literature, its history.

I have the list of both the students and the faculty from that year in Garmisch. Quite a number of the professors were probably in their 60s, if not in their 70s, whose experience in Russia had been pre-war and in some cases pre-revolution. There was a few, more recently arrived younger staff. Certainly no one had any sympathy for the communist system.

I recall going down to Munich to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) which had its headquarters in Munich and to another facility down there called Westport. It was for defectors and there we had briefings that were much more the type you are talking about, recent experiences with a very anti-Soviet perspective.

A few people came out that year, either from Washington or perhaps defectors who gave lectures at the institute. But that wasn't the primary focus.

I do recall that I learned the term 'Fulda Gap', the spot in Germany where the Russians, the Soviets, would presumably attack and quite often there would be a talk for the army types that I would attend. I noted how often they described it as "when" the Soviets attacked, not "if" the Soviets attacked. That was the way the army went about its mission. It was presumed it wasn't going to be a matter of if; it was when. This is where their tank assault would take place etcetera, etcetera. I listened with some degree of bemusement but it was also a part of my learning experience.

Q: Back when I was a young vice consul in '56 to '58 in Frankfurt, one of my jobs was if the Soviets attacked I was to set up a card table in a parking lot by the housing complex

and document American citizens to be evacuated. We figured out I'd probably get the card table up about the time the first Soviet tank appeared at the other end of the parking lot.

BROWN: At the same time, I would be wrong if I just suggested it was a steady diet of anti Soviet, anti-communist lectures. The major emphasis during the year was helping me prepare for the job I was going to be doing, using my Russian in conversation but also reading some of the newspapers such as Literary Gazette (LitGaz).

Q: You went to Moscow when?

BROWN: September 6, 1978. We had expected to go much earlier but as I said, we were delayed because of the fire in 1977. Anyway, word finally came in August that we could come but that meant we needed Soviet visas. We packed and made plans to arrive on September 2 but when our passports arrived from the Soviet Embassy in Bonn, they were marked for entry beginning September 14. "Technical error," they told the embassy in Moscow.

So on Monday, September 4, I got up at 4:30, drove to Munich, flew to Cologne and by 9, I was at the gate of the Soviet Embassy. They didn't open until 10 but I managed to talk my way inside when an obliging consular officer called me by name and rectified the problem. I was back at the airport by 10:30, where I called my wife and asked her to re-enter us in a tennis tournament going on that afternoon in Garmisch.

Everyone was quite interested in my experience when I got back to Garmisch. In the tennis tournament, Bobbi and I were on opposite sides in the finals of the mixed doubles. Her side won. We had the next day to wrap things up and on September 6, all six of us – including the dog and the cat – flew from Munich to Frankfurt to Moscow.

Moscow, USSR (1978-1981)

Q: You stayed there until '81.

BROWN: I would be there for three years. Today I can talk about the first year.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

BROWN: The ambassador was the late Malcolm Toon. This was his fourth ambassadorial post. He had been ambassador in Prague, Belgrade, Tel Aviv and Moscow, a true career ambassador.

I had a career ambassador in Yaoundé, Cameroon but this was the first time I had really encountered someone who was as steeped in the Foreign Service as Malcolm Toon.

The general impression of Mac Toon was that he ate young or even mid-level Foreign Service officers for breakfast and that the first time I screwed up, I would be out on my ear. I was in a very exposed position. My title was Information Officer but really I was the press attaché. I was the first point of contact for journalists. The first time I did badly, I would be tossed out on my ear.

I think I was introduced to the ambassador in a very perfunctory way. It was not long after I got there but there was no formal introduction.

I don't want this to sound boastful but I connected with Mac Toon. I did a job that he liked and I really liked working for him. I really felt comfortable. To get to him, I often had to go through the PAO and the DCM who were both fine individuals, very professional, but they had to clear on my memos or whatever. When I got to Ambassador Toon, I felt a degree of comfort, professional comfort that I could then do my press attaché job well.

He took a liking to my wife and me. I knew that when, early in our first year, we found ourselves invited to Spaso House for a family dinner on the second floor along with the British ambassador, his wife and one of the correspondents and his wife. I knew Mac Toon liked me both professionally and personally. It was a source of satisfaction.

He was renowned for his briefings, generally done on Friday afternoon, for the American press corps. These were background briefings and to be attributed to a "senior Western diplomat." Back in Washington, on Saturday, if they read anything that said "senior Western diplomat," they all knew this was Mac Toon speaking. If they knew that in Washington, I am sure everyone else knew it.

He was pretty candid but to be honest, we had limited exposure, limited first-hand exposure to Soviets. I can remember one time he came into one of these briefings and he had actually seen at some sort of activity a member of the politburo and the journalists must have spent half an hour just asking him questions about this individual. It wasn't a high member of the politburo but just what he looked like, what clothes he was wearing, what his health was, how he comported himself. Mac Toon had no sympathy for the Soviet Union and he came up with some wonderful quotes that the journalists liked and he didn't mind seeing himself quoted in the press.

There was a time when he said something that got him in a little trouble in Washington, a little hot water. Something I had then said maybe compounded it. He said to me later on, "Did you see that back in Washington they don't like what I said?"

And I said, "Uh huh" thinking I would was then going to get in trouble myself. He smiled and said, "I could care less." The way he confided in me was great for my ego and, of course, made me feel very loyal to him.

In 1979, he went to the summit meeting in Vienna between Jimmy Carter and Brezhnev where they signed a SALT agreement. At the end, I don't know what led him to do it but

Ambassador Toon did a special briefing for the American press corps. He said, "I haven't yet decided whether I will support the SALT treaty."

Well, that was pretty much out on a limb, shall we say? It later came to the attention of Secretary Vance and Mac Toon back in Moscow had to say yes, he had now studied it and he would support the SALT treaty because there was adequate verification. He didn't mind being an independent operator.

I will mention him more because I really liked Mac Toon. Just another anecdote:

Early on, there was a fire in a building directly across the street from the embassy -- the embassy was located on the Ring Road in Moscow -- from where it was believed the Soviets directed their radiation at the embassy. This was an ongoing subject when I arrived, that the Soviets were directing radiation at our embassy, whether to foul up our communications or as a health issue, it was an ongoing issue and to this day, I would like to see some in depth reporting on that subject.

I went in on Saturday morning and there were fire trucks across the street; it must have been cold weather because there were icicles dripping and we quickly learned that the fire had taken place on a Friday night up on that level where we knew the Soviets had their equipment to direct radiation at the embassy.

So I started getting phone calls. What's happening? Is the radiation continuing? I worked my way up through the two levels I had to go through to Ambassador Toon's office and the question was posed there.

The simple answer was "we don't know whether anything has changed because they operate their radiation equipment Monday through Friday and we won't know if this fire had any impact until Monday morning."

Toon said, "Let's just say that."

And I thought, "Oh, goodness. What a wonderful way to deal with a press issue. A straightforward, honest answer" and that's what I was authorized to say to the press. "We don't know because they operate that equipment Monday through Friday and we won't know until Monday. Check back with us then." They checked back with us on Monday and I was authorized to say there is apparently no radiation coming at us from that building. The fire has damaged their equipment.

That's a long, convoluted way of saying I really felt comfortable dealing with Ambassador Toon. He was honest and direct and didn't mind being quoted.

Q: How would you say relations were with the Soviet Union in 1978?

BROWN: On the day we arrived from Munich via Frankfurt, we were met at the airport and taken to our apartment. I say we because we arrived as a family of four plus dog and

cat. We were taken to our apartment and the next morning my children got up and went across this big highway to the school and my wife set about doing what she needed to do to make our life there, to make our apartment there livable.

I rode to work with my colleague Dick Combs for my first day on the job. There were three issues already that were of interest to the press. They would say something about the nature of our relations.

Number one: We had a big delegation in for SALT talks headed by Paul Warnke and General Ed Rowney. They were meeting with the Soviets; part of the negotiation that would lead to the signing of a SALT treaty the next summer. From that point of view, relations were pretty good. These were serious negotiations. I wasn't the spokesman for the group of anything but I was immediately dealing with journalists if there were any statement to be provided, I was the source of that statement.

At the same time, issue number two involved an American businessman whose name was Jay Crawford and who had been arrested on some phony charges; his verdict was announced on my first day, September 7, my first full day at work. You can Google Jay Crawford, businessman verdict and see more about that issue.

The third issue. Senator Edward Kennedy was in Moscow en route to Central Asia, to Alma Ata, for an international meeting on health care. I don't recall that journalists were going with him but he was a source of news as well.

So you had the good, the bad and the in between. But for the most part, we were in a fairly upbeat mood that year.

Q: Brezhnev was

BROWN: It was Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. There was also a nominal president but the ones we would be dealing with would be Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. This was Cold War.

We were largely out of direct contact with friends and family back home. It was a family experience. My children were at a good age (Sarah was 12 and Christine was 10 the year we arrived). They were not so young that they required babysitters or constant tending. Nor were they weren't so old that they were restless and I will say proudly that we fully integrated them into our lives there. There were many opportunities to interact with Soviets or with others and we fully involved our children in that.

They went across this huge highway, Leninsky Prospekt, that we lived on to the Anglo American Canadian School. There were minimal opportunities, almost zero opportunities to send your children to Russian school. I know that some of the correspondents sent their children to Russian schools but it really wasn't an easy alternative and the Anglo American Canadian School was excellent.

Our apartment was on the 12th floor of a standard Soviet apartment building, Leninsky Prospect, number 83. All the various compounds where people lived had shorthand descriptions. We were L – 83. Someone else would live at L-45 or K-7 or SadSam.

We were on the 12th floor of a 14-story building. Two Russian apartments put together so we could look out at three directions. It was an extraordinary apartment. You put that apartment with that view in Manhattan today and it would sell for three million dollars. On a clear day, in the distance, we could see the gold from the bell tower at the Kremlin. And a creaky old elevator, we always hoped it would keep functioning.

It was occupied by foreigners but not only Americans. There were Brits, New Zealanders, Syrians, Japanese; a wide variety of foreigners lived in the building. All around us, the other apartment buildings were occupied by Russians; it was a Russian neighborhood. We had the dog and that dog needed to be walked and when we would walk we would quite often have conversations with Russians through the dog. One of the first phrases I learned was “*kakaya eta paroda?*” What is the breed of your dog?

This gave us a window, literal and figurative, on the way Russians lived; we could see their apartment buildings, see them going home from work. Right up the street was a store that a lot of Russians frequented. It was called the Leipzig and apparently had goods from East Germany and so if you were talking to a Russian or a Soviet, you would say we live not far from the Leipzig store. They all knew where you were talking about.

We weren't close to a metro. The metro was over near the university. Early on, I bought a little Russian car called a Zhiguli, basically a Fiat, and I would drive that little Zhiguli from the L-83 into the embassy; there was also an embassy shuttle.

From our balconies -- we had little balconies on three sides; I hate to think how sturdy they were -- we had this great view in three directions. Soon after we arrived, there was a Russian holiday and they spent thousands of dollars on fireworks, launching them from multiple sites. This experience, early on, of looking out and seeing the fireworks displays in all directions was great fun for us and for the children.

Not too far away was the Russian circus. We spent an early evening there. The embassy had a dacha, an hour's drive or so from where we lived, in Tarasovka. We would make frequent trips out there. The way it operated, during the course of a year, you would actually have a dacha weekend and that was sacrosanct. You went out there with your family, invited anyone else you wanted and you stayed in the dacha.

When I say sacrosanct, I can remember that my boss, even when we had some high level visitor, said, “No, this is my dacha weekend. I am going to be there.”

There was also a smaller ambassador's dacha and a tennis court. It was a real plus as far as making yourself comfortable with this lifestyle. Behind the ambassador's residence, the famous Spaso House, there was a paddle tennis court. I got introduced to paddle tennis and learned that Mac Toon was also an avid paddle tennis player. At 11 o'clock in

the morning, you might get a call from the ambassador's secretary saying, "The ambassador is playing paddle. Do you want to come?" I loved that invitation. You never cut Mac Toon any slack. He knew if you were making a call that favored him; he wanted to be treated like one of the guys on the paddle tennis court.

During that first winter, I learned 40 degrees below zero is the same on both the Centigrade and Fahrenheit scale. We had minus 40 degrees and I learned what really true cold weather is. That was the coldest winter we had. Many times, people would ask "how you stand those cold winters in Moscow?" By the end of three years, I knew the biggest climate issue I had to deal with was the hot weather in the embassy; this horrible building where there was no air conditioning and temperatures in the office where you were trying to work must have been in the 80s and 90s.

My birthday is November 7th which was also the anniversary of the great October Revolution. The kids and my Soviet friends always got a kick out of the fact that on my birthday, there was a great parade across Red Square and fireworks. It was a source of a lot of laughter and jokes and fun. "*Slava Philu,*" people would say.

These were things that made life enjoyable for us. There wasn't a PX. There were no movie theaters. There were none of those these things that you sometimes associate with life overseas but we found a lot of ways to make life there fun and enjoyable. Films would come in from Frankfurt in the pouch. The army could bring them in and they were on these big reels. People would sign up as soon as the films arrived. To carry home a movie, you'd carry this very heavy suitcase with maybe three or four reels. Various people had projectors.

In our building, where there were quite a number of American families, we did something called hot reeling. The family downstairs would start the movie and when they came to the end of the first reel, they would bring it up to another floor where another group of people would watch the first reel and when they were done, they'd take it to another level. The movie might start at 7:30 in one apartment and 8 o'clock in another apartment, 8:30 in another. We called it hot reeling, moving movies from one floor to another.

Q: I learned to thread a projector very, very nicely.

BROWN: I learned that in Africa and it stood me in good stead in Moscow. These were Bell and Howell projectors with a big reel on top and a take-up reel on the bottom.

But we were not by any means confined to the American community for our entertainment. Early on, through various means, I had a lot of Soviet contacts or more precisely, Russian and specifically Jewish friends. We got to know any number of them. I will go into detail later. We enjoyed our American and other expatriate friends living in Moscow but we had a lot of other friends in the Russian community.

My job was information officer and there were two assistant information officers. In addition to the press corps, we had responsibility for the monthly magazine called

America Illustrated, a Life magazine size magazine we were allowed to “sell” through Russian kiosks. I think the number was something like 63,000; they had a magazine called Soviet Life that they sold in the United States, the same number. Everything was controlled by formal, written cultural exchange agreement.

We also had these large-scale, thematic exhibits. They went back to the Nixon-Khrushchev kitchen debate. They would go to six cities for about a month each with 25 to 30 Russian speaking American guides. The cities would be chosen in negotiations with the Soviets and would take us all over the country – to Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, major Russian cities.

The opening was always the occasion for a high-level American visitor along with the ambassador and local officials. In addition to the guides, American specialists would go out and interact with counterparts or do lectures. During my time in Washington, 1974 to 1976, I had actually interviewed and recruited some of these guides.

Russians, or other nationalities, would line up for hours to go through the exhibit. Inevitably, there would be problems and issues that arose and that required negotiations with the Soviets. My office was the primary point of contact with the exhibits.

There were occasional journalists who went on exchanges programs to the United States, part of the international exchange program.

But my primary duty or responsibility as press attaché involved interaction with the press corps. There were 25 American journalists representing something like 15 American news media. To this day, I could probably recall of the top of my head the names of 20 of those 25 journalists.

The two news agencies, AP and UPI, each had five correspondents. Reuters was also always represented and we always had a debate whether they were an American news agency or not. That came up when you had pools or when the ambassador did his press briefing. The New York Times had two correspondents and the other major American newspapers had one -- The Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor.

The magazines all had correspondents -- Time, Newsweek, U. S. News, and Business Week. The three TV networks -- and there were only three then, NBC, CBS and ABC -- had correspondents. They also had a cameraman who was quite often an American or non-Soviet.

Then you had a couple of special correspondents, an American who worked for The Financial Times and a man named Ed Stevens, who had been there for years and years and had won a Pulitzer Prize and was a free lancer at the time. A whole book has been written about Ed Stevens.

I knew the American journalists in many different ways. There was first of all the standard professional relationship of the press attaché to the journalist. They ask questions. We try to answer. That goes without saying.

But we also knew them almost as clients under the Helsinki Accords and the basket three provisions which included working conditions for journalists. I don't think anyone at the time realized how important this was going to be but the Soviets committed themselves to minimal working conditions for journalists and we were constantly going to the foreign ministry press division to raise an issue of an American journalist who had his film seized at Red Square, who wanted to go on vacation, whose replacement could not get a visa. One kind of indignity or another, we would go in and raise the issue under the broad heading of working conditions for journalists.

We also knew them because journalists had privileges at the embassy that they didn't have anywhere else in the world. I think it would surprise journalists these days to know they had these kinds of privileges. They were allowed to receive their mail through the diplomatic pouch. They were not allowed to receive personal packages but they could receive letter mail and business packages. The mail came in by pouch twice a week and one of the big moments was to go down and dump all the mail on the floor and sort it out. The journalists got their mail that way. Occasionally some of them received packages and we had to go through these and say "Oops, well, we will give it to you this time but remember you guys are not supposed to get packages." It would sometimes be cookies from their mother for Christmas or something like that.

The journalists also had access to the embassy doctor and to the snack bar; in the little compound right behind the embassy was the famous snack bar. There were a couple of Italians who had come to work, I believe, in the Fiat factory. They left there and came to work with the Americans. One named Clemente ended up as the major domo at Spaso House and another, Alfredo, ran the snack bar. It was such a convenience to go to the snack bar and have lunch. It was also a place to do business. The American journalists had access but it was understood that things talked about down there were off the record. This was a time we didn't have any rapid means of communication so when you wanted to get out a message, you sat down at your phone and you dialed the numbers consecutively of all these people and communicated with them; there was no email or other easy communication so the snack bar was a great opportunity for quick communications.

Lastly, these journalists were our age, they had families and their kids were in the American School with one or two exceptions. We very much integrated them into our social life. To this day, some of the journalists that we met in Moscow are among our closest friends. Bernard Redmont was the CBS correspondent. He and his wife are in their 90s now and in a retirement community outside Boston. Bernie and his wife were a generation older than my wife and me. He was a highly respected journalist and to this day they are very close friends.

There was a correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor named David Willis who had three children, two daughters about the ages of our daughters. It is a very long and complicated story but we went with them on a vacation to Sri Lanka. We flew Aeroflot from Moscow to Sri Lanka. David wrote a story about that vacation. My kids loved reading it because they could understand it. David said he got more comments about that story than about any of the deep thoughtful, thumb sucking pieces that he did about internal Soviet political affairs.

One of those daughters of the now late David Willis of The Christian Science Monitor is now a French horn player with the Berlin Philharmonic, one of the finest orchestras in the world. She is performing tonight at Carnegie Hall, on the stage of Carnegie Hall. We have stayed in touch with many of the journalists and with their families.

On one occasion, we were at a party that was mostly journalists and I noticed my wife and one of the journalists, Charles Bierbauer of ABC, were laughing uncontrollably; they had discovered they had gone to elementary school together.

So we had the professional relationship with the journalists but we also knew them, then and many of them to this day, as close personal friends.

Q: What would you say was the mood of the correspondents there? Were they able to do their job or were they working under siege or what?

BROWN: I think they were like the rest of us foreign services officers. Some had better Russian than others. Some managed to delve more deeply into what was going on than others. There were some really fine correspondents, some who went on to write books, people who went on to very distinguished careers in journalism and beyond.

Just to name a few: Craig Whitney of The New York Times, still one of their senior executive editors. David Shipler of The New York Times. Kevin Klose of the Washington Post. Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. David Satter who wrote for the Financial Times. Tom Kent and Serge Schmemmann of AP.

They all had their own qualities. Some had better Russian. Some were better writers. They used to joke about Dan Fisher. He didn't have the best Russian. He wasn't the best writer but they always say if we could only have Dan's ability of ferreting out facts. He was a fact finder. He would come up with the little details the others wouldn't find.

I can't say I read everything they wrote but I do know in dealing with them that they were enterprising, they had good language, and they had no illusions about the country they were dealing with. I think we owe a debt to these people for putting on the front pages of our newspapers really fine insightful reporting on the Soviet Union.

What was their attitude? They were as frustrated I suppose as everybody in trying to gain access to Soviet officials but on the other hand, the really good ones didn't let that stand in their way. They found ways to interact with other people. They were perhaps frustrated

because the Soviets imposed restrictions on travel but the really good ones found ways to travel. I guess what I am getting at is that journalists, like anybody else, could use these restrictions as a peg to say “I really just can’t do my job because the Soviets impose all these restrictions” or they could say, “the restrictions are there but I am going to find ways to get around them and do a good job in spite of that.”

Q: Did you or did you get stories from the journalists about harassment from the KGB?

BROWN: Yes, and that fell under the issue of working conditions for journalists. They assumed their conversations were monitored. They knew when they met with people they had to be careful about compromising the safety of their Soviet counterparts.

Even before we got there, two of the journalists, Craig Whitney of The New York Times and Hal Piper of The Baltimore Sun, were put on trial for slander. I am just going to mention the broad issue and for anyone who wants to a lot more detail, it is all on the record. They were put on trial for slander. It was called the Whitney – Piper affair by every news media except The Baltimore Sun which, we all jokingly noted, called it the Piper – Whitney affair, putting the name of their journalist first. It involved their contacts with Soviet dissidents and what they wrote. They were put on trial in a major form of harassment. So this was certainly a very ugly way in which the KGB, Soviet authorities, interfered with the abilities of American journalists to do their job.

During the course of that first year, in April, 1979, a journalist for U.S. News and World Report named Robin Knight was traveling in Central Asia, in Tashkent in particular. We got a call at the embassy from his wife saying that Robin “is deathly ill. We don’t know what has happened.” The ultimate conclusion was he had been slipped some sort of drug by the KGB and was very ill, incoherent. His wife had to virtually carry him back to Moscow. He recovered. We protested. The Soviets claimed no responsibility for it.

I might as well take that story right through to the last stage. That summer in Vienna at the Carter-Brezhnev summit, Ambassador Toon met with Marvin Stone who was the publisher of U.S. News and World Report, accompanied by Robin. I sat in on the meeting as note taker.

The question was should Robin go back to Moscow to finish out his assignment or is it too dangerous? Might he be further compromised? I was really surprised to hear Mac Toon say, “I don’t think he should go back. I think it is probably risky for him to return.”

This seemed uncharacteristic for Mac Toon because he was a stick-his-finger-in-their-eye kind of guy. I realized afterwards that he was giving that advice on the record to protect himself. If Robin Knight had gone back and something had happened and Mac Toon had been on record saying, “Oh, I don’t think there is any problem. Sure, let him go back,” he, Mac Toon, would have been vulnerable. As a matter of fact, Robin Knight did go back. He completed his assignment and there was no problem.

This same Marvin Stone later on became deputy director of USIA and came out to Moscow in the late '80s. He was a really good guy, a man I liked very much. I met him first when he was publisher of U.S. News and World Report and at that meeting in the summer of 1979 in Vienna.

Robin Knight recently wrote an article in the Foreign Service Journal about Mac Toon and his press briefings, a very thoughtful article. I would agree with almost everything he wrote except for one phrase and I will quote that phrase: "The embassy and the American media were locked in a tight embrace to the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department and his long suffering press attachés." By that "tight embrace," he was referring to Ambassador Toon's weekly background briefing for the American press corps. "To the mutual satisfaction of everyone except possibly Toon's superiors in the State Department . . ." Well, I can believe that. They must have wondered what they were going to read the next day attributed to a senior Western diplomat.

But not "his long suffering press attachés." There he was wrong. I was that press attaché and I loved Ambassador Toon's accessibility to the press. I looked forward to those press briefings.

Yes, at the end we had to type the notes on an old mechanical typewriter. The ambassador was asked this and he answered thus. You had to get those notes up to the ambassador by Monday, a lot of work, but if I hadn't done them, my life would have been much less interesting. I was not "long suffering." I was a very privileged.

Another thing Ambassador Toon did -- I keep coming back to him -- was to meet one-on-one with the itinerant journalist or maybe with one of the resident press guys. You couldn't abuse the privilege but you could ask for a one-on-one or two-on-one interview with the ambassador; I would sit in on those meetings and take notes.

After having done that any number of times, probably somewhere between 10 and 20 times, I heard from my boss that Ambassador Toon commented favorably on my notes. "How does he do it? Does he take shorthand? He's not taping these, is he?" No, I wasn't taping them. I said, in all honesty, that "I have heard you asked the same questions and give pretty much the basic answers so many times that I can hear it coming."

Sure, I'd take notes but I could almost do the briefings as well as the ambassador could because I had heard the same question answered a number of times. I couldn't do them as well as he could just because of the way he answered the questions, they loved that. They loved his rather gruff personality and his little turns of phrase. I was pretty familiar with what he was going to say.

Q: In your relations with the media and all, were you getting things say from the political sector saying, gee. The Soviet politburo is doing this or that. You wonder how this was playing with the Soviet public and ask the journalists could they sort of monitor it? In other words, put them on jobs.

BROWN: No, I don't recall that kind of inquiry.

I was not the only one who had close working relationship and close personal friendship with some of these very fine journalists. I want to emphasize that point again. These were really top notch journalists. I have mentioned the names of a few; Craig Whitney, David Shipler, Kevin Klose, Dan Fisher of The Los Angeles Times, Tom Kent of AP, Serge Schmemmann of AP. People who follow the world of journalism know that this was a cream of the crop group of journalists.

There is another subject for a book; the American press corps of the late '70s in Moscow.

People in the political section undoubtedly had personal friendships. They would do background briefings with these guys and they'd probably bat ideas back and forth but I don't ever recall anything suggesting that we try to task them. We would read their copy.

Q: Were any of the press people sort of complaining that their bosses back in their home offices really didn't understand them?

BROWN: If they weren't complaining, they weren't human beings. Exactly. Sure, it wasn't easy to have people back home understand the difficult working conditions.

I was back in Moscow a few years ago and I thought comparatively what would it be like? A lot of things were a lot simpler when we were there, you know? You never had to worry about parking. The first trip I made to Moscow, when I was there on TDY, a guy I had worked with on the Soviet desk named Dick Combs who was a really fine Foreign Service officer was a political officer and I mentioned something about Red Square and he said, "Oh, I haven't been down to Red Square for quite a while. Why don't we go down?"

We drove down somewhere close to Red Square, parked and walked around. You never really had to worry about parking when I was there in 1978 to 1981, didn't have to worry much about it ten years later. Today I don't know how you get around Moscow in the traffic and how you would park anywhere.

On the other hand, we didn't have email or cell phones or any of the modern means of communication. Maybe that made life simpler in some ways, too. You weren't constantly being tasked or constantly being expected to do things you are expected to do today.

I am sure the journalists complained that people back home didn't understand.

One thing we didn't have too much of, and I don't think the journalists had too much of, was people from back in the States coming out. We occasionally had to hand hold and organize dinners but it wasn't overwhelming. I can't recall too many times when the journalists had to do handholding for visiting firemen from Washington.

I think that maybe this is the time I could turn to some of the things during that first year that made news. Hardly a week went by when there wasn't some activity, event or newsmaker. I mentioned what transpired on my very first day with the SALT negotiators, the American businessman released from prison and Senator Kennedy.

From 1978 on, we had a group of people living in the embassy called the Pentecostals. This was basically two families, close to a dozen people, who had dashed into the embassy compound to seek asylum. The way the embassy was structured, we had a couple of militia men out front but if they weren't looking, there were no gates or barriers to go through and these fundamentalist Pentecostals had come into the embassy seeking religious freedom, refuge. And in this period of human rights, we were not going to throw them out. They were given refuge in a small underground, below street level apartment where they lived for years. They were known as the Pentecostals. Books have written about them.

They were off limits to the press and the journalists who came into the snack bar understood that they were not allowed to interview them; that was one of the rules of the road. Finally, towards the end of my first year, the Ambassador decided we would allow the journalists to come in on a Saturday and film them. They were not allowed to interview but they could at least film these two different families, parents and children walking around the courtyard of the embassy. Of course, the ground rules broke down because the Pentecostals did decide to talk and present documents and everything else. That was just one of the ongoing issues. Ambassador Toon was not going to throw these people out on the street so they were always on the minds.

We had the fire across the street that I described earlier.

On March 28, 1979, the same day that I had lunch to meet the new Baltimore Sun correspondent, I got the word that there was a man, a Soviet citizen, in the consular section threatening to blow himself up; he would not leave. The issue dragged on and on throughout the late afternoon and into the evening. Eventually, it was resolved by, I believe, Ambassador Toon allowing Soviet officials to come into the consular section. The man did blow himself up. He died. From my 8th floor balcony, I saw his body being carried out late in the evening.

Prior to that, I had never experienced the smell of teargas but the smell of teargas in my office, which was quite some distance from the consular section, made a big impression on me. Our consular officer was a good friend named Tom Hutson. You always knew when Tom was coming. You could hear him singing and whistling through the corridors and after that incident, I never again did hear him singing and whistling. That one night incident, that man blowing himself up in the consular section affected all of us but no one more than Tom.

Q: What did he do? Did he have a . . .

BROWN: I don't think anyone ever really knew, because his body was taken away, whether he was just a lunatic or whether he had some serious cause. According to some news articles, his name was Yuri Vlasenko but in my little bit of research, I haven't ever found very much about and who he was and what happened. I believe one of the consular officers was faulted for bringing the man into the embassy. Perhaps some cables would shed more light.

Q: Tom Hutson has made himself sort of a name for himself as sort of a dissident. He, I think at one point, made some sort of statements when he was at the embassy.

BROWN: He was, I don't know how to describe him. He was opinionated. He has very close ties to the American Serbian community.

Q: I knew Tom when I was in Yugoslavia.

BROWN: We saw his daughter last summer, the same age as our daughter, Amy Hutson, a lovely woman.

Q: The Helsinki Accords had been signed fairly recently, hadn't they?

BROWN: In Vladivostok in 1976. Gerald Ford went to Vladivostok and signed the Helsinki Accords.

Q: I realize we were using them as sort of an instrument with the press corps. Did you realize how powerful these things were because they did turn out to be a major instrument in ending the Cold War?

BROWN: If someone claims to have realized how important those documents were, ask him or her to show you that in writing in 1976. Ford and others took a beating that this was just another Yalta type agreement.

Q: And this ended some of the disputes over territory with the Soviets wanted.

BROWN: You had the three baskets: political, economic and human rights. People said and wrote things like "We all know the Soviets don't respect human rights. Sure, they will sign anything. This is just another giveaway." The part I focused on was working conditions for journalists but freedom of movement and similar rights were covered.

I think it is pretty well agreed on right and left today that these were very important documents in the whole history of the Cold War.

I think that the people who realized most how important these documents were the dissidents themselves. They said, "Well, if our government signed these documents, then we are going to take them as true." They risked their lives and their liberty but many of them said "we are going to claim these rights." They wouldn't have had much meaning if people like the dissidents hadn't taken them seriously.

Going back to that visit by Secretary Vance in spring of 1978 when I was there on TDY, a Soviet woman who had married an American and who was seeking permission to emigrate chained herself to the fence around the embassy. She didn't set herself on fire or anything but she chose that moment to call attention to herself. She got a lot more attention that day than any of the news on the SALT negotiations or whatever Vance was doing.

Back to my first full year, we had a visit from two cabinet members in December, 1978. Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal and Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps. That said something about the quality of the relationship at that time. They were received at a high level. I rode to the Kremlin with the press pool and got to see Brezhnev and Kosygin and Gromyko. I was back in the corner with the Soviet handlers but it was my chance to see the table with Ambassador Toon, the interpreters and the two delegations. It was the kind of stuff I enjoyed, one of the fun aspects of my job.

There was another side to it and it involved a lot of running around, preparing transcripts and other reports and you breathed a sigh of relief when they left town.

Q: Who was secretary of state then?

BROWN: That was entirely the Vance period.

Another subject that we dealt with regularly was shortwave broadcasting, especially in Russian and other languages. The Voice of America Russian service was jammed. During the course of my first year, we had a visit from the director of Voice of America, Peter Strauss. I used that occasion and other similar occasions for outreach. I would invite in American and West European journalists and make it a representational affair.

We had this nice apartment on the 12th floor of our building at L-83. So the guys, they were mostly guys, would come in and we'd do a buffet dinner and someone like Mr. Strauss would answer questions or, more often in a case like that, he would ask questions. It would be a business evening but enjoyable and I received a lot of positive feedback.

Q: What was your impression of the non-American press representation?

BROWN: Equally high. One of the names that pops right into mind was Michael Binyon with The Times of London who was then and later on a very distinguished British journalist. Sam Rachlin, a Danish journalist, had deep Russian connections, was virtually bilingual and knew a lot; he also had a lovely wife and small daughter. Bob Evans of Reuters had been many years in Moscow and had an encyclopedic knowledge. Daniel Vernet of Le Monde was another outstanding journalist whom I knew in Moscow and later in Paris. Within the French, German and Italian press corps, there were people who seemed equally well qualified, had language and were there as serious correspondents. I very much enjoyed having contact with these people.

But the American press corps was by far the dominant foreign group. No one else had as many journalists as we did nor as many top notch journalists.

Q: Were you able to pick up much information or contact with what later became known as 'the stans', all the various elements of the Soviet empire which eventually broke away?

BROWN: We had been in Moscow for only six weeks when my wife and I put our children in the charge of somebody else and flew off to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan and just over the mountains from Afghanistan. This was the first trip we took outside Moscow. I can remember walking out to the airplane, seeing the pilot checking out his plane, looking at the bald tires but it gave my wife some degree of comfort when she saw the pilot because he looked like what a pilot should look like.

That was the first of many trips we took to Central Asia and they were wonderful experiences. During my first three years, I visited every one of the republic capitals except for the Baltic States. I went to every one of the Central Asian capitals.

What made it interesting, among the many reasons for going out there, we had this exhibit called "Agriculture, USA" with American guides, staff and specialists and so I went out to observe. It seemed like a totally different world. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen and others were not native speakers of Russian so they were dealing with a foreign language just like I was. You would go to the markets and gape at these wonderful faces and these piles of fruits and vegetables that you'd never see in Moscow or only in very special places in Moscow. They'd hand fruit to you as a gift and they loved conversation. They loved having their picture being taken. There just didn't seem to be fear of communication with an American.

We were taken on that trip to a dam to a place called Nurek which was described as the largest earthen dam in the world. You would think this would be the kind of place that the Soviets would not allow you to go to but we went out there, spent a whole day going and coming back, traveled in and around this dam, felt dwarfed by this giant construction.

After several days, we came back to find that our children were well and that our Aeroflot planes had landed as many times as they had taken off. We were safe. It was an exciting first trip outside Moscow.

After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Brzezinski sent out instructions that any intelligence, any sort of reporting you could bring back from Central Asia was encouraged so we had a blank check to travel to that part of the world. I didn't go back to Dushanbe but I went frequently Central Asia -- to Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand, to Alma Ata, to Frunze, now called Bishkek. I think it was there I stayed in a yurt. I also went to Ashkhabad, so to all five Central Asian capitals.

Q: Did you get any feel of knowledge or coverage of the United States there?

BROWN: My recollection is that the exhibit we brought out there was a real eye-opener; anything they knew about the United States was primarily through Soviet filter. They probably disbelieved much of the propaganda they heard from their own government but our own little modest efforts, American magazines or the exhibit would be as much as they would have. Radios would be jammed but in Central Asia, especially away from urban areas, you could more easily avoid the jamming of both Radio Liberty and Voice of America. If you understood English you could hear Voice of America English unjammed. But their knowledge of the United States was superficial.

Q: America was very popular wasn't it, the magazine?

BROWN: Sure. Nevertheless, we regularly received back "unsold" copies but then we could take them on trips and give them away.

Q: There were these educational sessions open to the public of people getting up and giving lectures and all and many of our officers would go to find out. Some people would come up and say why the hell aren't you doing this?

BROWN: I don't have too much recollection of that; I didn't attend many of those events. I do remember going to one in particular about a year before the Olympics where a man stood up and talked. The countdown was on to the 1980 Olympics. I came away from that thinking what genuine pride he had that his country was going to host the Olympics. Certainly he was picked and primed to do this topic but there was a great sense of pride in the Soviet Union was going to host the Olympics. That of course, all became an issue.

I'd like to return to the year 1978 – '79 just to give a sense of how much activity there was.

As I've said, we did host representational events in our apartment whenever we had people come out from Washington. One time I hosted something for some journalists who had gone to the University of Indiana on an exchange program and one of the persons who popped in that night unannounced was a man named Vladimir Pozner. Vladimir Pozner grew up in Brooklyn.

Q: I listened to him on the radio, Radio Moscow.

BROWN: Yes, to this day is very well known, absolutely flawless English, very smooth, very gifted. I remember he went one time to the American School and spoke and the kids just came away thinking, "oh, my goodness. They are just like us" because he was so smooth, he was very candid. He would say: "We are just like your country; we have people who are smart, people who are dumb. We have people who are courteous and people who are discourteous, etcetera, etcetera." He disarmed the kids a lot and he could do that equally well with adults but I liked him and I thought he was a very good man.

There was a problem and it goes back to that impression I spoke about our very first time. If you met somebody who either spoke English well or was willing to receive foreigners or spoke out candidly, there was an inclination on the part of some foreigners to immediately say “Oh, he’s KGB. He’s a colonel. You just can’t trust that person.” Sometimes they would tap two fingers on their neck. I don’t know how they felt so sure unless you concluded that everyone who had style was KGB; I think it sometimes gave people a sense of self-importance to say all-knowingly that someone was KGB.

I didn’t know myself; maybe that was sometimes the case, but other times, these were genuinely interesting people. In any case, I didn’t risk anything by interacting with them. I knew or know about a few of them to this day and I don’t think they had close ties to the KGB. I think they were just willing to talk to foreigners.

New subject: One Friday night, I got a call at home from my boss, Ray Benson, who lived right in the embassy itself. The embassy building was in reality nothing but a converted Soviet apartment building and Ray lived in one of the apartments. Ray and his wife Shirley (friends to this day) were getting ready to take a trip along with the DCM Mark Garrison and his wife. Ray said, “You need to come in here, come in here right away.”

He didn’t say anymore, didn’t tell me what it was but by the time I arrived, the incident had ended. Once again, an apparently deranged Soviet man had managed to walk right into the courtyard with a firearm and start shooting at the exterior of the building. You could see bullet marks or chips on the building. Don’t get me wrong. This building had plenty of chips but these clearly were new ones.

David Shipler of The New York Times came by and covered it and picked up a quote from me and for the first time I was actually quoted by name. My family back home was excited to read in The New York Times “Philip Brown, spokesman for the American Embassy.” I don’t recall what great thought I had but it was rare that I was quoted by name. That incident was a little like the man who walked into the consular section. It was a mystery what was behind it.

We had during that year a visit by the attorney general, Griffin Bell. My notes say he spent two weeks in the Soviet Union. Can you imagine the attorney general being out of Washington for two weeks and in the Soviet Union? It concluded with a reception at Spaso House where I met some people I didn’t normally encounter at Spaso House receptions, including a man somehow involved in the judicial system of the Soviet Union. I shook hands with him and I looked at his hands afterwards and these hands were not like mine, soft, office hands. These were the hands of a steel worker, a metallurgist, rough, big.

I thought to myself, because he had been one of the people dealing with the attorney general, that sometimes it is amazing these people are not more crude in their behavior than they are. These are not guys who studied at the counterpart of Yale or Princeton or who have been sitting at desk jobs. These are people came up like Brezhnev and the

others through the school of hard knocks. Many of them are out of the heavy manufacturing, industrial world. This man, for all I knew, might have been a steel worker. I came away from that encounter thinking that we needed to be careful not judge Soviet officials the same way we would judge bureaucrats back in the system in the United States. I'm, of course, not suggesting that we should cut them slack when they abuse human rights or invade other countries. But it was helpful to remember where they came from.

One of the things I did for Ambassador Toon was to write his July 4th speech. Every year, the ambassador was invited to tape something for Soviet TV that might then be carried on July 4th. It would be carried if he said the right thing and there were times when the Soviets either censored it or refused it in its entirety. That year, I was very pleased that the speech I wrote was approved by the State Department, virtually without change. Ambassador Toon recorded it and it was carried on Soviet TV on July 4th. That would have been after we returned from Vienna.

I got the word -- and was very pleased -- that along with one of the other assistant press attachés, I would be invited (or assigned) to go to Vienna for the summit meeting. A lot of the Moscow-based American press corps from Vienna was going and I believe that Ambassador Toon recommended that I be present.

I remember getting together for a drink with some journalists on the first night in Vienna and the question among the Moscow-based people was "when did you come out?" We used that expression, "going back in," or "coming out." It was not an idle question. You were out in the West. It was a badge of pride. We were on the front lines in Moscow and now, we were coming out for some sachertorte and the joys of Vienna.

I had some relatively routine assignment in the press center in connection with the summit. I did try to associate myself as far as possible with Ambassador Toon, especially for his meeting with Marvin Stone to discuss the Robin Knight incident in Tashkent and also in setting up his briefing with the American press corps. I am sure Ambassador Toon did not clear that with Washington and I am sure that journalists not invited were envious. These two events made my visit to Vienna quite memorable.

I mentioned travel besides the trip to Dushanbe. We did a lot of little trips around Moscow. We could travel 40 kilometers from downtown Moscow without permission as long as it was an open area. We had these maps that showed open and closed areas. The point being we did a lot of travel. We'd go out to Peredelkino to the grave of Pasternak, to the American dacha, to some of the churches on the periphery of Moscow.

We took a family trip to Leningrad, took the train. I had some business there but my wife and daughters went along and we visited a lot of the standard tourist spots.

We also went back to Garmisch for a week. We traded apartments. Somebody from Garmisch came in, lived in our place and we went to Garmisch and did some skiing. We also had an experience there that I will talk about later.

I have been reading recently the biography of George Kennan and, it goes without saying, I don't in any way compare myself to George Kennan. Still when he writes "It was my sixth winter in Moscow," I couldn't help but think that I spent six winters in Moscow and at least some of the experiences I had reminded me of experiences Kennan had. Kennan was there in 1945, '46, not sure when it was. The British ambassador hosted a dinner for Winston Churchill to which he invited Stalin. George Kennan and his wife were not invited to that dinner. His wife ...

Q: Annelise.

BROWN: Annelise. She said that they were not invited to the dinner but they could go by afterwards to sort of stare and she wrote "At least I can tell my grandchildren that I have seen some of the people who made history."

I feel exactly the same way. I can tell myself that I saw some of the people that made history. I know that I was just the press attaché at the American Embassy and later on the public affairs officer but I got to see some of the people who made history.

One of the persons I met early on (I didn't fully appreciate who he was at the time) was a man named Valentin Berezhkov. He was editor of USA Magazine, published by the USA Institute. I also met him a second time on my second tour and knew by then that he had been the translator and interpreter for Stalin at Yalta. He was the counterpart to Chip Bohlen; the stories that man could have told.

Victor Louis was a story in himself and I won't take the time right now to go into detail. Russian-born, he became a British citizen, married a British woman named Jennifer Louis. He lived in great grand style in Moscow. He had a house. The obituary in The New York Times that Craig Whitney wrote in 1992 will tell you a lot about him. He probably was working for the KGB but nevertheless, interaction with Victor Louis was always an interesting experience.

There was a day when I came by the embassy and I cannot recall why but this man was standing out on the sidewalk wanting to go into the consular section but his entry was being delayed. I realized right away who he was and I helped André Sakharov walk past the Soviet militia and go into the consular section to do business. I can tell my grandchildren I saw André Sakharov and on more than one occasion.

It wasn't long after that, in January, 1980, that Sakharov was picked up on a Moscow street and sent into exile in the closed city of Gorky east of Moscow. It was a closed city so people could not visit him there. He had become too much of a thorn in the side of Soviet officials and so they detained him and sent him and his wife, Elena Bonner off to internal exile.

My little contribution at that time was to serve as a conduit for Sakharov's mail to a relative in Boston. What would happen was as follows. His wife, Elena Bonner, still had

freedom to travel and she would come to Moscow with letters that she would give to a New York Times correspondent named Tony Austin. Tony Austin had arrived only fairly recently but of course, I knew him as I knew all the journalists there. Tony Austin and I worked out an arrangement whereby he would give these letters to me, I would put them in an envelope and send them off to my dad in Pittsburgh through the pouch. My dad would open the outer envelope and forward the contents to, I believe, a niece of Sakharov's in the Boston suburbs.

By my second tour, the Gorbachev period, Sakharov had been released and I saw him a couple times. Eventually, I would stand in line a long line on a cold winter day in 1980 to walk past his open casket.

In connection with the visit by Secretaries Blumenthal and Kreps, Averill Harriman came to Moscow. There was a meeting of something called the U.S. - USSR Trade and Economic council. I went to the airport when he arrived and because of his prominence and his history of working with the Soviets during the war, we were allowed to drive right onto the tarmac.

One day soon after, I got a phone call that I should gather up as many journalists as quickly as I could and go down to Novodevichy Cemetery where Khrushchev was buried; it is one of the great cemeteries of Moscow, the final resting place for prominent people from all walks of life, next to the Novodevichy Convent. It wasn't generally open to the public. I had a way of getting in which is a separate story. But I was to go there because Averill Harriman wanted to place a wreath on the grave of his wartime colleague, Anastas Mikoyan, who had died in October.

Sure enough, at the appointed hour, Averill Harriman and his wife, Pamela Harriman, came and placed a wreath on the grave of Mikoyan. We had half a dozen American journalists there. It was pretty much a photo event. Harriman was one of the towering figures of U.S. – Soviet relations. He didn't live too long after that.

And I can say I saw Brezhnev and Kosygin in the flesh. I don't think Brezhnev ever even mumbled a word in the photo sessions before the meetings. Kosygin would banter quite often with the people on the other side of the table. He seemed like a much "nicer" man than Brezhnev.

Early on, I got into the world of music, theater, arts. For me, this was one of two avenues for interacting with Soviets. This wasn't the primary example but Senator Mathias of Maryland came out.

Q: Mac Mathias.

BROWN: I think it was to one of our exhibits. The Soviets invited him to go to the Bolshoi for an opera. It happened to be Khovanshchina, a four hour opera. At first, it seemed long and tedious but I began to appreciate Russian opera and thereafter I would always advise people if you want to go to Bolshoi, don't go to see Verdi or Puccini. You

could see that better in Western Europe. Go to see Eugene Onegin or Queen of Spades or Boris Godunov or Prince Igor, whatever. I became a devotee of Russian opera.

I got to meet a photographer named Vladimir Sichov. He later resettled in Paris. He had an amazing collection of black and white pictures, many of them published in a book called (in Russian) "The Russians seen by Vladimir Sichov." I read somewhere he had more than 100,000 pictures of ordinary life in the Soviet Union. Not just ordinary life but young military recruits in training. He also used his apartment to exhibit paintings by Russian artists and we scarfed up several of them. Of course they were delighted to sell these oil paintings so I have paintings by Vladimir Arkharov and various others.

One of the collectors was a woman named Tanya Kholodzei (or Kolodzei). She again was one of these mystery figures. She had a daughter -- I didn't know of any other family members -- and you would go to her apartment and under her bed and in closets and on walls and stacked up in corners were endless numbers of works of art by Russian painters. We acquired a few of those. In turn, we would invite her to film showings at Spaso House or events like that.

I discovered only recently through Facebook that her daughter Natasha now runs a gallery in New York. And Tanya Kholodzei still travels between Moscow and New York. I look forward to meeting her because we knew her very well in Moscow.

Facebook would have been fun and useful (and not allowed!) back in those times to stay in touch with a lot of these people.

Q: How about movies? Were American movies shown?

BROWN: No, unless they had a particular slant.

Not movies but various works of American literature would be translated and very well known, particularly if they provided a picture of the United States that unfavorable. Streetcar Named Desire was performed quite often, *Tramvay imeni Zhelaniye*, literally Streetcar Called Desire would be shown in Soviet theaters because it provided a fairly negative image of the United States. I don't recall very many if any American movies.

Q: I understood The Grapes of Wrath was shown but then again, people say these people had cars.

BROWN: It was a double-edged sword for the Soviets. I don't think they could ever come out the winner on these things. They would let in American literature that had an unfavorable slant.

Somewhere along the line, probably through my boss, Ray Benson, the public affairs officer, I met a woman named Katya Shirman. She worked at *Roskoncert*, the Russian concert agency. She learned I liked music and boy, the phone started to ring and I knew right away who it was. "Phil", she would say (it always sounded like "Feel"), "You must

come to this concert” so I would go or my wife and I would go to the concert. One of the first featured a young Russian violinist named Vladimir Spivakov. Today Vladimir Spivakov is one of the world’s famous violinists and conductors; at that time he was young and fairly timid but also ambitious and extremely gifted. We went after one of his concerts to the apartment of Katya and her husband to meet Volodya. It was just the first of many social encounters we would have.

We went to concert one time featuring Spivakov and another brilliant, young violinist, Viktor Tretyakov. They were both students of the same teacher, Yuri Yankelevich. There was a joke, a gag. The Russians like these quick one liners. Question: Who is better, Spivakov or Tretyakov? Answer: Gidon Kremer. Kremer is a Latvian violinist.

The point being you’ve got these two really fine young violinists but there is an even better one up there in the Baltics. The Russians would just throw their heads back and laugh at that joke.

A few years ago I went to a concert by Spivakov at Strathmore in Bethesda. I assembled the concert programs from all the Spivakov concerts that I had gone to both in Moscow and later on in places like Munich and Paris. I took them along. He and some of the orchestra members were amazed to see this collection. By the way, in the closed society that was Moscow, it was very easy to walk back stage after a concert and greet the performers. It was even easier for Westerners because the performers liked the attention. By contrast, that night at Strathmore, I was barely able to talk my way back stage after the concert to greet my friend.

If the KGB was keeping a file on me, they certainly did learn early on that I loved to go to the Great Hall of the Conservatory and to Tchaikovsky Hall and hear orchestras and recitals and that I really appreciated music. I loved going. I would always have great front row seats and people knew that I was American and I enjoyed cultivating that image, that I was a devotee of classical music. I am not a music critic but we heard a wonderful cross section of performers and orchestras in a, for me, a very safe environment.

There were two problems. It was hard after a busy day at work to keep your mind on the music and not be thinking about what you needed to do the next morning and it took a little bit of time away from my children.

Q: You mentioned Ray Benson. I knew Ray. He was a ‘red diaper baby’. During the ‘30s a number of people, leftist leaning, went to the Soviet Union to work in factories and to know the Soviet Union. As I recall Ray’s parents took him there and they called him the ‘red diaper baby’.

BROWN: Ray never let on at the time. All I knew was that he was born, I think, in New York City. He did not let on at the time but I believe he had a sister living in Moscow or a sister who had been born in Moscow. In any case, there were family members.

I did later learn more in detail about him. The point is that at the time, Ray was very, very discreet about this. I didn't ask and he didn't tell. He was my boss for my first year in Moscow, 1978-1979. And in 1987, I replaced him. Ray had two four-year assignments. I had two three-year assignments.

I mentioned going back to Garmisch for basically what was to be a vacation, skiing and other things. One evening, we went to the apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Posdeev where we met a Russian woman. This began what I will call the "saga of the Tanyas." We met a woman there named Tatyana Sergeovna Khodorovich. She had administered the Solzhenitsyn Fund in Moscow and was now living in Paris. I don't know exactly how she had ended up in Paris or why she was in Garmisch during our visit but she had emigrated or was in exile, a dissident. She said "you should get in touch back in Moscow with Tanya Ivanova."

So we went back to Moscow and on a Sunday afternoon a few weeks later, we drove and drove and finally found the apartment of Tanya Sergeovna Ivanova. We made two Sunday afternoon visits there and met a number of interesting people, including Tanya Velikanova who would later on spend time in Siberia, and Sergei Khodorovich, two of the directors of the Solzhenitsyn Fund. Tanya Velikanova urged us to go and meet someone named Tanya Zieman. This is why we call it the saga of the Tanyas.

Don't try to follow all that except on April 1, 1979, I walked not too far to the apartment of Tanya Zieman. Her husband, Yuri, was not there but their three-year old daughter, Vera, was. We learned they were refuseniks. Yuri had applied to emigrate and had been "refused," from whence the term in Russian.

I left Tanya Zieman's apartment that night entrusted with a package of letters – I held them under my coat -- that had been delivered to her by Tanya Velikanova. When I got back to the embassy, I pouched it, sent it out to people in the outside world. These were for people in the West who were active in the Helsinki human rights movement.

To make this long story short, Tanya and Yuri Zieman and family became our dearest friends. They now live in Boston. Vera, then three, is now a young mother living in Boston. She went to Amherst and the Fletcher School. Her sister Galina or Galka, Yuri's daughter, was ten years older. She and her husband Viktor and their children also emigrated and live in the Boston area. For the rest of our first assignment in Moscow, we were very, very close friends with Yuri and Tanya Zieman. We always told them that if "at any time being close to us jeopardizes you, puts you in danger, tell us and we will vanish from your lives." On the contrary, they wanted our friendship and felt a certain type of protection from it.

I took journalists, visiting firemen and later on, the Voice of America director, Richard Carlson, to visit them. He recalls it more vividly than I do, going to the Zieman apartment. They finally got permission to emigrate in 1988, right after the Ronald Reagan visit. In fact, there was even in the planning stage of the Reagan visit in 1988 the idea that

en route from the airport, Reagan would go by the Zieman apartment and then go on to Spaso House. That didn't happen but I can tell you, it was in the planning stage.

So through Yuri and Tanya, we had many, many indelible experiences and our children were involved. We would go out to the woods in one of the open areas, maybe Vatutinki, in the 40 kilometer zone around Moscow, and have a cookout. We would provide the chickens that we could purchase at the diplomatic gastronomie. Yuri would set up the spit and cook the chicken. You would have thought we were in Rock Creek Park on a wonderful spring day.

Or we would go to a little dacha they were able to rent. They babysat for our dog Tar one summer. It was a life-changing experience.

Q: Did you learn to identify mushrooms?

BROWN: I didn't learn to identify them but I certainly knew how important "gribi" are to Russians and I enjoyed tasting many varieties of mushrooms.

So through those two avenues -- the creative intelligentsia, particularly in the world of music but also theater, and our refusenik friends -- we had windows on Soviet society. To this day, people will ask, "Did you get to meet Russians?" We got to meet more Russians than we had time, even on our first tour.

Q: I sort of have the vision of sitting around a kitchen table drinking tea or vodka or what have you and talking about life, I mean, real discussions. This is very much the Russian spirit.

BROWN: Exactly. Much of our conversation was just as human beings, parents, sitting in a small kitchen, of course, all the time hoping that Yuri would not be arrested. He took a job as an orderly in a hospital because he had lost his job when he applied to emigrate. We were always hoping their health would be good and that they would not run afoul of Soviet authorities, which they didn't. They had almost 10 long years before they were able to emigrate. There is much more about that story I could tell but they could tell it much better.

I want to conclude memories of my first Moscow year by mentioning four world events that had an impact on our lives. I don't have them in order but one was the U.S. establishing diplomatic relations with the Chinese. All of a sudden, the Chinese Embassy was inviting us in for social events. It got to the point that Ambassador Toon I think had to say, "Look, we need to do this in an orderly, restrained fashion. We cannot look as if we are falling all over ourselves." So there was some sort of orderly structured way of accepting invitations but boy, did it produce very nice meals.

Q: Relations with the Chinese diplomatic life meant some damned good food.

BROWN: It certainly did. They had a huge compound. It was very interesting. They raised a lot of their food right there on the compound. They were out on Friendship Street not too far from the university.

Then there was the murder of Ambassador Dubs in Kabul. I didn't know him but some of my colleagues did.

Q: I knew him fairly well.

BROWN: It sent a chill over the diplomatic community.

Q: We have an interesting account in our oral histories about somebody who was right outside when he was shot. The implication is very strong that the KGB was in on it.

BROWN: Of course he had served in Moscow too. That was very sad.

One day after this incident in the consular section, the man blowing him up, there was a major U.S. - Soviet prisoner exchange. I think it was a three-way exchange. We sometimes forget about how these things took place. At various points, a prisoner would be freed and walk across the no man's land. That was April of 1979.

And then lastly the Vienna summit. I talked about that. That culminated my first year in Moscow. I came back to Moscow and not too long after that we went on home leave.

Let me add one quick thing to the Vienna summit meeting. There had been a report that Thomas Watson, formerly of IBM, would replace Ambassador Toon. Ambassador Toon probably knew more about this than he let on but he didn't confirm it. Thomas Watson came to Vienna for that summit and he was interviewed by journalists Kevin Klose of The Washington Post and Dan Fisher of The Los Angeles Times. The agreement was they would not run the interview until and unless Thomas Watson was actually confirmed as ambassador to Moscow or presented his credentials. I can't remember which.

Of course, he was and the stories were published. There was nothing wrong with them but Ambassador Watson didn't like them. He would write personal notes on his hand. If he was going to be interviewed by Dan Fisher or Kevin Klose, he would write on his "Fisher/Klose" in pen on his hand. They picked this up and wrote about it in the story. It was just a little thing but Ambassador Watson was offended by it. So for that reason, he always felt very uneasy dealing with the press.

That summer, we went back to our beloved cabin in Maine for home leave. I knew all along that the Watson name was in Camden. But it was his brother who had a house in Camden. Along with a little more research, I realized that Tom Watson (I never would have called him that at the time) had a place on one of the islands in Penobscot Bay and it was he who had been named ambassador to Moscow.

I screwed up all my courage and with some trepidation called that number, introduced myself to Tom Watson and explained that my wife and I were vacationing there. We had just finished one year in Moscow, we would soon be going back and we were, whatever I said, excited and pleased to know he was going to be our new ambassador.

I am not quite sure he grasped who I was or what I was saying but he said, "Well, we will have to get together. Call me back." I called him back. When he said "get together," I assumed he meant that we would get together for lunch. I had to explain to my children that they were not going to be involved in this, that this was dad's new boss and that I would have to deal with this very carefully.

So I called him up on the given morning and he asked me on the phone, "Do you have children?" All my kids heard was, "Yes, we do, two. They are 11 and 9." He was inviting us all and he said, "You know where Lincolnville Beach is?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, get down there at 11 o'clock and I will pick you up in my helicopter." And he did.

Q: We will pick this up in the summer of 1979.

Today is the 20th of March, 2012 with Phil Brown. Phil you said you wanted to do something and then we are going to pick this up. We left it off you were going to meet the new Ambassador to the Soviet Union up in Maine.

BROWN: In my chronology, I have reached the summer of 1979. It has been almost a month since I was here last time. For anyone who ever happens to be listening to or reading this, please note that change. It is a little hard to keep a smooth continuity.

What I am doing in this interview is to talk about what my Foreign Service experience 30 years ago. What I have done between now and the last time I was here relates very much to my Foreign Service experience. When I was overseas, one of the things I was supposed to do was identify young, upcoming future leaders to send on the International Visitor Program. I was on the sending end. Today, I am still involved but on the receiving end. I contract periodically with the State Department to accompany groups of international visitors on their two-to-three week visits to the United States.

I am just back from a two-week trip around the United States with 19 IVs. In two weeks, I will be going on a three-week trip with another group of IVs.

Q: Could you describe your last trip? What was the composition and where were going and what were you seeing?

BROWN: The theme of the program was combating human trafficking. That's an issue that was hardly in anyone's mind ten years ago.

Q: It wasn't. We are talking about mostly prostitution.

BROWN: And forced labor. But it is an issue that has become a very important part of foreign policy. In 2000, the United States passed very important legislation on human trafficking. Hillary Clinton has put it at the top of her priorities. There is now an annual report that the State Department does, the Trafficking in Persons or TIP report, which evaluates the performance of every country around the world including the United States. Countries can be suppliers, transit countries or consumers of human trafficking so I was with a group of people from 19 different countries, from Trinidad to the Seychelles, from Estonia to Tunisia. We spent several days in Washington at the federal level and then we split up into three different groups and I went with a 1/3 of the group to Denver, Colorado. The others went to Minneapolis and Phoenix.

People ask “why Denver?” There are very engaged people there at the nongovernmental level dealing with this issue of human trafficking. But on any assignment, we leave the major cities of the east and west coast to visit some other cities in the interior – Chicago, Des Moines, Memphis, etc. From Denver, we gathered in Miami for a couple of days of programming.

Two weeks, very concentrated, but at the end of the time, I am almost a mini-expert on the subject. The people who came are all involved in the subject back home so they went back with a lot of new knowledge, contacts and so on.

Q: What were you talking about? Obviously, we are not immune from particularly prostitutes but not only that, the Chinese

BROWN: It could be Hispanics in Colorado, Chinese in New York City. Miami is a major transit point. Americans are addressing the subject from many different perspectives, from legislation to NGOs that are involved in working directly with victims. Human trafficking in the formal sense is people moving across borders but there are also people dealing with human trafficking where the victims have not been moved across borders. At the NGO level, you find quite a number of groups and people heavily involved.

My next project will be the U.S. judicial system. It does remind me of when I was overseas sending people on the IV program.

Q: What were you looking at in these places? Were you talking to police or judiciary?

BROWN: In Washington, it was four of the five federal agencies that are most involved; State, Justice, Labor and Health and Human Services. We also had a meeting with the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is an NGO and we had a talk by a woman from American University who is an expert in the field.

In Colorado, there is something there called the Laboratory for Combating Human Trafficking. It is an NGO. They have something called the Colorado Project and they are trying to do research on it because Denver is at the intersection of two interstate highways and Denver becomes a transit point for people being trafficked.

We went to a shelter for women who have been trafficked, prostitutes. Were they exactly, in a formal definition, victims of human trafficking? Perhaps not because they hadn't been moved across borders but it is a place where women who have been rescued, as it were, have a chance to start life over again.

We talked to a police officer there about awareness training. The police are prosecutors and they look at prostitutes as criminals and are trying to redefine this so that a prostitute is not simply a criminal but may be a victim. There are programs that provide assistance to victims of prostitution.

In Miami, we met with the other major federal agency, Homeland Security and with ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and their taskforce there. There were perhaps too many meetings with taskforces and office visits and not enough occasions to talk to the victims but we did have a meeting with a Hispanic man, a Mexican American, I believe, who's involved with labor there. He made a very contentious case about what happens to migrant laborers. I say contentious because a lot of visitors didn't accept his point of view. He really presented his point of view quite forcefully.

Q: We are talking about the summer of '79 and you are going to meet with the new Ambassador, Tom Watson. How did that go?

BROWN: So back to Maine and Moscow more than 30 years ago. It was delightful. We were on home leave near Camden, Maine, and I knew the Watson name was associated with the area. I called Mr. Watson and at first, there was a little confusion about who I was but when I called back he said, "You have to come over and have lunch." I told my kids that dad was going to be meeting the new boss and they were going to be left behind.

On the morning we were supposed to go, I called again and it was clear to them from my conversation when I said, "Yes, we do. Two" that they were going to be invited as well and he said, "Get yourself down to Lincolnville Beach and I will pick you up there in my helicopter."

He picked us up and flew us over to North Haven, his end of the island, where they have a large family estate. He and his wife, Olive, were the most hospitable, warm, welcoming people, nothing pretentious about them and yet, we looked around at this vast estate and were reminded that he was a former chairman of IBM and was now going to be the American Ambassador to Moscow. He took me aside. We went walking and he started asking me questions about how we could solve the problems of U.S.-Soviet relations and nuclear weapons and I had to explain that this was a little above my competence.

Then we completed lunch and the kids went swimming in the pool. Somewhere along the line, I learned that not long before, Mr. Watson had had a heart attack and so I was somewhat relieved when he introduced us to his pilot; his pilot flew the helicopter back to Lincolnville Beach. It was an experience we will never forget.

When I went back to the embassy a month later and mentioned in the country team meeting that I had had lunch under these circumstances with Ambassador Watson, I certainly got people's attention. Everyone wanted to know who he was and what he was like.

It also meant that when Ambassador Watson came out in October, I had to make it fairly clear when he called me up to his office that I was not the person to talk to. He needed to talk to the head of the political section or the DCM. That eventually got straightened out but we always had a very personal friendship with the Watsons and it continued. Several summers thereafter, we would go to North Haven, be their guests for a meal or meet him somewhere along the Maine coast.

He wrote a book (Father, Son & Co: My Life at IBM and Beyond) and inscribed it to Bobbi and me "with admiration." The book has about 20 pages on his time as ambassador. He referred to it as "his short, unhappy tour as a diplomat." We felt a twinge when we read in the newspaper that he had passed away; we felt as though we had lost a close friend.

Q: You went back after leave to the Soviet Union in '79. What was the situation? Was there anything developing at that time?

BROWN: Let me repeat that I kept diaries during this time. As I go through them, preparation for this interview has been tedious. It is time-consuming. I am sometimes amazed at how I found the time to keep a diary and put in the details that I did.

That was then and this is now but as I see names and recall incidents, I look them up on the internet. I learn more about them now than I knew back then. I am not only reliving these experiences but I am rediscovering them and learning about people I met back then.

I am not even looking at various files and photo albums but only at my diaries. I kept diaries every day, probably 362 out of 365 days of the year. What I conclude is that we, and I deliberately say we, had an amazing experience, an amazing opportunity. This was an extremely interesting place to be in a Foreign Service career. Our professional and personal lives were intertwined and one was as interesting as the other. I will say we took full advantage of it.

Our experiences there were people-oriented. I am amazed at the energy we had. I am amazed at how we could go out night after night and be involved in some activity or other. We were in the prime of our lives. For me, it was age 37 to 40. I had a lot of energy then. We involved our children. Our children were a great age to be in Moscow. They

were not so young that we had to have them taken care of and couldn't really understand the experience. If they had been a few years older, they might have been restless teenagers or we would have sent them off to boarding school. They were right in between. It was a good time for them to be involved.

It is fun for me even now to call them up and ask if they remember such and such an experience, like the day my 11-year old daughter and one of her friends, the daughter of a colleague in the political section, decided to get on the bus that goes around the Ring Road in Moscow. The only problem was they couldn't quite figure out where to get off and so they went all the way around the Ring Road -- Christine would have to recall the details -- before they realized where they needed to get off.

On the one hand you think, wow. You let your kid do that in Moscow in the midst of godless communism? On the other hand, I am reassured by the thought that Russians love children and they would have found somebody that would have helped them out. It was an adventure they talked about.

You asked what kind of mood we found when we went back. Summer of 1979 had been the Carter - Brezhnev summit meeting in Vienna. We did not know what lay in store in the next few months so September of 1979, when I went back was, or seemed to be, a pretty good period in U.S. - Soviet relations.

But there are a couple of things, some more detail, that I want to recall about the year 1978-79. I did talk about the fire across the street from the embassy and our belief that that was the building from which the Soviets directed radiation at the embassy.

What I forgot to mention last time was that in May, 1979, the embassy issued a statement saying that the Soviets had stopped directing radiation at the embassy. The New York Times published that in a four paragraph AP dispatch. I am really surprised that that issue did not gain more press attention and hasn't been looked at more.

It was an issue at the time because Johns Hopkins, at the bidding of the State Department, did a study about radiation at the American Embassy. But to this day, I remain convinced that that story has never been fully explored. They were directing radiation at us. My guess is that we, the CIA or whatever entity, was also directing radiation outwards. We were trying to listen to messages. There must something that explains the terrible heat in the embassy building, which was nothing more than a 12- or 14-story apartment building. There was strange heat in that building. It was just warmer than it needed to be.

Ambassador Stoessel, who had been there before I was, died of leukemia. There was speculation even then that he might have been a victim of that radiation. I sure would like to see a deep, thorough study of that issue.

Not long after I came back in 1979 -- it was still the time of Ambassador Toon, Ambassador Watson didn't come out until October -- we had a special event that I will never forget. It took place just down the hill behind our embassy on big plot of land that

was to be the site of our new embassy. We had a ground breaking ceremony down there. I recall Ambassador Toon standing on a little podium and it reminded me of the Politburo on top of Lenin's tomb on November 7th. It was a very formal ceremony. Ground was broken for the new American Embassy, the NOB, the new office building, on the new embassy compound, the NEC.

That was 1979. If anyone had asked me on that date, if they had told me on that date, that I would come back to Moscow in 1987, I certainly would have assumed that I could look forward to working out of the new office building. Well, when I came back in 1987, we lived on that compound in a very nice townhouse. A lot of embassy support facilities had been relocated there but the new office building, the NOB, was alleged to have bugs in it and was being deconstructed; it was a work site for Americans trying to find and take out those bugs.

In my three years, 1987 to 1990, we never got into that new office building. We continued to work out of the old office building under abysmal working conditions. I mean abysmal, dangerous to your health. It was dirty, a fire trap, a hot, awful work environment. One of my regrets is that we didn't ever have a chance to work in proper working conditions. I might have stayed a fourth year in Moscow on my second tour if the working conditions had been better.

Let me turn to a different and happier subject. I am reminded that one of our senior FSNs, a fellow named Yuri Zarakovich, wrote an article in 1979 for Ogonyok Magazine. Ogonyok was one of the more interesting magazines and the subject was the father of John Byerly. John Byerly was in our exhibits program. His father had been in the Second World War and had a very interesting experience with Soviet troops.

I never thought about that issue again until just a couple of years ago when John Byerly became the American Ambassador to Moscow. That subject, his father's World War II experience, was recalled just a couple of years ago in exhibits, newspaper articles and interviews. Those are the kinds of stories that Soviets, now we refer to them as Russians, love. U.S. - Russian cooperation during the Second World War.

Q: I don't know what it was like in those times but I think today Russian citizens don't live as long as most others; heavy smoking, heavy drinking, not much exercise. The population is actually shrinking. Was that, did we ever address it?

BROWN: A man named Murray Feshbach, an expert on Soviet demography at the Census Department, was pointing out way back in the '70s that Soviet population was not growing, was in decline from these very factors that you mentioned, alcoholism, diet, lack of exercise and perhaps just lack of incentive, given their living conditions, to have large families.

It was a problem that the Soviets, though they wouldn't come right out and say it, had to be aware of it as far back as the '70s and maybe before that. They are still dealing with it today.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet press at that point? Was it strictly a tool of the Communist Party? Was there any movement there?

BROWN: The short answer is yes, strictly a tool of the Communist Party. We dealt with Soviet journalists but we dealt with them as very competent, very well trained polemicists. We would occasionally take an American visitor to call on one of them. For example, I recall going with a congressman to call on the editor of Pravda, Viktor Afanasyev. He was a very skilled spokesman for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Alexander Bovin of Izvestiya was another with whom we would meet. Vikentiy Matveyev was another. I sometimes thought “boy, I wish we had people who are as skilled both in expressing a particular point of view and perhaps doing it in Russian.” Our visitors such as the congressman were frequently outmatched.

There were people such as Vladimir Pozner (I mentioned him before) who had grown up in Brooklyn, who not only spoke unaccented English but could speak “Brooklynese” as well. He would go to the American School or somewhere like that and perhaps admit, “Yeah. We’ve got problems here. We are just like any country in the world. We have smart people and stupid people just like you do in your country.” This was a very disarming approach.

But when it came to the crunch, to the issues in foreign policy, all Soviet “journalists” sang the party line. And for good reason; their jobs, their livelihoods depended on it.

Q: Were you seeing a lack of enthusiasm for communism per se? In other words, they have lectures on communism and on and on. There must be a point where students are tuned off, certainly in Eastern Europe.

BROWN: No question. It is hard to make a distinction between my official life and my non official life in Moscow because everything was official. You were always an American diplomat. I was the press attaché and so I would take Washington visitors to meet journalists or I would have Soviet journalists to our apartment. I recall a number of them coming to watch a video of the Reagan-Carter presidential debate in 1980. They would watch this debate and would discuss it. They were always, as we would say today, on message. There would be no concessions; whether they were defending the invasion of Afghanistan or saying it was the U.S. fault that we had hostages in Iran, they were right on line.

But, as I have said, I also had a lot of unofficial contact with people in two different categories. The first were people in the creative world, the performing arts. I did this simply because I liked having those experiences. We also had an ever-growing number of friends in the world of Jewish refuseniks or dissidents. You’d talk to any of them and either by the look on their face or by what they would actually tell you, the message was that this is all a big lie. Whatever the Russians were claiming about their standard of living or their role in the world, they were basically a third world country with nuclear weapons. I am sure that the official spokespeople recognized that as well. It is just that a

lot of them benefited from this system and so they were not going to undermine their own position.

The short answer to your question is people knew that they were being lied to. We often watched the television news at night, the program called “Vremya.” You would hear the reports on food production or the general level of contentment and you knew that very few people could have watched those and thought it was true.

Q: Was there any effort during this time to spice up the news or something? Tractor production is not exactly a gripper.

BROWN: No, it wasn't but it was there every night along with the speeches. Was there an effort to spice up the news? The front page of every major newspaper would have exactly the same article with exactly the same words. Newspapers like Literary Gazette might have long, tedious pieces on some aspect of cultural life but I don't think Russians turned to newspapers or TV to spice up their lives, at least not TV news casts. They watched cultural events, sporting events, children's programming, that kind of thing.

They didn't look to the media for news and the media was not trying to make it look itself interesting. Its role was to be the official mouthpiece for the CPSU.

Q: Where did people get their news in those days?

BROWN: We used to say that the rumor mill could get stories across Moscow and around the country in no time; that's where news traveled fastest or most believably just through conversations.

Beyond that, where did people get their news? A certain number were able to listen to foreign broadcasts including the Voice of America. Radio Liberty was jammed but if you got in the right places you could hear it.

One of the things I did a great deal of was travel. When I traveled to places like Tbilisi, Tashkent or Irkutsk, one of the things I was supposed to do was listen to the Voice of America and see if I could monitor it despite the jamming. The answer was sometimes yes, sometimes no. International broadcasts were a source of news.

Beyond that, you had the intelligentsia or the few people who were able to travel abroad and see things differently or who had contact with foreigners. For most other people in the country outside the big cities, I don't think they really cared that much. They just went about their daily lives struggling to make ends meet.

Q: This could be true in Kansas.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Did we see any differentiation or cracks between what you were seeing in the central part of Russia and Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, you know the other parts of what eventually broke off from the Soviet Union?

BROWN: A city we visited frequently, and where you would find the greatest sense of skepticism, where you felt a total change of spirit, was Tbilisi, Georgia. There was just something about that part of the world. The first morning I awakened in Tbilisi, I felt as if I was in a Mediterranean country. Over the course of two tours in the Soviet Union, I went there numerous times, quite often with family members.

I didn't go to Belarus, to Minsk, until my second tour but I don't think you would have found much deviance from party line in those areas.

In Central Asia, there was a whole different look – the faces, a different way of living, the ready availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and that kind of thing. Again, I don't think they were thinking that much about political issues out there.

But aside from these specifics, there is another more important point. What these three years in Moscow from 1978 to 1981 did for me was to make 1987 to 1990, when I went back on my second tour, so amazing. From the first day back in 1987, I would start the day, probably at a staff meeting, saying or hearing “you can't believe what we just read, what we just saw, what we just experienced.” How different it was from ten years earlier. It really did go from a tightly controlled, thought-controlled society to an amazingly open, vibrant new world.

Q: Let's take two issues that must have had quite an impact. One is the hostage issue in Tehran and Soviet reaction and the other of course is the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. How did the hostage crisis

BROWN: The hostage taking was terribly depressing. I didn't make a note in my diary about it until several days after it happened. Soon after, we had a meeting in the embassy to ask ourselves whether we were doing and what we should do. I am not exactly sure what we meant by that but it seemed important to address our concern over this issue. The Soviets were exploiting it fully, blaming the United States even though of course they had interests of their own as far as their diplomatic immunities but they showed no sympathy for us for that situation.

Then there was the day -- and again, remember how we got our news, news wasn't as instantaneous back then as it is now – when I learned through, I think, an AP report of the failed rescue mission. That just made that whole experience all the more depressing.

Life went on, we didn't stop living. It was on your mind every day. We had no fear of that kind of thing in Moscow. If anything, the Soviets had more worries about the safety of their diplomats sometimes in places like New York and elsewhere. In Moscow, we didn't fear hostage taking or physical attacks but you had to think of those poor souls in Tehran.

Jumping ahead to February of 1980, we and another family took a vacation in Sri Lanka. We got there flying Aeroflot from Moscow nonstop to Colombo. Part way through our flight, the pilot told us we were flying over the Persian Gulf. People even looked out to see if they could see American warships. It occurred to me that we were flying right over that country where this was all going on.

I remember the beginning of negotiations in November of 1980 and the Algerians being involved. When the hostages were released in January, the Algerian Ambassador in Moscow came to an event at Spaso House. We had served in Algeria and there was some grudging thanks to the Algerians for some little role they played in resolving the issue.

Q: Let's go to the invasion of Afghanistan. Here were the Soviets invading essentially a communist country. It is sort of a peculiar thing. Do you recall when it first happened what the hell is happening here?

BROWN: I am sometimes struck as I read my diary to see that I didn't write on that day that the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, etcetera, etcetera. I guess I took it for granted that this was in the news so I didn't have to write it. I do have a note on December 28, 1979 that the Ambassador briefed the American press on what we called the Soviet led coup in Afghanistan. That's about the only note I made.

Of course, the consequences were immediate and had a profound effect on our lives there; the sanctions imposed by the Carter administration. Ambassador Watson was recalled. We were groping for sanctions and sanctions included closing what we called the Kiev Advance Party, KAP. We were going to open a consulate in Kiev and they would open a consulate in New York. We had an advance party in Kiev.

Well, one of the ways we were going to punish the Soviets was to close the Kiev advance party and I remember some of our very good people being withdrawn from Kiev. That was about the most stupid thing you could do, to close your eyes and ears to an important part of the country, to withdraw your diplomats but that was one of our sanctions.

Another one of our sanctions was to suspend grain sales. This played right into Soviet hands. All those ships would no longer be coming from New Orleans to the port of Odessa. Aside from the negative impact on American farmers, the Soviets managed to manipulate the embargo quite nicely. They assured their people that the supply of bread would not be affected. Tightening belts in a time of crisis was nothing new for Soviets. It simply reinforced the sense of nationalism and loyalty.

The other major sanction was the boycott of the Olympics. I well remember the summer of 1981. We were not allowed to go anywhere near the Olympic Park lest we appear to be in any way involved in the Olympics. I wished in retrospect that we had not done that. I think it would have been a wonderful way to poke our finger in the Soviet's eye by having American athletes there throwing a Frisbee on Red Square. We played into Soviet

hands through that boycott which, of course, allowed the Soviets four years later to boycott the U.S.-hosted Olympics in Los Angeles.

I cite those three things off the top of my head -- closing our consulate in Kiev which never really opened, suspending grain sales and boycotting the Olympics – that happened in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan. There were also a few other “minor” things, cutbacks in cultural exchanges, that affected us most directly.

I mentioned that way back when I was in Princeton, I wrote a paper on U.S. – Soviet cultural exchanges. I explained that when you wanted to show that you were happy with a country that you had tense relations with, you initiated a cultural project. You sent ping pong players to China or the New York Symphony to Moscow. And when you wanted to show you were unhappy, and didn’t want to launch nuclear weapons as the first action, you suspended cultural programs and so that’s what we did. We suspended many cultural programs.

But it sometimes went to extremes. A young American pianist came to perform in Moscow. He wasn’t even there officially. His father had arranged for him to come out. I was told I should not go to his performance at the Conservatory because it would look as though I was somehow endorsing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan by going to hear an American pianist at the Conservatory.

That young pianist was Andrew Litton, now a noted conductor; his father was George Litton. George Litton asked me afterwards if I could get a copy of Andrew Litton’s tape of his concert that night. I turned to our senior Foreign Service employee, Yuri Zarakovich, and Yuri by some miracle got the tape from Gosteleradio, state television and radio. I passed it on to George Litton. A few years later, I was in Paris and Andrew Litton was there, either to perform as a pianist or maybe as an orchestra conductor. Anyway, he was in Paris and I got hold of his father because I wanted to go to the concert. I said, “You probably don’t remember me. My name is Phil Brown. You were in Moscow . . .”

He responded, “How could I ever forget you? You got me that tape of my son’s concert in Moscow.”

I didn’t want to say it wasn’t I who did it, it was Yuri, but anyway I will take the credit and get the tickets. He said, “You do me a favor. I will be grateful. If you do my son a favor. I will never forget you.” George Litton lives in Manhattan. To this day, every time I see him or go to one of his son’s performances, he remembers that concert in Moscow in 1980.

Q: Did the atmosphere of the embassy change after the Afghan invasion?

BROWN: Yes and no. The bloom was off the rose. No one felt that more than Ambassador Watson. Ambassador Watson goes out to Moscow and he wants to preside

over a period of good feelings created by the Vienna summit; within six months, that is all down the drain.

Did the atmosphere change? Indeed. On the other hand, did we still go about our work day to day? Did we still have a full plate of activities? Very much so. We weren't going to have exhibits and speakers and cultural presentations. That had a demoralizing effect for people in the cultural section. I was in the press section. I still had a full platter, particularly in my role as press attaché, but the assistant IOs who dealt with exhibits, magazines and the like had a vastly reduced work load.

Q: You are press attaché and here the press is a complete creature of the political apparatus. What did you do?

BROWN: Let me explain once again that we had an active American press corps and as press attaché, I dealt a lot with the American press corps. They were asking questions on various issues. And under the Helsinki Agreements, working conditions for journalists were an issue we were always dealing with. Anytime an American journalist couldn't get a visa, had his film seized, felt that his working conditions were being compromised, we were into the foreign ministry to raise that issue.

It was tedious. I never really enjoyed doing this but we would go to the foreign ministry press division to defend the rights of the American press corps constantly.

We also had a very interesting and ambitious group of journalists from Western Europe and I found it very important to work with them. I had no sense that after the invasion of Afghanistan I had any less on my platter than I did before.

I mentioned that Ambassador Toon was very comfortable dealing with the press. He had a weekly, Friday afternoon background briefing for the American press corps. He almost seemed to revel in being contentious and getting a rise out of Washington. Ambassador Toon left in the fall of 1979 prior to the hostage crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan. In connection with Ambassador Toon's departure, we had a whole series of activities, social events that were not merely social events. They were part of the whole fabric of living in Moscow. One such party for Ambassador Toon, held in the snack bar, was in October of 1979, and I offered a toast that was a variation on the toast he said that he had offered to Secretary Kissinger.

Toon said his toast to Kissinger was "you have been a great secretary of state but an SOB to work for." I recalled this and I remember people nervously shuffling thinking I was going to say the same thing about Toon but my variation was "you have been a great Ambassador and a delight to work for." I went to Moscow being told to watch out for Toon. He has press attachés for breakfast. And now that he was leaving, I felt so comfortable that I could make him the potential target of a joke.

Q: He had a reputation as a curmudgeon.

BROWN: A tough guy to work for, a demanding boss but he certainly made my life interesting and more comfortable because he was honest with the press. He was candid with them. He occasionally got himself in trouble doing it but, to me he was a role model in how to deal with the press.

Ambassador Watson undoubtedly heard how comfortable Toon was with the press and it reminded me of when Ambassador Payton was replaced by Ambassador Hoffacker during my tour in Cameroon. The one came from outside the Foreign Service and the next was a career man. I wondered “how can this new guy replace his predecessor?” In fact, he didn’t try to replace; he went about doing what he knew how to do best.

By the same token, I don’t think Ambassador Watson felt he was trying to replace Toon. He was going to come out and do what he knew how to do best but dealing with the press was not what he knew how to do best. He was always uneasy and his DCM, Mark Garrison, and his political counselor, Bob German, shared that uneasiness and so it was like walking on eggshells when we dealt with the American press. We tried some of the Friday afternoon background briefings but that was trying to do what your predecessor was comfortable doing and Ambassador Watson was not comfortable doing that. I have example after example where it was a very awkward relationship, complicated of course by the fact we quickly went from relatively good times to relatively bad times.

Just one more anecdote about Ambassador Toon that is too good and too memorable for me not to mention. Besides the snack bar farewell, there was another more formal affair at Spaso House. But the best farewell for Ambassador Toon was hosted by a correspondent named Ed Stevens. Ed Stevens won a Pulitzer Prize with the Christian Science Monitor in 1950 but by 1979, he was a character nobody fully understood. He was probably in his 70s then. He was afflicted by a physical problem where his head hung down. He couldn’t stand erect. He and his wife Nina had a lovely, multi-story home in central Moscow that was full of icons. Ed hosted a party for just the American press corps. I was invited along with my wife to say farewell to Ambassador Toon.

The first event of the evening involved Gene Pell, the NBC correspondent. I can’t imagine how much company time he had spent with his cameraman creating this video, a spoof on Ambassador Toon. It picked up on and exploited many of Toon’s idiosyncrasies, habits or comments. I hope it exists somewhere because it was very funny; we were in hysterics laughing at it.

That was over and you thought nothing could exceed this for laughter and kidding. Toon was loving it and then this man appeared and you would have sworn it was Leonid Brezhnev. Out lumbers this hulking man with his head down on his chest and a Brezhnev mask. It was Ed Stevens, our host for the evening. He went on in a mumbling style you could hardly understand. It was partly the way Ed talked at the time and it was vintage Brezhnev. Toon again just loved it. It was a genuine tribute from the American press corps. There were guys there like David Shipler of The New York Times, who only a few weeks earlier had written a very critical article about the embassy and about the embassy limiting access to the consular section in the wake of the incident there and this kind of

thing. These guys didn't lose their critical edge but they really genuinely wanted to pay tribute, say farewell to Mac Toon.

To this day I look back on that with real warmth.

Q: I met Watson once when I was consul general around this time in Naples and the NATO commander in that period was Bill Crowe who became chairman of the joint chiefs. Watson mentioned that he was sent out there because of his business experience and the idea when Carter nominated him this was going to be an opening. Here was a businessman who could go out and sort of get a business perspective. A good idea because of Afghanistan and all but did you find that there was any business perspective coming out of the ambassador's office?

BROWN: Not really. That may have been the case that he was nominated, partly because he was a Democrat and partly because of his business acumen. I would imagine it would have been saying to the Soviets, "Look. This man has achieved the top of his field. We are sending you someone who is really number one in his field." They would take no offense it being a business person. They have great admiration for American business, even though they might claim otherwise.

I can't speak for Ambassador Watson that what he hoped to do was to bring the force of his personality, whereas a career person would have been simply representing the official policy of the U.S. government. Sure, Watson would have represented the official policy of the U.S. government but he would leave a lot of the negotiating and that kind of thing to other people. He was going to use Spaso House and make it an American cultural center. He was going to be able to use his personal wealth to improve U.S. – Soviet relations. He could recall, and I wish I knew exactly the details, that he flew across the Soviet Union right after the Second World War in his own plane. He wrote about those wonderful experiences. He was involved in lend lease so by dint of his personality, he hoped he could contribute to the improvement of U.S. relations.

Who knows? In Watson's mind, maybe that would also make them more open to arms control and to loosening immigration restrictions but it wouldn't prevent them from, as we know, pursuing their own national interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Q: How stood our relations with our Russian employees, the Foreign Service nationals? This was before the Sergeant Lonetree incident.

BROWN: Yes, well before Lonetree. We still had Russian national employees. We had only a couple in the press section, most notably Yuri Zarakhovich. After December, 1979, we had less work for Yuri to do, there was no question. That was a regret of mine.

I might as well take a minute and talk about Yuri, a heavy-set, garrulous Jewish intellectual, a member of the Communist Party but only out of necessity. He had a hearty laugh, loved to exchange jokes or stories in either Russian or English. I believe that he had come to the press section from the exhibit program.

Yuri was a great help on many projects and we got to know each other well. He invited me to his dacha one weekend. I went out there alone, probably a violation of embassy restrictions. You shouldn't travel alone but I went out to his dacha for a weekend, met his wife, his mother, his mother's mother and their daughter. There were four generations

Yuri went along on several of our trips to Tbilisi; he had good connections there. In one particular case, Yuri put us in touch with a leading figure in state radio and television in Georgia. On a particular Saturday, we had a big Georgian meal with Yuri and his friend. I am sure we had not only a lot of food but a little bit of libation along with it. At the end, as we are walking out of the restaurant, we noticed that there was a Georgian wedding going on. It wasn't a house of worship; I think it was the reception. There was a ceremony in connection with it so I asked "can we just stand here in the back?" We did, the four of us, Yuri, the Georgian official and my wife and my daughter.

People caught sight of us, realized I was not Georgian, found out that I was an American diplomat and pretty quickly, I was paraded up in the front of the room with somebody acting as an interpreter. The next thing I knew, I was being offered one of these cow horns full of, I am not sure what it was full of, wine, let's say and I was "invited" to toast the bride and groom by downing that horn of wine nonstop with the appropriate amount of wine trickling down my chin and everything else. I did it and got a round of applause.

Then I said through the interpreter, "I have observed one of your traditions and now I am going to ask you to observe one of our traditions and that is I am going to kiss the bride." So I kissed the bride on both cheeks and that produced a lot of laughter and applause. We walked out and the Georgian jokingly said to me, "You better be careful you don't overplay your hand; kissing the bride before the wedding or before her bridal night might be contrary to local tradition. You might end up finding your tires slashed or your throat cut." It was fun.

I remember my daughter was there because she was in hysterics watching me drink this cow horn of wine.

On another occasion, my wife and I went to the Moscow puppet theater with Yuri. My Russian was good but I could not have begun to appreciate the nuances of what was going on in the puppet theater if Yuri hadn't been sitting behind us whispering and explaining things. He was always willing to become involved in any activity we had.

That same summer we were home, 1979, we met a woman named Helen Papashvily, a Georgian name, and learned about George Papashvily (his life is a whole story in itself, a Georgian American sculptor). We took a catalog of his works back to Moscow, showed it to Yuri and asked if he could translate the introductory remarks. I think he initially looked at it skeptically but he translated it into Russian. He brought it to me a few days later. He loved it. It was this genuine U.S. – Georgian story.

By my second tour, we had dismissed all the Foreign Service national employees. There was a lot of chest beating about “boy, oh boy. This is the best thing we have ever done. We got rid of all these spies. How could we have ever operated an embassy with these disloyal people working inside?”

I am proud to say that I did not buy that argument. I thought some of these people were very good. If we weren't smart enough to know how to use them but keep them in control, then that reflected on us. As I have said many times, if Yuri and others reported back to the KGB that Phil Brown loved classical music, let them fill up the file.

By my second tour, Yuri was working for AP, the Associated Press, and our loss was their gain. After the invasion of Afghanistan, in that year and a half that I was there, we didn't have enough work for those people but by the time I went back in 1987, we had so much work that I kept thinking if I could only get Yuri to help me out with this that or the other thing. By then, he was a very capable staff member at the Associated Press.

Then he was stolen away by Time magazine. The AP bureau chief was married to the Time magazine correspondent and I don't know how that went down within the family but Time stole Yuri away from AP. We last saw Yuri in Moscow in 2006 when we returned as tourists.

In the interim, Yuri had arranged for his daughter Masha to do university study at Emory University in Georgia. It happened to be a period when we were living in the States and Yuri asked whether Masha could call us in case there was a problem or issue. I said certainly. Masha is now an immigration lawyer in Jacksonville, Florida. She has her own child and she just posted the last week or so on Facebook page that her mother has become an American citizen.

A couple of years ago, 2009, we were coming back from overseas and picked up a copy of Time magazine. There was Yuri's obituary, a full column on the magazine's own page acknowledging what he had contributed to Time's reporting on Russia. He had died in his mid-60s of cancer. By this time he had come to live in Jacksonville. He lived long enough to hold his first grandchild. Yuri's daughter told me that they still have the dacha outside Moscow.

So that's the Yuri Zarakhovich story, my part of it. I hope he left memoirs.

I just love that kind of story. As I go through my diary and look up people on the Internet, I say, “gosh. So that's who that person was we were dealing with. Now they are dead.” There are others who were children when we were there and they are now in the prime of life and doing interesting things. We can keep track of them; that is rewarding.

Q: In this first tour, did you feel the heavy hand of the KGB?

BROWN: No, I did not. I was conscious that they were probably monitoring my telephone calls and I always carried a number of small, two kopek pieces with me. If you

were going to call somebody and didn't want to be monitored, you'd find a phone booth on the street and use that to call. I was not personally aware of the KGB.

I was just the other day reading about a trip I took with the head of the internal political section, a fellow named Bob Ober.

Q: He taught at my prep school, Kent.

BROWN: On one trip, we flew to Odessa; from there, we took the train to Lvov and from Lvov, we flew back to Moscow; it must have been a five or six day adventure.

The most interesting part of it was you'd get out and walk the streets, meet people in a restaurant. I really like Bob Ober and have great respect for him but I can't tell you how many times on that trip Bob would say, "See those people over there on the other side of the street? They are following us. They are watching us."

I would look at those people on the other side of the street and I'd see just a couple of ordinary Russians going about their lives. So I think it is a matter of perspective.

I had my agenda. I would try to listen to the Voice of America and see if it was being jammed or not. We also did things like go to a concert at the conservatory in Odessa. I am sure I put Bob up to that. At the conservatory in Odessa, you could see the names of famous graduates, people like Rostropovich and Oistrakh.

Neither when we were going to the conservatory nor when we went out to visit someone by public transportation was I aware of our being watched or surveyed or whatever. Bob was sure we were.

Bob also had his agenda. There were people on various lists he wanted to talk to. So we went to visit a person who was on the embassy representation list. Any time we had a high level meeting with Soviets, we would pass over a list of individuals on whom we were making a formal representation, probably for the right to emigrate. For that visit, we might well have been monitored.

There was an Indian consulate in Odessa and Bob and I called on the consul, who was delighted to have some English-speaking visitors. We signed the guest book. I must have visited there twice because I remember signing that guest book a second time and there hadn't been many visitors in the interim. But there was always something about going to a port city, just a little bit different from other places.

Q: What was the history of the Jewish population of Odessa?

BROWN: All I know is there was a very large Jewish population there and that they were part of the creative intelligentsia but I don't recall very much of the specifics at the time. Undoubtedly, there would have been a synagogue and there would have been some

Jewish cultural organizations. Many of the creative intelligentsia came out of the Odessa Jewish community.

We went on to Lvov which is a pretty little town. It was really a Polish town with an old square.

People inevitably ask the same two questions when I say I served in the Soviet Union. The first is “could you meet people?” My answer is, “I didn’t have enough time to begin to meet all the people.” This may sound boastful but I am constantly amazed at how much time I did find to meet people after hours on the weekends and everything else.

Yes, we said to our Russian friends, particularly to our Jewish refusenik friends that if at any time they felt contact or friendship with us put them in jeopardy, let us know and we would back off without any questions being asked. The answer was always the same. “Phil, the more contact we have the better.”

The second question was “could you travel?” And I traveled extensively.

Q: You say you are meeting people. I know that the Soviets have sort of an unquenchable appetite for information about the United States. Do you really have a car or do you do this, do you do that, all these things. Were you able to engage in substantive conversations about the political situation and that sort of thing?

BROWN: We went to Moscow with a Volvo that we had purchased in 1972. That car was a lemon but somehow we nursed it as far as Moscow and it was obviously still going to cause us great difficulty. I managed to sell it. I never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy never dealt in the black market. The American Embassy always dealt with rubles at the official exchange rate but plenty of African and other third world diplomats dealt on the black market. So I sold, quite legitimately, my Volvo for a cigar box full of rubles that I could convert at the embassy at the official rate. It all worked out. The only condition was that I deliver that car to Helsinki.

I had a friend in the embassy named Craig Spitzer. I can’t remember exactly what he did but he was not a language-trained diplomat. He was one of the technicians but he knew how to operate cars and on a beautiful spring day, May 12, 1979, we headed off from Moscow and managed to drive that car to Leningrad. For Craig, it was a novel experience. Otherwise, he was not only never going to get out of Moscow, but probably never get out of the embassy-to-apartment routine so it was quite an eye-opener for him.

We stayed overnight in the guest apartment in Leningrad. After I had retired for the day, Craig was out there working on the car, changing the spark plugs, changing the oil and everything else. The next day, we drove from Leningrad to Helsinki. I put Craig on the train back to Moscow. I would see him frequently afterwards and he’d always talk about that experience. I checked in to a guest house in Helsinki and got up on Monday morning to deliver the car to the port. It wouldn’t start but thanks to Craig, I knew what I had to do with those spark plugs or whatever; I got the car started, delivered it to the port and that

was it. That was the last I ever saw of that car. I think it went off to Sierra Leone. It may still be operating in Sierra Leone.

That was the last we would ever see of non-Russian cars. We went out and bought the little version of the Fiat called the Zhiguli, a little yellow Zhig, probably about as unsafe a car as you can imagine. It provided us with anonymity. It had a diplomatic license plate on it but you could let that license plate get awfully muddy in the winter. That provided us with a degree of anonymity when we went to visit Russian friends. At least we weren't driving up in a Volvo or Chevrolet or something.

Your question; what did we talk about? Most of my recollection is that we had close friends and we were not talking very much about politics. We were talking about family and raising children. But they were also full of questions about life in America and often about things that made us reflect. I can remember Yuri Zieman, the father in the family we knew best, coming to our apartment. We had a whole row of books about Russia. We didn't have to engage in conversation. They were pulling out books and looking at pictures of the family of the czar and Russian history, pictures they had never been allowed to see.

I don't recall many conversations, except at the official level, on U.S. – Soviet relations or world politics or that kind of thing. We would talk about the news item of the day or personal concerns. With musicians, it might be on their hopes and aspirations for performing in Carnegie Hall in the case of Vladimir Spivakov, the now world famous violinist, or just the frustration of music making in Moscow.

Q: What was the music world, your impression of the music world then? What was going on?

BROWN: I listened to the Metropolitan Opera performance of "Manon" a couple Saturdays ago and during the intermission, they interviewed a couple of the leading singers. One was Polish, Piotr Beczala, and the other was a Russian, Anna Netrebko. The Polish fellow was quite critical of musical training in Poland but Anna Netrebko said that in Russia, they had the best musical training. I think she was referring to St. Petersburg. That's my way of saying that while I am not a music critic or a musicologist, I know that the musical traditions are deep in Moscow and it is not by chance that they have produced some of the world's leading performing artists.

I mentioned the Oistrakh family. I heard two generations of the Oistrakh family violinists perform in Moscow. I am jumping way ahead now but we were there when Rostropovich came back to the Soviet Union in 1991 as the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

Musical training in Moscow was outstanding. They produced great singers, instrumentalists. Perhaps the orchestras were not up to the level of some Western orchestras, although I am dubious about that rating game. As often as not, it may have been a lack of instruments.

I can remember when the Empire Brass Quintet came out in 1987. They played in one of the Baltic States, in Vilnius, Lithuania. A lot of local brass musicians came to the concert and stayed afterward to talk. They just didn't have the instruments that the American performers had.

The short answer – I believe that Russian musical training was and is top notch.

Q: In literature, what's out there? Certainly at one point Russian literature is, it's almost demeaning to say world class but that's of an era.

BROWN: It is undeniable that under Soviet communism, Russian literature was unable to bloom, was suppressed. All you've got to do is go back to the 19th century and see the great writers and contrast it with 20th century Russian literature.

I recall a night we went to a dinner with famous poets André Voznesensky and his wife Zoya Boguslavskaya and Bella Akhmadulina and her husband and a playwright named Misha Roshchin. This was on my first tour in Moscow and I am not sure I fully comprehended then who these people were or the role they played. I was the press attaché, not the cultural attaché.

The name Roshchin didn't mean too much to me then and it didn't mean too much to me this week but I looked him up and saw that he was a well-known playwright. The Soviets were still producing writers of note. There just weren't as many and they didn't have the freedom that they had at one time.

You could also argue, of course, that it is restrictions on freedom that produce great writers so you have a Pasternak or a Solzhenitsyn. We would regularly go out to Peredelkino, the so-called writer's colony. We'd take friends out there to see the grave of Boris Pasternak and be reminded even in the worst of times, or maybe because it's the worst of times, great creative talent emerges.

The Solzhenitsyn immigration was, if nothing else, one of the major points in the disillusionment of Western intellectuals in the Soviet Union and what it stood for, that a great figure like Solzhenitsyn would leave or be expelled.

Q: Did you find within your contacts any nostalgia for Stalin and his ilk or not?

BROWN: Not to any great extent. I have a little item in my files, an 8 x 10 photo calendar that includes a photo of Stalin and all his achievements. You felt a little bit of nostalgia for Stalin if you went to Georgia. I never went there but there was a museum in Stalin's birth town, Gori, that I think exists to this day.

The other place you might find it would be on Victory Day, May 15th. May was full of holidays. May 1st was International Labor Day. May 15th was Victory Day marking the end of the Great Patriotic War and you could go down to Red Square, take all the pictures

you want of the men who would come out in full uniform with all their decorations and among them would be those who felt great allegiance to Stalin for his role in the war.

If you were with a taxi driver or looked into the cab of a truck, you might see a picture of Stalin up there on the visor. If you engaged the taxi driver in conversation, there wouldn't be much more than a mumble. But some people remembered him fondly.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss?

BROWN: I've got a whole lot more.

Q: Let's stick to this tour. What was the role of the church and the openness in this first tour?

BROWN: I remember attending Easter services in 1979 at Yelokhovsky Cathedral in Moscow. We went with Kevin Klose, the correspondent for the Washington Post, and his wife and another visitor. Easter services were of course on Saturday night. What an experience to walk into one of those great cathedrals. They were jammed with people. There was a terrible crush, even in the diplomats' section, but it was worth seeing and experiencing. We stayed for several hours and the cumulative effect of music, liturgy, incense and the faces of both clergy and worshippers was profound. It will remain with me for a long time. That was our first Easter in Moscow and I think we went every Easter to a Russian Orthodox services. They were such memorable experiences.

We have a photograph of a Russian Easter service, perhaps at Yelokhovsky Cathedral, taken by a Russian photographer who was, I think, married to an American. It's a wonderfully-composed picture. He sold it as a way of making money.

I think the general consensus was and is that the patriarch was beholden to the Kremlin but nevertheless, there were plenty of true believers and they came out. That's probably true to this day that the church is beholden to the Kremlin and as we have seen, they are not terribly tolerant of other faiths. There were certain officially allowed faiths, the Jewish, Baptists and a few others, but they were not very welcoming to anybody else.

There were plenty of true believers and not just little old ladies. You'd occasionally see guys in uniform.

We went to a Baptist church to a baptism; I have vivid memories of that. Of course, the Soviets always liked to say that "we have religious freedom in this country. Just go to a Baptist church and you will see a baptism." Well, we did. It was one of those full-immersion baptism services that went on forever and ever. I am quite sure those being baptized and the clergy involved were very sincere and very true in their religion.

Q: Were we seeing problems with Islam at that time? Or were we looking at it?

BROWN: Not that I can recall. I do have a note about going by a mosque in Moscow -- I think maybe there was one mosque -- but we didn't talk much about it. Islam was more associated with Central Asia. If there was a problem associated with it, I don't think we were thinking about it at the time; it was a demographic issue. Even back then, the Russians were conscious that they didn't have population growth. They would try to put in measures that would reward large families but the problem was that all the large families were out in the Central Asian, Muslim areas.

As far as Islam being a political subject, not that I can recall.

Q: How stood Jews in the Soviet Union at that time?

BROWN: Not openly persecuted unless they applied to emigrate and then like our friends, they would risk losing their jobs and any other privileges. There was a variation on that. Some said the Jews had privileges that other people didn't have because they were at least allowed to apply to emigrate. Non-Jewish Russians couldn't even apply to emigrate.

And, of course, the Soviets could point to any number of what I used to think of as Jackie Robinsons. The American version would be: "What do you mean Americans discriminate against Negroes? Just look at Jackie Robinson." The Soviet version was: "What do you mean we discriminate against Jews? Any number of them occupy senior positions." I never stopped to think whether an editor or a member of such and such committee was Jewish but the Russians were very conscious of that. Nobody was wearing a Star of David. There was never any fear of that but there was anti-Semitism.

As for ourselves, we went quite regularly to church services which were held alternately in Spaso House or at the British Embassy. If you go back to the agreement in the 1930's that established U.S. – Soviet relations, one of the conditions was we could have a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest at all times in the Soviet Union at all times and we did. Protestant denominations went together here in the U.S. and paid for a Protestant minister to be in Moscow and there was always a Catholic priest.

The Catholics had their mass in the snack bar which resulted in all sorts of names such as our lady of the French fry or whatever. We Protestants met in Spaso House, which was a lovely setting or at the British Embassy, which looked out on the Kremlin. You could sit there at a church service on Sunday morning and look out at the bells of the Kremlin. It was a very inspiring setting. They would bring in an Anglican cleric from Helsinki or wherever. There was always good attendance and I even sang occasionally in a little choir we had. It was an important get together.

Q: Did you find much collaboration with the foreign embassies, particularly the French and British and German and all?

BROWN: There was something called the QP, quadripartite; the American, French, British and German ambassadors got together on a weekly basis with rotating hosts and

compared notes. On my second tour, when I was counselor, I occasionally attended when Ambassador Matlock would debrief but I often came away thinking I've got so much else to do. I understood that we were all political officer in Moscow but we were not all doing this kind of work. I went wondering if it was the best use of my time.

Similarly, on my first tour but not on my second, the four press attachés would get together, the British, French, American and German. I would go to those. We'd host a lunch and occasionally the PAO would come too because he was the press counselor. The meetings reminded me that we did very different work. My counterparts in the British, French and German embassies were political officers. They were reading the Soviet press, analyzing it for changes in a word or two; that's what our political internal folks were doing.

Very few of my counterparts were doing what I was doing which was dealing with the press on a day-to-day basis, answering questions. They didn't cater to the press the way we did. They didn't have as many issues. They didn't have as many news making events as we did, as many news makers, as many things that caught the attention of the press. So those press attaché get-togethers were always fairly low on my list of priorities; I didn't find them terribly useful.

More important to me was my contact with their journalists. I knew some of their journalists better than they did. They didn't worry about the working conditions for German, French, British journalists but I was dealing with correspondents for the Financial Times and Le Monde and German newspapers on a regular basis.

New subject: In late September of 1979, all four of us, my wife and two kids and I made our first ever trip to Tbilisi, Georgia. It was a real eye opener. This was a part of the Soviet Union that just acted differently than Moscow. This was not our first trip outside Moscow by any means. We had been to Dushanbe, Leningrad and places like that but Tbilisi, Georgia was a real eye opener.

We had been given through music friends in Moscow the names of a couple Georgian artists and the fact that I can remember the names of Shavleg Shilakadze and Nodar Zhvanya -- I don't have to look at notes to remember those names -- says something about what an impression they made on us. They met us near the Hotel Iveria where we were staying. They didn't seem to have any hang-ups, took us around, took us outside town, fed us meals.

I remember one or the other saying he wanted to take us to visit a town called Mtskheta, probably 20-30 miles outside Tbilisi. I explained that I would like to accept but that I hadn't requested permission from the foreign ministry; you always had to outline exactly where you were going before you took a trip. Either Nodar or Shavleg smiled and said, "Phil, that's Moscow; this is Georgia." Off we went. There was that thumb your nose at central authority attitude that distinguished Georgia from the rest of the country.

The proximate reason for going to Tbilisi at that time was an American cultural presentation called the Preservation Hall Jazz Band out of New Orleans, amazing octogenarian jazz musicians. They did several performances in Tbilisi. We hosted a small reception for them afterwards and then they again performed in Moscow.

It is just occurring to me now; I wasn't the cultural attaché. I wasn't the CAO, I was the press attaché or information officer but I didn't think anything of blending the roles, of going to Tbilisi to attend the Preservation Hall Jazz Band concert and hosting the reception afterwards.

I remember quite a few years later going to New Orleans and hearing them perform there. You have to line up in the street to get in. I think it is even free. Some of the same people who had been in Moscow in 1979 were still with the band. Not the octogenarians but some of their younger performers.

That's the kind of thing we weren't going to experience after the invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79. This was September of '79.

Q: What was the impression you were getting, both you yourself but also from the other officers of the embassy towards Brezhnev and the leadership of the politburo? Was this a politburo that was even compos mentis?

BROWN: The only member of the politburo who was given much credence was Kosygin. Brezhnev was secretary general of the party. You had the nominal president, Nikolai Podgorny (his official title was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) and Alexei Kosygin who was in effect the prime minister. When American delegations came out, they would call most often on Kosygin and he seemed to be *compos mentis*. He was in better health than Brezhnev. In conversation, he was intelligent. Brezhnev had only a few years left to live and it was quite well known he was ill. He would reportedly joke with visiting delegations that if there were any smokers among them, they should blow smoke in his direction since his doctors had banned him from smoking. Rumors would frequently circulate that he had died.

Q: From what I gather he'd read speeches and sort of fall asleep in the middle.

BROWN: He would read speeches and it was this mumbling style that lent itself to mockery and jokes. Not on an official stage but elsewhere, there would be mockeries of Brezhnev who was hardly articulate.

I got to see him a couple of times because I would accompany the journalists to the Kremlin if a high level delegation was making a call. I mentioned earlier that one of those high level delegations consisted of two members of the Carter cabinet, Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps and Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal. They came on their own plane and were received at the Kremlin by Kosygin and Brezhnev -- separate appointments. A small pool of journalists was allowed to attend the opening and I got to go along with the pool. I have a picture of myself standing against the wall in the

meetings with Brezhnev and with Kosygin. I was one of the relatively few people in the embassy besides the ambassador who actually got to see Brezhnev in the flesh.

I went to a hockey game one time. My wife's young cousin was visiting. We went to a hockey game just for the fun of it and there was this little shuffle or stir that caused us to pay attention. We realized Brezhnev was in attendance but otherwise he made very few public appearances.

This is one of the things that amazed us in 1987. Gorbachev not only appeared in public but you couldn't shut him up. He talked and talked and talked. At first it was interesting and then he wore out his welcome. He was so verbose.

One of the things that Tom Watson did was to attract a lot of friends. There were people who knew him from his previous life. I am sure he said "come see us in Moscow" without realizing so many of them would. I don't know if it was connection with Ambassador Watson but we had a visit by Harry Reasoner, the CBS newsman who at one time had actually been a USIA employee. We went out for dinner with Harry Reasoner. He was doing something perhaps for "60 Minutes" on the Soviet Union. He told my wife and me one of the reasons he left USIA was he never figured out how he could put his kids through college on the salary of a government employee.

Another visitor was Armand Hammer whose relation to the Soviet Union goes way back and he had a blank check when it came to access. He could come in and see Brezhnev at any time he wanted. Armand Hammer had known Lenin. On this particular occasion, I was supposed to make sure the film crew that accompanied him had *carte blanche* to film him at Spaso House. I was there to make sure they did what they were supposed to do and still obeyed the rules.

In retrospect, it seems as if Ambassador Watson was snakebit. In late October, I went to the Kremlin with all the senior officers from the embassy as he presented his credentials. I have that photo.

In late November, less than a month later, Ambassador Watson had to return to the United States for gall bladder surgery. If you look back on it, he didn't have good luck. Not only were political things going to turn sour, but his health was a challenge.

Q: Today is the 29th of March, 2012 with Phil Brown. We are finishing off his Soviet tour.

BROWN: Three years in the Soviet Union and we concluded last time roughly the summer of 1980, two years into my Moscow assignment.

What I would like to talk about today would be the last year but rather than doing it chronologically, I would do it by some categories.

As I read through my notes recently, I was reminded once again that on the one hand here we were in the depths of the Cold War. The Soviets had invaded Afghanistan; they had

arrested Sakharov and many other dissidents. The United States had responded with sanctions, everything from cutting off grain deliveries to closing our consulate in Kiev, a consulate that closed before it even opened because all we had there was an advance party. We boycotted the 1980 Olympics and closer to home or closer to our activities in Moscow, virtually all the cultural programs dried up. There were no exhibits with Americans out there talking about U.S. life, no speakers, and no performing arts groups.

And on the other hand, as I look through my notes and activities both on a professional and personal level, we were as busy and as active and enjoying the experience as we could be. I say professionally and personally and yet it was really hard to make a distinction because they overlapped so much.

Let me suggest just some of the interesting American people that we met and experiences we had. Part of this was because of the personality of Ambassador Tom Watson. I mentioned last time Armand Hammer. Another name that wouldn't mean too much today but to people of your generation and mine, Lowell Thomas, the man who ended all his radio broadcasts with the phrase "so long until tomorrow."

Q: In the theaters there would be a short, the movie theaters Lowell Thomas often, sort of travelogue and that type thing.

BROWN: He was well into his 80's. He died a couple of years later but he was still well known to that generation of American journalists.

Q: He was very involved with Laurence of Arabia.

BROWN: We had lunch one day at the apartment of Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose with Peter Jennings, the ABC anchorman and his wife, Kati Marton.

George Kennan popped in. He was there doing research and was invited to a staff meeting. Some other names don't mean quite as much but they are prominent figures in the world of publishing. Hedley Donovan of Time magazine; Time was doing a special issue, cover to cover, all about the Soviet Union. Sander Vanocur, who was a TV correspondent, came to interview Ambassador Watson. Walter Cronkite, I will mention in a different context.

But I want to go into a little more detail about two special visitors and about the experience we had with them. One was Bob Hope. Bob Hope came to Spaso House as the guest of Tom Watson. You can Google some correspondence between the two of them before the visit. Hope came with his wife and a friend whose name meant nothing to me at the time. The word was they would do a show for the American community at Spaso House.

No sooner had they arrived than I got a call saying Bob Hope wants to walk across Red Square. Round up some correspondents and walk him across Red Square so I did. It was an experience. Bob Hope, his traveling companion and a gaggle of correspondents and of

course, nobody on Red Square had the slightest idea who Bob Hope was but he pretended as if they did. He made jokes about Lenin's tomb and about people walking around. We had some TV cameras and flashbulbs. There is a picture that appeared in quite a number of newspapers with Bob Hope and a young Russian soldier and me. I was translating for him. I was really quite surprised no authorities came over and said what are you doing or do you have permit? You didn't have that easy flexibility at that time.

We went into GUM, the famous or infamous Russian department store. We wandered around a little bit in there, bought ice cream cones and this continued for the better part of an hour. The American journalists were covering it but they were also enjoying it. It was a once in a lifetime experience.

A day later, I got another call about lunch time saying "Bob Hope and his friend were out last night and they saw some blue suede shoes in a shoe store and they want to go buy them." I am sure the thought ran through my mind, why me? But I was smart enough to realize this was Bob Hope. Don't miss this opportunity. So I got my wife and Bob Hope and his friend. We went out from Spaso House – I think we walked -- to the shoe store.

It was the middle of the day when a lot of Russians would do their shopping so it was crowded, mostly with women. It may have even been a women's shoe store but we went in and he is cracking jokes the whole time. You don't walk into a shoe store or any kind of store in the Soviet Union at that time and expect service. Service and Soviet Union do not appear in the same sentence but we managed to get the attention of somebody. Hope tried on the shoes. The process for purchasing was different in the Soviet Union. You didn't pick out your product and then walk to the cash register. If you knew what you wanted to buy and how much it cost, you went to the cash register, paid, got a little ticket and came back and picked up your product.

When I had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to buy, I left my wife with Bob Hope and I went to the cash register, got in line, paid, got the ticket, came back and we picked up the blue suede shoes. My wife recalls that while I was doing this, he was making wisecracks about women's legs. I was told he wanted to use the shoes for a gag of some sort in California. He gave me a signed, autographed picture. In addition to his name, it says blue suede shoes. It was one of those experiences we enjoyed sharing with our friends.

There is another memory I have of Bob Hope. He did a show at the British Embassy because he was British born. I must have attended it because I remember it really didn't go over too well. The jokes were not that well understood but he gave a show at the American Embassy, at Spaso House, that was just hilarious. It was family oriented and for anyone who wanted to come whether they were diplomats or press or whatever. The entire community was invited.

The thing I particularly remember was that Bob Hope set aside a couple of hours that afternoon to go upstairs at Spaso House and prepare. Here was a guy who must have done tens of thousands of such shows over his lifetime but he didn't take it for granted.

He prepared, he adjusted his jokes for the particular context. They were all family jokes too. There was nothing that anyone would have been embarrassed about.

To me it was just a little lesson that no matter where you are in your professional career, don't take anything for granted. Always go and prepare. Today I don't know if there is any parallel or not but I am a Washington DC tour guide and I have done many, many, many tours around Washington. I did one just last Sunday night but I try to prepare and try to think in advance what is my audience, where do I want to go, what should I be attentive to. A little bit of that goes back to that Bob Hope experience.

The man traveling with him I didn't know anything about at the time. His name is Alex Spanos. I Googled him recently. He is a Greek-American, very right of center, a multimillionaire; he has written a book about how he made it in the United States with a nice preface from Rush Limbaugh. He is I believe living in San Diego, California. Somehow Bob Hope invited him to come along on the trip.

The other prominent visitor I want to mention is Senator Charles Percy. I didn't realize but there was a tradition involving the particular heads of three corporations. The head of IBM, Tom Watson, the head of Bell and Howell, Charles Percy, and the head of Motorola, a man named Robert Galvan who died a couple of years ago, would get together at Thanksgiving along with their families and they'd have Thanksgiving dinner, these three titans of American capitalism.

By Thanksgiving, 1981, the Watsons had been in Moscow for about a year and Senator Charles Percy and Robert Galvan and their wives came to Spaso House for Thanksgiving dinner. What made it different was that only a couple of weeks earlier, Ronald Reagan had been elected president and Charles Percy was in line to be chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He advertised this and the Soviets were very attentive. So Charles Percy made calls on Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defense Minister General Ustinov and on Brezhnev. He was not discreet about these calls. He let people know in advance. I camped out at Spaso House with the press corps when he came back from these various appointments.

On Thanksgiving Day, Washington Post correspondent Kevin Klose and his family were our guests for Thanksgiving dinner. Late in the afternoon, Kevin and I had to excuse ourselves and go down to Spaso House where we waited for Senator Percy to return from his call on Brezhnev.

In each case, he talked at great length and I dutifully had to go and type the transcript and send it off to Washington. That, I can assure you, was tedious work on any occasion but especially with someone like Senator Percy.

The upshot of it was that Senator Percy made statements to the effect "don't worry too much about what Reagan said during the campaign; now that he is president he will be much more moderate in his thinking about the Soviet Union." I am paraphrasing but that was the gist of his remarks I remember very clearly. That did not go over well at all in the

White House or more precisely in the Reagan camp. I don't know the full details but I know there was a great deal of tension between President-elect Reagan and Senator Percy, a great deal of tension.

Without being indiscreet, I can say one morning I showed up at Spaso House in connection with this visit and Ambassador Watson and Senator Percy were having a real verbal battle. I thought it had to do with political issues. Tom Watson took me aside and said "I am tired of being his errand boy." Apparently Tom Watson was being asked to do things that in his role as ambassador and former head of IBM, he didn't think he should be asked to do. That was, as I say, just another people experience.

Q: Senator Percy later got crosswise and essentially lost an election in Illinois because he got the Israeli lobby mad at him for supporting, I think it was AWACS or an aerial combat system that we were wanted to give the Israelis didn't want us to.

BROWN: I ran into him about ten years ago at Dumbarton Oaks and I can't remember what the occasion was. The then Maryland senator Sarbanes was there. I ended up at a table with Senator Percy. When I started the conversation, I am sure he thought it was one of these "do you remember?" things where you never remember. But as I described his visit with Tom Watson right away I had his attention. Yes, indeed. He remembered it very well and he was wondering if I could help him through the Freedom of Information Act to get the reporting cables on that visit. I had to tell him I was now retired from the Foreign Service. My luck with the Freedom of Information Act would not be any better than his would be. He definitely was still interested in that visit.

I have another category called interesting Russian people. I was not the cultural attaché; I was the press attaché. But I had a very genuine interest in cultural activities, people in the cultural world.

I am going to mention names of a few writers and playwrights whom I met because I was invited to a luncheon or dinner, perhaps at Spaso House or because I was attending a cultural event. I knew vaguely at the time these were prominent figures. But at the time, I did not know that I would be going back to Moscow in the late '80s and that these people would still be very high in the world of the arts, only ten years later they would be liberated. They would be able to do many things they were not able to do in 1980, '81.

These were poets like Andrei Voznesensky and Bella Akhmadulina. These were names that I was just getting introduced to at the time.

In the musical world I have an even longer list. Among those whom I haven't mentioned before was a man named Lev Markiz. He was a violinist, he is now a conductor in Amsterdam. He introduced us to a young pianist named Vladimir Feltsman. Feltsman is now an American, lives in the United States and even teaches at SUNY something or other. He came out in the late '80s.

We went to a concert by Sviatoslav Richter, the famous pianist. He had a reputation even in the Soviet Union for agreeing to do a performance and then not showing up at the last minute, begging off for health or other reasons. He didn't perform very much.

We did hear concerts by a wonderful husband wife team named Oleg Kagan and Natalia Gutman, a cellist and violinist. I will mention them again ten years later because they came back into my life.

I have mentioned violinist Vladimir Spivakov several times. Not only did we get to hear him play but we were part of his life in other ways. I helped Craig Whitney of The New York Times do an interview with Vladimir Spivakov. They met in our apartment and according to Craig, Spivakov was nervous. He began the interview by handing Craig a paper and saying "here are the questions and here are my answers." Craig explained that this was not exactly the way American correspondents operated and it all worked out satisfactorily.

Just recently, I ran into a fellow named Bruce Nelan, who was the Time magazine correspondent in Moscow thirty years ago, and his wife, Rose. We were reminiscing about those days. Rose asked, "Remember when you delivered the shock absorber to Volodya?" To tell the truth, I had forgotten but the question forced me to recall.

We had gone to a lunch or dinner with Spivakov and he lamented that he couldn't get a spare part for his car. I was able to get spare parts for his car, probably through Helsinki. I didn't have to beg or anything to get tickets for his concerts. It was a very symbiotic relationship. He could provide me with wonderful thrills on the violin and I could help him with a shock absorber for his car. I had completely forgotten it but Bruce and Rose remembered it.

The fact that they remembered it says something about the community we were then and about how personal lives were interwoven with our professional lives. Bruce Nelan was a Time correspondent; I was the press attaché at the embassy. We were supposed to have this very professional relationship and we did. But our personal lives overlapped a great deal.

With our friend, Yuri Zieman and his then four-year old daughter Vera, I took a walk through Novodevichy cemetery one winter day. Novodevichy cemetery was closed to the general public. The reason it was closed, I think, was there were just too many famous people there that might spark some sort of political activity. But Yuri's father was buried there so we got to go with him. After we visited Yuri's father's grave, we walked around and we saw the graves of some of the famous people there.

I went back about five years ago and managed to walk by the freshly dug graves of Rostropovich and Yeltsin so it is still a burial place for famous Russians.

On this particular day with Yuri, I noticed the headstone of Nikita Khrushchev. The sculptor or artist for the headstone is an American or a Russian-American named Ernst

Neizvestny. A gentleman was there scraping ice and cleaning the area. I wondered and so I asked in Russian, “By chance, are you Sergei, the son of Nikita Khrushchev?” And yes, he was. We had a brief exchange in which I let him know that I was an American diplomat and that I appreciated the historical significance of his father. Today he lives, I think, in Princeton New Jersey.

Q: Is he the one married to Eisenhower’s granddaughter?

BROWN: No, that is Roald Sagdeev, who was involved their space program. I don’t know much about Sergei Khrushchev’s situation today except that is quite normal to see and interact with him. But it was pretty unusual in 1980 to meet the son of Nikita Khrushchev. We had a little conversation, nothing substantive but enough to let him know that I was an American diplomat and that I recognized the role of his father.

Q: Did you feel, talking to people who had been there before that despite the fact the Soviet Union had been doing various nasty things, it sounds like things had loosened up an awful lot from the Stalin times.

BROWN: No question that things had loosened up since the Stalin era.

But people were still reluctant or nervous when they found out that you were an American diplomat. They were taken aback. We knew or encountered Russians who had children our children’s age and when they found out we were American diplomats, we learned they were not going to be comfortable meeting with us.

But we had neighbors in a big housing block right across from where we lived whom we met through our dogs. The dogs were a way of having a conversation with people. Their name was Yegorushkin and they had kids. They often invited us over there. We would go over there and have cake and tea and a birthday party and that kind of thing.

On any given day, I would see something on television or file a protest to the foreign ministry or read something in Pravda that confirmed the image that everybody has of the Soviet Union. These were not stereotypes. This was one aspect of life in that state.

But the same day, you could meet somebody on a plane or train or while you were cross country skiing or walking around the neighborhood and have a personal conversation with them. They would be astounded. “You are an American diplomat and you guys are riding on the second class train between these two cities in the Far East?” That was the reaction that an embassy colleague and I heard on a train trip one time.

We did have a lot of that kind of conversation with what I call the ordinary neighbor, the man in the street and despite what anyone says, these were not all KGB set-ups. In fact, I don’t think any of them were. Quite often they were just that, a onetime conversation.

In one case, the guy turned out to be a film producer named Sergei Aleksandrov. I met him on our plane ride to Dushanbe and realized he knew a lot about American film. I

invited him to our apartment to see a film – I think it was “Casablanca” – and to my surprise, he accepted. After that, we saw each other from time to time, often at the Union of Cinematographers building. He helped me acquire some really nice Bukhara rugs and in return I gave him a few pairs of jeans.

Q: I think one of the things that gets forgotten is how often we used to have magazines and leave them on trains or even in your car with the windows open. You could distribute things very nicely.

BROWN: I did this often. It was my own little way of sticking my finger in the eye of the Soviets, the way you did when you left a copy of Newsweek or Time magazine somewhere. Anything that would make it a little more difficult for them to exercise total control over their population.

But it wasn't all fun and games. I was recalling some of the sensitive press issues that popped up during that period. I have forgotten the details but we had a lot of focus on an alleged biological weapons incident in the town of Sverdlovsk. Sverdlovsk was a closed city but some of the correspondents heard rumors of a biological weapons incident there. We spent a lot of time dealing with questions about it that frankly we couldn't answer.

Q: The Soviets had a very extensive biological weapons program and the problem about these things is they can get out of hand. There had been reports from time to time of areas sort of devastated. Anthrax

BROWN: Yes, anthrax was the issue. Anthrax was the word of the day at the time and it was not out of bounds, not out of plausible thinking, especially when you think of Chernobyl and similar incidents. The Soviets were tightlipped. There wasn't much we could offer; whether we knew more than we were letting on, I don't know. There is a good subject for a freedom of information inquiry.

When the Soviets did invade Afghanistan, Ambassador Watson's relationship to the press became more difficult. He was never really comfortable with the press but now he was going to be dealing with a very difficult subject. He went back to Washington. I recall that I was told to tell the press it was on “personal business.” That made me uncomfortable because I knew it wasn't personal business and I didn't like being told basically to prevaricate. It certainly wasn't personal business.

Ambassador Watson did not have a comfortable relationship with Brzezinski. He was much closer to Cyrus Vance, who resigned, and to his successor, Edmund Muskie. I specifically recall an article in the newspapers that said according to sources in Washington, Ambassador Watson and his deputy, Mark Garrison were sending back “highly varnished reporting” from Moscow, i.e., they were not really being as tough as they should be in their reporting.

That quote came from Washington and probably from the Brzezinski staff. We were inundated with inquiries in Moscow. What kind of reporting are you doing? Of course,

we didn't say what kind of reporting we were doing. It increased the tension and Ambassador Watson's discomfort level in dealing with the press. We may have had some of the background briefings but they were more notable by their absence than by having them.

During that period, we also had the issue of the American hostages in Tehran. Soviet reporting on it was highly tendentious and we were protesting their reporting. Our visitors would raise it with any Soviets they called upon. Congressman Solarz from New York raised it in his call on the editor of Pravda.

Q: Stephen Solarz.

BROWN: Steven Solarz. He called on the editor of Pravda, who was nothing but a mouthpiece for the Politburo. I think it was in that meeting we raised the issue of Soviet press coverage of the whole hostage issue.

There were also world news events that you couldn't help but be aware of and feel affected by. As I said last time, you didn't get them quite as instantaneously as on your iPhone today. We relied more on the AP ticker.

First of all, there was the failed rescue effort which had terribly depressing impact.

The Moscow Olympics, I mentioned last time, during the summer of 1980. We were not only boycotting them as a nation and our athletes boycotting, but those of us who were at the embassy were not allowed to go anywhere near the facilities. I remember standing on Lenin Hills and you could look down at the stadium. You could see the lights, you could hear the roar but we were not allowed to be even caught close to the facilities.

We had the election of President Reagan in 1980. On the exterior of the embassy building, we had display windows and there was room there for four or so big photo panels that we would change regularly. These might be an innocuous subject like agriculture in the United States or it might be some news event that we could brag about and the Russians would walk by and take a cursory look at them.

Right after the election, in fact the next day, we put up big panels of President-elect Reagan. We also had big panels that we never put up of re-elected President Carter. We got these panels from the Regional Program Office, RPO, in Vienna and we were ready for either contingency. The Russians didn't really quite understand that and they thought it amazing that one day after President Reagan was elected, we could have these panels up there already with pictures of him and his career.

For most of those exhibits, the Russians would walk by and they might glance. Somebody might stand there for a minute or two. If they did the militiaman would probably encourage them to keep on moving. But for these pictures of Reagan, people lined up three and four deep.

Q: Did you find that people were wondering, what the hell is this? This is a movie star coming out of the right wing? This had to be very disturbing to the Soviets.

BROWN: And they had heard a lot about his statements about the Soviet Union during the election campaign. Both at the man in the street level and at the top level, they indeed were wondering who this man was.

That's why they were so interested in talking to Senator Percy. Anybody who could tell them something about this relatively unknown movie actor, governor, anti-communist, they wanted to know.

The man in the street, the people walking along the sidewalk in front of the embassy lined up for several days three and four deep. The militia did not prevent them from doing so.

Did that have much impact on shaping Soviet thinking about Ronald Reagan? I am not sure that it did, no. But I did say last time if you wanted to get a message around Moscow, in fact around the country, you could put it in those windows. We didn't do that but you could have put it in those windows and just by conversation, telephone calls, news would travel.

If we had put up there, for example, Sakharov arrested, that news would have traveled real fast. We also would have received a sharp protest from the Soviets had we done that. We never used them for that purpose.

I mentioned the Pentecostals, some 10 or 12 refugees in the embassy. We gave them refuge there. The press corps would see them there when they came in to use the snack bar but it was understood they could not do interviews. Finally we did relent and one summer day, the press and particularly the TV correspondents were allowed to come in and film them, interview them, give some insight into the life they lived there in the embassy. They lived there for several years.

Other world news besides the election of President Reagan and the release of the hostages included President Reagan's shooting which I followed until the wee hours of the morning on the Voice of America. A few days later, we received a tape from Frankfurt with the famous visual of Hinckley firing at the president. And I recall the shooting of the Pope and finally the death of Alexei Kosygin, the head of government. We didn't realize at the time this was the first of multiple funerals that would take place on Red Square.

Q: At one point President Reagan was asked about his connection to the Soviets and he said, "Well, they keep dying on me."

BROWN: After Kosygin, there was Brezhnev and then Andropov and then Chernenko. There was a joke about somebody at the funeral for Chernenko who said to another "but you were here for the Brezhnev funeral and the Andropov funeral." And the second guy

replied, "Yeah, I bought the subscription." That's the type of humor that the Soviets liked.

One little remembered event. 1981 was the 26th Congress of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. For the rest of the world, it was not a great big news event but by then, Ambassador Watson had left and the chargé was Jack Matlock. Jack Matlock, whom I had first met when he was head of the Soviet desk, was back in Moscow for about six months as chargé before going to Czechoslovakia as ambassador.

He really lit a fire under a lot of sections of the embassy but in his heart Jack was a political officer. The political section was told to cover this party congress like wallpaper.

Q: Which party congress was this?

BROWN: 26th, the XXVI congress. I don't remember that much came about out of it. There weren't any major changes in personnel or whatever but I managed to get a press credential for the press center and there wasn't much coming out of the press center either but at least officials would go down there and brief. I probably shouldn't admit it but I felt a little one-upmanship with the political section. I had access to the press center and I could read record briefings by spokesman Zamyatin and others and come back with various impressions. The political section always had to come to me and ask to borrow my tape. It was friendly rivalry. I had some wonderful friends.

Edward Djerejian was either the political counselor or head of political internal. A lot of Matlock's pressure was on Ed Djerejian to do the reporting on the party congress. Ed heaved a sigh one day and said, "Every time I think I have done my last cable on this, Matlock comes to me with some new assignment regarding the party congress." No one would remember these events, they were pretty dull. But for Matlock, he would extract everything possible.

Q: Was it the tenth party congress or somewhere where Khrushchev made his very famous denunciation of Stalin?

BROWN: Exactly and I think that is one of the reasons people, Kremlin watchers, paid attention to party congresses. Who knows? Maybe this would produce a repeat of the famous Khrushchev denunciation. In this case, it didn't. It was just the same old faces, the same old verbiage, every newspaper reporting it exactly the same way. But Jack Matlock could see the difference between an adjective used in today's Pravda and the one used ten years ago and extract something from that. He was like his mentor, George Kennan, and he could put a lot of pressure on the political section to cover the party congress.

Another thing I continued to do, that I enjoyed doing right through the end of my first tour and despite all the bad relations, was to travel, sometimes with family, more often with colleagues. I mentioned we took multiple trips to Tbilisi, more than one trip to Kiev;

despite the closing of our consulate, we could still go down there and observe. I've described my trip to Odessa and Lvov with Bob Ober. I went repeatedly to Central Asia.

I took a memorable trip with a colleague named Gerry Hamilton. Jerry was head of the commercial section and he and I were good friends. We had gone through language training together; we were played a lot of paddle tennis, either as partners or on opposite sides of the net. He was a genuinely good guy. One day in the summer of 1980, I took my wife and daughters to the airport and they flew to New York City. They went through eight time zones. They went across the ocean. They went from the capital of godless communism to the United States of America.

The next day, Gerry Hamilton and I went to a Moscow airport and we flew eight time zones the other way, east, and we were still in Russia. Eight time zones west and you went across an ocean to an entirely different world. But eight time zones east and you were still in Russia. We flew across Siberia to Khabarovsk. At least at first glance, life didn't seem much different in Khabarovsk, a Russian city. From there, we went by train to the port city of Nakhodka. If you were doing it these days, you could go to the American Consulate in Vladivostok but in 1980, Vladivostok was a closed city. The one place you could go on the Pacific Ocean was Nakhodka.

We took the train to Nakhodka and back to Vladivostok. My recollection is that one direction we were in first class and the other direction we were in very ordinary class and ended up with a couple of Russians who were dumbfounded to find two American diplomats wearing jeans, sharing the compartment with them.

There was an American in Nakhodka who was in business there, a most impressive guy, spoke Russian, probably in his 20s, early 30s. I don't know if there were other Americans there or not. You have to tip your hat to this guy, out there a long way from any of the comforts that we enjoyed. He arranged for us to take a boat ride around the harbor. Just amassing impressions that we could put into a cable when we came back.

On the way back, we stopped in Irkutsk and went out on a hot summer day to Lake Baikal, the Siberian lake that has more water in it than all the Great Lakes put together. People were out taking advantage of the good weather.

There was a story that on the other side of Lake Baikal, the Soviets had some sort of manufacturing plant that threatened to pollute the lake. It is probably still a concern these days. Where we were, it looked as pristine and clear as we had been told it would be.

That was a week-long trip.

With a colleague in the cultural section, Bill Thompson, I flew down to Baku which is not a beautiful city on the Caspian Sea. I recently traveled with a young woman, a visitor from Azerbaijan. She asked me about my memories of Baku? This was before she was born. I said I have two distinct memories. One was that as soon as you got off the airplane and drove into the city, you saw the oil wells and you smelled the oil and you

felt it was terribly polluted. We stayed in a place called the Caravan Sarai which if it had had camels and people traveling the Silk Road, you wouldn't have been surprised. It seemed to be one of those watering holes.

Q: Sarai was a basically an inn on the Silk Road.

BROWN: That's what it was and the one in Baku had a certain charm. We were well treated and we took a drive around the city and looked down at the Caspian Sea. You could see the oil wells out there.

From there we went on to Tashkent and to Samarkand, one of my multiple trips to that part of the world.

Q: Were you able to test or look at Islam in the Soviet Union?

BROWN: One of the reasons we were going to Central Asia was that after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there was a new instruction from Brzezinski that if anybody could go out there and do any kind of reporting, make any kind of observation, they wanted it. It didn't matter how ordinary or how mundane it seemed to be.

What we specifically looked for were soldiers or any indication that this was a jumping off spot for their operations in Afghanistan. Maybe go to a cemetery to see if there were recent burials and that kind of thing. But you couldn't go to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara without being aware of Islam in the Soviet Union -- the beautiful mosques, madrassas, the schools. The Registan in Samarkand is one of the UNESCO protected sites in the world.

It was hard to tell how intensive it was and at that time I didn't associate a madrassa with the kind of education that can produce terrorists, radicals, that kind of thing. In fact, these struck me as a very gentle people, very easy going.

Q: There are madrassas and madrassas. The Soviets didn't let this get out of hand.

BROWN: No, no. At the time, there was no association with either internal terrorism or what has happened in Chechnya or in Dagestan in recent years.

Generally I would say you had the impression that people were pretty free to practice their Islam, perhaps freer than Russians in Moscow would have been to practice their Russian orthodox faith.

Another memorable trip was to what is now called Bishkek. It was Frunze then in Kyrgyzstan.

Q: I spent three weeks there, in Bishkek in the 1990s.

BROWN: I went in the spring with a colleague named Kent Brown. Moscow was still grimy. The snow had not fully melted and we arrived in Frunze, which was the name of a famous Soviet general during the civil war. We were there for the May 1, 1981, holiday. You could see snow in the mountains but it was beautiful. It was spring, gorgeous. I thought “my goodness. What a relief from Moscow.”

Then we saw the May 1st parade and it was as dull and drab as any May 1st parade. Carbon copy. Any republic you went to, these same pictures of the politburo members came through.

We went up into the mountains with a guide and had a chance to realize what quality of life there could be there.

Our next stop would be Ashkhabad, the capital of Turkmenistan. To get from Frunze to Ashkhabad, we flew on what was called an AN-24, maybe on a couple of planes. We flew from Frunze to Tashkent, we stopped in a little desert town called Mary and we ended up in Ashkhabad, an entire day on these three flights.

We went out the next day, a Sunday, to the market, a beautiful market full of fruits and vegetables but also jewelry and camels and all those things you associate with any of the ‘stans.’ People these days talk about the ‘stans’ in a somewhat mocking or disparaging way. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan were wonderful, intriguing places to visit. We have embassies in all of them these days. I didn’t want to go there for a two or three year assignment but if you were living in Moscow when we were, it was a great change of pace.

I am repeating myself but we would get out into the city, observe the availability of produce, or fruits and vegetables, the markets, have conversations with people, some of whom wouldn’t respond, but others would. They were never big political discussions about your country and my country. They were just more about family and life. Those are some of the trips I took. I am indebted to my embassy colleagues who went along with me.

With my wife and daughter, we made multiple trips to places such as Leningrad, to Vladimir and Suzdal, the two historic church towns not far from Moscow.

On Russian Easter, 1981, we decided to visit a place called Yaroslavl. En route, we stopped in Old (Velikiy) Rostov (not to be confused with Rostov on the Don) and Pereslavl-Zalessky. I remember going on Saturday night to Easter services in the Feodorovskaya Church in Yaroslavl with my wife, my daughter and a friend of hers; we were in a large crowd and when we turned around, the kids seemed to have disappeared. We had to go back and indicate that I was a diplomat and that these children were with us; yes, they could come in.

In 2007, my wife and I went back to Russia as tourist and took a cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg on the multiple waterways that connect the two cities. I had never realized how many different rivers, canals, lakes and whatever connect the two cities.

One of the stops we made was Yaroslavl and I explained to our guide that in 1980, I had attended Russian Easter services here and he was quite impressed. I recalled the name of the church, Feodorovskaya. He said that was one of only two churches that were open and functioning at the time. Easter services wherever you went to them, whether in Moscow or outside, were memorable experiences.

Selling our cars was the occasion for another unusual trip. We owned two Russian fiats, Zhigulis. At the end of your tour, you could sell them and you would sell them to third country diplomats so I sold my two cars, one to a Syrian and one to a Sudanese who came with cigar boxes full of rubles. The embassy accepted these rubles as if they had been acquired as the embassy acquired all of its currency, officially, at the official rate. It is all too complicated to explain except to say that the incentive was to sell your car, get these rubles and have the embassy could convert them into dollars for you at the official rate. I could get back everything I paid for my two cars.

The hitch was that the Soviets had imposed some new regulation which said I couldn't turn over these cars to these people in the Soviet Union. I had to do it outside the country. It was very complicated but I arranged with the Syrian and the Sudanese that they would meet us across the border in Kouvala, Finland -- at the first place the train stopped after it crossed the border. So on this particular Saturday, my wife and I in one car and one of our Foreign Service national employees, Viktor Aksyonov, in the other car headed off in our two Zhigulis. We drove to Leningrad where we had dinner with my colleague, Barbara Allen and took a boat ride on the Neva River. We overnighted there.

The next day, my wife and I drove the cars out of the country to the train station in Finland wondering whether we would find these guys and sure enough, they were there. They, of course, were wondering if we'd show up because I already had the rubles and there was nothing to guarantee we would show up with our cars but we did, right on time.

One had the appropriate license plates to put on the car so he could drive back in the Soviet Union as if he were arriving there for the first time. The other guy did not have the right kind of license plates and he was going to have some trouble, we thought. My wife and I went on by train to Helsinki and treated ourselves to a nice night in a hotel and a spa and a good dinner because we had completed our mission and we flew back to Moscow.

Our FSN saw us when we were back in Moscow and he was laughing. He said "oh, the next day in Leningrad I saw your two cars. They had made it across the border and were on their way back to Moscow with them." It was one of those complicated but rather delicious ways of living and doing business in Moscow. Less than a week later, my wife and daughters left for the States; their three years in Moscow had ended.

Let me recall another couple anecdotes that I think illustrate what life was like in what was an unusual environment, these three years in Moscow.

One day, April 6, 1981, I went off to the center part of Moscow. There was a hotel where you could buy airline tickets and I think that is what I was doing. I drove my own car, my Zhiguli, down there and of course, in those days you had no problem finding a place to park. I bought my airline tickets and I was on my way back to the embassy. I would go up the street, around the circle where the KGB headquarters were and back down the other side, on the same side as the big children's department store called Detsky Mir.

As I am driving down there, by myself, there is a black Chaika ahead of me. That is a Russian official vehicle. It's not the Zil, the especially long VIP vehicle, but it's for high officials, the one ahead of me. These Chaikas are probably more associated with KGB; they are kind of official vehicles they have up there.

All I can remember is hitting the brakes quickly to keep from hitting this Chaika. I would stop in time. But before I could do anything, I was struck from behind and pushed into the vehicle ahead of me. This is the middle of the day. Everybody is out walking the streets, there is great clatter. I get out and realize it is a four car accident. There is the Chaika ahead of me, then I am here and I am now sandwiched between another big Chaika behind me and a fourth Chaika which had caused this whole chain reaction

We stood there looking at each other and it wasn't too long -- because there are police posts on every corner -- that somebody comes up the street. There is a big crowd of gawkers. The three Chaikas were pulled over to the right hand side of the street in the direction in which we were all headed. My car could still be driven although it was bashed in the front and the back and the trunk had popped open. All the traffic on the street was stopped and I was told to do a U turn and pull up on the other side of the street, roughly where I had started when I came out of the hotel so I pulled my car over there. I think they wanted to isolate me from the official vehicles.

Once they got me over there, that was it. They were done with me. They didn't want to know anything. My trunk had popped open. We talked before about America magazine the monthly magazine that we were allowed to sell in the Soviet Union. We kept selling it after the invasion of Afghanistan but the Soviets would say, "Well, we didn't sell very many copies this month. Relations are bad." They never explained; they simply returned the "unsold copies." You'd have 20,000 returned copies that went unsold so we had plenty of magazines to carry around and I always carried boxes of them in the trunk of my car. I could give them away to a gas station attendant or to anyone with whom I wanted to curry favor.

So my trunk popped open. The license plate, DO-4 told everybody I am a diplomat and a lot of people knew that 04 was the American Embassy. Nobody cared anything about my plight, my car. They started asking me personal questions and wondered if they could have a copy of America magazine. I gave a couple of people a copy of America magazine

and asked them if they might watch my car while I went down the street to a phone booth with the kopeks I always carried with me and called the embassy to say I need some help.

I called the GSO and I remember hearing someone say “Well, he speaks Russian,” meaning I could take care of it myself. But a good fellow named Jim Van Laningham drove over and provided me some much needed assistance as I was able to drive the car back to the embassy.

We insured the car through Ingostrakh so I did the paperwork and turned the car over to them. I didn't have a replacement vehicle and we were down to one car and that was pretty awkward but the damaged car came back to me weeks later looking like new; it had a fresh coat of paint, functioning well enough that I was able to sell it but I will never forget feeling pretty exposed and helpless. Not helpless but exposed out there in the middle of Moscow.

Q: Did any of those officials in those cars sort of point at you and try to

BROWN: No, I don't think anyone implied that I was the guilty party. It was pretty clear what had happened. Number four car had hit number three. I was number two and was pushed into number one. I hit the brakes and was not going to hit number one car until I got hit from behind. It was just a four-car accident. No, I didn't have any more official contact other than the insurance claim. The police simply wanted to isolate me from the Chaikas. I don't recall that I filed a report with police or anything like that.

Here's another story about airline tickets:

In 1979 or 1980, someone had discovered that in London, you could purchase Aeroflot tickets that would be written London to Moscow and then Moscow to anywhere in South Asia -- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka -- with two more coupons coming back for a very reasonable price. I wish I knew now what the price was but if you used hard currency, you could get these tickets in London. It was a way for Aeroflot to get business from South Asians living in the UK, Indians and Pakistanis who wanted to go home and not spend a lot of money.

Someone discovered that we too, living in Moscow, could purchase these tickets. You found somebody, a friend, in London who would purchase the tickets and send them to you. But instead of starting your trip in London, you could begin your trip in Moscow. So the four of us and the five-member David Willis family (David Willis, the correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, had two daughters roughly the ages of our daughters and a son) went to the airport on a February morning in 1980 and flew for many hours non-stop from Moscow to Colombo, Sri Lanka. We flew over Iran. The hostages were there. I remember the pilot saying something about “if you look out the window you can see American war ships in the Persian Gulf.” I think everybody went over to the right side of that plane and looked out the window.

It was a very comfortable flight. I wish I could fly that comfortably transatlantic or whatever these days. Good food and everything, a lot of Russians going down there for vacation, I guess. We had a wonderful two week vacation. Details elsewhere.

When we went to check in to fly back, we had our coupons; these were not electronic tickets, you had little paper coupons. When we said we were flying only to Moscow, the people said, "Oh, you need a visa for Moscow." We showed in our passports that we had visas for Moscow. And we flew back.

We still had coupons one and four. I didn't get to take advantage of it but a few weeks later, my wife and daughters used coupon number four to fly Moscow to London and number one to fly London back to Moscow. So for a very reasonable price, we had two holiday trips out of Moscow, albeit on Aeroflot; one to Sri Lanka, a two-week vacation there and one to London.

The David Willis' were Christian Scientists and they did not take any medicines, no malaria prevention medicines or whatever. We did, we took some precautions. Nevertheless, when we went there, our younger daughter got a little sick and was running a fever. She lamented "when I grow up, I want to be a Christian Science Monitor" so she wouldn't have to take pills and medicine.

David Willis wrote a piece for the Christian Science Monitor about that trip, somehow relating it to life in the Soviet Union. It was a humorous piece contrasting the world he left and the world he found, this so called third world country. He remarked that he could have written deep analyses of a party congress or changes in the politburo and never received a tenth of the reaction he got with that human interest piece on travel and contrasting a super power with a third world country. He got a lot of reactions to that story.

Another thing I remember about the trip to Sri Lanka is that when we got back, an Embassy driver picked us up with astounding news. I am sure he was unhappy himself but he had to share with us news of the great American victory at the Lake Placid Olympics over the Soviet hockey team. He didn't call it great; he just reported that the Americans had won. He couldn't believe it.

Q: It was hockey.

BROWN: And another memorable story.

A year later, it was school vacation time and our older daughter was in school back in the States so my wife and younger daughter and I decided we would go to Berlin. We had friends there who had invited us to stay with them and on the way back, we would stop and see some friends in Warsaw. It would be about a week long trip. On Saturday evening, February 14, 1981, we headed to the train station with our suitcases and our cooler with food and Christine's school books. My wife writes letters so she had her address book and cards and everything else.

Our train as called the East-West Express, leaving at 8:09 pm. We traveled all night and arrived in Warsaw in the middle of the next day. We stepped off the train because we knew we had an hour and a half and needed to stretch our legs a bit. My wife said she was going to go call our friends and let them know, reaffirm we would be back on such and such a day.

Off she goes while my daughter and I wait on the platform. Our train actually pulled out of the station but it soon returned. My wife hadn't been gone for more than a few minutes when I hear a whooshing sound, steam being released. A little red sign turns to green and a man on the platform says, "Get on, we are leaving."

I don't remember what language he spoke but the message was very clear. All I knew was that we had suitcases, coolers of food and all the other things we had taken with us up there in our compartment. I could not get all that stuff off the train. I had no choice. I said to my daughter, "We have to go" and she is in tears and I am in tears inside and we get on the train and off we go, leaving my wife there making a phone call. But she did not have her passport, she didn't have her money. She had virtually nothing except her wits, her common sense.

When we recount this story, this is the point where we begin to tell her version and my version. Soon after we left Warsaw, I began to figure out what had happened, that the train had been split in two with one part going to London and the other to Paris but both going via Berlin. I concluded that Bobbi would figure this out and decide to get on the second train.

So in Poznan, I explained to an official what had happened and left a written message saying "Bobbi, we miss you and love you." I enclosed some money, 200 zlotys. And at the border, I left her passport. I left her passport in the hands of border officials saying I think she is on the next train. Off we go, my daughter and I, to Berlin. We are met by our friend Paul Smith who welcomes us to Berlin. I say Paul, "it's good to be here but I think we have to wait a few minutes because I left Bobbi on the platform in Warsaw."

Remember this is 1981. It is the period of *solidarnost*, martial law and everything else in Poland. Bobbi comes back, realizes that something is amiss. She gets on the train and goes to "our" compartment but I am not there and it is not the compartment she remembered. But the conductor insists that she remain on the train and off she heads. At one point, she was entertained in the restaurant car by some drunken Polish "gentlemen" who wanted to buy her food.

She gets to Poznan and somebody gets on and gives her this envelope that says "we love you, we miss you." When she gets to the border, someone comes on shouting, "Roberta Brown, Roberta Brown." These drunken Poles had already opened the windows calling the same name. The border official comes on and gives her her passport.

It was a long, nervous afternoon. It is a good six hours or so from Warsaw to Berlin on the train. So when the second half of our train reached Berlin and Bobbi was on it, Christine and I breathed a great sigh of relief. Needless to say, the story has been told many times. And Bobbi actually wrote an extended version.

Thinking about those years in Moscow, I have a category I call fabric of life. It was those institutions, those places that were part of your personal life in Moscow. They meant so much. As Americans, we were the embassy community, the 25 or so journalists and their families, a few business people and that was about it.

Among the institutions that kept up our morale and in which we were constantly involved was paddle tennis. I think it was Ambassador Stoessel who put in a paddle tennis court behind Spaso House, the ambassador's residence. You played in an enclosed, caged area, a miniature tennis court. It was usually played doubles.

Ambassador Toon loved the game and I and others would frequently get a call from his secretary saying the ambassador was looking for somebody to play tennis during lunch hour. I accepted many of those invitations.

Then when Ambassador Stoessel went to Warsaw, he installed a paddle tennis court there. Paddle tennis was thus very popular among the staff in both American Embassy Moscow and American Embassy Warsaw, so much so that we had annual competitions. The first two years we were in Moscow, we went en masse by train to Warsaw and played a paddle tennis tournament there over the course of two days. People at the embassy hosted us and not only to play paddle tennis; we went out to dinner in the evening. It was a wonderful morale builder.

The second year, we should be hosting the people from Warsaw but because of the Olympics boycott, the thinking was "you certainly can't have the paddle tennis tournament here in Moscow" so for a second year running, we went en masse, probably 40 or 50 people, to Warsaw for another tournament, hosted by our American friends.

So you see that even an institution such as paddle tennis could get caught up in international politics!

The third year, 1981, we played host. I am sad to say we were such gracious hosts that unlike the previous two years, we lost badly. By now Jack Matlock, Chargé Matlock, was there. He wasn't much of a paddle tennis player but his wife played. We had a great dinner at Spaso House but I was really hung out to dry as the person who had put together all the pairings and whatever and had allowed Moscow the indignity of losing the paddle tennis tournament.

Another phenomenon; broom ball. Broom ball was played among the various embassies. They would take a regular tennis court, put water on it and in the winter, it would become like a hockey rink, except instead of a hockey puck and sticks you used brooms. I never

played it. It could be violent. The Finns and some of the other north Europeans took the game very, very seriously. It was fun to watch broomball.

Cross country skiing. You could go many places in the woods around Moscow and cross country ski. I can remember more than one occasion skiing on my very nice skis purchased, probably in Finland, and in the other direction would come a Russian on his homemade wooden skis. He might well be bare-chested, a big burly guy. They loved their cross country skiing. It was another little way to interact with Russians.

Ambassador Watson also felt that to maintain our balance, I forget the details but you should take half a day or part of a day per week and get out of the office, just do something recreational or non-office related. On one particular day, he invited me to go down to a place called Serebryany Bor to go cross country skiing. He wasn't too adept on skis but give him credit, he was out there trying. We were on this partially frozen river and all of a sudden we heard crack.

Tom Watson said in so many words, "let me go ahead. I am older than you are. If somebody is going to go through the ice, let it be me." Well, he went a little bit farther and we heard another crack. We turned around and got off that ice pretty fast. We were not where we should be on cross country skis.

The Anglo American Canadian School enrolled most of the English-speaking kids, not only British, American and Canadian but kids from Greece, India and Nigeria. It was a wonderful institution.

Q: How old were your kids?

BROWN: When we went in 1978, Christine was 10 and Sarah was almost 12, a real good age. They were old enough that they didn't need babysitting but they weren't teenagers. Christine did three years of school there. Sarah did two years, 7th and 8th grades. Because there really wasn't anything beyond 8th grade, we took her back to the United States and put her in a boarding school during our third and last year in Moscow.

Q: Where?

BROWN: Westtown Friends School, a Quaker school outside Philadelphia where her mother had gone to school and where her Uncle Tom was by then headmaster. That was a mixed blessing, she always told us. It was comforting to us to know that Tom was there and could be available but when Tom discovered that his niece had been drinking alcohol one night and had to send her up the road to her grandparents, it was an awkward situation. Sarah missed the last of our three years in Moscow; she was back in the States at Westtown Friends School.

One of the most memorable Moscow experiences was Christmas, 1980, when Sarah came out with her grandparents, my wife's parents; they were there for ten days. We did everything. Her parents experienced everything from the Bolshoi to Leningrad to meeting

our refusenik friends and four-year old Vera singing Christmas songs. It was one of the highlights.

The American dacha at Zavidovo, an hour's drive was a large compound with the big dacha and the ambassador's dacha. The big dacha was available for embassy personnel on a rotating basis.

We concluded our three years in Moscow hosting a big reception out there for the press corps. We used one of the embassy's two Italian-born cooks to fix a wonderful meal and the journalists and their families. I think 80 or so came out. It was a great afternoon. It was because of events like this that 30 years later, you can meet one of the people from that era and you don't have to reintroduce yourself. You knew each other, you knew their children. You had had common experiences together.

In addition to the school and the dacha, you had Spaso House, which was used not only by the ambassador for formal activities but also for community activities such as plays. There were always people with thespian talents who could do a show. One year they did a very capable presentation of "Our Town." One of the lead roles was played by the NBC correspondent, Gene Pell.

A few weeks later, when Gene Pell was getting ready to leave, the correspondents organized a roast. They put on a play and called it "Nash Gorod," literally "Our Town" in Russian. It was a parody of Gene Pell who had a wonderful voice, a big deep bass voice, the kind you would want for a TV correspondent. Everyone howled with laughter. Gene went on to head Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty.

Spaso House was also used for everything from the annual Marine Corps Ball to church services. In the 1930s agreement that established formal diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, it was agreed that the United States would be allowed to have a Protestant minister and a Catholic priest in Moscow. Those positions were filled by the respective denominations back in the U.S. The Catholics met in the snack bar -- "Our Lady of the French Fry" was just one of the monikers -- and the Protestants went back and forth between Spaso House and the British Embassy. We pretty regularly attended the Protestant service.

You would never live in Moscow without remembering, usually in the spring, that the Russians had to clean out the pipes that delivered hot water. So you would go for up to a month in your apartment with no hot water; you'd forget how much you appreciated hot water, especially if you had two young daughters. At Spaso House, at the paddle tennis court, there was a little facility where you could take a warm shower. But it's no exaggeration; for four to six weeks you'd get along without any hot water for dishes, bathing, that kind of thing, except for what you might boil.

Mail day: When I hear the U.S. Postal Service might suspend Saturday deliveries, I think back to the time when mail came once a week with all the diplomatic pouches from Helsinki. You'd get 80, 90 pouches at a time. I don't think there was any other place in

the world where American journalists were allowed to use the diplomatic pouch that way. They got their personal mail through the pouch. They couldn't get it directly. We had to sort it and make sure it was only letter mail. It couldn't be personal packages. We received all the journalists' mail. It could be official stuff, things they would use on the job, magazines, that kind of thing. Mail day was always a big event in the courtyard of the embassy.

We had a dog, a wonderful cocker spaniel named Tar that came into our family in 1970 in Algeria and lived with us for two years in Algeria, for five years back in the States and was now in an apartment building in Moscow. That dog introduced us to a lot of visitors. We'd take her out for a walk at night and meet people through the dog.

To get to school, our kids had to cross a busy, multi-lane road, Leninsky Prospekt. It was at least a six-lane highway with maybe a divider in the middle. I guess I should thank my lucky stars we never had any problem. One day, my wife walked over there with the dog, turned around and there was no dog. I got home to learn that Tar, our dog was missing. We were just terribly depressed. What in the world could have happened? We knew the dog had not been struck by a vehicle. So we went to our Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Ziemann, who lived not far away. They knew and loved Tar and Yuri put up little "dog missing" signs on trees.

Late that night, a couple of girls came to their door and said they thought they had seen the dog. We now think what happened was these girls had seen the dog and taken her into their apartment. The next day I went to the pet market to see whether our dog had been kidnapped and was now for sale down there. My wife went somewhere else to look, checked at home, and talked to our daughter. What a relief; the dog had shown up at the front door of the building to be greeted with open arms by none other than our militia man. The militia man was down there to 'protect' us and keep Soviets out of our building but he knew our plight and he was as happy as we were to see our dog show up. We think the dog had spent the night with these two girls and the next day they had let her out and sent her home. All we know was she was tired and muddy. We were so relieved.

I got into Soviet stamps. There was a bookstore (Dom Knigi) not far from the embassy where you could purchase stamps and they produced some political but quite pretty stamps. One of my retirement projects is to go to that shelf in my house and sort through the stamps. I've got a pretty complete collection for the late '70s and early '80s.

Those are some of the fabric of life things in Moscow.

I will conclude by mentioning the other thing that really changed life.

I have spoken frequently about our good friend Tom Watson. We had gotten to know him on a personal basis up in Maine before he came to Moscow and treated us wonderfully. It was tense because his general discomfort talking to the press was made all the more difficult by the political situation. Even so, when my parents-in-law came, he arranged a special dinner for us and them on the second floor living quarters of Spaso House.

I went up to see him one day in late 1980 and he had a paper on his desk. I realized what he was looking at were the design plans for his new boat. He had many yachts during his life and he was very excited about his new yacht and that was what he was looking at. He wanted to sail it around the world. He said something to me like “there’s nothing to do here.” That was pretty much the case; we didn’t have anything going on with the Soviets that he could put his imprint on.

He left in early 1981 to be replaced by Jack F. Matlock, whom I had gotten to know when he was head of the Soviet desk. Jack came back to Moscow for six months. He put his imprint on things. Boy, did he light a fire under everybody.

He did not live at Spaso House, as I recall, but he used Spaso House for all sorts of representational activities. I asked him at one point if he would be willing to do press briefings and he was right into that. He was very comfortable with the press.

One night, at my suggestion, he hosted a dinner at Spaso House for foreign correspondents -- West European, Japanese and others. It was an amazing social gathering. First of all, it was a Spaso House event. A lot of these correspondents had not been to Spaso House or had been there only a few times. They loved being invited with their spouses. A beautiful meal and at the end, Jack answered questions. He did so, on background, but he did so with such confidence and such knowledge of the subject that we were there until late in the evening. The man, one of the most difficult persons I have ever worked for, a tough guy to work for but such a professional. This was 1981.

Q: Can you characterize his mood towards the Soviet Union. It was a difficult period. Did you have this gerontocracy or whatever you want to call it in the politburo? It wasn't very dynamic.

BROWN: That’s a very fair question and I think I can say very fairly that Jack Matlock’s attitude towards the Soviet Union, the political Soviet Union, reflected very closely the attitude of the United States government and President Reagan. He was not in any way sympathetic to this evil empire. He abhorred the system and its leadership and the way it manifested itself. He was dead set against what it stood for.

At the same time, long before he became a political officer, he was into Russian literature. He learned Russian at an early age. These people I mentioned earlier, people like Voznesensky and Akhmadulina, he knew who these people were. He knew of their intellectual accomplishments and potential. That was the other part of the world that he cultivated. We had poetry readings at Spaso. He was able to make that distinction.

Jack Matlock was a combination of knowledge and confidence and that’s why he was so comfortable dealing with the press.

Walter Cronkite was in Moscow that spring to do some sort of documentary on the Soviet Union. I was chatting with him; my wife was driving Mrs. Cronkite from the embassy

over to Spaso House and that kind of thing. You knew that Jack Matlock wanted to accept Cronkite's request to do an interview but he got a turndown from State Department, from Assistant Secretary Stoessel saying no, don't do it.

About a day later, Jack called me up to his office and showed me a memo that said you can do it if you recognize the obvious pitfalls. I can remember to this day Jack Matlock's face. He was pleased. I didn't see all the correspondence but I think he must have gone back and protested a little bit because he had been told it was too risky. He was willing to take that risk and I can remember him sitting on a bench in the circle in front of Spaso House being interviewed by Walter Cronkite.

I wish I could see what was actually used but it was an example of Jack Matlock's determination and his feeling that the press was not to be feared.

Q: Just to get a feel for the time and the operation, what were the obvious pitfalls?

BROWN: The obvious pitfalls. You think of Senator Percy going out there and going far beyond what the Reagan administration wanted to him to say. And Percy wasn't part of the administration. Jack Matlock was part of the administration. For anyone in the State Department, it is easier to say no rather than to say yes. It is the old argument, what do you have to gain from it? Not much. What do you have to lose if you say something that is misinterpreted or just flat out wrong, that opens up Pandora's Box.

I don't know that Jack Matlock ever really got himself in hot water with the press.

Q: What was your impression of the Soviet Union? One always thinks of I saw the future and it works?

BROWN: I was never under any illusion. The idea, and I attribute some of this to the military world, that they were going to defeat us in war, not only defeat us in war but defeat us economically, was just ludicrous. All you had to do was to see how inept their economic system was, how it failed to function, how it failed to meet the needs of people to know that this was not true. We used to joke that as the West was moving into computers, the Soviets were leading the world in production of carbon paper. Their economic indicators were all in fields that people didn't pay any attention to anymore. I knew, we knew they were not going to outstrip us economically.

And of course, there was this idea that we were being monitored all the time, that they were collecting all this information on us and that the KGB had these great thick files. My feeling was the thicker the files the better because if they ever went to a great war against us and tried to find out something, they would be awash in useless information. I sometimes think that about our own services in this country these days. Sure, there are better ways now of filtering through all that information and listening for key words and that kind of stuff. But I don't think the Soviets had anything other than piles of useless information and unmonitored tapes, stuff that wasn't going to help them at all.

Q: Was anybody looking at the Soviet educational system? Here you have this Marxism. It is a huge field of how things worked and according to a certain viewpoint and yet time has proven, it didn't work very well. I would just think that a smart Russian would do anything he or she could to avoid getting too mired down in this academic world. Did you get any feel for that?

BROWN: Yes. You could sense from talking to people that they did not believe a lot of what they heard, not so much in their educational system but in the pseudo educational system which was the media, what they heard and read in the newspaper, watched on TV. They just couldn't hear this or that or see something on TV and then see reality and believe it.

Talking about the basic educational system, I don't know that anybody ever did studies but I felt and I think a lot of other people felt that you still got quality primary, secondary and university education in the Soviet Union in particular fields.

There weren't too many Westerners, Kevin Klose of the Washington Post was an exception, who sent their children to Russian schools but all three of Kevin's children went to Russian schools for several years and they got good educations in the three Rs and in foreign languages.

As we all know, the Soviets, in spite of everything, produced world class intellects in virtually every field, the sciences, mathematics, language, and the arts. I think their educational system was not the weak link. They did do a good job of educating their children.

Q: I have interviewed Beth Jones. She her father was an administrative officer. She later became ambassador to Kazakhstan and then became the assistant secretary for European affairs, a very major job. She was sent when her father was in Moscow to a Soviet school and went through this. Then he was assigned to Germany. She went to a German school. I think it was, I am not sure if it was East or West German but then she said she came out and went to I think it was Swarthmore or something and sort of on the first day of school one of the professors said, "Miss Jones, what do you think?" and nobody had ever asked her what do you think?

BROWN: Yes that's very true. Sometimes that comment is made not only about schools in Communist countries but even some other more liberal countries.

I assume that the other part of her observation was that she got a pretty good education. I think that Russian education was probably quite sound.

That was our three years in Moscow. It far exceeded our expectations. Initially, I thought it was going to be a two-year assignment. It turned out to be three. I don't think when we left in 1981 that we knew we would be going back to Moscow but we were headed off to what we thought would be a four-year assignment as press attaché in Paris.

Q: Okay, we will pick it up then.

Today is the 26th of April, 2012 with Phil Brown. We will move ahead. We are in 1981, is that right?

BROWN: Yes.

Paris, France (1981-1986)

Q: Where had you been and where were you going?

BROWN: 1981 was a transition year. We had just finished this amazingly interesting three years in Cold War Moscow preceded by a year in Garmisch, Germany so we had been overseas for four.

Toward the end of that assignment in Moscow, I thought a lot about where I would like to go next. I was intent on staying overseas. My wife and I had given serious talk about staying for a fourth year in Moscow, this rather surprisingly from a woman who practically kicked me out of the house when she knew we were going to be going there for three rather than two years. My wife, Bobbi, thrived in Moscow. We could talk about the possibility of staying for a fourth year. Ultimately we decided not to.

I still have a little piece of paper on which I prepared a chart of various possible assignments. I listed the advantages and disadvantages, professional, personal and otherwise. Paris was on that list but I thought Paris wouldn't be good for my career because the position was assistant information officer. In Moscow, I am information officer, press attaché. Do I want to go to Paris and be assistant information officer?

Fortunately that was just a paper exercise because without me having to do much to do with it, I was reassigned as assistant information officer, AIO/Paris. One day I picked up one of those bland cables that came out from Washington with personnel assignments and there was my name assigned to Paris as assistant information officer.

My job was going to be press attaché. In some ways it would seem to be a step down. I was going from being information officer to assistant information officer. But there is at least one thing I did right in my Foreign Service experience. I don't usually hand out advice but if somebody asked me for advice, I would say "if you see an interesting assignment, take it. Don't turn down an interesting assignment because it wouldn't seem to be a good stepping stone to something else." The reverse of that is: Don't take a lousy assignment just because you think it is going to help you out in the long run.

I was being assigned really, forget the AIO title, as press attaché to a key West European embassy and to what would turn out to be an amazingly interesting time and place in the Foreign Service. It was a wonderful five years. I really picked the right five, actually six years to be away from Moscow because it was the period of all the funerals in the Soviet Union and I was in Paris during a time of very active American-French relations.

Late in my assignment in Paris, I got back on the Soviet circuit. I was still in Paris but I will talk more about this later. I went to the Geneva summit in 1985. I was in Reykjavik in 1986 when Gorbachev and Reagan met there. Before the Geneva summit, I spent ten weeks in the Old Executive Office building on the staff of the National Security Council under Jack Matlock, doing public diplomacy preparations for Geneva. So I got back into things in time to go back to Moscow for my second tour in the late '80s but none of that was in my mind when I arrived in Paris in 1981.

Our first four years in Paris, 1981-1985, were a very unchanging period in the Soviet Union. Yes, we were well beyond Stalinism but there didn't seem to be any flexibility. Arrests were continuing. Our good friends were regularly denied permission to emigrate. The Reagan administration seemed to be on a head-on collision course with the Soviet Union and as we all know now, some awful things were going to happen. Remember when the Korean airliner was shot down? That kind of thing. These were not good times and there was no indication of any movement.

As I prepared for today, I decided rather than going through all my detailed journals and folders and for various other reasons, I would try to recall the five years we spent in Paris from memory and see what jumped out at me; later on, I can go back and fill in some of the details.

Q: Let's describe as you went, 1981 Paris but France in '81. How stood things there? What was the situation there?

BROWN: First, to describe my office physically. The American Embassy in Paris occupies a wonderful spot right on the Place de la Concorde, a classic center city location. Two blocks away is the Hotel Talleyrand where USIS, consular and various other sections of the embassy were located. For at least my first year in Paris, the Hotel Talleyrand was undergoing a major restoration and the normal occupants, including USIS, were in temporary offices around Paris.

But my office, the press office, was in the embassy proper. Look out the window of my mezzanine-level office and you could see the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde. What a heady location. My office was one floor down from the ambassador and the DCM. In effect, I was part of the embassy proper staff. The public affairs officer, my nominal boss the IO and the cultural section were all several metro stops away doing wonderfully important work but it was the USIS work. I was the press attaché. I was the first line of contact with the journalists.

The other thing that made it interesting was the fact that both countries had just elected new presidents. Ronald Reagan had just been elected president of the United States. He was in his first year, recovering from the assassination attempt, but he hadn't even finished his first year in office. François Mitterrand had been elected president of France that year.

Q: As a socialist, this was a real change.

BROWN: So you had not only a conservative Republican in the White House and a socialist in the Elysée Palace but you also had two very different personalities. Mitterrand probably read more books in a month than Ronald Reagan would read in his life. Mitterrand was a scholar. He was out of that leftist, socialist tradition in France. It was potentially a very uncomfortable relationship.

In fact, if you look back with historical perspective, the two men got along pretty well. They never became personal friends but politically, the United States enjoyed a good relationship with France during those five years.

The key issue, at the time these words were on your tongue all the time, was missile modernization and the desire of NATO -- political people are going to tell me I don't have all my details correct, but I know what I am talking about -- the desire of NATO to modernize the Pershing missiles in Western Europe, to counter the SS-20s that the Soviets had directed at Western Europe.

A lot of West European countries didn't like this idea but Mitterrand, in a very famous speech in Germany, basically said we must modernize the Pershing missiles or the Soviets will have no motivation to limit their SS-20s. That single speech did more to bring the United States and France together politically than any other event during the five years I was there.

There were plenty of other things the United States and France disagreed on but missile modernization was not one of them.

Q: This SS-20-Pershing issue, do you have any thoughts on the conflict that must have gone on within the French government to this? This is quite a threat to the NATO and Western alliance. It was designed that way to try to split; this is all on the part of the Soviet strategy. Through the press or something, was this a raging debate?

BROWN: There was probably opposition to it within the Mitterrand government. I think that the French acted in their national interest. They were not, technically I have to be careful here, part of the military structure of NATO but they were part of NATO, the political structure. So their voice was heard. If they had resisted on this, then countries that were wavering, such as the Netherlands and even Germany, would not have gone along.

Q: Well, the Netherlands were always a problem. Actually, Germany was a problem.

BROWN: Then the decision to modernize the Pershings would not have gone forward. As I say I think the French were simply acting out of their national interest. They certainly were not acting as some favor to the United States because we know on other issues they would resist.

Quite a number of years later, when President Reagan decided to bomb Libya and requested overflight rights for American planes coming out of England, the French said no and those planes had to take a long circuitous route to carry out their mission; on that and other issues, the French had no problem saying no to the United States.

Q: I was interviewing a man who was our ambassador to NATO at the time. He was the publisher of the Washingtonian, among other things. During this crisis he was invited to a dinner at the French Embassy and people were giving toasts and all that. So he got up and said, "I would like to toast our magnificent British allies who helped us launch this attack and I'd also like to toast our French allies who are giving us this magnificent dinner."

He was also the one who said that one of his daughters said, "When are you going to see the God damned French?"

He said, "What makes you say that?"

"Well, Dad every time you come back you slap your briefcase on the table, those God damned French." She thought that is what they were.

BROWN: I think, in some ways, that what made Mitterrand's support on this issue all the more credible was the fact that the French did not line up behind the United States on every single issue. If they were a puppy dog led around by the nose ally, then they wouldn't have had much credibility but because they could be so obstinate, we knew they were acting in their own national interest.

Q: Let's talk a little about the atmospherics. Who was the ambassador when you arrived?

BROWN: Let me answer that question a little more broadly. When you walk into the embassy in Paris, into the lobby -- and it is too bad the general public can't do it now -- there is a wall listing everyone who had ever been American ambassador or envoy to France. Right at the top of the list were names like John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

Q: Benjamin Franklin.

BROWN: Benjamin Franklin and on through many names that didn't mean very much. You reminded yourself that whoever your ambassador was, he was heir to quite a tradition. Out in the courtyard was a wonderful seated statue of Benjamin Franklin. He got moved one time because they put in a guard gate and had to relocate the statue and he was not quite so visible. I once came back from a July 4th party at the residence where they had given out hot air balloons and I thought too bad that Ben Franklin had not been able to attend the party so I tied the hot air balloons to Franklin's hands. A lot of people came by and took pictures and expressed their approval. Then some cold water person thought that this wasn't appropriate and took the hot air balloons off. There's always somebody.

But back to your question. When I arrived, the ambassador was Arthur Hartman. At that point, he was concluding his assignment to Paris; he was the ambassador-designate to the Soviet Union. So there was a little joke from his end that he and I were changing places. I never bought into that. I was very modest. Ambassador Hartman was going to Moscow as ambassador and I was coming to Paris as the press attaché but he and his wife Donna were very interested in talking to me about what they were going to find in Moscow. I think he was conscious of the fact that he was not a Soviet expert. He was not a Russian speaker and he was going into a pretty nasty climate there but he was the ambassador.

If you were at a party and you asked someone who didn't know to identify the ambassador, I am sure they would have pointed at Ambassador Hartman; tall, distinguished looking. He was right out of central casting.

Ambassador Hartman had a rather arms length relationship with journalists. He was not inclined to give interviews or talk freely with the press. He took more of the State Department approach that there wasn't a whole lot to be gained. I arrived in September and he hosted a reception on October 6 to say farewell to the press. Right during that mid-day reception, we got word of the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt. Ambassador Hartman didn't have anything to say on the record about that but it was a news making event on a day he was saying goodbye to the press.

Q: The Hartmans certainly both in France and in Moscow were very much avant-garde culturally, weren't they?

BROWN: I will tell you an anecdote. He provided at Spaso House in Moscow a venue for a pianist to play, a pianist who wanted to emigrate. His name is Vladimir Feltsman. The first opportunity he had to perform publicly was thanks to Arthur Hartman at Spaso House in Moscow.

In 1985, I was called back to Washington for ten weeks to work on the public diplomacy arrangements for the Geneva Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev. Then I got to go to Geneva. Ambassador Hartman came out from Moscow. He called me aside. He said, "Here, I have some thing I want to entrust to you." It was a violin. A Russian violinist, Sasha Brussilovsky, had emigrated but was not allowed to take his violin with him. Ambassador Hartman gave this violin to me and asked me to deliver it to Sasha in Paris, which I did.

I thought at the time here we've got this very high-level east west meeting, this summit. The future of the world was at stake here and what did Arthur Hartman risk by bringing out a violin for some unknown violinist? It wasn't going to be Gary Powers and U-2 but he could have provoked an incident. But he did it and he did it I think because he just wanted to help out this guy and he could.

So yes, he did a lot for the intellectuals and artists and dissidents in Moscow during those years.

He was replaced by Evan Galbraith and I will say what I have said a thousand times and something Evan Galbraith said ten thousand times; he was no relation politically or otherwise to John Kenneth Galbraith. Evan Galbraith was a protégée of Bill Buckley. It was Bill Buckley, National Review who recommended him to the Reagan administration.

Q: Sort of the extremely articulate spokesperson of the intellectual right wing.

BROWN: Yes and also vulnerable to putting his foot in his mouth too. A French speaking, investment banker who had spent time in Paris as a banker, a very young fellow with his wife, Bootsie. He was fond of recalling the various bistros that he and Bootsie had visited when they lived there in the investment banking world.

He arrived in the fall of 1981 and he made my life extremely interesting for four years and I mean that in a very positive sense. We got along well together.

In 1985, he resigned in a flurry of rhetoric and invectives and everything else we will talk about later. He was replaced by Joe M. Rodgers, a Republican from Tennessee who had been a Reagan fund raiser there. He was my ambassador for my last year in Paris. Did not speak a word of French, a very courtly man from Tennessee who nevertheless, managed to cultivate some pretty good relations with the French during his time there simply because he went to bat for them on issues. But the fact that he didn't speak French was a handicap and made it a little bit awkward for him.

Anyway, I had three ambassadors.

I shouldn't mention the three ambassadors without saying that I had three DCMs as well. The first was a man named Christian Chapman who was probably 5/5 in French. He had been educated in France and he certainly was a native speaker of French, very distinguished; the name just fit.

Q: I think he flew a Spitfire during World War II.

BROWN: It could well be. Replaced by a man named John Maresca. Jack also had very good French. Jack was not the easiest guy to work for. Reminded me a little bit of Jack Matlock in that respect. Not the easiest guy to work for, neither one was, but I had great respect for Jack Maresca. He was smart, articulate, bought into Evan Galbraith's approach to the press which was instead of holding them at arms length, we need to try to use them to get out our message.

If I did things right, and I was right most of the time, Jack was very complimentary. If I screwed up and didn't keep him informed on something, boy, he could come down on me like a ton of bricks. His office was only one floor above me.

Then there was a third DCM whose name was Bill Barrowclough.

As long as we are going down the line, I also had three PAOs. The PAO when I arrived was Jack Hedges. Jack was already into his third or fourth year in Paris. Jack really gave me great liberty to operate as press attaché. He had been press attaché Paris (my job), he enjoyed his job and he gave me liberty to operate as long as I kept him informed.

He was replaced by one of USIA's legendary figures, Terry Catherman. I have to be a bit careful how I say this but Terry was going through a terribly difficult period in his life. He didn't speak French very well and he was hung up about that. I think he had other personal issues. For a while, he wanted to keep really close tabs on what I was doing but then he realized that wasn't going to make his life or my life any easier and I kept him informed and that was enough.

The third PAO was Sam Courtney who again was one of the high profile figures of USIA. So I had three prominent ambassadors, three DCMs and three PAOs.

Q: Let's talk about sort of the administrative wiring diagram. Charlie Wick was the head of USIA. I have had people talk about both a difficult guy but also the guy that brought in money so a great deal of respect for him for keeping USIA high profile but not an easy person to work for.

BROWN: Everything you say is true.

Charlie Wick was the director of USIA. I would have to go back and count but I bet he made at least an annual trip to Paris while I was there. After my Paris assignment, I went back to Moscow and Charlie Wick was out there a couple of times as well.

In Paris, the burden of a Charlie Wick visit fell on the PAO and I can remember Terry Catherman saying he was losing sleep and sweating and everything else worrying about the Charlie Wick visit. I didn't have that problem myself. He added to our workload, certainly. Even when he wasn't visiting, he initiated this project called WorldNet or EuroNet. I think in fairness it has to be said that Charles Wick was ahead of his time and a lot of Foreign Service officers were behind the times, dragging our feet, thinking "what is this crazy system of using a satellite to put a newsmaker in Washington in touch with a journalist somewhere out in the field?"

Admittedly, there were technical problems the first few times or you might get someone who was supposed to be a newsmaker and wouldn't say anything. But the technology is so taken for granted these days as a means of communicating that our resistance to it early on leaves the Foreign Service people who resisted open to criticism.

Q: Could you explain what it was at that time?

BROWN: It involved identifying putting a newsmaker in Washington into a studio and inviting journalists into, let's say, a USIA office in Paris and thanks to the satellite, the journalists could interview the newsmaker. One of the first persons we had was George Shultz. We had a pretty good turnout for that.

There were technical problems. It wasn't done with the ease that you do a satellite connection these days. You had a language issue and you also had . . . I can talk a lot about George Shultz and my high respect for him, but he wasn't always the most scintillating newsmaker. He gave sometimes pretty bland answers to questions. But he was the secretary of state. The second time around you wouldn't get the secretary of state. You'd get somebody else further down on the food chain and it became awkward every time to round up an audience. Charles Wick wanted to make sure we were not only getting an audience but getting placement out of this.

So it was a challenge to produce the results that he wanted. WorldNet was the global name given to it. Euro Net was the name given to it when you had a European audience.

It wasn't always bilateral. It wasn't always just journalists in France interviewing someone in Washington. You might have three or four or half a dozen posts involved so you'd go around from one post to another. Again, that added to the logistical, mechanical difficulty. But that was Charles Wick's major contribution in those early years.

The other major contribution of course, was his personal relationship through his wife to Nancy Reagan.

I have said many times, as a registered Democrat, that I always felt we got better support from Republican administrations and from Republican directors of USIA than we did from Democratic administrations and Democratic directors of USIA. Various theories as to why that might be the case, even if you accept my premise.

My basic theory is that Republicans liked the idea of going out there and telling the rest of the world our story. They had no embarrassment at using federal government funds to go to the rest of the world to say "hey, we are a good country and our policies are correct and our point of view is to be listened to. If we need money to get that message across, let's do it."

Mr. Wick came to Paris many times. Usually my job was to put him in touch with journalists and I can remember arranging a couple of luncheons with very prominent, English speaking French journalist contacts. You would hold your breath and hope that Charles Wick wouldn't say something offensive, stupid or outlandish because he did shoot from the hip. There were plenty of occasions when I had to make that kind of arrangements.

One of his other projects goes to the period when martial law was declared in Poland and we were very concerned about the situation there. He put together a program called "Let Poland Be Poland." We were to try to place it on television. The French were not at all open to the idea of taking a packaged American program and putting it on TV but one channel did. They ran "Let Poland Be Poland" on a given Sunday night and, of course, we were obligated to report the reaction to it.

Q: How did it play?

BROWN: I don't recall. I don't think it had a whole lot of impact. At least we could say it went on French TV.

I guess I could take off from that a little bit, however, and say that the whole trend of French thinking during the five years I was there was increasingly dubious, skeptical or whatever about the communist model. There was of course a communist party in France and tangentially, Ambassador Galbraith got himself in trouble early on by making negative aspersions about the French Minister of Transport, Charles Fiterman. Mitterrand's government included communist ministers and Galbraith made critical comments that got him in hot water with the French.

I recall an occasion when the French Communist Party wanted to deliver a petition to the American Embassy. I had only been there for a few months and a fellow in the political section, Ted Van Gilder, and I were assigned to the front door to receive this petition from members of the French Communist Party. My picture appeared in L'Humanité, the French communist newspaper, along with an article about this petition.

But overall, events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the five years that I was in France conspired to make that model increasingly unattractive to the French left. I was so fortunate I was in Paris for five extremely interesting years in our bilateral and multilateral relationship. During those same five years in the Soviet Union, you had the death of Brezhnev, the death of Andropov and the death of Chernenko. As one person said to somebody else in Moscow at the Chernenko funeral, "didn't I see you at the Andropov funeral?" and the second guy replied, "Yeah, I bought the subscription."

Not much was going on. This was also a period when they exiled Alexander Solzhenitsyn. It is one thing for the Soviet Union to be an unattractive political model but when they exiled their leading intellectual, cultural thinkers, then the Soviet Union in general had no attraction for the French left. This was a period in which the French left was increasingly disillusioned with Soviet-style communism.

Q: Maybe this would be the time to talk a bit about the French intellectuals. I can't think of any country where the sort of intellectual class, whatever that is, has the importance or presumed importance or at least the high profile than in France. How did you approach it and what was your impression of it?

BROWN: I am going to be modest in answering that question. I think my colleagues in the cultural section and elsewhere had more direct contact with the intellectuals per se. You always were aware that intellectuals played an important role when you went to the Pantheon and saw where they were buried or you saw those long, thumb-sucking pieces in the newspaper which I never read, actually. You knew the intellectuals played an important role.

Let me address the subject indirectly. There were a more than a few French journalists who were truly intellectuals. Especially in my early years in Paris, I was frequently invited out to lunch by French journalists. These were long, two hour, two and a half hour affairs, full course meals, bottle of wine kind of get-togethers. A few of the journalists or commentators who invited me out were way above me in terms of intellectual ability. I was doing this in French and my French was good but with a few of these people, I can remember thinking “he isn’t going to want to see me again because I am not really on his intellectual level.”

I didn’t worry too much about it because there were a lot of others who were just plain old practical journalists, interested in a story, interested in the good background, interested in being invited to some event with an American newsmaker. I felt comfortable with these people, able to exchange ideas, able to operate on a practical business level. For me, the French intellectuals were out there but they weren’t really a direct part of my day to day work.

Q: Did you have the feeling that they were, their chromosomes put them in the left or were they distinctively left or did you have a feeling that this was sort of an immovable group?

BROWN: Without thinking about it, you say emotionally in the left but a couple of the people I am thinking about who were just so far above me in terms of their thought processes were working for Figaro and L’Express, the journals on the right. The French journalists were thinkers. Many of them were deep thinkers and I suppose more of them were on the left than on the right but not exclusively so.

Again I come back to the point more often than not, I’d call them and say, we have somebody in town who is available for a background briefing on economic or political or issues or we can send you to the United States on an IV grant, that kind of thing. That was more the relationship I had with the French press.

Q: How about the right and the Le Pen phenomenon?

BROWN: We didn’t have anything to do with Le Pen and we didn’t have anything to do with the far left, L’Humanité. We were, I think, absolutely restricted from contact with the communists. With the far right, we were not absolutely restricted but we didn’t have anything to do with Le Pen and company. Figaro and the Express and those legitimate right-of-center publications, yes. We had a lot of contact with them. The ambassador would be invited to a big luncheon hosted by the L’Express and Figaro enterprise.

My job brought me in contact with the whole gamut of the French press – Le Matin and Liberation on the left. L’Express, Figaro on the right and Le Monde, wherever you would place it.

Q: You mentioned you were forbidden contact with the communists. It is fairly simple to be that way in the United States where the communists aren't really much of anything. Since the communists are part of the web and wolf of the French politics

BROWN: I think it was an absolute restriction. I could not invite journalists from L'Humanité to a press event. Within the political section, there were contacts with the whole spectrum of French politics but not with the French Communist Party. There were no formal relationships. They were communists and they were in some ways farther left than any other West European communist party.

Q: As often is the case the step children of the regime. I would think that if you wanted to get at least maybe you couldn't do anything press wise, but certainly for politicians you should know what they are thinking and all because the maneuvers going on, you know. This is like in Iran, one of our terrible mistakes was we allowed ourselves to be cut out from a contact with the anti-Shah forces.

BROWN: I didn't make the policy.

Q: Did you find yourself chafing under this?

BROWN: No, I didn't. I had plenty to do. I recognized, not that I ever even thought about resisting it, that this was the Ronald Reagan, Evan Galbraith administration and this was perfectly consistent with their thinking, that we would want nothing to do with French communists. You didn't want to do anything to legitimize them.

Did people in the political section have some informal contacts? Perhaps, I don't know. But I don't think they would have wanted to have been seen in a restaurant dining with someone from the French Communist Party. We did not have relations with the French Communist Party.

Q: This was the period of time where there was the phenomenon called Euro communism. It was considered to be ___ in Italy. They were seen as more, you might say, more respectable.

BROWN: That may be true but overall, I would argue that the early '80s in France marked the decline of influence of the French Communist Party. More importantly, just a general disillusionment among the French left with communism and the eastern bloc.

Q: The invasion of Czechoslovakia in '68 I think really hit the communist Western European communism.

BROWN: On the other hand, despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, people were still talking in the 1980's, as you said, about Eurocommunism. I think that part of what happened in the '80s was the inability of the Soviet Union to produce anybody who could articulate, who could speak. It was a sclerotic society. In addition, you had the expulsion of Solzhenitsyn. You talk about intellectuals in France. Well, here was the leading

Russian intellectual, an esteemed Russian writer and the Soviet leadership couldn't tolerate him; they booted him out of the country.

Let me turn to a couple of things I have notes on, some personal observations

First about arriving in France. My wife and I both passed through Paris en route from Moscow back to the United States on home leave but we did it in a clumsy fashion. She went with our younger daughter Christine to try to decide where we were going to be living and she found an apartment somewhere in the suburbs. A few weeks later, I went through Paris, decided I didn't want to live in her apartment and picked out one that I thought was better. I put down \$1,000, which seemed like a lot of money to me at that time, to reserve it and went on home leave.

I came back to Paris ahead of my wife and checked into a hotel around the corner from the embassy where I was going to be staying for a while because nothing was ready. Ironically, we felt hard pressed to find anything in Paris as wonderful as the apartment we had in Moscow. Moscow living conditions, you would think, would be awful but remember that in Moscow, we had this spacious apartment on the 12th floor of a building with a view on three sides. Something like that in Paris proper would have cost multiple times my housing allowance.

There was another factor at work and that was our daughter was to be enrolled in the Lyceé International several miles west of Paris, in the direction of Versailles. We decided, contrary to the advice of a lot of people, not to look for an apartment on the Left Bank or in the 16th arrondissement but out in St. Germaine-en-Laye.

Well, I got back to Paris and went out on the weekend to look at the apartment that I had put down \$1,000 on and I became almost nauseated. I could not live out there where I have to take a bus and then a train to get to work. I felt confined. I tossed and turned for several nights, talked to my wife on the phone and decided to forfeit the \$1,000 and start all over again. I was going to wait until she came and do it the correct way.

But I didn't. A couple of days later I went out to St. Germaine-en-Laye with a note that I picked up in the embassy's housing office and accompanied by the Reuters bureau chief, Bob Evans, and his wife whom we had known in Moscow. I found this big old airy house with a huge garden a short distance from the RER, the train line, and I was blown away by the place. This was totally different. It wasn't available for a month but I said to myself "this is where we want to live." The owner, Madame Legras, wisely suggested I wait until my wife came. I did wait until my wife came before I confirmed.

We lived in that house a 3, rue des Bucherons, and it was a huge part of the France experience. We were in a community where we had a lot of friends and acquaintances. Contrary to what the security people said I should do, I would walk every morning from my front door five minutes to the RER, pick up my Herald Tribune and find a spot on the platform where I knew the doors on the RER car would open. It was the end of the line.

In 20 minutes, I would be at l'Opera and two metro stops later, I would be at the embassy. Living in the suburbs didn't inhibit my style.

At the end of the day, I would gather up newspapers and other unclassified documents and read them on the return trip home. Yes, we did not live in the Left Bank but we had a really wonderful French experience. Not only did we have a lot of friends out there, we had a chateau and a huge park, a great place for our dog, a different lifestyle, a different experience during our five years in Paris. So that is a very strong memory.

The second thought involves where my office was in the embassy, looking out on the Place de la Concorde. I replaced a fellow named Chris Henze. Chris had done a fine job. The first week I was there, Jack Hedges hosted a farewell reception for Chris. It was very well attended, a tribute to Chris and the job he had done. Journalist after journalist came up to me and we exchanged cards and said we will have to get together for lunch. I did not really know what this meant at the time but especially over the first year, I had innumerable lunches with French journalists. I got a lot of kidding about it as I came back into the embassy after a couple of hours away.

But when somebody mentioned the name of a particular journalist or wanted to have access to somebody in the French daily press, the weekly magazines or the audiovisual media, I had those contacts. My office and I had those contacts.

In my office, I was blessed with five extremely dedicated, long serving French employees -- Lucette, Monique, Nicole, Michelle and Jacques. Those five were like the starting five on a basketball team. I will never forget them. They were such an important part of doing the job there and I remain in contact with a couple of them.

Lucette Beal, in particular; I wrote a piece about her for the USIA magazine. If I do say so, it was a really good piece that captured who she was and what she did. Lucette prepared a daily press briefing for the ambassador. She had come to work for the American embassy I think circa 1948 and her office was actually in what became the ambassador's residence. She went to work for the Marshall Plan and occupied a cubicle; not far from where she sat was a young Foreign Service officer named Arthur Hartman. That was 1948 and I am going out there 30 plus years later. By 1981, Lucette is the chief FSN in the press office and Arthur Hartman is the ambassador.

Just to illustrate how things worked, it was my first week and I think back to my first day on the job in Moscow in 1978 when I had three newsmakers. I got a call from the DCM, Christian Chapman, who said Richard Allen, the NSC adviser, was in town and would like to do a background briefing with French journalists. This is my first week on the new job.

I turned to the PAO, Jack Hedges, who suggested two or three names. I turned next to Lucette who at that point, more easily than I, could contact those journalists, all of whom were delighted to come to the ambassador's residence for a background briefing with the NSC adviser. I attended and I did what I do well and what I was experienced in doing

from my Moscow days. I took notes. I took good notes and I showed them to the ambassador and DCM. They were put into a telegram and they got me off to a good start. I got a lot of commendations right away for making effective use of this press opportunity. It is always nice to get off to a good start.

I won't attribute all of my success in Paris to those five French employees but they were part of it.

Meanwhile, remember that I had the title of AIO. That didn't last very long. Things were restructured. I became the information officer with a lot of other responsibilities.

As I said, Lucette did this daily press briefing. She would come in early. With her scissors, she'd cut up all the French newspapers and at about 10, we'd go up to the ambassador's office and do a briefing for the ambassador on what was in the French press. The ambassador, DCM and PAO and anyone else who was interested would attend. Not that many other people attended because they I think they found it a little bit tedious. For Ambassador Galbraith, it was a five day a week operation unless there was something extraordinary that called him away. We did it in French. He preferred to have it done in French.

Michelle Carteron was a generation younger than Lucette. She aspired to do what Lucette did and there was a lot of tension between the two of them and Michelle brought in her contacts in the French press. Things became very competitive.

Monique Barra was flamboyant type whose contact was in the audiovisual world. She would come running into my office and tell me I absolutely had to meet some particular journalist she had encountered or absolutely had to go to some event, attend a live taping of a show. A very effervescent, ebullient character.

Nicole Mazon prepared the daily summary of the French press that every West European embassy was required to do. Nicole went through and summarized particularly the French print press, the editorial comments, press round up. She would bring this to me in draft. I would correct it.

I always remember the day around 1982 when Nicole brought her report to me in draft and said "we have a new system here. Put a circle around something you want changed and we will take it back out and change it on the machine." Literally, when I arrived, it was all being done on a typewriter. Lo and behold, a couple of years later and they had come up with this thing called the word processor produced by Wang. You may recall that Wang was the supplier early on to the State Department.

I can remember the novelty when we had the first Wang computer. It was in my office and when I wasn't using it, other people were able to come in and use this fancy device where we could actually change words without retyping the whole page.

Then there was even a stage where once you did that, you took the report to the technology center, pushed a couple of buttons and this whole thing was transmitted electronically to Washington. Wow.

Q: This whole communications thing, you were right on the cusp of it at that point.

BROWN: Cusp but we were still on the slow side.

The fifth employee was Jacques Jacquinet. He was a midget. He was less than five feet tall, probably four feet and so well known. Everybody knew Jacques. He tended the AP and AFP tickers. All day long, he would tear news items off the tickers, photocopy them and like a mailman, in the afternoon, he'd go around and plop 20 or 25 pages on people's desks. He did that early in the morning and again late in the afternoon.

When we say we were on the cusp of advanced communications, this is the way we kept informed. There were no other ways, except a telephone call, that brought the news any faster than the AP and the AFP ticker. I can remember any number of times when there was a news event and I would go dashing in to the embassy to get the latest news on the event so we could keep the ambassador and other people posted.

I said that I keep in touch with those people. I am still in touch with Lucette and Monique. There was a spring Saturday in 1982 and I received a phone call saying Jacques had died of a heart attack. I immediately went to his home on the other side of Paris and tried to console his widow. It was clear that the Embassy was Jacques's life.

We set up a condolence book at his desk and the outpouring among both the FSNs and the Americans was overwhelming. The ambassador went to his funeral. Partly because he was a midget, people would never forget him physically but that aside, he was a beloved character. He would come into my office late in the afternoon and although, he didn't speak much English, he'd use this little phrase like he was going to take the rest of the day off. It reflected his pride in his work. He was married to a French woman of normal stature. I don't know if he ever had any children. Bless his soul, we missed Jacques. In the condolence book, I wrote that somebody else would take his job. He could never be replaced.

And there was the practical question of who was going to monitor the AP and AFP tickers that were going to keep spewing out paper forever. I interviewed several candidates and eventually hired an Algerian-born fellow whose last name was Choutri. He was still in the job when I last visited the embassy a few years ago.

Q: Did you find your employees, the French national employees were, were they sensitive pointing out saying look this is correspondent or this event in the United States or something is taking a peculiar turn, a wrong turn or anti Americanism? Was this left sort of to the officers or were you getting from the people who had been around the press for a long, long time where things are going?

BROWN: Lucette was completely objective in her clipping of the French press. If there was something critical of the United States, that was probably the first thing she called to the ambassador's attention. There was no effort to feed the ambassador and the embassy just the good news. Critical information out of the French press was served up.

As far as the journalists we dealt with sure, we were aware of those who might provide a sympathetic hearing. Particularly between Lucette and Michelle, there was a competitive relationship enhanced by the generational gap to try to introduce me to some journalists we didn't know and they might advise that this particular person was fairly critical or not necessarily as inclined as someone else to give us a good hearing.

Q: You have five years, from early Reagan to mid Reagan. Did you sense a greater understanding of Reagan? When Reagan first came in here was a Hollywood actor from the far right and Europe was extremely dubious about this character and they learned to live with him. It was a learning experience. Did you sense this change?

BROWN: It is hard for me thirty years later to recall precisely what was in the French press. You could go back and see he was described as a movie actor and all this kind of thing.

Was there an evolution on Reagan during that time? Yes, there was. First of all, he's President of the United States. He has to be taken seriously and he didn't bomb the Soviet Union or whatever. He was conducting reasonable policies. Some policies they would agree with; some they would disagree with.

Overall, the understanding and appreciation of Reagan improved during those five years partly because we were starting from a fairly low understanding and a low appreciation. You'd have to go back and look in detail at editorials and that kind of thing to give an in-depth answer to that question.

But I was dealing more with the day-to-day kind of stuff. Very early on, a couple of months into my presence there, the word came to the press office that shots had been fired at the DCM, Christian Chapman. He was the chargé. He came out of his house in the morning to get into his car -- I think he was being driven -- and realized that someone was firing shots at him. Christian Chapman was as close to a French intellectual as you could find in the American Embassy, educated in the French or in the French tradition. But like a good American, he ducked behind his car; shots were fired but missed him, miraculously missed him.

He came to the embassy where I asked him for guidance; our phones were ringing off the hook. What had happened, etcetera? I asked him if he would be willing to speak to the French press and despite concerns from the security people, he was. I will never forget the scene as we allowed French journalists into the embassy and Christian Chapman occupying a position there on the second floor of the embassy where the ambassador's office was, a very elegant position. He answered questions in both English and perfect French and basically the word that went out was that the American embassy chargé

d'affaires had ducked behind his car, the bullets had glanced off and he was safe. That was about all there was to it at that time. No clear cut information on who the assailant was or whatever.

Little did we realize this was thrusting us into a new age. In 1982, anyone who wanted just walked in the front door of the embassy. We didn't have ID cards, badges. If there was any sort of control on who walked in the embassy, it was minimal. Somewhere, not too long after that, we got ID cards. The French resisted this, particularly the more senior employees. Lucette, for example, was accustomed to French journalists coming in and having a chat with someone in the embassy, perhaps the way it used to happen in the State Department. It wasn't just the attempted shooting of Christian Chapman that caused the change but it was part of the whole evolution at that time.

The Christian Chapman incident was November 12, 1981. It was two months later, January 18, that one of our military attachés, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Ray walked out of his house and was not so fortunate. Someone walked up and shot him once in the head. He was assassinated, murdered right there in the streets. He was married with two children, roughly the same age as my children

By that time, Evan Galbraith was there as ambassador. We all assembled in his office and I can remember to this day, Ambassador Galbraith was very quick except at this point, he seemed to be a little bit paralyzed. What should we do? We lowered the flag to half staff. I drafted a statement. He didn't like the statement. He thought it was the bland kind of thing you say every time something like this happened so he came up with his own version. He not only issued it in writing but verbally as well. He said he was "revolted" by the cold blooded murder. And he went ahead with a previously scheduled lunch with President Mitterrand.

The next day there was a funeral service at Notre Dame where Charles Ray was a regular parishioner. My job was to control and advise the French and other press on what they could and could not do in the service. So that was a big news making event.

It was not the only terrorism related incident we would have but it was the only time an American official would be killed while I was in Paris.

Q: Did it become clear later who was doing this?

BROWN: They did arrest somebody, a Lebanese. He was tried and sentenced to jail.

There was another incident a couple years later on a Saturday where somebody from the embassy was coming out of his house and was suspicious about a package under his car. He called the police. The French police came to check it out. It exploded and killed one of the French police and wounded the other.

And in March, 1984, there was a shooting at our consulate in Strasbourg. The Consul, Bob Homme, was struck twice but was not seriously wounded. It was a miracle. If I

recall correctly, the shooter turned out to be the same guy that shot and killed Colonel Ray.

The point is that along side having a great time going out to lunches with French journalists, there was this nasty backdrop that always involved questions from the media. It was a wakeup call to everybody and it was part of a pattern.

I mentioned all these lunches I had with the French journalists. At some point, I decided I would make a list of the restaurants I had gone to. I still have the list. It became an embassy directory of the French restaurant world. I probably should have made more of it than I did. I could have made some money off it or gone into the restaurant review business.

New subject: During my first year, I got a call from the Elysée press person -- basically the President's press person -- inviting my counterparts from five other embassies and me for a planning session for the G-7. You recall that the first G-7 meeting took place in Rambouillet, France, in 1975, hosted by Giscard d'Estaing and then it went to every other member of the G-7 which meant that by 1982, France was due to host it again. So with my counterparts from five other embassies, we went out to Versailles. The French were going to use Versailles for the 1982 G-7 meeting.

At a subsequent meeting, we were asked what the needs were for the respective press corps in covering the G-7. The Germans, Italians, Canadians gave rough estimates of what they might need. The Japanese said they would need something like 22 typewriters, 18 telex machines. They just had it down precisely, very Japanese like.

As for me, I had to say "well, we have asked the White House but they really haven't responded." As we all know, the White House just didn't march with the other countries on these things. The White House press office and the whole White House on any presidential visit had their own way of operating.

Over the course of the next several months leading up to June, 1982, I hosted any number of White House press advance teams and people from the White House transportation office for innumerable visits to the sites, discussions about photo ops and everything else leading up to the President Reagan's visit in 1982 which was the biggest presidential visit that I had ever been involved in and probably ever would be involved in. Talk about President Reagan's image in France.

I describe this as three visits. There was President Reagan's bilateral visit to France. This was his first visit as President of the United States to France and so it was a state visit with reciprocal dinners at the Elysée and at the ambassador's residence. It was rare to have two official dinners and President Mitterrand came to the residence as a guest. Mitterrand would never have gone to any other ambassador's residence for a dinner but an exception was made for the President of the United States.

There was also Nancy Reagan in France and a whole team with vast resources went into that visit. And finally, there was President Reagan's attendance at the G-7 summit meeting. I worked my tail off in the preparations. I worked very intimately with people in the White House press advance office, including especially with a very good guy named John Dreylinger. Unfortunately, his name came up often during the Clinton years in connection with the so-called Travelgate issue. I knew every one of the probably 25 photo ops at Versailles. I was intimately prepared for that meeting.

It was also a lesson to me on how the White House big foots everybody else. Yes, I got to stand at certain points along the way but the White House would never entrust anything solely to embassy people. The White House staff, many or most of whom were political appointees, would ultimately have responsibility for everything.

I did make a good impression on Larry Speakes, who was the White House spokesman. He had replaced Jim Brady, wounded in the assassination attempt. Larry Speakes liked me and I liked Larry Speakes. I got high praise for whatever it was that I did, even though it seemed to me at the time I was mostly standing at some place waiting for a photo op to take place.

A couple things characterized that G-7 meeting. I think it was the only time that Alexander Haig came to Paris as secretary of state. He was something of a show of his own which the White House didn't particularly like.

It was also extremely hot and the press operation was in the Orangerie at Versailles; the Orangerie was a hot house designed to allow fruits to grow year round. The working conditions were absolutely atrocious. If the French had hoped to call attention to the magnificence of Versailles, that failed because it coincided with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra Shatila massacres. All news attention was focused on that event and very little on the G-7 meeting at Versailles.

But I do have vivid memories of it, of lost sleep and long days.

Q: How about Nancy Reagan? She was quite a power unto herself. I was wondering how you found

BROWN: I really wasn't too involved in it. Somebody else did all of that.

Jumping ahead several years, when Reagan came to Moscow and I was the PAO, we had all the various advance teams and specific site assignments. Everybody on the staff was assigned to some particular group or location such as the university, the writer's club, Red Square or wherever. There was a woman on my staff, an assistant cultural affairs officer, and we assigned her to the Nancy Reagan team. She came to me one day in high dudgeon and said that she didn't like this at all. It was sexism. As a woman, she was being assigned to Mrs. Reagan while everybody else was being assigned to President Reagan. I said, "Susan, first of all, a lot of women on the staff are being assigned to President Reagan but somebody also has to be assigned to Mrs. Reagan. Secondly, you're

in the cultural section and most of her program will be culturally related. And thirdly, I can tell you that at the end of this event, you will have had the most interesting experiences.”

She came to me later, perhaps still offended that she had been assigned to Mrs. Reagan but she acknowledged that she had had very interesting experiences while the rest of us again stood around and waited for things to happen or listened to speeches. She got to see icons and attend cultural events that nobody else got to see.

I don't specifically recall much about Nancy Reagan's program in Paris but there were probably some similarities.

Q: On that trip to Moscow I have talked to Nick Burns and others. They said the whole party ended up three days in Helsinki before they came to Moscow. I think that was the trip because her private astrologer had said that if they arrived at a different time or something it would be dangerous or something. Maybe it was that trip.

How did this G-7 thing work out from your perspective?

BROWN: The visit ended on a Monday and we went to Orly Airport, waved goodbye to Air Force One and to President Reagan. I so wished that it had ended on a Thursday or Friday so that I would have a few days to recover. Instead I went right back to the office.

From a practical point of view, some of my USIS colleagues or people back in Washington seemingly forgot that I had just been spent five or six days nonstop on President of the United States-related activities and they would ask me some mundane question about a work related project. I was physically exhausted by the end of this visit. I didn't have this great uplifting sense of satisfaction. I had put a lot of time into working with the White House advance people only to realize, come the time of the visit, that my role was pretty minimal. I didn't expect it to be maximal, certainly not involved in substance, but you were never entrusted with any responsibility because the White House wanted to hold all that responsibility to itself.

Was I the only person to feel this way? I mentioned our DCM, Jack Maresca. Jack was a very controlling kind of guy. President Reagan came to France three times while I was there. First was 1982, Versailles. The second was 1984; I'll talk more about that later, the 40th anniversary of D-Day. And the third was a quick visit to Strasbourg and the European Community. Jack Maresca was as involved as I was with the White House advance teams for each of the first two visits. By the time of the third visit, he said "I don't need to be here" and he went on leave. He realized that the White House comes in and they just take over everything.

At the end of the Versailles visit, Ambassador Galbraith felt somewhat the same way many of us did about the behavior of the White House staff. We had a wheels-up party that did not involve the White House party. Ambassador Galbraith was as offended as everyone else by how we were treated and made some pointed remarks about manners

that gave all of us a good reason to laugh and to relax a little bit. He did not include President and Mrs. Reagan in his criticism.

For me personally, I had become well and favorably known to the White House press office. A year later, when it was the turn of the United States to host the G-7, the Reagan administration chose Williamsburg, Virginia, as the site. I was invited back to the United States and I attended the G-7 meeting in Williamsburg. My job was to work with the French press, attend their briefings, report back to Larry Speakes on what the French were saying, try to encourage their coverage of something other than just the G-7, the Williamsburg scene, that kind of thing.

I also went to the G-7 meeting a year later in Bonn and in 1986, I went for the only time in my life to Japan. I went again at the invitation of Larry Speakes and company to the G-7 meeting in Tokyo, to cover the French press, report back on what their take was, how they were dealing with the issues. That was heady, that was fun, a good ego trip.

Let me mention some of the other newsmaker things that kept me busy.

On September 15, 1982, right at the end of a visit from Mr. Wick, we learned that Princess Grace of Monaco had died in an automobile accident. Soon after, we got the word that Nancy Reagan would lead the American delegation to the funeral so I and others, including Lucette Beal, were sent down to Monaco to work particularly with the American press who came along with Nancy Reagan. Her press person was Sheila Tate and I met with her.

On the day of the funeral, September 18, I had the experience of being right across from the cathedral as the whole funeral party led by Prince Rainier walked down the street. I was really very moved. I didn't have much of an impression of Monaco prior to that time except I knew it was a gambling mecca. Clearly, the whole community led by Prince Rainier was grieving for the loss of their princess, Princess Grace of Monaco, and I had a firsthand seat, not a seat, but I was standing right across from the doors to the cathedral as everyone came by.

November 11, 1982 was a holiday and I got the word that Brezhnev had died. I called the Ambassador. He was having breakfast with Henry Kissinger but he called me back a few minutes later. I went in to the embassy. Kissinger was staying at the ambassador's residence. A lot of French knew about the visit and there were a lot of requests to interview Kissinger so I went over to the residence and was asked to coordinate.

I tiptoed in to the room where he was meeting with a French visitor. I had never met the great man before and I asked him if he would like me to try to coordinate media requests. To my surprise, he was very cordial and very appreciative. He explained that he had a contract, I think, with ABC and had to do ABC first but after that, he would do any number of interviews.

We used two rooms at the residence. He did the interview with ABC and then we moved him next door to do a follow on interview with a pool of French TV networks and then we moved him back to CBS and NBC. I think he did four interviews quite willingly on his memories of Leonid Brezhnev.

It was the only time in my career I encountered Henry Kissinger first hand. Fortunately in contrast to other people's experiences I found him quite easy and cordial to work with.

In October, 1983, I had one of my busiest weeks. It was on a Sunday that we woke up and heard about the bombings in Beirut, the Marine headquarters there. 250 American marines killed there. The second largest number of deaths was among French so there was an American-French link and the ambassador did not hesitate. He went on French television that same day, didn't check with anybody. I can't tell you at this point what he said but I thought it was very courageous of him to do that. His words must have been along the lines of loss of life, our common loss and that sort of thing.

With him doing that on French TV on a Sunday night, the DCM, Jack Maresca felt confident to accept a radio interview the next day. I went along. I had great admiration for Jack Maresca; he was not an easy guy to work for but very, very professional. His French was far better than the ambassador's. In some ways, his reasoning and thought processes might have been less emotional and more analytical and he did a really good interview. I couldn't tell you today what he said but I do remember those two interviews; the ambassador on Sunday night on TV and the DCM the next day on the radio. We really got our message out.

That was Sunday and Monday and on Tuesday, the United States invaded Grenada. Again, we were up in the ambassador's office, the DCM, somebody from the political section and me. Ambassador Galbraith was chomping at the bit. He wanted to go out and make a statement. The problem was nobody really knew what was going on. We didn't have guidance. We didn't know what the whole story was except the ambassador was sure he did. Everyone else was advising him to be cautious about this because we didn't fully understand but he went ahead

Q: The real concern was Americans on the island, students.

BROWN: And we were going to go in and rescue the Americans at the hospital and elsewhere. Whatever the case, the ambassador looked at us who were around him hesitating and didn't have a very charitable view. He went on television and debated Serge July who was the editor of Liberation, one of the left of center newspapers and he didn't come out too well. I think he lost the debate. He didn't come out too well on TV and he came out even worse in the eyes of Secretary of State Shultz who was in Paris on Thursday of that week.

I think the ambassador made some statement suggesting that the Grenada invasion had been planned two weeks earlier. He was really off the reservation. When Secretary Shultz arrived on Thursday, I linked up with John Hughes, his press spokesman and it was clear

to me with all the body language that the ambassador was going to be disciplined by Shultz for going beyond what he should have.

That was an up week for the ambassador and a downer. I am sure in his view you won a few, you lost a few.

Q: Did the ambassador later acknowledge that maybe he'd gone too far?

BROWN: He did, maybe not publicly, but I am sure when he looked in the mirror, he said I should not have been quite so outspoken. Regarding his statement that the invasion had been planned two weeks ahead, he did say something about being misquoted.

Amidst all this, the Beirut bombings, the Grenada issue and the Shultz visit, we had a visit from Director Wick and that was always a full load. He made a speech that week; we had to record that and the Q & A session. I set up a lunch for him with two leading, English-speaking French journalists; a woman named Christine Ockrent and a man named Leon Zitrone. At the time, they were as well known on the French scene as any two network nightly network people are today.

Wick liked me personally but he was wondering during that period if we should have in our Western European capitals a super press attaché, not a career Foreign Service officer but someone from the outside who would really know how to get out there and get home the message. I have always felt good that Christine Ockrent and Leon Zitrone both rejected the idea. "You don't need a super press attaché. We deal quite well with the press office at the embassy, thank you."

That was October, 1983. It was almost two years later that Galbraith gave an interview to John Vinocur of The New York Times just as he was leaving and in that interview he criticized Foreign Service officers for not having guts. I won't take the time now to describe the repercussions but the State Department issued a formal statement disavowing Galbraith's remarks. George Shultz issued a less formal statement in which he said the ambassador's tongue ought to be tied. Galbraith found himself backpedaling and apologizing and saying he didn't mean individually that Foreign Service officers lack guts. They don't have the guts to stand up to their superiors and challenge. I think what he may have had in the back of his mind was this whole Grenada thing when he wanted to make a statement and people were advising him to be cautious.

Q: Did you sense that he during the time you worked with him sense that he was looking at you all and judging you all none too favorably?

BROWN: He may have been. I don't want to single myself out but he liked me because I, in my own interest, kept enabling him to do press contact work.

Let's talk a little bit more about what motivated Galbraith. He went to Paris and in so many words, he said I am a businessman but I don't want to be a super commercial attaché. I don't want to be a super political officer, spending all my time delivering notes

to the foreign ministry. I want to go out and espouse Reaganism, Reaganomics and any opportunity speaking or otherwise to do that I will do it. I don't have to check first, I don't have to ask permission. I know what the policy is.

Very early on, we were doing one of the morning press briefings. He had given an interview to French TV in Washington before he came out and the embargo was that the interview was not to air until he presented his letters of credentials. Well, it ran before he was in France but he hadn't presented his letters; they jumped the gun.

I was told to call and make a little protest. I did. I called, I knew the guy at which ever French TV network it was. He apologized. I went back to the ambassador's office and said I had called and talked to him and he apologizes. What more can we do? Everybody nodded.

At the end of that meeting, the ambassador asked me to stay behind along with PAO and he basically said what I just said. I want to do press work and I don't have to check with people. I want to be pro active. I want to get out there and give interviews and talk about Pershing missiles and Reagan economics and he did and it really made my life interesting.

I could say to journalists, "You want an interview with the ambassador? Yes. You want to talk to the ambassador about this subject? Yes."

Along the way, there were some bumps and there were some things he may have regretted. I didn't appreciate him saying Foreign Service officers don't have guts but I have to be honest and say he really made my life interesting. I think overall he did what he set out to accomplish. Probably he advanced the U.S. national interest by espousing what he saw as U.S. government policies.

We had innumerable high-level official visits. We had three by the president; I don't know how many by the vice president, even more by the secretary of state and just as many by the secretary of defense, to say nothing of many other newsmakers farther down on the food chain. We had the one Haig visit and that was Versailles. About a month later, he resigned to be replaced by George Shultz.

Shultz and Weinberger talked to the press every time they came to Paris. Shultz was bland; Weinberger was outspoken and imminently quotable. But in the long run, I was much happier we had George Shultz where he was and we survived Cap Weinberger.

In December, 1982, Shultz came out for a meeting with his counterpart, Claude Cheysson, the French foreign minister. I think there was a gas pipeline issue, something we were not seeing eye to eye on. Cheysson reminded me of Christian Chapman; he was a French version of Christian Chapman, totally bilingual. There wasn't even a hint of the Gallic accent in his English.

Shultz had a press conference (in my diary, I wrote that it was “technically successful but substantively very bland”) and the traveling press filed their reports. There were always 8, 10, 12 journalists who came along with the secretary of state. Parenthetically, these were really serious journalists. Some of them had been covering the State Department for so many years that they had a longer mental record of foreign policy than the incumbent secretary of state. They were very unlike the White House press corps with a lot of big egos and people looking for a headline; the State Department press corps was a very serious group of people.

So Shultz had his press conference and I fed back to John Hughes, the press spokesman for the State Department, some of the early reaction and that went to Shultz and he said, “What? This isn’t what I said at all. You are totally misinterpreting.”

Shultz was trying to calm down, put to rest the idea that the U.S. and the French were not seeing eye to eye and that’s not at all the message that went out that day. John Hughes, I think, was probably the best press spokesman at the State Department that I worked with, a former Christian Scientist Monitor journalist, a very solid individual, in it for the professionalism of it, not for the ego trip and that kind of thing.

I got the word that Shultz and Cheysson were having a black tie dinner at the Foreign Ministry but at the end of that dinner, they would again meet with the press to clarify things, at 10:30 at night. The American journalists covering Shultz had gone off for a night in Paris, nice dinners and whatever. We certainly didn’t have text messages or e-mail or anything like that but somehow we rounded up as many as we could and went to the Quai d’Orsay. At the end of the dinner, Cheysson and Shultz sat down again with the press and talked in English for about an hour. I had my little cassette tape recorder. I kept praying that the red light would keep glowing, that my batteries would not die.

I recorded this press conference and went back to the embassy. It is now past midnight. The phone rings, Jack Maresca who says, “Phil, we have to have that transcript.”

I protested, “It’s midnight. It can wait until tomorrow. I can go home and get a good night’s sleep.”

Jack says, “No, we have to have it tonight.”

In my heart of hearts, I said to myself let’s get it out of the way tonight. I don’t want to go home, sleep come back and face it tomorrow.

We got hold of an OECD secretary to type. She sat down in front of the Wang computer and I am playing this tape recorder, pushing a button. Half a sentence, half a sentence would be typed. We worked all night long. We worked until 6 or 7 in the morning and came up with a 25-page transcript cable.

Well, that probably did more to advance my Foreign Service career and increase my promotion rate than anything I had done to that time. John Hughes at the end of the visit

sent out the perfunctory note praising the work of the PAOs in the various posts. But he tacked onto it, I will immodestly quote, "A special word about Phil Brown who worked straight through the night doing a transcript and who was a superior fellow all around." That was widely circulated to my betters, Charlie Wick and whomever.

It was donkey work. It was nothing but pure drudgery. It was not creative policy making but it increased my profile and probably my promotion rate. I will never forget the reaction to it.

Q: Is there anything we should be covering in the next session in France before we move on?

BROWN: I could talk about any number of things ranging from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games to some plane hijackings. We will talk about those next time.

Q: Okay, great.

Q: Today is the 8th of May, 2012 with Phil Brown.

BROWN: Let's continue with my five years in France. I'll preface it by saying I have a lot of resources to look at -- journals and files -- and once again, I am struck by how fortunate we, I always say we, were to have had this stretch of time overseas. From 1977 through 1990, we were overseas: three very interesting years in Moscow during the Cold War and then, when very little was happening in Moscow, this five year period in France. In future sessions, I'll talk about our return to the Soviet Union and three more very memorable years there. I turn the pages of my journal and day after day, I am struck by what an interesting time we lived in. We took full advantage of it, both personally and professionally.

So what I thought I would do today is to go through and touch on some of these experiences from our years in France, maybe not go into them in too much in depth. Some may seem trivial; others were more substantive and most of them in chronological order. I have touched on a number already.

I talked about working as the press attaché at the embassy, the wonderful French staff that I had and Ambassador Evan Galbraith who was very happy to encounter the press. He wanted to be active both with the print press and the audio visual world. He felt very confident. He didn't feel he had to check with headquarters to know what he should say. Most of the time he did quite well and a few times he really got himself in trouble doing it. For better or worse, it made my life very interesting.

I talked about the Versailles G-7 summit of 1982, my first intense experience working with the White Office Press Office, how I got myself on the G-7 circuit and became known to Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman. He liked me, got me involved in subsequent G-7 meetings.

My ambassador in the Soviet Union had been Tom Watson, former head of IBM. We continued our relationship after he left Moscow and after we moved to Paris. It wasn't unusual for him to take his own plane and fly to Paris. We would see him there from time to time. On one particular occasion, he called and said he wanted us to attend a dinner with the board of IBM which was meeting in Paris. At the last minute, he and his wife could not attend but he arranged for us to go to the dinner nevertheless.

We were there with some pretty high rollers. I was reminded recently when I saw the obituary for Maersk McKinney Moeller, the Danish man whose family created Maersk, the big shipping firm. When I saw his obituary, I remembered we sat with him and his wife at that dinner at a restaurant in Paris called Le Faugeron. That wasn't a typical night out in Paris but it was the kind of thing that made it fun.

A frequent visitor to Paris was Vernon Walters, General Walters, who wore so many hats it was hard to keep up with all of them; he was multilingual and bilingual in French and any time he came to Paris, he was good for an interview. We could usually line him up with TV because they loved his outspokenness and his fluency in French.

Another note about people like General Walters or any number of senior officials. I have frequently mentioned Lucette Beal, the senior French employee in my office who had been with the U.S. government since 1948. It was typical of these people like General Walters that when they came to the embassy, they'd stop first to see Lucette and then they'd call on the ambassador or political counselor. It was partly a courtesy, it was partly friendship but I also think they got a reading on what was going on in France from Lucette. I shouldn't say just Lucette because we also had Monique and Monique and General Walters were twinned.

Q: I think there was a time when De Gaulle was speaking and he used Walters and I think it was a public occasion. And Walters translated. And De Gaulle said 'tres bien' about Walters.

BROWN: His ability in the language but also his willingness to speak to the press. And as I said, he wore many hats, military, civilian and otherwise.

I had a lot of professional contacts at the International Herald Tribune but also friends we knew there in other ways. We knew Charles and Laurana Mitchelmore both through the IHT and the American Church of Paris.

Our first Thanksgiving in Paris, they invited us to their home for dinner and I learned that one of the guests was a singer but I didn't know who other than she had some association with the opera. Everyone simply called her Flicka. After the dinner was over, I learned her name was Frederica von Stade, a personal friend of our hostess for that night. Frederica Von Stade is one of the leading sopranos in the opera world.

There was something called the Anglo American Press Association, English speaking journalists, and they had a luncheon that the ambassador attended. He came back very,

very pleased with the whole experience. That was good for me and good for my relationship with him.

It loosened him up all the more and so one night early 1982, soon after the assassination of our military attaché and the beginning of terrorist type activities in Paris, Ambassador Galbraith agreed to do an interview for Nightline with Ted Koppel. Pierre Salinger, who was by then resident in Paris and working for ABC, came by at the ambassador's residence. I was there to coach the ambassador on what it would be like doing an interview with Ted Koppel. It was an awkward situation because we could see an image of Ted Koppel but only the ambassador could hear his voice. The ambassador had an ear piece that allowed only him to hear the question. So there would be silence in the room and then the ambassador would speak because only he was hearing the voice. It created the image of this daft man sitting in the corner of the room occasionally talking to the wall but it worked out and it was just part of the ambassador's increasing level of confidence in doing interviews.

Q: As a press attaché in an extremely important country, how important was the ambassador's connection to the press both French and foreign, did you feel he advanced the cause?

BROWN: I think he felt it was very important. As I said last time, he did not want to be a super commercial attaché. He made that point. He was a businessman. He didn't want to be carrying diplomatic notes to the foreign ministry so he was looking around to see what he could best do that would keep him busy? He had a lot of energy and so he felt that public diplomacy, I think we must have used the term though I don't think he ever thought of it in those terms, public diplomacy was where he could do the most good.

So he certainly felt he was advancing the cause even though as I say, on occasion he got himself in hot water. It made him certainly a higher profile individual because people would read his name in the paper. They'd see him on TV. After almost four year there, he sort of wore out his welcome and he was not that much of a newsmaker.

But did it really have a major impact on U.S.-French relations? I doubt it. Relations were going to go where relations were going to go because countries like the U.S. and France act in their own best interests.

Q: How did he relate to the fairly extreme leftists?

BROWN: He didn't and I think we discussed this last time. We did not have contact with the far left press, with L'Humanité, the French communist newspapers. He would not have agreed to give them an interview.

He got himself in trouble by very critical remarks about communist ministers in the Mitterrand government. He did not relate to the far left, the communists.

I will say there were a couple of times when we had encounters, I can't recall now specifically with whom, I wouldn't say the far right but with the right and Galbraith would sometimes say, "Gosh, that guy goes a little bit further than I go."

To answer your specific question, there wasn't contact with the left.

I was working intensely. During my first year, I thought I would never get a break. It was thanks to contacts with a couple of French journalists, Jean Leclerc du Sablon and Marie-Claude Descamps from Le Matin, that we went off on our first ski trip in France in winter of '82. It was memorable.

Q: We used to listen to the French news here in Washington. When the ski weekends come the traffic

BROWN: That was the thing I learned. These school vacations or long weekends, there was no way around them. Vacations were not staggered. We left in the wee hours of the morning to try to beat it but to no avail.

But it makes a difference when you go skiing with somebody and the next week you invite him to a breakfast with a visiting newsmaker at the ambassador's residence. Or if you are calling to discuss something you didn't like in their reporting.

Q: You mentioned G-7 meetings. From the public affairs side of things, how did these meetings usually come out?

BROWN: That's a big question and I am not prepared to add much to what I said last time..

What I do recall about the Versailles summit was that with all the effort that the French had put in to this -- closing Versailles to the public and transforming it into the venue for the meetings, the press and everything else -- two things could not have been anticipated. One was the intense heat, especially in the Orangerie; this greenhouse for tropical plants became an impossible place for the press to operate in.

The other was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon at that same time; whatever news that was coming out of the G-7 was overtaken by the events in Lebanon.

The next year when the U.S. hosted the G-7 in Williamsburg, my job was to deal with the French press. That was specifically what I was assigned to do. I could go to their press briefings, unless they were closed and they generally were not closed, hear what they were saying and feed that back to the White House in case there was anything that we wanted to address.

What worked quite successfully was that after a couple of days of reporting economic news and politics, a lot of French journalists looked around and wondered "what is this place, Williamsburg?" They were looking for a new story, a new angle. A year earlier,

there had been the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Yorktown, just down the peninsula. At least geographically some of them were familiar with that area. There were some good stories about Williamsburg, about William and Mary College (which is where the press center was) and about Thomas Jefferson and I was able to answer a lot of questions and point people in the right direction for interviews and information.

By the way, the White House paid to air condition the building on the William and Mary campus that was used as a press center. I think they had the Versailles Orangerie experience in mind.

Q: In the Battle of Yorktown they had troops there and the French fleet had kept the British from relieving

BROWN: That's why there was also much emphasis on the bicentennial in France because it was a glorious moment in U.S./French relations.

I had a call from Jock Shirley, a mentor of mine in late 1982, asking me if I was interested in bidding on the job of PAO, Moscow for the summer of 1983. That took me aback. I was barely in my second year in Paris. I had given some thought to returning to Moscow but not that soon so I turned him down. I said "no" to Jock. I really didn't want to do it then. They found someone else, Ray Benson

Q: I know Ray because Ray and I served in Belgrade together.

BROWN: I eventually did replaced Ray in Moscow at a much more appropriate time for me in my career and a more interesting time in Soviet history but I didn't like to say no to Jock. He said something at the time to the effect of: "Well, I will accept your no answer this time but it may not be as easy the next time."

It wasn't too much later that he called and said he wanted me to bid on PAO Brussels for 1983 or 1984. I was not the least bit interested. My quick analysis said Paris has three missions, three ambassadors. Maybe by that time we only had two because UNESCO may have been cut. We had OECD and we had the bilateral and of the two or three, the bilateral was by far the most important. I was press attaché in a big West European embassy.

Brussels had three missions, NATO, USEC and the bilateral, and the bilateral was the least important of the three. The fact that I was going to be PAO didn't mean anything to me. One thing I did very well in my Foreign Service career was not to take a job just because it might be a stepping stone to something else. Take a job because it was interesting. So again I said no to Jock and he accepted my no and I got to stay.

About that same time, I was pushing to stay in Paris not just four years per the assignment but for five years because my daughter went there in eighth grade and I wanted her to be able to graduate after five years. I was making that case to Washington and I got a call one day saying "send us a letter saying you want to stay in Paris for five

years because there is going to be a change of ambassadors and a change of PAOs and issues and other things and oh, by the way, I d like to stay because my daughter is going to be, for her schooling.” So I rephrased it and I did get my fifth year although to be honest, the real reason was the schooling.

Q: You earlier mentioned Pierre Salinger. He was one of the figures, a hold over from the Kennedy administration who was a name and continued to be a name. Was that a problem for you?

BROWN: No, it wasn't a problem. In fact it was a big advantage. He was working for ABC then and he would quite happily receive Mr. Wick for breakfast or drinks and I'd go along. He said nice things about me and about the embassy and about how we were getting the U.S. message out. He never undercut us.

It is rather interesting that Wick thought he was going the extra mile because here he was representing a Republican administration but he was willing to speak to this former press man, under Kennedy, just an example of how open minded he could be. What I think he liked was associating with a famous name.

Pierre Salinger was a good guy, a friend. I remember going out to dinner with him one night. He lit up one of his cigars and I recall that I enjoyed it; ever since my youth, I have enjoyed the smell of a cigar because I had a friend who used to smoke them when we went to baseball games in Pittsburgh.

Pierre Salinger was also working with someone else at that time for one of these big coffee table books called Over Paris, Views of the City. I don't recall exactly how but I consulted with the man who was working with him on that book. So we liked Pierre Salinger.

Q: WorldNet; How did that work in France? The French seem to like to talk to people.

BROWN: I think Mr. Wick was ahead of the curve and I would say a lot of Foreign Service officers were behind the curve; some people dug in their heels and didn't think it was going to work. This was Mr. Wick was taking us out of our comfort zone.

It did not work real well initially because we were going through the trial and error stage, technologically. What is today taken for granted back then was a risk; you were never quite sure it was going to work.

The first couple of times we had newsmakers like Shultz or at least high profile people like Shultz. When you got down to the lower levels, it was hard to attract French journalists especially when these lower level people personally would likely as not come through Paris; General Walters or Fred Ikle. These people were available in person almost weekly so why trundle over the to the USIS office for a WorldNet?

Then they tried to get into different types of audiences; have an intellectual in with an author or something like that. We struggled with it initially, both for technical reasons and our unwillingness to get fully behind it and also because Washington wanted inflated reports on placement and audiences reached.

This was a period of martial law in Poland and we also had the “Let Poland be Poland” project of Mr. Wick’s. It was different from WorldNet because he wanted us to place this specially created documentary on French TV and we managed to do that by calling in some chips. The French weren’t comfortable about carrying a piece of American produced material on the Cold War.

Let me jump ahead to May 20, 1984, for one of the most amazing days I ever had in Paris. To retaliate for our boycotting the Moscow Olympics of 1980, the Soviets decided they would boycott the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984. Late on a Friday afternoon, a couple of months before the games were to begin, I got a call from French TV, TF1, saying they were going to discuss the boycott as part of their regular Sunday night sports programs called Sports Sunday, Sports Dimanche.

They wanted to have a debate about the Olympic boycott and they had invited the Soviet press attaché and now they would like to have a representative from the American Embassy. Literally this call came about 3 o’clock so I ran upstairs and explained to the DCM, Jack Maresca. I admitted that I would be nervous but when he suggested they recruit someone from the political section, that got my juices flowing. Jack talked to the ambassador and after very little deliberation, I was assigned to be the American Embassy representative on this program. Since it was the press attaché from the Soviet embassy, I would carry the ball for our side.

And so I did. Maybe it is a good thing I didn’t have a whole lot of time to prepare. I spent Saturday and part of Sunday preparing for the debate but it wasn’t the only thing I had on my platter that day. By that time, I was also singing in the choir of the American Church of Paris and we had scheduled a special concert that night plus my daughter was in a fashion show. So on Sunday, I sang the Schubert “Mass in C major” with the American church choir. What a wonderful experience that was. We did it by memory, this rather short mass, but we sang it well and then I went to Christine’s fashion show.

And from there, I went to the headquarters of TF1, just around the corner from the American church, and debated the Soviet press attaché, Mr. Avdeyev on the Olympic boycott. They threw the ball to him first and he was well prepared. I probably should have interrupted him. He went on for several minutes but then I had my chance and my theme was basically that Americans believe you can have both freedom and security. For the Soviets it is a choice of either freedom or security. We could absolutely guarantee that their athletes would be secure while at the same time, people would have freedom of speech.

I made reference to my years in Moscow and even some reference to the KGB which is the Committee on State Security and how they interpret security and how we interpret

security and obviously, if security is part of the name KGB, then it has a very different meaning in their context than in ours.

I went home and didn't sleep a wink that night. I tossed and turned wondering what the reaction would be. Jack Maresca, the DCM was the first person to greet me and he was indignant, not with me, but he felt that TF-1 had favored the Soviet, let him have more speech time than I had. But the ambassador was 100% on my side, congratulated me not only for what I did but for being willing to go do it. He felt he had set an example for people on his staff; not only he but the DCM and now the press attaché would be willing to go out and do this sort of thing.

I am not sure I ever want to do it again looking back. It was live TV and I could easily have stumbled. When we got to the station, my wife and daughter went along. The Soviet was by himself but he could not have been more courteous. Spoke English with us. But when he got on the set, he was a well-trained debater.

I remember that TV offered an interpreter. Of course, he didn't want an interpreter and I remember thinking to myself "I am so glad I don't have to say, yes, I want an interpreter." I did it in French and did very well. That was a day I will never forget. Ironically, no one taped it at the embassy. It had all come together late on a Friday afternoon so there is no record of it.

Less than a month later, I had another day I will never forget. After weeks and weeks of preparation and on-site visits, President Reagan came to Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day. He came specifically to the Pointe du Hoc where he addressed still some living members of the units that scaled the cliffs of the Pointe du Hoc on June 6, 1944.

I had worked closely with the people in the White House press office on all aspects of the visit. I will be the first to point out when the big day comes, they don't pay any attention to you; they take over everything but I made many trips out there for the planning stages, to Normandy and specifically to the Pointe du Hoc.

On that morning, I was fortunate enough to be aboard a helicopter and to ride over the area to Cherbourg where the press planes came and where the press boarded buses back to wherever they were going. The roads are so narrow and the photo ops were so limited that journalists went to one particular spot and that's as far as each one could go that day.

For the visit, I was at Pointe du Hoc on a bunker that was the CBS base and with me there were Walter Cronkite and Mrs. Cronkite. While Walter Cronkite was off interviewing a couple of veterans from 1944, Generals J. Lawton Collins and James Gavin, I struck up a conversation with Mrs. Cronkite, reminding her we had seen her in Moscow when we were there. She said she remembered. She had a recollection of my wife and our dog. So when Walter came back over, she very kindly introduced me to him and we had a brief chat. Then off he went to interview President Reagan at the conclusion

of his remarks. So it was a moving day from the helicopter ride in the morning to ending up at the press center in the afternoon.

I think it is still true to this day. There is no part of France where the American flag flew more prominently than it does in Normandy on June 6th. In 1984, there were still people who could remember the liberation, D-Day and the rest. Today almost 30 years later, there are not many people who can remember it as participants but the memory is still there and nowhere is the warmth of feeling towards the United States stronger than in Normandy.

This trip to Normandy was President Reagan's second visit to France. The first was Versailles, the second was Normandy. The third, in May, 1985, was a one day, no overnight, symbolic visit to Strasburg to address the European parliament, the first American president to do so. As always, the White House would send out advance teams. There would be opportunities to go look at the sites and everything else connected with a presidential visit.

I was in Strasburg in February, 1985 when an advance team came in headed by Mike Deaver, the president's image maker. A big group of Europeans came down from Brussels to Strasburg to meet with the White House officials and to talk about the arrangements for the visit. Mr. Deaver was too busy even to meet with them. Mr. Deaver did a lot of good things but I don't think that was one of his finest moments.

They had been to Munich – this was the trip that would include the controversial stop in Bitburg -- and one of the White House press advance people was gloating about that stop. The highlight of the stop in Munich was that nine of them had used their diplomatic passports to buy BMWs at a big discount. Somehow that got under my Anglo-Saxon, Calvinist sense of what is right and wrong and I will now go on record for the first time that it was I who passed that information to the Newsweek correspondent in Paris, Scott Sullivan.

Q: I remember reading about this.

BROWN: It appeared in the Newsweek Periscope section and it led to a White House examination of the issue. The White House concluded that there was "nothing per se illegal or unethical" about this but nevertheless, they rewrote the rules. One or two of the people who bought cars using this method were Secret Service people. It bothered me.

To keep things chronological, let me recall another unusual experience that dates to December, 1984. At some level in Washington, I don't know whether it was the White House or not, there was concern that we were not getting our message about Central America across to European audiences. This was the period when the U.S. was concerned about the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and their influence on the rest of the region. So along with PAOs from several West European countries, I traveled to Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala over a period of ten days for a first-hand look at the situation

there. The idea was that we would be better able to make the case for U.S. policies if we could say that we had actually been there.

One problem arose right away. Along with our concern about Nicaragua, we were holding up El Salvador as a model. But the people at the American Embassy there advised against our travel because of the security situation so we did not go there. It seemed rather ironic that we could safely go to Nicaragua but not to El Salvador.

I'm not sure how much I was able to draw on my experiences in my subsequent conversations and work in Paris but it was a learning experience for me – my first trip to the region, to an area that really was foreign to me and my foreign service experience.

On February 13, 1985, John Vinocur interviewed Ambassador Galbraith. The ambassador had now been in Paris for almost four years. I did not sit in on the interview. It was one of the very few times that either he didn't invite me or I decided not to sit in.

Out of that came the article in The New York Times in which the ambassador, as Vinocur put it, talked of his "scorn" for the Foreign Service; we did not have a backbone, we weren't courageous. That led to Secretary Shultz saying someone ought to tie his tongue, to the ambassador receiving protests from the local chapter of AFSA, a lot of hand wringing and soul-searching for the first time. His DCM did not know which way to go; whether to side with the masses in saying this was uncalled for or continue to hang on with the ambassador.

The Vinocur article provoked columns by Flora Lewis, the late esteemed op-ed columnist who lived in Paris. She took him to task.

I would never have imagined but individually Evan Galbraith, DCM Jack Maresca and Flora Lewis, none of whom was a shy character, none of whom ever had any lack of self confidence, all three separately asked me my point of view, my impression, my advice. What do you think I should say or do? After the local chapter of AFSA rose up, Galbraith said to me in so many words, did I make a mistake? He felt that he wasn't talking about physical courage as much as the willingness to challenge and that kind of thing.

Jack Maresca, who was offended by what he had said but was still the loyal DCM, was very uncertain and even Flora Lewis at some point asked me about her column. Maybe it was a tempest in a teapot. I thought some of it had to do with that earlier time with Grenada when we didn't fully support the ambassador going on TV to talk about that event

Q: It wasn't that much of a tempest in a teapot within Foreign Service ranks.

BROWN: No, not at all.

Q: The Galbraith name in Foreign Service folklore is linked to that.

BROWN: And not unfairly. He backtracked and said he didn't mean physical courage. He said he was misunderstood and I don't think he would have looked some of us in the eyes right there in the embassy and said you don't have courage. But it was in the back of his mind. It was a thought that he had, there's no question.

For some of us close to him whose lives he had made professionally interesting, it was a hard to turn our backs on him. It was only a few months later that he left his position but I don't think it was necessarily linked to that.

From this same period, March, 1985, here's an example of the type of activity we had all the time. Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger came to Paris regularly and on this particular visit, we arranged for him to meet at the hotel where he was staying with Michael Tatu, one of the best known writers for Le Monde. I was very pleased the next day when there was a front page interview, Michael Tatu interviewing Weinberger and Weinberger putting his views on record.

You could say that anybody could do this. No French journalist is going to turn down an interview with the secretary of defense. Nevertheless, I was very pleased and it redounded to my credit that I was the go-between.

Weinberger had also agreed to do an interview with French TV. I don't remember the subject but it probably had to do with military hardware and during the interview, Weinberger was saying, whether he meant it or not, that the French had a great deal of technical prowess. Something like: "The French are very, very good in the field of technology, wonderful technical prowess. We don't always think of the French in that context but the French have a great deal of technical competence."

It was about at that point that the interviewer got a signal that a camera or the recording device wasn't working and we had to say to Mr. Weinberger, "I am sorry. We didn't get that. Would you mind?"

He said, "No problem." They rolled things again.

And off Weinberger went: "As I was saying, the French have enormous technical prowess and in the field of technology the French are leaders. The technical prowess of the French is unmatched." He didn't miss a beat. We were all smiling but I was a little tense for a moment. I thought he might stomp out of the room but he didn't. He knew it was in his interest to get his views on the record. I was always rather glad that on matters of policy, he was counterbalanced by Secretary Shultz but for an interview, Weinberger was much more interesting.

I mentioned singing in the church choir in Paris. Our rehearsals were on Wednesday night and I would walk from the embassy across the river to the American Church on the Left Bank. The timing was perfect for me. I regularly worked six days. Wednesday was a halfway point of the week. It was a true break from what I was doing. There were always a bunch of Americans in town studying music so you never knew who was going to be

there on a given night. There were always enough people for the tenor section that I didn't have to worry about being alone.

In addition to singing on Sunday morning, we did special concerts. In May of 1985, the Sacré Coeur church on Montmartre dedicated a new organ and our choir was invited to be part of the celebration. We did some wonderful choral music including works by a French composer named Louis Vierne. That opportunity brought balance and spiritual pleasure into my life.

Q: You'd been fortunate because of your obvious interest in cultural life and cultural values both in France and in Russia too.

BROWN: The difference was that in Moscow, it seemed more accessible. Tickets were virtually given to us. It was maybe physically a little closer to us. We lived outside town in Paris so I always had to remember that when the concert ended at 10:30 or 11 o'clock, I'd have a long train ride to where we lived but nevertheless, you are right. The cultural, musical opportunities in both cities were considerable and there was overlap too. Some of the same people you had seen in Moscow, you would see in Paris for one reason or another; either they emigrated or they were on the circuit. In both cities, music provided me a balance to the intense press work that I was doing.

Two and a half weeks after that Sacré Coeur concert, we got word that a TWA airplane had been hijacked out of Greece and had been forced to land in Beirut. Jewish passengers on board were singled out. I think that was about a Friday of that week. The plane ended up in Algiers where women and children were released before the plane went back to Beirut. Those freed hostages were then brought to Paris and put in a hotel and the call went out that someone needed to be there with them.

I went in on Sunday. Part of the reason they needed to have someone with them was there was a lot of press interest. I spent an entire Sunday with those people. I was more than a press attaché. We wished we could follow the details minute by minute but we couldn't. The French didn't have much news on TV on Sunday. There was a midday program we watched but it had just had a little bit of information; then later in the day, we watched a TV program and I remember one of the ladies saying "oh, that's my husband." Whether or not that was the case, it was an emotional experience to be with those families that entire day while they waited for information. I did arrange for one or two of them who were willing to talk to the press.

Eventually the hostages were freed. Vice President Bush came out; he passed through Paris on his way to Germany to welcome the freed hostages and later, there was a reception at the ambassador's residence for the freed hostages who had come to Paris. I had the satisfaction of a lot of them thanking me for having spent that day with them. They didn't speak French and they appreciated me trying to keep them as well-informed as I could.

You think of a particular news event and you don't think Paris but somehow no matter what it was or where it was, it often spilled over to Paris.

Q: You mentioned, obviously the hostages, if any, usually up at least in that era, at our military hospitals in Germany. What about German French relations? Did you get any feel for that maybe in the field of interest in the press or anything like that?

BROWN: I can't give you a quick answer about French-German relations. I guess they were pretty good during those years. The process of post-war reconciliation was still underway.

Those were the times when the Germans were buying a lot of property in eastern France, particularly in Alsace, and you'd hear the French say if they'd only realized they could have bought that land in the 1910's and in the 1940s, they might have avoided two wars.

We talked before about the speech that Mitterrand gave on the SS-20 and Pershing modernization and the fact that he gave that speech in Germany was very important and of course, it endeared him to the U.S.

I remember talking to John Vinocur, whom I referred to regarding his interview with Ambassador Galbraith. He spent much of his career in Germany and then he was reassigned to Paris. I said to him, "How are you enjoying being here in France after all the time you spent in Germany?"

He said, "Oh, I would rather be back in Germany. It is much more interesting news environment there. They are going through a crisis." I don't know what crisis he was referring to in the mid '80s.

I said, "But John, France has crises of all sorts. They've got economic crises, governmental crises, and the liver crisis to which they attribute to all their ailments."

He said, "That's the point. The French always have a crisis so it is not news. When Germany has a crisis, then it is news." And that's why he wanted to be back there analyzing what was putting the self-confident Germans into a crisis mode at that time.

I went to the Bonn G-7 meeting in 1985. I can't remember it being much of a newsmaker. This was still Cold War time and the capital was in Bonn.

In July of 1985, Ambassador Galbraith left. He had been there for four years and despite bumps along the way, he and his wife had a large number of friends and were sent off with sincere best wishes. Within two days, there was a full page interview with him in Figaro in which he made some blatant comments about French internal affairs. Our chargé , Jack Maresca, found himself being called in to receive a protest about inadmissible statements about French internal affairs.

I remember thinking Jack is going to come back wringing his hands and wondering what am I going to do now? He came back basically laughing saying, “Look, we went through the ritual of their delivering the protest and me receiving it and that’s it. That is the end of Galbraith’s presence.”

Q: What sort of things? Were these things that Galbraith had been stewing in private conversations or something?

BROWN: He ran into the same trap early on and that had to do with the communist minister of transportation, Fiterman. In the Figaro interview on the 17th of July, 1985, he said the French Communist Party should be outlawed and he said he was convinced the right would win upcoming parliamentary elections. He wasn’t disagreeing with them on major foreign policy issues.

The irony was he spoke pretty good French and he was always uncomfortable calling himself a ‘liberal’ in French which meant more of a conservative to them. He could never tolerate anything that looked like socialist or public welfare programs so it might have been one of those issues.

Within days, we had Ambassador Joe M. Rodgers who didn’t speak a word of French but had raised a lot of money for President Reagan’s reelection in his home state of Tennessee. He and his wife Honey came out; very, very nice people.

I was very flattered when Jack Maresca, still the DCM, brought him down to the press office to look around. Jack described the press office as “the nerve center of the embassy” and said that we often knew about a news event before anyone else in the embassy. That was just the nature of how news traveled at that time. We had the AFP and the AP tickers. Journalists would call our office before they would call anywhere else. I felt pride in him telling the ambassador we were the nerve center of the embassy.

Ambassador Rodgers did not want any give and take with the press. He was not going into that. If he knew some event would be image creation, that was fine, but he did not want to do what Ambassador Galbraith did, understandably.

About that same time, we had another newsmaker. Rock Hudson was suffering from AIDS and he came to Paris to seek care at the Pasteur Institute. There was a report that someone had a cure for AIDS that he could benefit from only by coming to Paris. It became a news event over the question of whether Mrs. Reagan had been involved and whether she had intervened to ask that he be given special attention. She had and eventually, I was allowed to say that although not quite that baldly but to say to the press that Mrs. Reagan was very concerned about the health of Rock Hudson and hoped that he would be able to get the best of treatment in France. It was just a one or two day story and Rock Hudson then got on his 747 and went back to California where he died. Mrs. Reagan’s interest in the issue brought it a lot of attention.

By 1985, I had an additional number of people working with me in the press office. They had expanded the responsibilities and given me additional staff. Some were Foreign Service officers, others were political appointees who were rather interesting characters. One was a guy named Danny Wattenberg. His father was Ben Wattenberg, the rather well known conservative writer. I don't remember much about Danny.

Then we had a young woman named Sandy Sidey. She had been working right out of college in the 1980 Reagan campaign and ended up with Larry Speakes in the White House press office. She was a good young Republican. Her dad was Hugh Sidey, well-known columnist for Time magazine. Sandy was a delightful person. She didn't ask for any special favors because her dad was Hugh Sidey or because she had worked with Larry Speakes at the White House. She was quite willing to do all the grunt work of going through the AP or the AFP tickers or running upstairs to get the cables or working on transcripts. She was a real gem. And the French liked her very much.

I mentioned that Joe Rodgers didn't speak any French but one day in September of 1985, I went up to the ambassador's office and was told the he would soon be leaving to go back to the United States on an issue on an issue that was described as RITA Ptarmigan. This had to do with competition for a DOD contract on some battlefield communications technology and the French program was called RITA and the British had a competing program called Ptarmigan.

For some reason, the ambassador got it into his head that the French were not getting a fair shake back in Washington in the Defense Department and so he flew back to argue their case. This was a case where you could have had an ambassador who spoke perfect French and who knew Voltaire and all the great heroes of the Pantheon or you could have an ambassador who didn't speak any French at all but who was willing to go back and argue their case in Washington, to in effect to be the French representative in the DOD. They would obviously choose the latter.

I am not sure how the issue resolved itself but it was rather interesting that he decided this was an issue where . . .

Q: What was the issue?

BROWN: The Defense Department was going to contract for a highly sophisticated battlefield communications technology and the French program was called RITA which was an acronym for something. The British had a competing technology called Ptarmigan and the ambassador just thought somehow the French were not getting a fair shake and so he was going to go back to the Defense Department and at least make sure their case was being heard.

We are now to the summer of 1985. I had been in Paris four years, one year to go, and I went on home leave. That was the summer I shaved off my beard. I had had a beard for ten years. I came back feeling very self-conscious and people would say you've lost weight or nothing at all or you were better with a beard. I remember that very self-

conscious period but I was back a very short time when I got a call saying Larry Speakes and company would like me to come back on a temporary assignment to work in the NSC in the Old Executive Office Building on the public diplomacy task force prior to the Geneva summit of 1985.

Recall the situation: Gorbachev has taken over in Moscow and is being touted as such a change from his predecessor. He is on the cover of Time magazine. He's a man who not only talks but he talks endlessly. He is now the great communicator. Ronald Reagan is running second. We have to do everything to make sure we get our message out especially with this summit meeting in Geneva scheduled for November of 1985.

I did go back for ten weeks as did a fellow named Bud Korengold who was with USIS in London. I lived in a hotel for that entire period and endured awkward, strenuous working conditions. We had very little information technology. Word processors were hard to come by. I recall researching an issue and I went to the library in the Old Executive Office Building. It had a clanging, wrought-iron door and endless shelves and the librarian, a woman, helped me locate a particular book. She pulled it off the shelf but before she handed it to me, she blew the dust off the top and I had to step aside to avoid the cloud of dust.

But the clumsiest aspect of it was just maneuvering in that NSC bureaucracy and trying to move anything forward. One of the few people who could help us move a document forward was the president's NSC advisor for Soviet affairs, Jack Matlock, with whom I had worked with on several previous occasions. I didn't know it at that point but he was soon going to be my ambassador for three years in Moscow so all in all, it was a good experience.

Q: Were you getting any feeling, obviously Gorbachev had gone through this period of gerontocracy in the Soviet Union. You can't exactly call Brezhnev or somebody like that a bright and interesting person but you had been a Soviet hand sort of qualifications or seen some of the things? Do we trust Gorbachev or what was happening?

BROWN: It wasn't a matter of trust. No and no one at that time was talking about the end of the Soviet Union or the end of Communism or anything of that sort but what had people frightened -- maybe that isn't the right word but what people couldn't cope with -- was that he was a communicator and because he was a communicator everyone was falling over him to get the interviews.

There is a parallel I draw here and it is probably not a good one but I can't help but do it. On the one hand, you've got these Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko stumble bums, unable to communicate, sickly men and on the other side, you have Reagan who was virile and communicative. We had such an enormous advantage. Victory is ours.

The parallel I draw is the current presidential campaign. Here is Mr. Romney being raked over the coals by Santorum, Gingrich. His staff says the wrong thing. Obama has an enormous margin on him and suddenly, Santorum and Gingrich are gone and they have

effectively endorsed Romney and Romney is just about dead even with Obama in the polls. How quickly things can turn around, that's all I am saying. I think that is what had people scratching their heads.

People were saying that Reagan had met his match and that the more effective communicator was in Moscow. Forget for a moment that Gorbachev didn't have any better story to tell. Their economy was still in shambles and everything else was going wrong but people were very concerned that by the Geneva summit, we would be out argued by Gorbachev. That is why they created this special staff in the NSC to focus on nothing but interviews that Reagan would give, the timing, what messages we wanted to get out. I was just a little part of this.

Q: I have never heard of one of these before, such an effort, but something of this nature.

BROWN: I think we were created by the White House press office but Larry Speakes was the one who was instrumental in Bud Korengold and me coming back and put in a huge, high ceilinged room in the Old Executive Office Building along with a couple other people, my Foreign Service friend Gil Callaway among them.

The problem was we had responsibility but we didn't have any real authority. We couldn't make any final decisions. We could only pass papers forward and make recommendations. USIA people thought it was just great because they had all these ideas on how to get Reagan's message out. Now, they had three people in the NSC they could turn to. We were inundated by USIA people saying "hey, can you pass on our ideas? Can you pass on our suggestions?" We'd say "yeah, sure. We'll try but we don't have any magic way of getting these things over to the White House" which was still focused on the domestic press. In their hearts, they may have been thinking about getting their message out to the world but on a day-to-day basis, they were still going to focus on the domestic press.

In the end, I went to Geneva on the White House press charter plane and worked out of the press center. Even on arrival, Mr. Wick was being told "oh, the Soviets have their press center up and operating. They are getting their message out. You guys are so far behind the curve. You are not getting it out." That could be fairly easily dealt with by putting out a few American newsmakers. Bud McFarland was one of those who were doing a lot of the speaking for the White House at the press center in Geneva and in the end, it looked like unnecessary worries.

This was the summit meeting where Ambassador Hartman came out from Moscow. I got a message one day that he'd like me to come by his hotel room and he handed me this package which was a violin to be delivered to a violinist named Alexander Brussilovsky in Paris. I thought about the trouble he could have created and the deflection from the major news he could have caused by bringing that violin out but I passed it on.

On the way back, we stopped in Brussels. Reagan did a quick NATO briefing there and on the tarmac there was the first time I actually saw him as part of that assignment. We

got to Washington and I said to someone in the White House press office that I actually saw the president in Brussels. I had been back there this whole time and I had never really seen him, which wasn't completely true. One day, I was in the White House because I did have access to the press office and was taking some piece of paper over and I realized there was a flurry coming in the other direction and I stood in one of these little stairwells with my back against the wall as a secret service man came by followed quickly by the President, the Vice President and James Baker. When I caught my breath, I realized that I had been that close to power.

But I told the guy at the White House I had hardly seen the president. He says, "Oh, really? We see him every day."

Not long after, after the summit, we have returned to Washington. This was the occasion when Reagan returned from Andrews and his helicopter landed on Capitol Hill and he went right before a joint session of congress to talk about his meetings with Gorbachev. Talk about stagecraft and drama. That was midweek.

The word to me was that I should come to the White House on Saturday and I would be able to attend the President's Saturday radio address. Along with Bud Korengold, we were pre-positioned in the Oval Office in late morning when Reagan came in.

There is a myth that Reagan so revered the Oval Office that he never appeared in there in anything other than a business suit. That is not true. At least on this particular day, November 23, 1985, he came in casual clothes he would wear around the ranch. He sat down at the desk. A woman there gave him some advice. This was live. Reagan delivered his remarks. He had his watch on and his wrist turned so he didn't have to turn his arm to see exactly the timing and he concluded his remarks, made a comment about how he had gone two seconds over but it was that perfect showmanship.

Then somebody said we have a couple of guests here today. So he came over and shook our hands and we got our pictures taken. He did make some jocular remark about "I don't usually come to the Oval Office dressed like this." I responded "well, I don't usually wear a dark suit on Saturday but this is a special occasion." Anyway, I got my picture taken in the Oval Office with President Reagan. I have two photos – one formal pose and one laughing.

After that, I went back to Paris. People there thought I had flown the coop forever. I had been gone for ten weeks but I still had an interesting six months in my service there.

On January 28, 1986, I was getting ready to go home when Monique came running into my office. They were showing on TV the explosion of the Challenger liftoff from Cape Kennedy. We all know that image. You might ask, "Well, what did that have to do with an assignment in Paris?" NASA had two overseas offices, one in Tokyo and one in Paris. So NASA had a full time representative at the embassy in Paris. The fellow there did not speak French but he was willing to go on TV so the next day I accompanied him to AN-2 for an interview about the Challenger and about the shuttle program. He didn't have any

special information but the fact that he was a NASA representative gave him a certain cache. I remember saying to him that I bet the shuttle doesn't fly again for several years. He was dubious. I think I was closer to being accurate in that case.

A couple of days later, there was one of those moving services at the American Cathedral on Avenue George V in Paris, a service of remembrance honoring those who lost their lives in the Challenger explosion.

In mid-February of that year, 1986, there was a big flurry because Baby Doc had fled Haiti; he ended up on Lake Annecy in exile in France. I can't tell you the details but there was a question about whether the French were going to ship him out, send him to the United States. For a couple of days, we handled a lot of press questions on that subject with very little guidance from Washington. In any case, they did not send him out. He stayed on.

One thing I was able to do quite often was to invite French journalists to travel to the United States on IV programs, to be involved in newsmaker events at the embassy or to participate in NATO or U.S. military related activities. The aircraft carrier Eisenhower came into Monaco in June, 1982, right after the G-7 summit. We got to invite and accompany journalists on board.

In March, 1986, there was a plan to take a handful of journalists way up to the north of Norway where Norway has a common border with the Soviet Union. There would be NATO exercises up there. So I had a half dozen fellows rounded up to go when I got word that there had been a late season avalanche; 16 Norwegian soldiers on cross country skis had lost their lives in this avalanche in a place called Vassdalen.

If you extrapolate, 16 young men in Norway would be like 1,000 in the United States and to lose their lives on cross country skis where most Norwegians are as comfortable as anywhere was a major news event in Norway, a major confidence shaker. Despite this, we went. I went with these half dozen journalists all the way up to a place called Bardufoss, not far from where the accident had taken place. We had briefings on the NATO exercises and how NATO would be ready if there were any attack from the Soviet Union but it was all overlaid by the nation in shock and in mourning at the loss of so many young lives in an accident.

Not long after that we had another visit from Secretary Shultz. The most notable memory I have is that the press spokesman was no longer John Hughes, who I found to be the steadiest and the easiest to work with. Now it was a man named Bernard Kalb, brother of Marvin Kalb, both of them well known journalists from network news. Bernie Kalb didn't have his mind very much on news or on Secretary Shultz. The first thing we did was to head out to one of his favorite art dealers on the Faubourg St. Honoré, someone he knew well and did business with. We spent the morning with that person. It was a different approach to the job than what I found with John Hughes.

On April 15 of that year, 1986, the U.S. bombed Libya, retaliation for the nightclub bombing in Berlin. Tensions had been ratcheting up. There was all sorts of talk about how we might retaliate against Libya but when the news came through, I got a call in the early hours of the morning that the U.S. had bombed Libya. We were in for a lot of press questions, the biggest one being whether the French granted over flight rights? No. Did that affect the mission? Yes, it meant the U.S. had to fly much longer but of course, you went from there to “did the United States request over flight?” What was the nature of the request? What was the nature of the response? And we were not able to go into any detail on that because we didn’t have the information. This was a low point during my time in France in U.S./French relations.

There were ramifications on a personal level. Our daughter was flying back to the United States two days later on TWA to look at colleges and my wife was very, very nervous. She went to the airport to put her on the airplane and came back saying she had never seen so much security. That reassured her.

By now, everyone who worked at the embassy had ID badges. When I arrived there, we you just walked in but now we had badges. It was about that time, the bombing of Libya, that the word went down to the Marines at the entrance to the embassy that even if the Marine knew you, even if he’d seen you every day for the last six months, he couldn’t take that for granted. He had to look at your badge, eyeball you and make sure you really were the person on that badge.

The result of that was there was quickly a nice long line of Americans and French out in front of the embassy and we remarked that if the Libyans ever wanted to retaliate, we had lined up very nicely for them. They could come by and pick us off one by one. That policy got turned around fairly quickly.

It was also during that time that in *Le Monde*, there was an article headlined “*l’Inquietude des Américains a Paris,*” worries and concerns among the Americans in Paris. I had been authorized to talk to a correspondent at *Le Monde* and to say that yes, we were concerned about security but that we were going about business as usual, that we were not being deterred. We had taken certain measures that we wouldn’t go into detail on. I didn’t know what those were except we were always told to vary your route to work. Don’t come to work via the same route or at the same time every day, a policy I violated everyday because I came in from outside of town. That article in *Le Monde* caught the attention of a lot of people at the time, in part of this whole context of Libya and terrorism.

Q: Was there a bit of hard feeling about the British allowed us to use their territory?

BROWN: I think the bombers actually used came out of bases in Britain.

Q: And the French didn’t allow.

BROWN: Sure. This was not looked upon kindly at all. Not only did it make the mission much more difficult but you had to fly much farther, refueling, a question of the accuracy of your raid and everything else and it just seemed to be saying we are not in this together. I think the French were calculating then whether they risked more by angering the United States or by angering some of the radical countries.

Q: Were you picking up discomfort with Islam coming out of Africa?

BROWN: It wasn't a major issue then, no. Of course, I referred to the hijacked plane between Athens and Beirut but nobody was talking al-Qaeda. Nobody was talking about radicalized Muslim youth in urban settings in Europe, that kind of thing. That wasn't a preoccupation. I think it was more focused on the PLO in that part of the world or on people like Gaddafi. No one could even tell you where Yemen was on a map. Iran was of course under the same leadership it is today.

Q: Was there any discussion about the absorption of Algerian and Moroccan youth coming in? Later it became a huge problem.

BROWN: Right. Of course, though those are two totally different situations for the French; the Algerians and the Moroccans. People were aware you had these increasingly large numbers of Arab youth in the suburbs of Paris and in other cities and that it was a potential problem but it wasn't yet associated in my mind with terrorism.

There had been a bombing on the rue Marbeuf in the Jewish quarter early in the 1980's but that was not necessarily linked to a group like al-Qaeda or to radicalized Muslim youth. I am not even sure who they eventually determined was behind that.

So there was concern and the embassy was tightening up and there was talk about putting bombproof devices on the wall that was very close to the road there but still it wasn't the conversation we have these days about radicalized Islam. It seemed to be more a case of isolated incidents and a lot more associated with Lebanon than with Algeria or Morocco.

Q: Did you get any information or feedback from our attachés concerning relations between the American military and the French military?

BROWN: They were good.

Q: That was my understanding.

BROWN: Very professional.

Q: I was a little earlier on consul general in Naples and admiral Crowe I remember saying that really, the French navy excellent cooperation even under Mitterrand, the socialists and all.

BROWN: I think they were and I think Weinberger in his many visits there had always had very professional relations with the French minister of defense.

If there were policy disagreements, they were at a different level but on a pure military to military level I think they were very good and very professional.

Q: Did you get any feel for the French political class? I used to watch these people on TV. For one thing, you didn't see a single dark face in that group and not many women.

BROWN: That's true and also true in terms of the people doing their television news coverage. The term French political class is appropriate. Most of the French political leaders came out of the same schooling, the same elite and they loved debates. As vigorous as the debates could be, I would image they knew each other very well. This class was a rather small inbred group of people. These televised debates would draw large audiences that I think in America would draw very small audiences. They had frequent elections. The presidential elections were every seven years. Mitterrand had been elected in '81 and wasn't going to be up for reelection until 1988 after we left. But there were frequent parliamentary elections and elections for local offices. And for most of it, you had divided government.

Q: Did you find yourself sitting around the table or something with the French and all start getting into highly intellectual discussions which were sort of not the sort of thing we would have in an American?

BROWN: Yeas, but for me, this did not involve sitting around the dinner table. It was lunches with French journalists. I said last time and I still say that most of the French journalists I dealt with were pragmatic. They were looking for a good story. They were looking for a good interview. They were hoping this lunch would pay off in being invited to something we were putting on.

There were a few where the conversations were not so much that, where the French person would do most of the talking. All I would have to do was throw out a little question and the guy would go on at great length and it was usually a guy. I can remember some of the names: Paul-Marie de la Gorce of Figaro or Henri de Kergorlay for example. The names sounded as august as their ideas. These were primarily idea people. They weren't interested in the next interview or getting a short answer to a short story. In fact, they seemed more interested in conveying information to me. I didn't find them all that interesting. I sometimes found myself out of their league and I'd look at my watch and think I need to get back to those phone calls in the office.

Let me mention another couple of other quick memories of my Paris years.

In spring of 1986, my last G-7, I got to go to Tokyo, flew halfway around the world, and attend the G-7 meeting again at the request of Larry Speakes, following the French briefings there. I used that as the opportunity to get out to Kyoto. It was the only time in my life I have ever been to Japan.

Ambassador Rodgers was not interested in hard news interviews but 1986 happened to be the bicentennial of the French gift of the Statue of Liberty so he wanted to do anything that was Statue of Liberty related. In fact, he put out some mandate that he wanted a Statue of Liberty event every day. Anybody could come up with a Statue of Liberty event.

I was involved in proposing the mother of all Statue of Liberty events. It led to a three-day trip the ambassador made to Alsace Lorraine which is where Bartholdi, the Statue of Liberty sculptor came from. It went way beyond what I had initially thought of. We flew out in the Minister of Defense's plane. For three days, we traveled along the wine road through Epinal, Luneville, Baccarat, Colmar and Mittleberghein with the ambassador being feted with parades and lunches and dinners and gifts in each town.

I had never eaten so much quality food -- six major meals in three days -- with each town vying to outdo the last one. I went along, among other reasons, to interpret for Mrs. Rodgers. Somebody else did the interpreting for the ambassador. It was what he liked, flying the flag, saluting the French, looking back at our long historical ties. He came back very, very satisfied with that.

On my return to Paris, I found a Superior Honor Award awaiting me for my pre-Geneva work. A few days later, with complimentary tickets from NBC, I went to Roland Garros to watch some of the French tennis open. I still have the seat cushions that I bought. It all brings back wonderful memories.

One of our last trips was a visit to Annecy to visit our older daughter Sarah, a Tufts University student, who was studying at a Tufts' summer program at Talloires on Lake Annecy. She was staying with a wonderful French family who lived in Veyrier-du-Lac. I recall visiting them, looking down at the lake and eating more wonderful French food.

Soon after, on the 11th of July, 1986, I ended my five years in Paris.

Q: During this Statue of Liberty thing, was there anything done about that copy of the Statue of Liberty in the Seine?

BROWN: I don't think the ambassador fully got his way. We didn't have one event a day. There was probably one a week thing somehow related to the Statue of Liberty.

Q: We put on quite a show here, a big

BROWN: Tall ships and fireworks and they refurbished the Statue of Liberty. They cleaned it all up. That was all 1986. Reagan was still president. It was a big event here.

For me, press attaché was the best job I could have had in that embassy. Maybe we were not deep down into every issue but we were across the board, clued in or somehow

involved in virtually every issue. I had good colleagues, wonderful colleagues, both American and French.

Q: How about other embassies and all? Did everybody sort of do their thing?

BROWN: It was not like in Moscow where you had the subgroup, the French, the British and Germans looking at what was going on in the Soviet Union. We really didn't need it in Paris. Whereas in Moscow, I had a lot of contact with West European press, I had relatively less contact in Paris with the American and non-French press. It was much more a bilateral relationship.

Looking back, I recall that early on my wife was at a loss in Paris; she felt uprooted and part of the reason she felt uprooted was that after three years in Moscow, she really missed the place. She missed our wonderful friends back there, particularly those refusenik friends whose fate seemed to hang in the balance and the only way to cure that was for her to go back. She went back in February, 1982, after we had been in Paris less than a year, stayed with her Russian friends and was there for ten days. That was really very, very helpful to her psychologically and otherwise. Then we got to the point where we could make phone calls back and forth and that helped a lot.

We also became very involved, she more than I, in a group that called themselves the Committee of 15. They were French people who were concerned about Russian Jews who were unable to emigrate; they picked 15 families. They would meet regularly and try to put pressure on the Soviets to let these people go. Our friends were added to the Committee of 15, even though they didn't change the name. That didn't matter. It was another way of staying in touch psychologically, very important for my wife.

By the summer of 1985, I had been reassigned as PAO Moscow but the position wouldn't come open until the summer of 1987. My friend Ray Benson went out as PAO in 1983 for a four-year assignment and wouldn't be coming home until 1987. So the merry go round had come all the way around and just as in 1977, we went to Garmisch, Germany to the Army Russian Institute for a year of additional Russian language training before returning to Moscow. We would go back to Garmisch in 1986 for a year of brush up Russian which was going to be very, very helpful before going back for another three year tour in Moscow.

It would be a very different experience. The first time was with family, two young children. The second time it would just be the two of us. My wife had gotten into the English language program at the embassy, teaching English as a second language to French locals so we were both very busy. Our daughter was a senior in high school with a lot of French boyfriends and ski trips and all other sorts of activities.

I remember very clearly the changed situation following home leave when we went to Garmisch. Both of our daughters were now in college back in the States and we were in this little town house. One night the phone rang and both of us ran to answer because we were so accustomed in Paris to the phone ringing all the time; now we were in Garmisch

and things were so quiet. I didn't have a press attaché job. My wife didn't have a teaching job at the embassy and our daughters weren't with us.

Q: Today is the 16th of May, 2012 interview with Phil Brown. Where did we leave off, Phil?

BROWN: We left off in the summer of 1986.

Q: What was happening then?

BROWN: I had just completed my five-year assignment in Paris as press attaché. I should correct myself and say "we" because I always emphasize that this was a family affair. Part way through the assignment to Paris, in 1983, the question of returning to Moscow came up. I didn't want to do that. I knew that was too soon.

But throughout our years in Paris, my wife said to me in so many words "if you want to go back (to Moscow) let's do it now. I don't want to go back to the States, get settled, be into something and then have to pack up and go overseas." So things worked out. Normally after nine years, I would have been due for a return to the United States but I was assigned as public affairs officer at Embassy Moscow beginning summer of 1987.

And with a year between the end of my Paris assignment and the beginning of the Moscow assignment, it was arranged for me to go back to the U.S. Army Russian Institute, USARI, in Garmisch.

So the summer of 1986, we went on home leave, came back to Washington. I tested in French at FSI and was pleased to get a 4/4+ which I thought was deserved. My French was quite good at the time. I also had consultations. One of the first things I noticed was that when you are serving in Paris, everybody in official Washington knows about France or thinks they do. But very few people knew about the Soviet Union so my consultations even before I went out were extensive. I had consultations over two or three days. All sorts of people wanted to talk to the person who was going out to Moscow in another year and I realized that would be the case throughout my Moscow years. Consultations were extensive.

At the end of home leave, I flew back to Paris and I have a special note in my journal; as we rolled down the runway at Dulles Airport, I had this rather exuberant feeling. This was really exciting. The Foreign Service was good to me. Here I was heading off on yet another adventure. I felt that way then and as I look back on it now, I was extremely fortunate. I was overseas for 13 years in a row from 1977 to 1990. As a consequence I am ignorant of American cultural trends between those years. Every time I do a crossword puzzle and it refers to some TV drama of the 1980s, I am really out of it but I served my country overseas during an extremely interesting period.

Q: What was the situation as you were briefed and all that you were facing in Russia, the Soviet Union?

BROWN: I had been involved in the Geneva summit of 1985 and people obviously could see there was a change. The handwriting was on the wall. We were going to have opportunities in the Soviet Union we had never had before. I don't think we fully realized it but people were gearing up and although it was still a year before I would go out to replace Ray Benson, people wanted to get their oar in and say when you are there we want to work with you on books or exhibits.

As I recall, even at that time we were hearing that the budget crunch was serious. I observed then and throughout the time I was in Moscow, if you look at it in the global sense, USIA was devoting a lot of resources, a lot of money to activities related to the Soviet Union: the Voice of America in Russian and I am not sure how many other languages; the exhibits program, which was personnel-intensive, sending all these young Americans out with the exhibit as it traveled around the Soviet Union; America magazine had a whole staff that published a monthly magazine, including printing and distribution and one or two other activities like performing arts or books that involved resources.

I am not sure whether it existed at that time, in 1986, or whether it came a little later but they actually created an entire office, D/R, that was Russia-related and reporting to the director. It was outside the area office and outside the other parts of USIA and focused solely on programs for Russia.

Where we really didn't have a lot of resources were what we called at that time the GOE, the budget at the post. We had a fairly large number of people in Moscow, a dozen or so assigned to Moscow and Leningrad with all the costs involved in sending people overseas, but what we didn't have was a large discretionary budget at the post. I am sure I heard about that in 1986 a year before I went to Moscow.

Garmisch, Germany (1986-1987)

But I'm getting a little ahead of myself because I still had this year in Garmisch before I went out.

Q: Let's talk about what you were doing there.

BROWN: I flew to Paris, picked up the car, said goodbye again to my friends in the press office and drove to Munich. Munich was the consulate that would handle administrative affairs.

Garmisch was a very different experience this time. In 1977, it was the first time I had ever lived in Europe and I was a newcomer to Europe. This time, we had no children with us. Our daughters were a freshman and a junior in college. No dog; the dog we had taken on so many walks through the beauties of Garmisch, we had buried in our backyard in Paris. We did not live in Breitenau, that little enclave in Garmisch where the most Americans lived. We were living on the economy on Hauptstrasse, the main street of

town. It was still a beautiful town but Hauptstrasse, across from a car dealership, was a noisy place to be living. So that was different.

The other thing that was different was I now had spent the last eight years in major embassies, including three years in Moscow, which gave me certain credentials. People are always interested in talking to someone who has actually had real life professional experience in Moscow.

I learned also somewhat to my embarrassment that my grade, whatever it was then, was the equivalent in the army to a brigadier general; I had to whisper that. I didn't want special treatment. The first time around, my friends jocularly called me colonel because I had some equivalent rank. But I did not want people running around calling me general. They did know I had a relatively high Foreign Service rank and there were certain perks that went with that.

As far as the academic program, I was pretty much invited to write my own ticket. I didn't have to go to any particular classes. I didn't have to take certain exams. The teaching staff at Garmisch had changed in the almost ten years since I had gone there the first time. In 1977, many of the people teaching there were the original cadre who had been recruited as displaced persons after the war in the Munich area, in Bavaria. They were then quite elderly.

By 1986, very few if any of them remained and a new group of people had come in. Some of these people were recent émigrés from the Soviet Union. They brought a newer, younger outlook on things although, since most of them were émigrés, in some cases forced émigrés, it was still a very unsympathetic approach to the Soviet Union. They were yet to be convinced that Gorbachev meant anything.

I was able pretty much to pick courses and not just courses but to have one-on-one work with individual staff members. Much of that concentrated on conversation, reading the press and preparing myself for the Moscow assignment.

There was nevertheless a great deal of continuity from the first time. One cannot go to Garmisch without being impressed by the natural beauty of the area. We did endless hiking and skiing (I bought a season pass) and took full advantage of the cultural life. My wife got into scuba diving and did her test to become a certified scuba diver in a lake in Bavaria in the dead of the winter.

It was also an opportunity to meet some people with relatively prominent names at the time. Vladimir Voinovich was a writer, a satirist who had come out. I am not sure voluntarily or been expelled. He came to the institute. We attended his lecture and got to know him and his wife quite well. They were living in the Munich area and this was an opportunity to get to know some of the creative intelligentsia.

Also Americans. A man named Murray Feshbach who worked for the Census Bureau and was an expert on Soviet demographics. He was typical type of the Americans who came out to lecture. We could take advantage of that.

We also went as an institute from time to time to RFE/RL headquarters in Munich. In addition to broadcasting in many languages, they had a whole research wing there and they gave periodic lectures and seminars on Soviet matters. So all in all, it was an opportunity to prepare both language and substantively.

Q: Were we broadcasting through Voice of America the disquieting statistics about whether the Soviet Union population, health wise and all that?

BROWN: I can't tell you specifically but certainly, VOA and RL, Radio Liberty, were broadcasting that type of information and as dramatic as that situation is today, we were aware of it back in 1986-87. Male life span, declining numbers of children. If that information was available, I am sure it was being broadcast.

This was still a time of jamming. Later on, when I was in Moscow, there was that day when I turned on the radio and there was Radio Liberty broadcasting clear as a bell. They had ended jamming but even before that, there were still ways to get around jamming.

Against the backdrop of this comfortable life in Garmisch, studying Russian and then going out skiing and hiking and coming back and having a conversation with someone in Russian, we were very conscious of news from the Soviet Union.

One of the first things that occurred after my arrival in Garmisch was the arrest in the Soviet Union of Nicholas Daniloff of U.S. News and World Report. Nick Daniloff, whose ancestry was Russian, was picked out for some reason in a tit-for-tat retaliatory way, arrested, held by the KGB and delivered to the American Embassy. There is a whole story; Nick has written a book on it so I won't go into that, but that was a real damper, that kind of thing. Just when you think relations were improving, post Geneva summit, you have something like the arrest of Nick Daniloff; it's pretty disconcerting.

No sooner did that news come across than one day the phone rang and it was the consulate in Munich. The person calling me said, "Have you heard the news?"

I can remember to this day; my knees buckled. Had I heard the news? No, what? The news was that Reagan and Gorbachev would be meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland. That was September 30. I had been there barely a month and the word was that USIA had checked it out with the White House and sure, Larry Speakes would love to have Phil Brown go to Reykjavik to help out with the press program.

It was late at night. I said, "If you guys can buy the ticket, I will get myself to Munich." I did and the next day I was down in Munich and flew somewhere, I think it was Copenhagen, and from Copenhagen on to Reykjavik. I was there before anybody; I think I was the first outsider. I reported to the PAO who had no idea what to anticipate.

For a little while after the first White House advance team arrived, I was a part of that small group. I went out to this place called Hofdi House which was eventually chosen for the site of the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting. It was a White House decision that the Soviets went along with. They thought it had character, class. It was kind of place that would be remembered so much more than some office building or some other facility.

So for two weeks, from October 1 through 15, I was in Reykjavik. Because hotel space was at a premium with all these people coming in from outside, I ended up staying with an Icelandic family which was in itself an opportunity. Ottar Halldorsson was a professor at the university with a wife and a couple children. At the end of the day, I would often go back to the house and talk to them about what I had experienced in Iceland that day.

Director Wick came out and I was assigned to brief him particularly on Soviet activities, what they were doing in preparation. I also set up a meeting between Larry Speakes and his Soviet counterpart, Gennady Gerasimov, and briefed Speakes on what to expect.

As an aside, there was a fellow on the White House staff named Dale Petrovsky, a political appointee. Like me, Dale was an avid baseball fan. This was the end of the baseball season. We went one night to one of the American TV network trailers and in the wee hours of the morning, we watched the Red Sox-Mets World Series game. Dale went on to become director of the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

Q: Were you getting from any of the people you were talking to that this was a different Soviet Union in a way?

BROWN: No more than we already knew, I think, because what the Reykjavik summit will ultimately be remembered for was the Sunday negotiation between Reagan and Gorbachev. I don't remember the details but Gorbachev made an extraordinary proposal on arms control, something like getting rid of all nuclear weapons. Reagan apparently went back and forth and finally did not accept it.

I have this distinct memory of waiting with this very large press corps and particularly with the guys from Newsweek and Time magazine as they calculated how much was costing per hour to hold the cover, to hold the magazine open. They would normally go to bed and print on Sunday but they were keeping it open for this great news that never came.

We were talking about the last Sunday and the anticipation. What was going to happen? Was this going to be the big breakthrough on arms control? Ultimately it wasn't. George Shultz came out looking grim. His press conference put a damper on this. The Soviets had made a proposal we could not accept. Reykjavik would not be remembered as the great breakthrough.

I stayed for an extra day and took a nine-hour bus tour of the island. That was my Reykjavik experience. It did wonders for my bona fides back in Garmisch. Everybody

wanted to know about my experience. I was invited to give a lecture and I did so one night at the institute to a rather large audience. I began with a few words in Russian but since the audience included spouses and because I simply could not do the entire lecture in Russian, I went into English. The title was “Soviet and American Approaches to Public Diplomacy: Personal Impressions of a Press Office Spear Carrier,” which is what I was. I was just one little guy there on the ground but I did have the first-hand experience.

I talked about the Daniloff arrest as a downer and Reykjavik as an up. Within days, there was an announcement of reciprocal expulsions of Soviet diplomats from the United States and American diplomats from the Soviet Union. Since they had so many more diplomats here than we had there, the Soviets also withdrew all of the Foreign Service national employees from our missions so that there would be similar numbers. We had these precise numbers of people at the embassies in Moscow and Washington and the consulates in Leningrad and San Francisco.

While some people thought it was just great and cheered it, I felt depressed. I remember seeing a picture in the Herald Tribune of the ambassador’s wife, Donna Hartman, serving at a reception at Spaso House. Associated with it was this bravado, “oh, we can get by without foreign service national employees. We really didn’t need them anyway. They are just a bunch of spies; cost us a lot of money.” Well, that was not my impression at all. I knew that Foreign Service national employees are vital to the way USIS operates. We operated everywhere in a very public situation so our foreign service nationals didn’t have access to classified information. It depressed me.

The other issue for my wife and me during that year as we went through the various ups and downs in relations with the Soviet Union was where we would live. The first time, we lived in a 14-story Soviet apartment building, quite a long drive from the embassy. The question the second time was whether we would live on the new embassy compound, the NEC, or in a similar situation to the first time.

In the midst of all this, we learned about the scandal, the Lonetree affair. Sergeant Lonetree, the Marine guard who had allegedly allowed Russians into the embassy and sold secrets to the Russians about the embassy design and all the rest. There are books on this subject. It led to the withdrawal of Soviet laborers from the new office building

As it turned out, we would live in a very nice, three-story townhouse on the compound; it worked out extremely well. I was within easy walking distance of my office. Our townhouse had extra bedrooms and it was often more convenient to house Washington visitors with us than to put them in a hotel. And most importantly, it allowed us to do representational entertaining.

We were literally a stone’s throw from the NOB which was being taken apart, piece by piece, to try to find the microphones. This was frustrating, even maddening. We were not able to work in a modern office building. We were confined to the old office building which was dirty, a fire hazard and worse. It was very difficult to work under those

conditions. So that was the other issue that hung over us all during the year; the new office building, where we would live, etcetera.

Another facet of life during that year in Garmisch was travel. One is always impressed by the resources that the army has. In September, before I went to Reykjavik, they put together an observation trip to Yugoslavia. I don't recall if they called going behind the Iron Curtain but at least you were going to a communist country to see what life is like.

So we took off by bus for ten days. We went down to Bled, Maslenica, Split, Dubrovnik, Sveti Stefan, Sarajevo and Zagreb through what was then Yugoslavia -- what is today Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Even today, as I listen to the news and hear about trials in The Hague, it is hard to believe what happened. At that time, in 1987, if anyone had told you that in less than ten years, there would be a brutal civil war and that places like Sarajevo and Mostar would be in the news for the death and destruction, it would have been hard to believe. This was September and we were going down the coast of Croatia amidst all the vacationers. It was idyllic.

In December, we took a trip to East Germany. This wasn't idyllic at all. We went through some grimy little towns but there were also cities that were full of history. We were breathing in the coal dust. It was an eye-opener, a learning experience. Our itinerary included Eisenach, Erfurt, Weimar, Leipzig, Wittenburg, Torgau, Dresden and Meissen.

During that trip, I spent a lot of time with Captain Peter Huchthausen, a Navy captain who was himself en route to an assignment in Moscow. We shared a lot of cultural interests -- literary, artistic, musical -- and we found opportunities to visit some of the great art galleries and hear some of the music that was available.

Most memorable was a trip that my wife and I took in April, 1987. I went down to Munich on Good Friday and heard Bach's St. John Passion performed there. Bobbi met me there and we took the train from Munich to Leipzig and another train from Leipzig to Dresden where we rented a car. We went out to a place that a lot of people in Germany had never heard of called Herrnhut. It's near the border, close to where East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland come together.

This was a really important trip for my wife because this is where the Unitas Fratrum, the unity of the brotherhood, has its roots. My wife is a Moravian, born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which is one of the two cities in the United States along with Salem, North Carolina, where the Moravians have their largest presence. They came from Herrnhut. My wife is descended from Nicholas von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians. And this is where it all began for the Moravians in the United States.

On Easter morning, before the sun had even come up, we were awakened by the sound of the brass choir and on foot, we went to the cemetery to hear the brass choir play. It was a very moving experience for my wife. And for me too and so unlike anything else we

associated with East Germany at the time. It was a truly spiritual experience. We met the bishop and stayed with people there, Johannes and Jutte Kluge. We went back later after the collapse of East Germany. The old East German cars had been replaced by Mercedes and the roads had been paved but Herrnhut maintained its significance.

We retraced our steps back to Dresden and to Leipzig and as we waited on the train platform to go from Leipzig to Munich, there were huge crowds of people. I don't remember what we were carrying in the way of suitcases but we could barely get onto the train standing, let alone sitting. There were large numbers of young East German punks with their wild hairdos and their music and their rather obscene language and behavior. I thought they don't have absolute control over what's going on in this country, that's for sure. These kids got off at various spots along the way. Finally we got a place to sit but the contrast between what we had experienced on Easter morning in Herrnhut and the train that Monday night was rather shocking.

In June, USARI put together a three-week, multi-country trip through the Balkans that took us to Ljubljana, Belgrade, Nis, Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bucharest, Brasov, Cluj, Budapest and Vienna. Again, it was an opportunity for these intelligence officers to observe life in Eastern Europe. It was more substantive than the September trip to Yugoslavia which went down the coast. In this case, we saw Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the ethnic diversity. We had some briefings by embassy officials, including one in Sofia by a USIA officer, Jocelyne Green, that made me very proud. We saw poor areas and we saw some that looked quite well to do. It was a wonderful opportunity presented to me by my year in Garmisch. My traveling companion was one of the USARI faculty, Jacob Hentov.

At the end of that trip, I came back to Washington. A year earlier, I tested in French and had a 4/4+ and felt really confident; this time I tested Russian. They came out and said you are right on the cusp. Would you mind taking a little more test? And so I went through another test. I think I was tested close to three hours but finally came out with a 4/4 which was probably generous. My Russian was very good. I was able to do business in Russian but I also knew my limits and that would always be on my mind as I went back to the Soviet Union.

Once again, I had those multifaceted consultations and came back to Garmisch. We packed, drove down to Florence where our daughter was on a summer program and from Florence we drove in a highly choreographed trip from Florence to Garmisch to Lubeck. We saw friends there, went out to the island of Fohr in the North Sea, took a boat from Travemunde in Germany over to Helsinki and then drove from Helsinki to Leningrad. We spent two nights there, meeting with people at the consulate, before heading off again by road. And late on a Friday afternoon, July 17, 1987, as was my design, we got to the embassy in Moscow where we would begin our three years back in the Soviet Union.

Q: We will pick this up your first impressions of the new Soviet Union.

Q: Today is the 22nd of May, 2012 with Phil Brown.

Now you are practically a member of the faculty of Oberammergau. What was your judgment of its effectiveness and did it mold officers, including not just State Department but military officers going to the Soviet Union?

BROWN: I was not a member of the faculty even though I was back for the second time. I was there as a learner. I went both times to Garmisch but old timers did refer to it as Oberammergau because that is the village where the institute first operated. People in the Foreign Service who were older than me referred to it that way. For me it was Garmisch both times.

Yes, it was an extremely useful assignment for people who were able to take advantage of it. I didn't have a military background and people said "well this is not typical military; you are dealing only with officers" but you had a cross section. You the tank driver – that's what he called himself -- who I don't think was going to get much out of it. Here he was trying to learn Russian without any background in foreign languages, probably not much of an aptitude. He wasn't going to have direct use for it.

But I encountered in Garmisch some really outstanding individuals, officers who went on to play extremely important roles in U.S./Soviet relations. There are three who come immediately to mind beginning with then Colonel Roland Lajoie. I call him Colonel because that is what he was the first time I went to Garmisch; he was the head of the institute and later became General Lajoie. The others were Major Greg Govan who went on to be General Govan and a Marine, George Connell, who retired as a Colonel in the Marine Corps.

All of them served in the Soviet Union, all of them were highly regarded. Roland and Greg were also in Berlin, which was another onward assignment for people who studied in Garmisch. And they served in high positions in the Pentagon and CIA. They were also part of that group who went out to Votkinsk in the Soviet Union to monitor the missile production. They were really and literally on the front line of U.S./Soviet relations.

They were all outstanding military officers who took full advantage of what Garmisch could offer to become even more proficient in their trade and I think that was also the case with the State Department people who went there. I certainly feel that I benefited greatly from the experience.

Q: One of the great benefits of the Foreign Service with the various defense war colleges is intermingling with the military and learning military attitudes and basically gaining a much greater respect and in how they think and also to spread the Foreign Service story.

BROWN: I don't have first-hand knowledge about the war colleges but clearly, one of the benefits of Garmisch was acquainting me with the military. I didn't do military service myself so exposing me to these people and to the environment in which they operated was beneficial.

In turn, it was good for them to learn about the Foreign Service. There were two of us the second time. Outstanding Foreign Service officers went through Garmisch. The back and forth certainly was profitable.

When I was in Moscow and needed to get some information or do something that involved the defense attaché office, it was extremely useful to have that contact.

Q: Were there ever discussions there by people who both served there or going out there about the Soviet military and their outlook?

BROWN: They had regular talks on that. They'd bring people in from everywhere to talk about Soviet military, various aspects of it. I used to be fascinated by how they always phrased it. It wasn't "if" the war begins. It was always "when" the war begins. I learned the expression Fulda Gap, the spot on the border where the Russians would cross into West Germany. I don't know how many times I heard that. So yes, in addition to the regular programs, there was a lot of discussion about Soviet military intentions. Many of these people felt they would be in the front lines when the war began.

The last time, I explained how going to Garmisch a second time – I may be the only Foreign Service officer who actually went to Garmisch twice -- was a very different experience. In the first place, I had three years experience in the Soviet Union working at the embassy under my belt. I had been promoted to senior Foreign Service and while I never thought much about it, the army is always interested in rank so I had the equivalent rank of a brigadier general.

I was invited early on to go to Reykjavik and was there for the Reagan/Gorbachev meeting. That added to my bona fides. I gave a talk to a rather large audience about my experiences there. It wasn't anything highfalutin. It was how a summit meeting takes place, the planning, the press work, that kind of thing.

I felt as though I gave as well as got during my second year.

I did mention very hurriedly some of the trips that I took during that year. One was early on within old Yugoslavia. Another was a trip through the Balkans. That was late in the year. Another was a trip to Berlin. And a fourth was through East Germany.

In each case, we traveled as a class on a bus but the people who got the most out of it were the people who really went well prepared and observed and got out at night and walked around and talked to locals. I had companions on those trips -- a navy captain on one and one of the Garmisch faculty members on another -- that helped me extract a lot of impressions and observations.

Moscow (1987-1990)

Q: You went to the Soviet Union from when to when?

BROWN: My first tour was 1978 to 1981. So this was the summer of 1987.

We drove down to Italy, visited our daughter who was in school in Florence and doing a summer program there. When we said good bye to her, we basically headed off by road to Moscow. We drove all the way across Germany, visited friends in Lubeck and took a boat from Travemunde across the Baltic Sea to Helsinki. It was mid-summer, a lot of daylight in the summer. Drove from Helsinki across the border. With that we were back in the Soviet Union. It was symbolically meaningful for us getting back in the Soviet Union. Stopped in Leningrad, met with people at the consulate there.

We met with a young USIA officer. There was a branch public affairs officer in Leningrad and an assistant branch public affairs officer, a young fellow named Ian Kelly, who was there with his wife and small children. It wasn't too long after that that Ian Kelly was transferred to Moscow and became a key member of my staff there. Today Ian Kelly is the ambassador in Vienna to CSCE. It didn't take much brain power early on to see that Ian Kelly was a rising star.

Then we drove from Leningrad to Moscow. I remember stopping along the way. There was a lady along the road selling flowers or tomatoes or something. We stopped and had a little chat with her, told her we were diplomats, how astounded she was. She was of a certain age, her saying to us "no more war, no more war" in Russian. It was that spontaneous emotion that came from Russians out in the villages. We arrived at the embassy as I had timed it late on a Friday afternoon. I wanted to get there on the weekend so I didn't have to go to work the next day. I would get in the swing of things but not right in the office.

One of the members of the P&C staff came down and saw me because I had called to say I was there. She thought I was one of the contract employees that had been hired to replace the Foreign Service nationals. She was very apologetic.

Thus we would begin our second three year assignment in Moscow, 1987 to 1990.

The question is always "how was it different, how did it compare?" It is a daunting task to try to answer that question. More generally, as I have been going through my notes, it has been a daunting task. How am I going to summarize this experience? The first three year assignment was full of activities, full of memories. The second was even more so. It was the nature of the times and it was the activity level imposed on us. I don't have a simple checklist of items of how to compare.

Early on, we went out with some friends to a restaurant which wasn't something you did very often there but by 1987, some little restaurants, they were called coops, were opening. At the end of the meal, we were down on Red Square and there was a demonstration by Crimean Tartars. Not a violent demonstration but people were out protesting and they were being allowed to protest. That was something we had never seen before; a protest of any sort let alone on Red Square. It set the tone and for three years and in varying ways, frequently at the embassy staff meeting the next morning, you or

someone else would say “you can’t believe what I saw, what I read, the play I went to, the conversation I heard.” It was a transformative period, no question about it.

This was especially true for someone with the perspective of having been there ten years earlier and who saw people harassed and arrested. By the time we returned in 1987, André Sakharov had returned from internal exile in Gorky. He was back in Moscow. If you didn’t have perspective, things probably still looked pretty grim physically. Moscow was still a pretty dirty city; people lined up for food. The newspapers all printed the same articles especially about political subjects. Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty were jammed. People did not have the freedom to travel. We had wonderful Jewish refusenik friends whom we were very close to on our first tour. They were still there waiting and their prospects for emigrating seemed little better in 1987 than they did in 1981 when we had last seen them.

Q: What was there at that time when you got back, what was their relationship to the powers that be?

BROWN: Our Jewish refusenik friends?

It was pretty much the same it had always been. Yuri was still working as a janitor at a maternity hospital, hired just because they needed those kinds of people and his wife would teach English at home. Their daughter, whom we had known as a very small girl, was now 11 years old. We quickly set about pushing their case. We had a lot of friends in the press corps and we would say to them, “Would you like to meet an interesting Jewish refusenik family?”

That was too good an offer to turn down and one woman in particular, Ann Blackman who worked for Time magazine, reported regularly on them. Her husband, Mike Putzel, was bureau chief for the Associated Press. Ann did a lot of stories with these particular friends. It was a year later, right after the Reagan visit, that they received permission to emigrate.

Back to your question, when we returned in 1987, there were many refuseniks and many people who wanted to change their lifestyle but couldn’t. So I use the old cliché about glass half full, glass half empty. It depended a little bit upon what you were comparing it to; for the most part, right from the beginning, the comparisons that we made were “wow, gee. Something has really changed here. Things are changing.”

I will say right away if anyone ever tells you that he knew at that point that the Soviet Union’s days were numbered and that in four years the Soviet Union would exist no longer, ask them to show you where they put that down in writing in 1987.

Q: You are the public affairs officer. What did you see as your priorities or opportunities at the time of your arrival?

BROWN: Let me go to one little detail here. Moscow was the only place in the Foreign Service world where we didn't use the term USIS, U.S. Information Service. We referred to the section as press and culture or P&C.

I was replacing Ray Benson. Ray had had two four-year tours as public affairs officer. He was completing his four-year assignment and one of the last big activities on Ray's watch was a visit by Charles Wick, USIA director. This was symbolic of what was happening.

Mr. Wick had called on I don't know how many people in the Soviet hierarchy, in government, radio and television and the rest, and he had gone back and written follow up letters and now action had to be taken on those follow up letters. I think there were a dozen of them.

You asked me what my assignment was. One major part of my assignment was following up and implementing the ideas in Mr. Wick's letters. We were working on those letters for much of my three years or much of the time that Mr. Wick was still in office.

For another, I was working for Jack Matlock. Ambassador Jack Matlock had been back for about a year. He saw the enormous opportunities and he was a demanding taskmaster. He had his own agenda so I had Mr. Wick's letters and Ambassador Matlock's agenda. He wanted, for example, to set up a monthly lecture at Spaso House. This would involve bringing a noted figure from Washington, having that person lecture around a dinner. This was modeled on something he had seen elsewhere.

Mind you too, we were doing all of this without any Foreign Service nationals. They had all been withdrawn, gotten rid of and they were only gradually being replaced by contractors under the title Pacific Architect and Engineers, PAE.

Q: I knew them in Vietnam when I was there.

BROWN: They were doing a few of the little tasks. We had none in our operation.

My title was Counselor of Embassy for Press and Cultural Affairs. By the way, it translated easily into Russian. I had responsibility for the whole press operation and all of the cultural activities.

I had previously been press attaché. I determined that I was not going to be a super press attaché. I had enjoyed that job very much in both Moscow and Paris but I was going to let the information officer/press attaché do that job and not constantly look over his shoulder. The model for me was Paris. When I went there as press attaché, the PAO was Jack Hedges and Jack in a previous assignment had been press attaché. I very much appreciated that he let me do the job rather than looking over my shoulder all the time.

I also mentioned last time that USIA had created a special office, D/R, which was Russia reporting directly to the director headed by a fellow named Greg Guroff. Greg had serviced in Moscow as cultural affairs officer and he had his own agenda, his own

programs that he was pushing over and above those that normally came out of USIA -- exhibits, America magazine, speakers, cultural exchanges, IV program.

So we had an unending list of assignments. This was 1987. That year, Gorbachev would go to Washington and in 1988 Reagan would come to Moscow. A presidential visit, especially given my familiarity with the White House press office and the fact that they knew me, was also going to be a very time consuming activity.

We not only had a presidential visit but just about anybody and everybody in Washington wanted to come to Moscow to see what was going on; not only government officials but people in the private sector as well. So we had an unending stream of prominent personalities.

An example of the expanding area of activity was something called the Chautauqua exchange. This had begun in Jurmala, Latvia a couple of years earlier as a meeting of citizens from both countries. It was stimulated by the program in Chautauqua, New York. It was blossoming and was going to become an annual affair. I had been back in Moscow less than two months when I returned to the U.S. with a huge Soviet delegation to Chautauqua for the meeting there. Some people in the embassy questioned our involvement. "Do you really want to get that close? Remember, these are still Soviets, still Communist Party members." I argued that it was an opportunity I should not miss to accompany a cross-section of 250 Soviets going to the United States on a charter flight. So I did. I went back with them. So did Rebecca Matlock, the ambassador's wife.

I remember the flight on a Soviet-built Ilyushin-86 aircraft. You fly from Moscow to Shannon, Ireland. You refuel, you fly from Shannon to Gander, Newfoundland and you refuel and you fly from there to New York City.

We were hosted that evening at the apartment of George Soros on the Upper East Side of New York. We were a pretty tired group but I went. There must have been 200 people, more than even George Soros' apartment could comfortably accommodate. I was seated at a table for theater people including some Russian actors and Americans such as Colleen Dewhurst and the wife of Jason Robards.

After a full day in New York City, where I was joined by both of my daughters, we went to Chautauqua for five days of meetings -- ABC did its Good Morning America show live from Chautauqua -- and then on to Washington and a barbecue at the home of Esther Coopersmith.

Many of the contacts I made were long lasting. I remember talking to a man who was in the information department of the Central Committee. I said "I hope we will be able to continue this contact when we get back to Moscow." He said, "Well, of course. Why not?"

I will give you several reasons why not, I said. I know from my past experience, I have had contact with Russians outside the Soviet Union but when we go back, you are

operating under very different rules. I was recalling the Vienna summit meeting of 1979 where I talked to journalists and party officials who said “let’s talk now because when we go back to Moscow, I won’t be able.” They were that candid about it.

This was a man named Leonid Dobrohotov. He said in so many words, test me and I did. He became an invaluable contact in the information department of the CPSU.

Back to Moscow (another Aeroflot charter with stops in Gander and Shannon), I could go on and on about my duties and my responsibilities. What we lacked were the resources. We simply didn’t have the tools to do all the things that were being asked to do. People would come out and say “I’ve got an idea.” I would respond: “We have no shortage of ideas. What we need is help in implementing ideas and perhaps weeding out the good ideas from the bad ones.”

The one thing I had was a really outstanding staff of younger officers. I sometimes say it was as if P&C Moscow had had about six or seven first round draft picks in the NFL.

I may as well name several of them and I want to make sure I don’t forget people. Every one had some previous involvement with Russia, either living there as a child, studying there or whatever. In the press office, there were two assistant information officers, Margo Squire and Mike Hurley. In the cultural section, we had assistant cultural affairs officers Rosemary DiCarlo, Ian Kelly, Susan Robinson and a young woman who came out for a year named Ann Lowendahl.

These people were devoted, hardworking and so capable. I am happy to say all of them went on to very successful careers.

What I did best of all was to give them the freedom to do their jobs. I was able to stand between them and the ambassador and the other people who had ideas on how they should do their jobs, to provide a buffer. I represented our section to the ambassador, to Washington, to the visiting firemen and let my youngest staff, the assistant cultural affairs officers and assistant information officers do their jobs and they did them extremely well.

Q: Let’s sort of take apart some of the elements. What about the press? How had it changed or had it changed?

BROWN: When I was there the first time as information officer/press attaché, it was much different from what I would experience in Paris. Paris was a much more representative press attaché job. By 1987, we were still spending a lot of time with the American press corps and to some extent still defending their working rights under the Helsinki Convention, looking out for working conditions for journalists.

The Soviets, however, were beginning to loosen up a bit, not in a Western sense. We could work with the Soviet media. One of the first activities I recall was the editor of Ogonyok magazine, Vitaly Korotich, doing an interview with Ambassador Matlock. It

was an interview that was fairly done. Ogonyok was a weekly magazine that was doing some very interesting stuff. They were publishing materials on the Stalin era and all of a sudden, people were lining up on the day of the week when Ogonyok came out. For them to do an interview with Ambassador Matlock was symbolically important. Little by little, both the press and the audio visual media gave us opportunities to get our point across.

Mr. Wick was responsible for something called U.S./USSR information talks. We had bilateral meetings in Washington and Moscow on an annual basis. Those talks and the preparation for them was also extremely time consuming, extremely labor intensive. We, of course, would push the argument to the Soviets that there was still an imbalance, that you have so much more access to American public opinion than we have to public opinion in the Soviet Union.

That was the case but notwithstanding, we were getting an increasing number of opportunities to have our point of view put across in the press. I myself did some interviews, not on high political subjects but quite often on the life of a diplomat.

But it was up to the political section, I didn't get involved, to sit down every day and read the press and analyze it for nuance.

Let me turn to something I did right after Moscow when I went to the Fletcher School as a diplomat-in-residence. I asked myself: "When I look back on my Moscow experience, what jumps out at me? What really strong memories do I have?"

They certainly included the visit by Ronald Reagan. The President of the United States comes and you are at the airport and shake his hand or you're in the Kremlin when he says goodbye to Gorbachev. That's an indelible memory. Or when your wonderful Jewish friends finally get permission to emigrate, that's an indelible memory. I traveled, continued to travel; went to all the republic capitals. Those are very strong memories.

But the common theme that jumped out at me -- and I thought I might talk about it today -- was music, particularly events that left indelible memories not simply for the music but for what they seemed to be saying about politics and the changing climate. So I thought I would highlight some of those moments.

Even before I got to Moscow, I heard that someone named Billy Joel was going to be performing there so I went to my daughters and said "who is Billy Joel?" I remember my daughter Sarah saying, "Dad. You don't know who Billy Joel is?"

So I went out and got an audio cassette of this rock performer named Billy Joel. Indeed he was giving two concerts in Moscow right after we got there, within a week of our arrival. I went to the ambassador and asked if he wanted to go to the July 27 concert?

I don't think Ambassador Matlock ever said no to anything as quickly as he did to that. He said, "No. You go. You represent us. I do not want to be involved."

I went and it was an experience. Billy Joel performing in one of the stadiums built for the 1980 Olympics, 20,000 people, packed. The Russians knew who Billy Joel was and it didn't take much advertising, a few posters and word of mouth to attract an audience. When we got there, we had a couple of extra tickets. I remember giving them to some teenage girls and they were delighted.

The thing I recall about the concert is not so much the music, although that was part of it, but Billy Joel's ability to master an audience with a little hand-held microphone. He walked around the place, amidst 20,000 people and a lot of security; by the way, they were a little nervous when he got off the stage and walked around. I think a lot of the Soviets were as impressed by the technology as they were by the music. But I will never forget Billy Joel singing "For the Longest Time," one of his signature tunes. Anytime I hear Billy Joel singing, I am transported back to that concert.

It was loud. I remember my wife put cotton in her ears. We were sitting way in the back. I was representing the embassy but hardly. I wasn't in any prominent position. Billy Joel was there with his wife, Christie Brinkley. The second night, I think, he was unable to really rev up the audience the way he wanted to and he started smashing the piano. You read some newspaper articles and you will see that was picked up by the American press more than the concert itself.

The important thing was that Russians were allowing in an American rock performer. Up to that point, rock was considered decadent. The other part of it was that 20,000 people filled that hall each of two nights for Billy Joel. To me that was as much of a barometer as anything of change.

Less than two months later, September of 1987, the Empire Brass Quintet out of Boston came, a really high quality cultural musical group, five brass musicians. Their first stop was Vilnius, Lithuania. This was one of the first, if not the first, American performing arts group to go to the Baltic States. I arranged with the assistant cultural affairs officer, Rosemary DiCarlo, that we would attend the concert. But on Friday afternoon, we got a call from the Foreign Ministry saying we couldn't go because there were no hotel rooms. We had permission, we had the plane tickets. I said, "Rosemary, we are going" so we got up early Saturday morning, flew to Vilnius and went to the hotel. No, there weren't any rooms but by the end of the day we had worked it out.

This concert wasn't 20,000 people; this was maybe 200 people in a small hall but they were just blown away, to coin a phrase, by the skills of the Empire Brass quintet. The scene afterwards was remarkable. Young musicians came up and wanted to see instruments. The Russians and the Lithuanians have a great history of music but they didn't have access to this quality instruments; the trombone, tuba. The American musicians were very, very accommodating, signing autographs, giving out scores and that kind of thing.

A week later, they arrived in Moscow and they were pretty worn out. They had been to various cities on an itinerary put together by a Soviet concert agency, Goskoncert, and

were now in a dreary Soviet hotel. We were living on the compound in a very nice townhouse that had three levels. I asked the group if they would like to come by on Friday night for pizza and beer. I hardly had the words out of our mouth; were they ever happy to come by for pizza and beer.

And we said if they needed a place to practice, they could use our place. So they came and from our three level townhouse, you could hear tuba on one floor, trombone on another, trumpet from another floor. I loved it. We saw them here in Boston several years later and they remembered us well and favorably. They did a couple of other great concerts in Moscow. It was one of the first times we did a reception on the compound.

Because of the Lonetree scandal and the spying scandal, it was pretty obvious we were not going to be working in the new office building. We were going to be consigned to the wretched old converted apartment building up on the Ring Road for all three years, terrible working conditions. Right outside our bedroom, they were doing constant work of some sort, looking for microphones in what should have been a modern new office building. And the work would go on all night with noise and bright lights.

But we did have the compound which included the snack bar, the school, an auditorium, a garage, apartments and the townhouses, much better living arrangements. On the first assignment, we were happy to be away from the embassy in a Soviet apartment building. This time it was much to my advantage to be within walking distance of my office and to have a townhouse where I could invite visitors to stay.

By now we had a young woman, Sara Fenander, living with us. We called her a nanny but she wasn't there to take care of small children. She was there to help us out with representational events. I'll talk more about her later.

The big question now was how we would get Soviets to our townhouse for representational events. Things had so totally turned around. It used to be you had to escort Soviets into your apartment building past their militia man. Now it seemed I was going to have to check with American security if I wanted to bring Russians onto the compound. The Soviet militia would let them come in but was I going to be violating rules, our own security rules?

Fortunately it wasn't a long distance from the gate to our front door and we were able to escort people in pretty easily.

The Empire Brass provided the first occasion for us to invite some Soviets guests after the concert. We did and they came. Eventually, we hosted many, many events, they came in great numbers and we were able to manage. But initially, it was nerve wracking for us to think that all these years, we had been fighting the Soviets so we could have Russians in to our apartment. Were we now going to be fighting American security? We won the battle.

By the way, another American who happened to be in town at the time the Empire Brass Quintet was Fred Rogers who did the programs on television for kids, Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers was there on his own and my wife ran into him and went swimming with him.

Mr. Fred Rogers and staff people came to our reception that night with the Empire Brass Quintet. I have to guess that he was out there because he saw and heard that things were opening up in the Soviet Union. They had always had excellent programs on TV for children. It was a very non-political area to exploit and that is probably what brought him to Moscow at that time.

In November of 1987, we got the word the famous violinist, Yehudi Menuhin would be performing in Moscow. He had Russian Jewish connections. He had performed in Moscow a few years earlier and had raised eyebrows there because he criticized the human rights record and here he was coming back in 1987, performing.

We went to the concert at Tchaikovsky Hall. Americans have trouble understanding that in the Soviet Union, a poet could fill a stadium of 20,000 people and there would still be people outside struggling to get tickets. That was the nature of society there. This Menuhin concert was sold out. I got tickets through connections. I went back stage afterwards to greet him in the name of the American Embassy and he handed me a list and said these were people he would like to have at a reception.

I went to the ambassador and even though he was going to be in Geneva and there was some question about whether Menuhin was an American, a Swiss or a British citizen, he agreed that we could host a reception at Spaso House nine days later.

The only way to get these invitations delivered was to spend half of Saturday driving around Moscow personally delivering them to people like the sister of Rostropovich, to the ballet dancer Maya Plisetskaya and her husband Rodion Shchedrin. A colleague of mine in the embassy delivered the invitation to Andrei Sakharov and his wife.

Then there were people whose names I didn't recognize, the parents of a young Russian named Mikhail Rud; he had emigrated and was playing piano in Paris at the time. I finally found their apartment in some distant part of Moscow and knocked on the door. A lady came and then a man came wearing only an undershirt over his pants and I said, in Russian of course, "Lidya Petrovna, My name is Philip Brown. I'm from the American Embassy." I remember she stepped back as if she had been struck by a bolt of lightning saying "*Bozha Moy*" or "My God." I explained the circumstances. When they picked themselves up off the floor and I handed them the invitation, they actually believed it.

That Sunday evening, these well known figures from the Moscow musical world along with André Sakharov and Elena Bonner and the British, Swiss and Dutch ambassadors came to Spaso House. For Sakharov it was the first time, perhaps the only time, he was ever at the American ambassador's residence.

There was a couple named Oleg Kagan and Natasha Gutman; one was a violinist and the other a cellist. We knew them from their performances. They walked into the room and Menuhin was sitting on the couch. They got down on the floor, sat there like children at his knee and talked about how they had heard his performances, his records when they were growing up and studying music and it was as if they were in the presence of their mentor and role model.

Before the evening was over, the African American singer Barbara Hendricks and the composer Sarah Caldwell also showed up. It was really a very touching and memorable evening.

Q: This sort of thing must have really touched you, didn't it?

BROWN: It did. We walked out of that evening with a special feeling, knowing that this was one of the events we would never forget. And by the way, from the reception, we went to the second half of a concert at Tchaikovsky Hall featuring the violist Yuri Bashmet playing a new work by a Russian composer named Edison Denisov. An artist friend of ours, Boris Birger, introduced us to Denisov afterward. It sometimes seemed as if it was non-stop but it was rewarding.

I knew that events such as the Menuhin reception were having an impact on the elite, the cultural elite; the people who attended had all gone out and talked about this evening, this experience. And I would have an opportunity to mention it to my official contacts.

In April, 1988, we had a visit from Yo-Yo Ma, who was even then a world famous cellist. He gave a special concert at Spaso House. This again was where Ambassador Matlock was such a wonderful ambassador to have because he would offer Spaso House. We would invite in an elite group of people to hear Yo-Yo Ma perform. Then he did a couple of public concerts.

You think of the Soviet Union as being isolated, cut off from the rest of the world but you didn't have to explain to people who Yo-Yo Ma was. They knew he was one of the world's great cellists even back then.

What I especially remember about his visit was that he was there on Russian Easter weekend and after his concert, he went with us to one of the cathedrals just to be part of the mass of people outside or inside the church observing the Russian Orthodox Easter.

My wife mentioned to him that we had a daughter in school in Boston and that she would be there in the spring. Yo-Yo Ma lives in Winchester. I don't have the details but when she went there in the spring and there was a concert, there were two tickets waiting for her thanks to Yo-Yo Ma. He was, and still is, a genuinely gracious, friendly human being.

President Reagan came in June of 1988. One little vignette in connection with President Reagan's visit. Anyplace where he was going to be making an appearance, whether it was the university, the Writers' Club or Red Square, the White House had a team assigned to

that location. My staff was all divided up and I was working with the White House press office.

We had an assistant cultural affairs officer, a woman named Susan Robinson married to the consul general and I assigned her to work with Mrs. Reagan's people. Susan came to me one day saying this was sexism, that just because she was a woman working in cultural section didn't mean that she should work with the First Lady, that she should be out among the guys in one of these other spots, the Writers' Union or whatever.

I said, "Susan, I hear what you are saying but really it is not sexism and we have to have somebody work with Mrs. Reagan's staff and you will have opportunities that you won't believe."

Well, the visit came and went and a lot of us who were assigned to various spots did a lot of standing around and were upstaged as always by the White House staff. By contrast, Susan Robinson told me she got to go to the bowels of the Tretyakov Museum to see art works and icons that were never made available to the general public. She got to go to musical and theater events that were specially put on for Mrs. Reagan. Her ego was assuaged and she had opportunities the rest of us didn't have.

They did a special gala ballet at the Bolshoi for President Reagan but it coincided with a meeting arranged by the State Committee on Education and Mr. Wick sent me to it to represent him. I did manage to put my ticker in my wife's hands.

Right after the Reagan visit, the New York Philharmonic conducted by Zubin Mehta came to Moscow and did an opening concert in a concert hall. Then they were scheduled to do an open air concert in Gorky Park. Reagan had gone so the embassy staff cleared out. The ambassador was in Germany, the DCM had gone to the States for his son's graduation and I was the ranking person in the embassy.

For a week, I was the chargé and I went to a few cocktail parties and such. I asked the ambassador what should I do and he said "you act as if you are the chief of mission" so I rode around in the Cadillac with the flag flying, including to Gorky Park for the New York Philharmonic concert, feeling somewhat self conscious, I must say. I didn't take to the role too comfortably.

It was an outdoor concert with a little bit of rain at the beginning but by the time they played the Stars and Stripes Forever at the end, the rain had stopped symbolically. It was another big splashy American presentation with Zubin Mehta conducting half the program and a Soviet conductor, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, doing the other half. I did not get to speak to Mehta or make my presence known but I did make sure the car was there with the flag flying so they knew somebody important was in attendance.

That week was also the millennium of Christianity in Russia; 1,000 years since Christianity had come to Russia and there was a gala concert at the Bolshoi. I still have the program from that and since I was the chargé, I represented the U.S. The invitation

from His Holiness Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia and the Holy Synod inviting us to the festival jubilee meeting on the occasion of the millennium of the baptism in Russia at the Bolshoi Theater. It was a wonderful concert that ended up with the 1812 Overture, cannons, bells and all of that.

Leading religious figures from all over the world came for this event. Billy Graham was on stage. The church had never been entirely suppressed despite what we heard about the lack of religious freedom. The hierarchy of the church was probably on pretty good terms with the hierarchy of the KGB but still, the fact that they had this splashy event was another example of the changing times. Raisa Gorbachev was in attendance.

A year later, June of 1989, Paul Simon came through on his Graceland tour. This was something he was doing with African artists including Miriam Makeba and they did a big outdoor concert in Moscow. Graceland was the name he had given to this series of concerts featuring African music.

A month later, returning for the first time in 31 years for what he called a sentimental visit, was Van Cliburn who had won the Tchaikovsky competition back in the worst days of the Cold War. He was there because in 1987, when Gorbachev came to the White House, Van Cliburn came out of retirement and did the something at the White House as part of the Gorbachev visit to the United States so Gorbachev expressed the desire that Van Cliburn would come to Moscow. His name was still very well known there.

On July 2, I went to the concert. Our house guest that night was a woman named Madeleine Albright. She was there on a USIA-sponsored speaking tour. At the time, she was a professor at Georgetown and I don't recall why but she ended up as our house guest. There was always an extra bedroom. I still have the thank you note from Madeleine Albright. The ambassador was in attendance as was Gorbachev.

This was one of these theaters that was not well maintained and before the music began, right above where Gorbachev was sitting, there was this terrific explosion. If these had been American secret service people, they would probably have thrown their bodies over him. A light bulb had blown out but other thoughts went through our mind.

At the end of the concert, the ambassador was invited back stage to talk briefly to Gorbachev, not for courtesy sake but to be informed of the death of André Gromyko, the Soviet foreign minister. Word had just come to Gorbachev that night that André Gromyko had died. Gorbachev simply referred to Andrei Andreyevich but it was clear who he was talking about.

So you had all these elements -- Van Cliburn, Van Cliburn of 31 years earlier, Van Cliburn of the Gorbachev visit to Washington, Madeleine Albright and the death of Andrei Gromyko. There were a lot of things at once.

Q: Did you get any feel from your Soviet contacts that the times were changing for them. This must have been every disconcerting for some.

BROWN: I think for some of the older generation, we could see people who were fearful or who felt threatened by the changes. Take the case of one family we knew quite well. The oldest generation, one generation older than ourselves, were shaking their heads in disbelief and wondering if this wasn't a little bit too much too fast. But the grandson was already jumping at the opportunities for interaction with Americans and new opportunities. If it were today's world, he would be writing an app for the iPhone but then he was envisioning going into business, being an entrepreneur.

The great masses probably didn't see any great benefit. Their living conditions were still not that much improved. They were still standing in line to get food. Housing hadn't improved.

Q: This brings to mind one of the things about Russia is considered a great power but when I think about it is there anything that comes out of Russia that I would want to buy? The answer is no. Maybe if I wanted to buy a fighter plane or something like that but it just isn't an industrial power in the advanced sense but yet these are people with this tremendous mathematical and science ability. You would think that something would start stirring there.

BROWN: That has always been one of the mysteries for me. No one ever questioned their innate intelligence. They produced mathematicians and chemists, great writers, ballet dancers, sports figures but they have never manufactured a product you wanted to go out and buy. That was certainly very much the case at this time. If we had extra rubles, we'd go to the art market and buy little paintings or some of the stacking dolls or a samovar or something that might have a little bit of artistic value but there wasn't a product that I can think of that you would go and buy for its mechanical qualities.

Q: What about on the cultural side? My wife was taking Russian literature and there was a series of books that were coming out, this was in the '50s and earlier. I mean big books on Russian life and all and they were considered very good but since that time I haven't been aware of any major writer or writers. Were the Dostoyevskys only working under because they had the ___ or whatever on top of them or what?

BROWN: I am embarrassed to say I don't know much about what is happening in Russian literature these days. Whether there is a Dostoyevsky or not.

During the time we were there, there was not to my knowledge any explosion of great writing. There was a lot of stuff being produced. People were writing stuff for the theater. They were publishing in magazines but whether any of it is of lasting quality or being thought of today as having particular artistic merit, I am not sure.

Q: There is no particular reason for them to be suppressed. I think some of the so-called top writers of the somewhat earlier period mainly because their books were smuggled out and they had that cache.

BROWN: I can think of people we associated with at the time and who we thought of as quality writers. Some of them have ended up at George Mason University or various places in the West but where they really stand in the world of literature these days, I don't know. Were we simply giving them more credit than they deserved at the time because they were having an opportunity?

Back to the year 1989. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra came out and offered several concerts. They were very well received. They were conducted by Lorin Maazel. Talk about a controversial figure in the world of conducting. Their accompanying artist was the famous Irish flutist, James Galloway. He wowed the audience with his abilities on the flute.

The orchestra was staying in the Sovietskaya hotel which wasn't very fancy. I was hosting a lunch on a given day for a bunch of educators and people from Washington. Fortunately, for some reason, the lunch wasn't to start at 2 o'clock. It was going to be at my townhouse. Late morning, I got a phone call saying Lorin Maazel and James Galloway were sick of the food in the hotel. Could they come by for lunch?

My secretary was a wonderful woman named Anne Edwards. She was born in Wales and a naturalized American citizen and she loved music. I said, "Anne, drop everything you are doing. You and I are hosting Lorin Maazel and James Galloway for lunch."

Well, she couldn't believe I was serious. But she had been to one of the concerts; she knew they were in town and sure enough, we managed to escort the two of them and a couple of others. We ended up paying for these guys, which we shouldn't have done, but it was worth it for the conversation.

Lorin Maazel, a very haughty and somewhat controversial figure in the world of conducting. There were not a lot of tears when he left Pittsburgh because he was didn't associate much with the musicians himself. But on this day, he was dependent upon me for his lunch and Anne Edwards, my Welsh-born secretary was walking on air to be sitting at the lunch table with James Galloway.

We Americans were not the only ones bringing cultural presentations. La Scala, the famous opera company from Italy, did several operas at the Bolshoi. They also did a performance of the Verdi Requiem at the Conservatory and that was a tough ticket to get. You'd go down there and people were swarming around, trying to get in. My wife and I had tickets but there was such a large crowd it was even hard to get in the building. As we were caught up in this mass of people, we saw people in uniform, Russians of course, saying "make way for academician Sakharov." We turned around and sure enough, escorted by two big militia men, were Sakharov and Elena Bonner looking very small behind him.

The crowd did part and let them come through but then you had the same phenomenon as when a fire truck is coming down the street and the cars all go aside to let the fire truck go by. As soon as the fire truck is gone, everyone tries to get behind and make it through

the next several lights. All of us went swarming in, including a lot of people who didn't have tickets. I remember because it was the last time I saw Sakharov alive. It was a couple of months later he died. He was such a frail figure.

That night, our guest was a man named Paul Plishka who recently retired after many years at the Metropolitan Opera and who had Ukrainian roots and had been singing in Kiev and came by Moscow and stayed with us a couple of nights.

A month later, in November, 1989, my wife and I went to Yerevan, Armenia, for the opening of a USIA-organized children's book exhibit. Ambassador and Mrs. Matlock went along with Tom Graham from the political section. This was one year after the terrible earthquake in Armenia that had caused massive destruction and led Gorbachev to cut short a visit to the United States. At the time, that earthquake symbolized a lot of things. Instead of asking for visas to come in to cover the event, journalists just went across the border between Armenia and Turkey without visas. Aid agencies brought in materials that way. A lot of standard procedures went by the way in 1988 at the time of the earthquake in Armenia.

The ambassador didn't want to go down there in the immediate aftermath, wisely feeling he didn't want resources devoted to him that should be going to the earthquake recovery, so it wasn't until a year later that he took advantage of this book exhibit to go to Yerevan. We were staying in guest quarters there. This was the occasion when I heard the news on the radio that the Berlin Wall had been breached. On this particular night, the ambassador was torn because he was being invited to a concert but he was also invited to a dinner hosted by the hierarchy of the Armenian government.

So Phil, never wanting to miss an opportunity said, "Mr. Ambassador, could Bobbi and I represent you at that concert?" "Oh, perfect idea", he says. "Please you go represent us at the concert." It was perfect from my point of view because I would much rather go to music than to another official dinner.

We went to the concert. It was the Armenian symphony orchestra conducted by an American named Loris Tjeknavorian and we were seated up in a very nice box. At the intermission, we went downstairs and I introduced myself to the conductor and explained the circumstances, that the ambassador could not attend but that my wife and I were representing him and we were delighted to be here on this evening and probably we should leave now and go back to this dinner.

He said, "Oh, you can't leave. You must stay." It didn't take too much work to twist my arm to stay. We went back up to our box. After the intermission, the conductor came out and said a few words in Armenian and the next thing I knew, he was pointing to us and we were being asked to stand and everyone in the audience was giving us this enormous round of applause. It was explained to me that he was saying "our guests are from the American Embassy and we want to thank them for all that America has done to help us with earthquake recovery." It was a moving moment. I have never felt more than on that

night that I was representing my country, that I was being thanked for all we had done to help them recover from the earthquake.

The conductor himself had amassed the funds so the orchestra could play this concert. He was providing them with the wherewithal, not only the conducting but many of the instruments they used to play the concert. Some of the music they did that night had roots in Armenian musical history. It was a very memorable evening.

Another memorable musical evening came in February, 1990, when the National Symphony Orchestra came to Moscow and returning as their conductor was Mstislav Rostropovich. It was the first time he had been back in the Soviet Union since he had been exiled. Years earlier, when he and his wife Galina were traveling abroad, his passport and his citizenship had been taken away but during that period, he had done well. He was now the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra.

So his return was an event. I went to the airport with the ambassador and the minister of culture for his arrival and it was a mass of journalists and well wishers. I knew his sister and her husband quite well so we were swept up in the arrival of the orchestra. There were press conferences and luncheons in his honor and two concerts.

At the first concert, he conducted the same program as the last time he had conducted on that stage before he went into exile – Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 and Shostakovich. Shostakovich was one of his mentors so there was symbolism all over the place. The audience included in a special box Raisa Gorbachev. He did a number of encores.

All of the encores were by Russian composers until the very last which he didn't introduce at all. He simply turned, picked up his baton and conducted the orchestra in "Stars and Stripes Forever." The message was clear. All the other music was Russian. That's where he came from. What he knew best was Russian music. But the final encore said something about where he was now. Politically he was now an American, Stars and Stripes Forever. People stood and clapped rhythmically. It was a moving event.

The next night, he not only conducted but he played the Dvorak Cello Concerto, one of the pieces he has recorded and one of the most famous pieces for cello. Then he went on to Leningrad and did another performance there. If you didn't know it before, you knew by then that things were changing in the political world and what better medium to express it than music?

Finally, just a month before we left in 1990, they had the quadrennial Tchaikovsky competition. This is the same competition that Van Cliburn had won in 1958. For all our years in Moscow, this was the first time we had been there when the Tchaikovsky competition took place. So we went to several of the performances and knew that one particular American woman was really outstanding.

We were not at all surprised when Deborah Voigt received the first prize in the soprano competition; Deborah Voigt is today a staple at the Metropolitan Opera, one of the

leading figures in the world of opera. I did see her one time in Washington and again in Pittsburgh and I said to her on both occasions, "I heard you when you sang in the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow." She smiled and remembered; it was a stepping stone for her.

So I have gone through my major Moscow musical memories. There are plenty of other lesser Moscow musical memories but you get the gist.

Q: I think all of this is extremely important and as one talks about Russia, music is important.

BROWN: The point I am trying to make is these weren't simply concerts. These were concerts that said something about what was going on at that time. They had political symbolism that conveyed to the Russians that times had changed.

Q: Did you have American visitors come and say what the hell is this all about? In other words, being rather skeptical? Did you find yourself saying things really are happening?

BROWN: I didn't find Americans were skeptical about the musical events or any of the other activities that we were involved in. Whether it was a concert or a book fair or a speaker or an exhibit, it was quite easy if you had a particular visitor in town to say "hey, do you want to go out to one of these?"

It was both fun and instructive to include your visitors, whether it was Madeleine Albright or a foot soldier from Washington. There were people who were maybe a little more sober about the changes and who said "yes, but." That wasn't bad to have people come say "let's keep this in perspective. Let's keep their feet to the fire." I think Mr. Wick did that in a funny way through his information talks. There were a lot of people saying "they are just like us; they are just people." Sure, they are just people. That was not a great discovery but the system was still based on very different ideas.

I had an excellent desk officer in USIA named Rick Ruth. He had been an exhibit guide. He didn't stay in the Foreign Service. When I came back for that first Chautauqua Conference, we had these pins that somebody had produced with the joint Soviet and American flags and we had given them out on the airplane. The Russians loved these flags and I was wearing one and Rick called me on it and said he wouldn't be comfortable wearing an American/Soviet flag pin. I thought about it and concluded Rick was right; that Soviet flag still stands for a lot of things that I do not believe and am not comfortable with. It was good to have reminders from time to time that there were still a lot of differences.

Q: As you were doing this were you able to see or place or one way or the other more favorable treatment of the United States in the media?

BROWN: By and large, not only in the media but in almost all aspects of our bilateral relationship, things were improving. The way we communicated with each other

officially, the number of visitors in both directions, things like the Chautauqua exchanges which involved hundreds of people both ways, the number of people getting visas to emigrate and by and large press coverage. It was still controlled but it was much more favorable especially in connection with the Gorbachev trip to the United States in December of 1987 and Reagan's visit to Moscow in 1988.

Somebody will say to me that I am forgetting that along the way there were bumps in the road. There were issues that still arose, though there weren't major roadblocks. For most part it was a pretty harmonious period.

Q: I almost had the feeling you had almost a separate entity being the KGB which tried to screw things up from time to time such as taking a correspondent like Daniloff and others. You could almost count on it.

BROWN: Yes, as we've discussed before, there was the Daniloff arrest in 1986 right before the Reykjavik summit and right after the Reykjavik summit, with the Daniloff episode sort of resolved, you had the mutual expulsion of diplomats. We didn't have during my time there anything comparable to that. We didn't have mutual expulsion of diplomats or symbolic arrests of people. There were annoyances and issues would pop up but by and large, this was a period of good, improving relations and of people continually talking about that.

Q: Did you have a positive feeling toward Gorbachev or not? Did you really feel he was behind making this change or at least the person who was?

BROWN: I think people pretty much did associate it with Gorbachev and also with his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. James Baker and Shevardnadze developed a very close working relationship so it was personalized to that extent. Not only could you contrast Gorbachev to his predecessors, who were just stumble bums. Gorbachev was out there, active, speaking. Margaret Thatcher said it better than anybody else, "a man we can work with" so yes, it was associated with Gorbachev. He was accessible. I think the ambassador, if he needed to, could get to Gorbachev. He certainly could get to Shevardnadze.

Q: How did you find Matlock as someone to work with?

BROWN: I always begin by saying I was very privileged to have Jack Matlock as ambassador during my three years in Moscow. He was there for a few months before we arrived and was there for a full year afterwards. He was the only ambassador we had on our second tour. Outstanding, professional, good Russian, knew the history of the country, had served there at various different levels. He was not an easy man to work with. He was a difficult taskmaster, he could be cutting in his criticisms, he could really squash people's morale but he was a first-class professional.

I used to laugh because he did as much chest thumping as anybody about how we could get along without local employees. "We can do it on our own," he would say and then he

would also ask why there weren't more activities at Spaso House. He wanted these monthly seminars. He wanted us to get a whole new group of people into Spaso House.

Then he would come in some morning grumbling because we were doing so much at Spaso House and they didn't have local employees to help out. "We are doing this with our very limited resources," he would say. Don't we know? Aren't we all operating under that kind of situation where we have more on our platter than we can handle? We don't even have the human resources to deliver invitations.

Q: I would think that on the information side of diplomatic business you relied heavily on the local employees with their connections. You usually get an extremely high caliber; the niece of prime minister or what have you. It was a sought after job and we benefited tremendously.

BROWN: I remember people who had been our Foreign Service national employees from my first assignment. On my first tour, Yuri Zarakovich was the chief FSN for the press section, working with me. I earlier recalled some of our experiences together. By my second tour, Yuri was working first for the Associated Press and then Time magazine. When he died a few years ago, Time featured him in their inside cover page for all that he had contributed to their coverage of the Soviet Union.

People used to fret that the Soviet employees were a threat to our security and were nosing around, finding out what we were doing. That to me reflected badly on the American supervision, if that was the case. You used these people where you could and you didn't get them involved if you didn't want to. Sure, if you were working in the defense attaché office or certain other parts of the embassy, you didn't use FSNs directly. In our business, it would have been extremely useful if we had had some of them just to help us out with some of the mechanical things, drivers to deliver invitations and that sort of thing, but we didn't have them and we managed.

Back to Ambassador Matlock, he was a most willing participant in any of our programs. When we had an exhibit opening, he always wanted to go out and deliver a speech. He, of course, would do it in Russian or even try his hand at some other language.

He counted on us to provide the speakers and make the arrangements for what we called Spaso House seminars. Ambassador Matlock wanted to have a once-a-month evening at Spaso House, each event with a whole new guest list, not the same old people, a dinner, a lecture by a prominent American, preferably in Russian but if not in Russian, we would use simultaneous interpreters. We would get find people in Washington and elsewhere, pay their way and bring them out to lecture.

At one of those events, the speaker was a woman who had been on Jack Matlock's staff when he was at the NSC and who he saw as a bright, upcoming, future high ranking official in our government; her name was Condoleezza Rice. We brought her out as the featured speaker at a Spaso House seminar.

Q: Were these speakers all government people?

BROWN: Government, non-government. Matlock felt there were enough resources in Washington that we could get someone out there once a month. We'd have people in economics, politics, occasionally in a cultural field. The other thing was he didn't want us, quite legitimately, to be inviting the old reliables, people we already knew. He wanted new faces. It was a little hard sometimes because there were people who had come reliably to our film shows or whatever during the toughest times and they were no longer on the guest list because we were trying to expand, get new people.

A partial list of those who appeared would include Murray Feshbach from the Commerce Department, an eminent scholar on Soviet demographics. A professor from Princeton named Steve Cohen who was writing a biography of Nikolai Bukharin; this was a subject that would have been completely off bounds a few years earlier. We had Alan Greenspan. I don't know what hat he was wearing at the time.

We also had Marshal Goldman, the Soviet scholar at Harvard. Speaking of Marshall Goldman, during those three years his son, Seth Goldman, came to Moscow to work for a family there as what was called a "manny," a young man to come out to help with the family and that kind of thing. Seth didn't have mail privileges so his dad sent things to me and I passed them on to Seth.

A few years later, I was teaching at the Fletcher School and I went down to Harvard to an event chaired by Marshall Goldman at Harvard. We went around the table introducing ourselves. I introduced myself and said, "The most important role I played in Moscow was to deliver mail to Seth Goldman." At that point, eyebrows went up as he remembered who I was. Seth Goldman, in his 20s then, is today the owner of the very popular product called Honest Tea. He did not follow in his father's footsteps of being a Harvard professor but he has done well.

Q: Were we trying to spread the word of American culture, Tom Sawyer?

BROWN: The Soviets did a lot of Mark Twain because again, Mark Twain stuff did not depict us in the best possible light, race relations and that kind of thing, so a lot of Russian kids grew up reading Tom Sawyer.

We were spreading American culture more broadly, as through the exhibits. Anyone who doesn't know about the exhibits might not know what I am talking about but you'd take a theme like agriculture or design and around that you would build an entire mini expo. Thousands of visitors would walk through the large exhibit area seeing aspects of design in the United States. At each stop along the way, American guides would answer questions and interact with the visitors. There would be brochures and souvenirs handed out at the end. People would line up by the hundreds and thousands and these were not only for Moscow and Leningrad. These were for places like Rostov, Dushanbe, Magnitogorsk and cities that had never before been exposed to Americans and American cultural life.

Q: We are right on the cusp of the Soviet Union disintegrating and all these various republics, the 'stans' and all coming up. Were we getting out to Dushanbe and the Bishkek and Almaty and all and were we also seeing anything there, the seeds of discontent or disunion?

BROWN: Yes, we were getting out and no section got out any more than the press and cultural section partly because we had the mandate, partly because we had the tools, for example, a book exhibit in Novosibirsk.

On my first tour, as I mentioned before, I traveled to every republic capital except the Baltics states. I made multiple trips to Tbilisi, Georgia. We had the mandate to go to Central Asia and I traveled to republic capitals like Tashkent, Dushanbe, Frunze and Alma Ata, as they were then called. I went to Khabarovsk and Nakhodka in the Soviet Far East.

The area I didn't go to on my first tour but that I did visit multiple times on my second tour was the Baltics and it was here, more than any other area, where you began to see the seeds of disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the Baltics, more than any other area, they were talking about independence. Not in 1987 but by 1990, Lithuania and other areas were talking seriously about breaking away from the Soviet Union.

Q: Did you sort of feel you were in the middle of a historic moment?

BROWN: Yes, I did. I was smart enough to know that this was a sweep of history. Things were really happening there. There was no country that had a higher priority in American foreign policy during this time than the Soviet Union. There was no place where the changes were more revolutionary, where the stakes were higher, where the opportunities were greater than Moscow during this period.

My wife and I regularly discussed whether we should stay on for a fourth year. We didn't but I was not alone. I think many of us in the embassy knew this was a historic period. And again, no one was more aware of this than Ambassador Matlock. He authored a book, Autopsy on an Empire, which is a definitive work for scholars and journalists on what happened during this period. David Remnick likewise wrote an excellent book covering this period so it has been very well documented in a scholarly fashion.

Q: How did you view events in East Germany and Czechoslovakia that were, when that started?

BROWN: I guess it was part of the pattern, part of what was happening.

Q: When the Berlin Wall collapsed, was that seen as well, there goes the ballgame or something like that?

BROWN: I clearly remember where I was at that moment. We (my wife and I) were in Armenia with the ambassador in November of 1989 and I heard on the Voice of America that the wall had been breached and that people were freely moving back and forth by the thousands. I brought that news to him at breakfast. He first looked at me skeptically but it was then confirmed. It was confirmed through the Voice of America broadcasts.

You knew that things were happening, that historic events were occurring but every new event seemed to outdo the other by such a degree that it still amazed you. On that morning, if I had said within two years the Soviet Union would no longer exist, I don't think anyone, including Ambassador Matlock, would have believed me. It was happening so fast and each new phase was so revolutionary it was really hard to believe it was occurring.

When you think of the fall of the Berlin Wall or what was happening in Czechoslovakia, the question was always the contagion. How were the Soviets going to control this? Change was happening within the Soviet Union but it was still controlled change.

Q: Did you have someone somewhere within the Soviet government, an official, not a secret source but someone go and talk to and say what the hell is going on?

BROWN: This man I mentioned earlier, Leonid Dobrohotov in the Information Department of the Central Committee, was someone we could talk to about what was happening; you could get an honest answer to a question if you needed to for business purposes.

I think better sources were people like Vitaly Korotich, the editor of Ogonyok magazine or people in the intellectual, creative intelligentsia, because there wasn't that much of a gap between them and the people in the Kremlin. For a big country, there was a relatively small group of insiders.

Just as Obama can name all the basketball players in the NBA or NCAA playoffs, people in the Kremlin knew all the movers and shakers in the media world or in the theater. All you had to do was talk to those people and they could tell you that.

Q: When you were there were American entrepreneurs, missionaries flooding into the country or did this come later?

BROWN: If by missionaries you mean purely religious?

Q: Yes.

BROWN: No, I am not aware of that. But missionaries in a broader sense, people coming in with ideas.

My notes say something about Frank Perdue, the chicken man. At one point, someone in Washington suggested I might facilitate his entrepreneurial interests in Russia.

Q: I would think that would be a natural.

BROWN: It would be a natural but I managed to persuade people in Washington it was not for me to do. We had any numbers of people coming out with ideas.

Q: I am a film buff. Anything about films one way or the other?

BROWN: I went quite often to Dom Kino to see movies and quite often at the invitation of a producer but I am not enough of a film buff to be able to remember the movies that I saw. The excuse that I can use is that a lot of them I saw were not terribly memorable.

A visitor we did have during that time was Robert Redford. He came out in May, 1988, to show his film called "Milagro Beanfield War." There was a special showing and enough people knew Robert Redford that he attracted quite a crowd.

The next night, after a reception for Redford at Spaso House, we asked Redford and his party if they would like to go to a special theater event. It was at the Taganka Theater which was then directed by a man named Nikolai Gubenko, who later became the minister of culture. The show had to do with the life of the singer/songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky. At the end of the performance, there was an appearance on stage by Yuri Lyubimov, who had founded the Taganka Theater. He had been forced into exile and this was his return. He was greeted by applause, cheers, tears and flowers.

It was an experience for Redford not simply to see the play but to see how Russians adored theater and how Lyubimov was being rehabilitated, reintegrated into the world of theater. We went to Lyubimov's office. I remember Robert Redford adding his name to signatures on the wall. Famous people had written all over the walls of Lyubimov's office.

The Redford party was being escorted. I got back in their vehicle and as we were driving back to the hotel, Redford said, "Where can I get a beer?" I said, "Why don't you come by my place?" So we went by my place and Robert Redford came in with me and picked up a couple of beers and I said, "Well, why doesn't everyone come in and have drinks here?" He said, "We'll go back to the hotel" so he took my beer and went back to the hotel. I can never claim that he was in my house for drinks but he did drink my beer.

And then there was a very special night at the House of Cinema. All of the various artists or members of the creative intelligentsia had their own clubs. There was the Writers' Union, the Composers' Union, the Journalists' Union, the Cineastes' Union and with it, the Dom Kino or House of Cinema. They invited the ambassador and members of his staff to come for an evening, to be on stage, talk and answer questions. So the ambassador put out the call. I am proud to say I was the only counselor who accepted the invitation. There were four other guys, three of them mid-level Foreign Service officers, all with beards, plus the Ambassador's special assistant. I have a picture. That hall must have been filled with several hundred people and many of them asked questions.

We were on that stage for a couple of hours. The ambassador with his excellent Russian answered 90% of the questions because a lot of them were political. At some point, someone wisely said “tell us a little bit about yourselves. Tell us what you do. Tell us something personal about yourself.” That is where I made my biggest contribution because I humanized things a little bit.

I said, “I am 47 years old.” I told them my birthday was November 7th which, of course, is the anniversary of the great October Revolution and that produced laughter and amusement. I told them I had recently seen on Soviet TV video of events on Red Square on November 7th, 1941, during the war. That happened to be the day I was born and I explained how I looked with great interest and respect at that video of what was going on in Russia on the day I was born. I think they appreciated that.

It was all done in Russian and we got a lot of compliments from the ambassador. He was very pleased with the evening, that he didn’t have to carry the entire load. Of course, he wanted to carry the ball but he appreciated the rest of us coming along and participating in the evening. It was one of my more memorable public diplomacy opportunities.

Q: Today is the 29th of May, 2012 with Phil Brown. And Phil, I will let you pick it up where we left off.

BROWN: I spent from 1977 to 1990 overseas, a period of 13 consecutive years, a little longer than normal. As I look back on it, I was really fortunate. I was in interesting places at interesting times.

We are now covering the last phase, 1987 to 1990. I returned to the Soviet Union for my second tour there. In preparing for these interviews, it has been a daunting task figuring out how to approach that period when we were amazingly active. We were very fortunate to be in the Soviet Union during a period of great change. I think even among people who don’t have a great sweep of history, if you talk to them now about the Soviet Union and Gorbachev, a light will go on. People remember that period.

The last time, I talked about an exercise where I just blue skied. I recalled the things I really remember from that period and there was a link to them; it happened to be music so I treated you last time to a baker’s dozen of different events ranging from Billy Joel to Mstislav Rostropovich. That is a pretty wide spectrum. It wasn’t just the music, it was music in a political context that struck me but I left out a lot of other things.

Going through my notes this week, I happened upon a newspaper article that really captures what I have been trying to say, what an amazing period it was. It was an article written by my friend Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. The first time I was in Moscow, I was the press attaché and we had about 25 American journalists including Dan Fisher of the Los Angeles Times. Dan and I had the normal kind of relationship you have with a journalist, a very professional relationship, but we were also good friends. We played paddle tennis together. Dan and his wife, Candy, came to our apartment for

Thanksgiving with their three daughters, roughly the same ages as our two daughters. We were good friends.

So Dan came back to Moscow. I am not sure if he was on an overseas assignment somewhere, had been in Poland or Israel or came from the States. I don't know but he looked around the Soviet Union he saw in 1989 and he had the same impression everybody else had. My goodness, this place has changed. He wrote an article that captures so much of what I have been talking about. I want to quote a little bit from it.

Q: Please do.

BROWN: The headline (Los Angeles Times, January 29, 1989) was "Friendly Soviets Roll out Red Carpet for Americans" and it referred right in the first paragraph to the different world of journalists because Dan knew what it had been like being a journalist roughly ten years earlier. He talked about the changing environment for businessmen and then he referred to the U.S. Embassy saying it has become the hub of a busy bilateral social life. He wrote: "All this reflects the 'new thinking in Kremlin foreign policy' and the change this has wrought in the day to day life for Americans here."

Then he quoted me: "'Four-fifths of what I do wasn't even in the job description three years ago,' said Philip C. Brown, the press and cultural affairs counselor. He is back in Moscow for a second tour after having served here in the late 1970s."

I distinctly remember sitting down with Dan for that interview. It was a relaxed interview. I knew I could be completely open with Dan as I talked about how much things had changed. I made up the quote on the spot but it was entirely accurate. Four-fifths of what I was being called on to do wasn't even in the job description three years earlier.

To quote more from the article, Dan wrote, "Just last week, for example, most of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra showed up at the embassy's theater for the premier of 'Maestros in Moscow,' a video concert of American Soviet compositions and the video is narrated by actor Gregory Peck. Such an evening would have been inconceivable a few years ago, conductor Dmitri Kitayenko said.

"The next night, Ambassador Jack F. Matlock, Jr., an accomplished linguist and expert in Soviet literature was host at a poetry meeting reading for Soviet and other guests at Spaso house, the ambassador's residence. And the day afterward, Matlock gave an unprecedented background briefing, in Russian, for the Soviet press.

"At the famous Tretyakov Gallery, Soviets flocked to see a photo exhibit marking the centennial of America's National Geographic Society. It all adds up, Matlock has said, to 'the most intense relationship since the (World War II) alliance'."

I thought that article really hit the nail on the head. This is what it was like halfway through my second three-year tour so I thought I would take off from there.

Q: At some point I wonder if you could touch on the other Russia and that's the village Russia. I have talked to people and I go back to my little experience of five years in Yugoslavia. Their transportation often was an ox drawn cart. In the world there is a difference between village and city. Were we trying to reach them and frankly, did it make any difference?

BROWN: If you talk purely about village Russia, we were restricted to the area 40 kilometers around Moscow. I do have a distinct memory of going out with our very good Russian friends one day for a picnic in the woods. Not too far from where we were having this picnic, there was a little pond, a natural pond, and boys sitting there with fishing poles that were not much more than sticks with a line on the end. I thought to myself: "This is the 19th century. This could be Mark Twain" and if you multiplied that by thousands of little villages each with a couple of thousand people, you would describe much of Russia at that time.

Were we trying to reach those people? No, I don't think so. I don't think that most of them were all that concerned about the bilateral U.S./Soviet relationship. They were pretty much concerned with what people in villages are concerned about, their daily routine.

Were they poor? By some standards, yes. I don't think the medical care was good. The teaching may have been pretty good in their schools. Teachers were probably very committed. It was certainly not a big city environment.

In 2006, my wife and I went back to Russia and we took a cruise between Moscow and St. Petersburg. I joked I had never before been to St. Petersburg; I had been many times to Leningrad but this would be my first visit to St. Petersburg.

I was looking the other day at that map of that cruise. We went through some eleven different bodies of water -- rivers, lakes, canals, reservoirs. I would be hard pressed today to name even four or five of them. It is such a complex water route from Moscow to St. Petersburg. On the way, we stopped in a couple of villages. We had left behind the Moscow, the glittery Moscow that you see today with Gucci and all the other luxury stores within a stone's throw of the Kremlin.

You get out to these villages and it doesn't look as if a whole lot has changed. I think the way of life is much as it has been for a long time, both for good and bad. On the good side, relationships are probably simple. Families are close. But in other ways, it is not a wealthy life and a lot of young kids are probably anxious to get out of the villages just as they are in many other countries of the world.

But during the period of 1987 to 1990, I did not make many trips to villages. I went to some cities that were really pretty remote, places where I wouldn't want to live. Two that come to mind are Magnitogorsk and Donetsk, both industrial towns, both a couple hours' flying time from Moscow. They struck me as grim places in which to live.

BROWN: Back to the article which quotes Ambassador Matlock. I talked about Ambassador Matlock last time. He was a tough taskmaster and at times he was too tough, unnecessarily critical of a very hard working staff. But it was a privilege to be there at a time when he was ambassador. No one was more qualified for that position -- as a career Foreign Service officer, as a gifted linguist, as a political analyst, as a full time participant in just about anything (except a Billy Joel concert) and as, we learned later, on as a scholar.

Dan Fisher's article referred to a press briefing. The first time I was in Moscow, as press attaché, we had weekly press briefings done by Ambassador Toon and they were *de rigueur* for the American press because you didn't have many other sources and you might pick up some little tidbits from Mack Toon.

On my second tour, Jack Matlock started out doing press briefings for the American press but interest diminished. It didn't have anything to do with the quality of the briefing; there were simply a lot more sources of news apart from the embassy. So we reached the point where we did them on an *ad hoc* basis. That was a very excellent evolution.

Related to that, I remember the case of an American official -- governor, mayor or someone like that -- who made a visit to the American school. He was talking to kids and he asked somebody at the school, "aren't there aren't any journalists?" They laughed and said no. Once upon a time, when an American governor or mayor came to the American school, there would be journalists, American press, but it became so ordinary that no one was interested.

But Matlock did do background briefings and even on-the-record interviews for the Soviet press. That was interesting on several different levels: one, that the Soviet press would come; two, that we had an ambassador who felt comfortable doing it in Russian, though there were times when he was careful and might prefer to say something for the sake of record in English. That, I think, says a whole lot about the change.

Getting back to Dan Fisher's article he wrote, "American correspondents who were much derided here as 'bourgeois scribblers' are today (1989) being invited to write guest columns for the government newspaper." That was very definitely the case. We and U.S. government officials had access to the Soviet media.

But I want to talk about some other particularly memorable moments from this period.

1988 marked the 30th anniversary of the U.S./Soviet cultural exchange agreement. It dated back to the Eisenhower period and his granddaughter, Susan Eisenhower, came to Moscow for the anniversary. Susan Eisenhower was a fairly regular visitor, very interested in the Soviet Union. There was a ceremony at the Hall of Columns in Moscow. Jack Matlock was on stage. From the Soviet side, someone delivered remarks from Gorbachev and Matlock asked me, "Do we have Reagan's remarks?"

I said, "No, we don't." I didn't know that there were supposed to be Reagan remarks for this occasion.

So I scrambled. My counterpart Aleksandr Churlin from the foreign ministry got on the telephone and took down a dictation in Russian of President Reagan's remarks. Meanwhile, the ceremony was going on. We found a secretary who typed the remarks in Russian. I passed the text to Ambassador Matlock with a note saying here are President Reagan's remarks in Russian. He took them, walked over to the podium and delivered them even though he hadn't had a chance to read them beforehand.

This was an act of faith that the Russians were on our side, that they weren't coming up with their own distorted version of Reagan's remarks. We could hand the text to Jack Matlock and know he could pull this off.

I used to joke that Ambassador Matlock -- who went to Moscow first as a young consular officer in the 1960's, went back as DCM in the 1970's, returned briefly as chargé in 1981, then went back as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary (and he certainly was that) in 1986 for four years -- should really go back to Moscow one more time as cultural affairs officer. He should have done so both because that's where his interests lay and because it would have been good for him to get his hands dirty and see how much work went into putting together some of the programs. He knew his Russian literature, opera and theater. He kept us on our toes.

In addition to the ambassador, we also worked for USIA Director Wick. This was the heyday of Charles Wick's directorship. We felt it in many different ways, not least of which via something called U.S./Soviet information talks. These were annuals talks involving on the Soviet side the head of state television and radio, state publishing and certain counterparts in the United States to try, from the American point of view, to make sure we had more access to Soviet audiences and that we could call them on issues of disinformation when they were putting out something we felt was not honest.

We had several rounds of talks, both in Washington and in Moscow. The Moscow meetings in 1988 marked what I described as the busiest programming week in the history of P&C Moscow. We had virtually every senior USIA official in Moscow at that time, mostly because of the information talks, but because the talks coincided with the Chautauqua exchange in Tbilisi, and the opening of the exhibit that we called Information, USA in Leningrad. And oh, by the way, we had a musical group, the Cleveland Quartet and the musical, *Sophisticated Lady*; all in the course of one week.

As I have mentioned before, these exhibits were not just pieces of paper on a wall. These were multifaceted, three-dimensional displays of American life complete with young Russian-speaking guides. Sometimes it wasn't only Russian; for non-Russian cities, we tried to recruit people who spoke those languages.

Under the Cultural Exchange Agreement, we took these exhibits to six cities around the Soviet Union and the Soviets had the right to go to six cities in the United States. They

never came close to matching our programs. For anyone not familiar with these exhibits, the best point of reference would be the Nixon kitchen debate with Khrushchev back in the '50s. That same program was still going strong in the late 1980's.

Over the three years 1987 to 1990, I went to every one of the cities in which the exhibit was staged. I went to a city called Rostov, south of Moscow. What I distinctly remember from that trip was that the person who came out from Washington for the opening was our deputy director, Marvin Stone. Marvin Stone's was formerly editor in chief of US News and World Report. He was a strong anti-Communist and told me that he could never have imagined coming to the Soviet Union under these circumstances. But I heard him on the phone one night with his wife saying that he wished she had come with him. He called it a real eye-opener of an experience. It was an experience that far surpassed what he thought it was going to be.

This was October of 1988. It coincided with the stock market crash. I told Marvin Stone the Dow Jones had gone down more than 500 points in one day and he said what? He was quite convinced I was wrong and would only believe it when I had a better source. That drop in the stock market crash was going to affect his portfolio pretty seriously.

I went to Tashkent, Central Asia, for the opening of the exhibit there. We were going to go to Tashkent for the opening and then on to Samarkand and Bukhara. The guy who came out was not the most scintillating personality. But I went. It wasn't the first time I had been to Samarkand and Bukhara but now that I think back, what an exciting place to visit. These were Silk Road cities with wonderful architecture, wonderful history.

I was trying to describe Samarkand to this man who came out from Washington. Goods would travel east and west and people would come to Samarkand to tie up their camels and get refreshed. He said, "Oh, yes. I know what you are talking about. It's like Breezewood." He was referring to a place that I know well on the Pennsylvania Turnpike where people come from north and south and east and west, tie up their "camels," get gasoline and go on their way. I thought that was a perfect analogy; Breezewood on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and Samarkand on the Silk Road in Central Asia.

I mentioned two other cities I went to for an exhibit opening. One was Magnitogorsk and the other was Donetsk, two of the grimmest and grimiest cities I can recall. Magnitogorsk is east of Moscow a couple of hours. There was a sign that pointed in two directions; one said Europe, the other Asia. It was true. It was in the Urals and a pretty much the dividing line between European Russia and Asian Russia.

Donetsk was down in the coal basin. Both cities were described as the Pittsburgh of their region. Magnitogorsk because back in the '20s and '30s, moguls from Pittsburgh went there to help them establish their steel industry and Donetsk because it was a coal mining area. Having grown up in Pittsburgh, I didn't really see much of my hometown in either Magnitogorsk or Donetsk.

We also went to Minsk, the capital of Byelorussia for the exhibit opening or, if not for the opening, to visit with the guides and see how things were going. Minsk is a city that got wiped off the map by the Nazis. They have Napoleon and Hitler to thank for the lack of any architecture there. That visit coincided with the earthquake in Armenia in December of 1988.

I recall clearly at the time that Gorbachev was in the United States meeting the president-elect, George Bush. He cut short his visit and returned to Moscow to be back home for the recovery efforts following the earthquake in Armenia. It said something at the time. The head of the country was personally involved in this terrible tragedy in Armenia.

Charles Wick was succeeded by Bruce Gelb as Director of USIA and Bruce Gelb and his wife came to Moscow for an exhibit opening. They were with us for an entire week so we needed a variety of activities. We decided he should visit Tbilisi. I had been to Tbilisi many times and so I proposed that we do something different. Despite objections and questions from a number of quarters, I got my way. We flew to a city called Vladikavkaz and from there, we took the Georgian military highway to Tbilisi. I had heard about this route from someone years earlier and it fascinated me.

My counterpart in the foreign minister, Mr. Churlin, was not keen on this at all. I think that he felt it was dangerous, and maybe he was right. We were picked up at the airport in Vladikavkaz and driven at breakneck speed down the old Georgian military highway to Tbilisi, getting out just once or twice for the view. It was really an exciting trip.

Q: How well was it maintained?

BROWN: The road was maintained but what I think they were concerned about was even then, there was unrest in this area. At one point when we stopped to take pictures. I stood so that it looked as if I was standing right on the edge of this cliff though I wasn't; people were concerned. It was an exciting addition to the trip to Tbilisi.

For the exhibit in Moscow, I asked Mr. Gelb, who was traveling with his wife Lueza, how he would like to visit it. It was in Sokolniki Park, one of the parks outside the center of the city and Gelb was staying at the ambassador's residence. I said: "There are two ways we can go there on Saturday. We can get in a vehicle, the ambassador's vehicle and drive out there with all the comfort or we can do it the way an ordinary Russian would do it; we can go over and get on the subway."

He said, "I'd love to go on the subway" and so Mr. Gelb, his wife and I walked to the subway, made our connections and arrived with the general public. I think he really appreciated it. It gave him a better feel for Moscow and, when we got there, for the big crowds. This wasn't the formal opening but there was a big crowd and long lines. He stood in line a while just to get a feel for things.

We also took Mr. Gelb and his wife to visit friends of ours, Misha and Flora Litvinov, in their apartment. Misha was the son of Maxim Litvinov, one of Stalin's foreign ministers

and also Ambassador to the United States during the war. It was just a personal call but a chance to meet someone with an interesting personal experience.

Q: He's Jewish, isn't he?

BROWN: Yes.

And there were two other cities I went to in connection with the exhibit. One was Kishinev, the capital of Moldova. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic at the time. Today, the capital is called Chisinau.

Q: Did you feel a division there between Romania

BROWN: I guess because we were told that this was a country that was ethnically closer to Romania than it was to the rest of the Soviet Union. I remember it as quite a poor city.

These days, in my current role accompanying international visitors, we occasionally get people from Moldova. There is no reason to be surprised but I would note that some of them are very capable, very committed people.

Q: We had an intern here from the university. She is very good.

BROWN: I think of some of these countries like Albania and Moldova, what we used to think were the dark side of the moon. Sure, they are still poor but I think one of the things we can be most satisfied about is that with the end of the Cold War, a generation later, there are good, capable, committed people.

Then I went to Almaty, then the capital of Kazakhstan. Ambassador Matlock went along. We had a senior official from USIA named Michael Pistor. Ambassador Matlock was willing to take a couple, three days to go out there because he saw the exhibit as a catalyst, a way to call on local officials.

I should say parenthetically that on an early trip I took with him, he called on local officials; when we came back, he realized there had been no note taker. We in P&C had our hands full with the exhibit and everything else we were doing and were really not in the role of note taking so from there on, he would add someone from the political section to go along and be a note taker.

I remember one time hearing him boast that he had reached the stage where he would be a note taker only for the president. Even for the Secretary of State, he would not be the note taker. Somebody else would. Here's a guy who grew up on the mother's milk of a junior Foreign Service officer's note taking. He had now reached the level where he would be the note taker only for the President of the United States.

I think that was the occasion where at some meal we were served the entire head of a beast, perhaps a goat or a cow, which included the tongue and the eyeballs and

everything else. Jack Matlock played along with this in his toast, likening the body parts to our relationship. Whatever he said, it was vintage Jack Matlock.

There were many other facets of USIA/USIS programming. To mention a couple of them, we used books in several different ways. We participated in book fairs in Moscow. I remember going one time to the University of Tartu in Estonia and making a special book presentation at the university there; we had a nice little ceremony as we gave a book donation to the director. I went to Novosibirsk in Siberia and to the adjacent city of Akademgorodok, this created scientific center, for a book exhibit.

We also brought out or facilitated the visits of individual artists, speakers, specialists. My list here shows the name of clarinetist Charles Neidich, the Dance Theater of Harlem, the Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble, the Beaux Arts Trio, pianist Ruth Laredo, the Aspen Wind Quintet, the Verdehr Trio, Disney Gillespie, Joshua Bell. All these individual artists and groups performed in the Soviet Union during this time. If we were not the entire sponsor, we were facilitating. We were very involved in their presence.

We had an evening at Spaso House featuring the U.S. poet laureate, Howard Nemerov and the eminent Russian poet, Bella Akhmadulina. She and Nemerov shared the stage. You have to know how seriously the Russians took poetry to understand the impact an evening like that would have.

The eminent architect Richard Meier came out and met with counterparts.

We also inaugurated a high school exchange program. This is something that had the blessing of President Reagan. Somewhere along the line, he had said he wanted to see thousands of high school students exchanged every year. One of the first schools to participate was Bethesda/Chevy Chase High School, which is just up the street from where I live right now.

Let me mention the visit of Voice of America Director, Richard Carlson. He was another of these persons whose visit it would have been hard to imagine. The director of the Voice of America, Peter Strauss, came out on my first tour but by my second tour, it was a totally different relationship. By now, the Voice of America was not being jammed and Richard Carlson could have meetings with Soviets.

Even more interesting was the fact that the Voice of America assigned its first full time correspondent to Moscow and they could not have picked a better person than André de Nesnera. André was a fluent Russian speaker and a delightful guy. He and his wife and three young boys lived in a hotel for quite a while and I remember inviting his wife one day to come over and use our washing machine for their laundry. She did and was so grateful; little things like that you could do for people but if you are living in a hotel with three small boys, you really appreciate it.

Q: When you are talking about the Voice of America there was a man who for years ran the jazz program. He was quite a hero. You might explain what he did.

BROWN: Yes.

In connection with Voice of America and long before jamming was ended, the name of Willis Conover was better known in the Soviet Union than it was in the United States because he did a jazz program on the Voice of America. For many Russians, everything they knew about jazz was through Willis Conover, his programs. I dare say the jamming was less intense when his program was on.

To clarify, what the Russians jammed were language programs. They didn't jam Voice of America in English. Willis Conover's programs would have been on VOA English broadcasts. In any case, the important thing is that Willis Conover was a household word in Russia.

So by the late 1980's, we had a full time VOA correspondent, André de Nesnera, in Moscow. André, I think, was the first person to report the death of André Sakharov. At least that was where I first heard the news.

A footnote: The same year I retired, in 1996, I became a licensed tour guide in Washington, DC. For a number of years, working for Meridian International Center, I led any number of Russians on three-hour tours of Washington; they were here as part of the international visitor program. So I used to point out the Capitol or the Smithsonian, they would take their pictures.

But when I'd say, "Over here on Independence Avenue is the headquarters of Voice of America, *Golos Ameriki*," that got their attention. They wanted to go in and quite often they would do so later and meet some of the people whose names they had gotten to know over the years. It was just as if a radio station we regularly listened to for years had been off limits and suddenly we could go in and meet those people. It was pretty interesting.

Q: In my walking I have often found Russians speaking tourists around the Einstein statue. Was this popular?

BROWN: It is a nice spot for a group photo, yes. Sometimes if the group is on its way to State Department, we will stop there. I don't know if it had a particular connection with Russian visitors.

Another spot that Ukrainians like to visit is the Shevchenko statue over on 23rd street. Likewise with the Russian Orthodox Church on Massachusetts Avenue, the Soviet embassy and various other landmarks.

Q: The visitors exchange and all, were we breaking away from we were sending young people to study architecture and they were sending middle aged scientists?

BROWN: Yes, we were breaking away from that. I think it was probably always a little bit overdrawn. In the first place, we really didn't accept all their people going off to study nuclear technology and submarine warfare and that kind of thing. I don't recall it being much of an issue in my second tour.

If anything, and how quickly we forget; I don't want to overdraw this, but people started to ask if we need exchanges anymore? People can travel so freely now and that kind of thing. This is something I felt less than ten years later in my last overseas assignment.

One of the issues that came up on my second tour in Moscow was a cultural center in Moscow, an agreement for reciprocal cultural centers. We had long, lengthy negotiations and an agreement, if I recall correctly, was signed in 1990 at the Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Washington. There were a lot of negotiations about the diplomatic status of the building and the people working there. We all felt it was important that we have a cultural center in Moscow.

Six or seven years later, when we had carte blanche throughout Eastern Europe, the feeling among some was we don't need cultural centers now. They are wide open societies. Why are we spending all this money on bricks and mortar? I don't know what the status is these days of libraries and cultural centers.

Q: Big mistake.

BROWN: It is true they are expensive and in some countries they can become targets but there was this other element at work, the idea that we had won the Cold war. We didn't need to worry about any of these things anymore.

But let me go back to some of the other people who came out to Moscow during that time. In some cases, it was the place to be and so we had a continuous stream of either high level people or people who'd always somehow wanted to get involved in activities there and now had the opportunity.

In 1988, an American theater director was invited for the first time to direct a play on a Soviet stage. It may not seem like a big deal; perhaps it wasn't but at the time, it was looked upon as a very interesting breakthrough. His name was Mark Lamos. He came out to direct Eugene O'Neil's play called *Desire Under the Elms*.

What I especially recall is that we hosted a reception afterwards at our townhouse and I had no idea how many people were going to come. It seems everyone involved in the project came in our door that night. We pulled out everything we had in the refrigerator and people scarfed it up. It was heady. You had the feeling you were part of something.

There was a Neil Simon play called *Biloxi Blues*. There were new productions on Soviet stages. Again, I use the word Soviet deliberately because they were dealing with issues that had not been touched on before. These weren't your classic Russian plays.

A journalist for The New York Times, Felicity Barringer, was sufficiently impressed by this that she wrote an article about this phenomenon of American theater coming to Moscow. She called it a “milestone” and used phrases like “Broadway on the Moskva” and “the Soviet theatrical world . . . speaking with an American accent.”

You have to understand culture in the Soviet Union to understand why theater was such a barometer. I don’t have the memory right now to go over all the specifics but I can tell we went to a lot of plays. We were conscious of what a barometer this was of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, that this was the real reworking of Soviet society. This was a new openness. There was no area where that was more evident than theater.

Some more names: Ted Turner. I don’t know what brought Ted Turner of CNN out but Ted Turner and all his retinue coming. I remember being invited to a reception for him. Father Hesburgh of Notre Dame came for a human rights meeting and we had an opportunity to brief him, have lunch with him. The artist Robert Rauschenberg was there for an exhibit. In Brezhnev’s time, Rauschenberg’s works would not have been tolerated in the Soviet Union but now he was on a world tour, a peace tour going to countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Jeanne Kennedy Smith, the sister of President Kennedy, came out to plug the very special arts program for disabled, handicapped athletes. Walter Cronkite, whom I had seen in Normandy on the 40th anniversary of D-Day, came out for an event in Leningrad.

Bob Hope came back. Bob Hope was there on my first tour and I talked earlier about how I walked across Red Square with him, helped him buy blue suede shoes, enjoyed his special show at Spaso House for the embassy community. He came back the second time in the late 1980’s. This was a commercial production that they did on the new embassy compound with lights and cameras. I couldn’t get close to him. It involved gags held up on a big card that he would read. Very disappointing.

Q: What about missionaries, do-gooders? They were all over the place.

BROWN: I don’t recall that. Many of the people I mention had an agenda of their own. They were there for a reason. They were pushing some project and they thought this would be to their own benefit. Sara Caldwell came out from Boston and wanted to create a festival of American music. It went nowhere and the Russians, as I recall, were rather disappointed. It would have been great to have a musical exchange but Sara Caldwell did not manage it very well.

Leon Uris, the author of Exodus, came out in connection with Jewish literature, is the way I want to say it. He gave me a signed copy of Mitla Pass.

Q: Did you get any feel from your cultural friends concern about the hemorrhaging of very talented Jewish Russians going to the United States from the Soviet Union?

BROWN: No, I don't remember people expressing that as a concern. They may have thought about it but I think that would only be people who had a think tank view of the world. What's this going to mean to us when all these really good people leave? I can't tell you that my Soviet contacts ever once said "gee, we are losing our good people." More likely, they were wondering if perhaps they should do the same thing.

Q: I can't help looking at Germany today and the horrors of Holocaust. The other thing it did to Germany was it took out a tremendous cultural collection of talent. Either dead or who left. Hollywood and the United States has benefited tremendously by this.

BROWN: No question. America, Israel and a few other countries have benefited greatly from Russian Jewish immigration. The country is much poorer intellectually and otherwise from this loss. No question about it in my mind but I never sensed that people were frightened. In fact, they were probably saying "be gone if you want to leave." I don't think they felt it was ever going to affect them adversely.

What is interesting, and Rostropovich comes to mind, are the cases of those who found fame in the West but wanted to be buried on Russian soil. There are also people who symbolically took a little bit of Russian soil when they left. The talent is gone.

In addition to the steady stream of eminent Americans, we had an unending series of high level visits. I came back to Washington for Gorbachev's visit to Washington in 1987. President Reagan came to Moscow in 1988.

In 1990, Gorbachev went to Washington again. I did not go back for that visit. We had any number of visits by Secretaries of State Shultz and Baker. In 1988, before the Reagan visit, the consul general, Max Robinson, who lived a few doors up, invited us to a reception for some of the human rights dissidents, refuseniks and other people who were trying to emigrate; we made sure our Russian Jewish friends got to that reception. George Shultz was there, Colin Powell was there. I kidded my friends later they were not Jewish enough, they were not pushy enough. "You gotta get in there and introduce yourselves" to Colin Powell and others, I said. Let them know who you are. One way or another, they became very well known and were at the top of the Reagan list when he came out to Moscow a few months later.

We had any number of congressional delegations and many of them were groups of senators. Senator Bradley of New Jersey is the one whom I remember best. I would have to go back and see how many times he came out but he made the most favorable impression. He did not come out for show and I am not saying all CODELS came for show. But he really came for substance and he was particularly interested in economic issues. We did have him one time at our townhouse for lunch with our Russian Jewish friends but he wanted to know about things like Soviet demographics and the whole economic situation.

Despite his interest in economics, I was quite often the control officer, partly because his point of contact in Washington before he came out was my friend Greg Guroff at USIA. I

did not travel with Bill Bradley when I he went to Central Asia. People from the economic section did but I did go with him on any number of appointments and these were really substantive. He asked deep, probing questions. He came back with a lot of information.

We had other senators such as George Mitchell and John Glenn. Senator Glenn met with the first woman cosmonaut, Valentina Tereshkova, and they talked about space flight. But it was Senator Bradley whom I remember most prominently.

I don't think that any USIS post anywhere in the world was busier or was receiving more attention during this time than Moscow. But not everyone understood that. There was something called the USIA Advisory Commission and in June of 1988, they had a meeting in Berlin, right after the Reagan visit to Moscow. They invited the PAOs from London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, all the traditional West European posts with senior PAOs who were mostly ten years older than I was.

I said to people back in Washington "don't you think they should have the PAO from Moscow? There is no other post that has more going on from the USIA point of view right now. We just had the President of the United States. We have all these programs and issues." So at the last minute, they invited me to attend that meeting in Berlin. It wasn't for my ego that I wanted to go. I had plenty of chances to travel but I felt they were trapped in old thinking. These guys had to be reminded you might want to have the PAO, not just from Moscow but from Warsaw and a few other places.

I have another category here in my notes called *perestroika* and *glasnost*, different ways in which those concepts came to life. I mentioned earlier that soon after we returned to Moscow in 1987, we went out to dinner at a place near Red Square. When we came out, we observed a demonstration by Crimean Tatars on Red Square. Demonstrations of any sort were unheard of at one time, let alone on Red Square.

On November 7th, 1987, I was one of two people who represented the embassy at Red Square. We were in the grandstands next to Lenin's Tomb for the parade. As I stood there, I thought of the contrast with my first tour when, on this great public holiday when you think people come out to cheer and watch the tanks go by, several of us from the embassy decided to see what it was really like. What we found was that streets were blocked and you really had to be approved to go anywhere, not only to Red Square but blocks away to watch the parade go by. It was anything but a public kind of event.

In 1987, I had my own pass. I could go down there and sit on the bleachers next to Lenin's tomb. On the other side was a very attractive young woman, Gorbachev's daughter. Raisa Gorbacheva was also there working the crowd. I couldn't get over to talk with her but for me, it was instructive to see the general secretary's family.

A photograph that always made an impression on me was Gorbachev at the funeral of his wife, dissolved in tears. Many of us will be in tears when our beloved spouse passes away but as I looked at that picture, he seemed so very human to me.

Q: What did she die of?

BROWN: I think she had cancer of some sort. She died in 1999, premature, in her sixties. To me, the man, Gorbachev, had humanity and does to this day.

Q: I was in Washington in the '80s and was walking down the street. They had Soviet flags up and Hugo Chavez was making a visit but I wasn't paying much attention. All of sudden the crowd split an awful lot and people waving and all. Up pulled this limousine and there was Gorbachev and we were about five feet apart waving out the window, a world leader

BROWN: Did he actually get out of the vehicle at that point?

Q: He may have somewhere else but

BROWN: It was on that visit in 1987 that he actually got out of the vehicle on Connecticut Avenue and worked the crowd. That was one of those transformational moments.

Q: When you were at the embassy were people coming up with their thoughts about Yeltsin?

BROWN: Yes. I can remember seeing Yeltsin at the July 14, 1990, Bastille Day reception at the French embassy. He showed up there and people were interested in him. By then, he was a well known personality and he probably had had quite a bit to drink already. This was well before he basically pulled Gorbachev's fate out of the fire by getting up on the tank but you can imagine this man getting up on a tank. He was a larger than life personality. I think at the time nobody really knew the role he was going to play but you did know he was a force to be reckoned with.

Q: There was a time, looking at it from the Washington point of view, Yeltsin was being denigrated as a drunk and a fool. It is usually at the lower level, sort of the munchkins of the White House and all were sort of knocking Yeltsin.

BROWN: Even at the time, Yeltsin had a reputation for being a drinker and for being pretty unpredictable. Nobody at the time could foresee what a major role he would play. I stayed in Moscow until the summer of 1990. This was still the Soviet Union. I didn't know anybody at that time who said within a year the Soviet Union will collapse and this whole thing will come apart. We were still very much talking about evolution.

Q: Were we looking at all, was anybody at all sort of sounding the independent republics' temperature?

BROWN: I think in the Baltics. The Baltics was where it was first felt. These were people who were the most ready to talk not necessarily about independence but about something more than just evolution.

The December 2011 issue of the Foreign Service Journal was devoted entirely to the Soviet Union during my second tour. The cover read "When the USSR Fell: The Foreign Service on the Front Lines" and the lead article was by Ambassador Matlock. Other articles quote from some now-released telegrams that they did analyzing what was going on. Even if they were sending back highly classified telegrams, nobody in mid-1990 would have come out and said flatly -- or did come out and say flatly -- this Soviet Union will not last. We were still thinking in terms of evolution and still casting our fate with Gorbachev entirely.

Q: Knowing human nature, particularly human nature in a bureaucracy, there is a tendency to straight line to predict things. This is the way it is; this is the way it always will be.

BROWN: We were not dealing with someone we disliked at the time. We were dealing with someone who gave us the opportunities for an accord we could never have imagined.

Q: Could you give a definition of perestroika and glasnost?

BROWN: At the time people were using these terms, *glasnost* was probably the easier one. Openness, transparency. *Perestroika* would be restructuring with the prefix "*pere*" meaning to redo, to change. It would be the more fundamental restructuring. It didn't mean getting rid of the Soviet Union.

Perestroika is easy to illustrate through examples such as the biography of Bukharin that American professor Steve Cohen wrote. He was given a forum to talk about this biography and Bukharin's widow came. This name would not even have been mentioned earlier.

Such as the staging of a play that in Russian we called *Bretski Mir*. The English title is something like Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Names like Trotsky were referred to in the play itself.

There was a week of conscience to honor the victims of Stalin (this may have been the occasion for the visit by Father Hesburgh). It would have been in the same context of looking back at the Stalinist period and the horrors of that time.

Some other miscellaneous memories:

My wife and I went for a weekend in Tallinn, Estonia. We got in touch with a Lutheran pastor there and he invited us to come to his church on Sunday morning. We accepted and the next thing I know, I am being invited to come up to the pulpit and say a few

things which I did spontaneously. I tried to make them appropriate to a church service. I also talked a bit about my country. They were translated and apparently well received.

We were invited that evening to the pastor's home, where we enjoyed a simple but wonderful meal with their family and children. The pastor pointed out that that morning in the pulpit, he had been wearing a blue shirt. He had on a white clerical collar and his coat was black, fairly standard dress for a cleric. But he explained, "A few months ago I could have been arrested for wearing this outfit."

Those were the colors of the Estonian flag. Every time I see the Estonian flag, black, blue and white, I think of that pastor wearing the Estonian flag. He was a man of God in the pulpit preaching his message and wearing the garb of a cleric but he was also very proud of wearing an outfit that could have gotten him arrested a few months earlier.

I mentioned the writer Vladimir Voinovich who wrote any number of satires in the Soviet Union. We had been fortunate enough to meet him in Garmisch the year before we went back to Moscow. During our tour, he came back and there was a whole night devoted to him at the Writers' Union. He could come back and bring his satirical literature to the Writers' Union.

A man named Edward Lozansky – he was born in Ukraine but by 1990 he was living in the U.S. -- came out along with Senator Phil Gramm of Texas. They were going to establish an independent American university in Moscow. I imagined it as a university that would preach capitalism and all the virtues of capitalism.

What I especially remember is that Senator Gramm at some point said that the only reason people go to work in governments is to wield power. I decided I'd had enough of this. I had to bow and scrape for CODELs but I said to him, "That's not why I went into government service. I went into government work because President Kennedy inspired me to do public service." I basically let him know that I was disagreeing with him and was offended by what he had to say. He harrumphed.

Q: At some point Phil Graham in Congress had made some remark about American diplomats living in marble halls and drinking champagne or something like that just at the time that two of our diplomats were killed in Sarajevo. Not only Foreign Service officers but also the press spoke out against it.

BROWN: Then there was that morning, December 15, 1989, when I turned on the radio and heard that Sakharov had died. It was a moving moment. On the following Sunday morning, there was a public viewing in a building a little outside the center of downtown Moscow. My wife and I went. We could have shown our diplomatic cards and gone to the front of the line but chose not to. It was a bitter cold day. I did what Russians sometimes do. I took newspaper and stuck it in my shoes just to keep my feet a little farther away from the cold. We stood in line a couple of hours just to walk respectfully, silently past the open casket as friends of ours played appropriate string music.

I wanted to walk past Sakharov's casket after having done it the way Russians did it and then I stepped aside and stood there watching other mourners pass by. The estimates on the number of people there were relatively small but the line was extremely long. It was a fitting farewell to a great man.

It was bitter cold that day. The weather the next day changed radically. It was raining as they took his coffin to a grave outside Moscow.

On our first tour, we went frequently to the old American dacha. By now we had a new dacha. We didn't go to it quite as often. It was closer. There was also an international dacha that we went to more often on the Volga River. We would go there and if the weather was cold enough, we would go cross-country skiing on the frozen Volga.

We'd also go out to a place called Ismaylovo outside Moscow where every Sunday the artists would come. They didn't have to be approved. They could sell their wares. There was a lot of junk but occasionally if you had a good eye, you could pick up some really nice souvenirs.

Then there was the February day in 1988, Wednesday the 17th. We had a tie line to Washington, a 24-hour telephone line. We could use it also for personal calls but during the day it was limited to official calls. If I recall correctly, P&C was allotted from 2 to 3 so if I wasn't out of town or at some other activity, I would get on the phone at 2 o'clock and talk to my desk officer back in Washington where it was 6 in the morning. Yes, we had telegrams but this afternoon phone call was a very useful tool.

On this particular day I was talking to him, Rick Ruth, and there was a knock on the door and a woman on our staff named Laura Hodges opened the door and said "Phil, there's a fire on the fifth floor." I relayed the information to Rick, told him I needed to check and put down the phone. I stepped out of my office and I heard one of the information officers, Mike Hurley saying "yeah, I smell the smoke."

I told Rick there was a fire, hung up the phone, put away some papers, locked my safe, grabbed my hat and coat and headed out.

Sure enough, we made our way down one stairwell and I kept hoping we wouldn't come to a door that was locked for some "security" reasons. When we reached the courtyard, we had a view of a raging blaze on the fifth floor and a column of black smoke that went up higher than the roof of the building. Soviet fire trucks arrived and the firemen were allowed into the courtyard; they put out the fire quickly and as it turned out with minimal damage.

That night, we hosted a reception for IREX students and the next day, we went back to work. It was business as usual except for the smell of smoke and the fact that we were invited to wear old clothes.

Somebody could write a small, or not so small, book on fires at or fires related to AmEmbassy Moscow. The building was a horrible fire trap. Everybody got out safely that day. As one of my colleagues said, "After everyone was safe, I was cheering for the fire." He and others would have liked to see the whole building go up in smoke.

It was a fire trap; it was hot, so dirty. We didn't have anybody to come in and clean our offices, even empty the wastebaskets, that kind of thing. It was a wretched place to work. It was one of the many physical challenges of working in Moscow.

President Reagan's visit in 1988 memorable. There were concerts. Charles Wick was there. President Reagan made a public appearance on Red Square. I missed my daughter's college graduation to be in Moscow for the visit. "Sorry. I'd love to come to your college graduation from Tufts but the President of the United States is here." I don't put it in the category of sacrifice but it was one of those little prices you pay.

A few months later, we went with our wonderful Russian friends, Yuri and Tanya Zieman and their daughter Vera, for a last picnic out in the woods before they were able to leave; at last, they had received exit visas. Less than a year before that, during the Gorbachev visit, I was in Washington and picked up a copy of the Washington Post; there on page one was a picture of Yuri's older daughter, Galina, who had received permission to emigrate, a picture of her on the front page of the Post holding up a poster saying 'Let My Parents Emigrate'. You look at the picture and you have to pinch yourself for a moment to remember this is someone whom you know very well.

I did come home for Christmas in December of 1988. I flew one day after the Pan Am bombing. If I recall correctly, every embassy received a notice, an alert from Washington that there might be an incident or be alert or something. Our embassy was one of the few that took that and put it in the form of a memo to the staff. As a result of that, a lot of people thought we knew more than we did. I think it was just coincidental but there were questions raised about whether AmEmbassy Moscow knew something.

Q: Oh, yes. It became quite an issue.

BROWN: I flew from Moscow to Frankfurt and on to JFK and I had a copy of the International Herald Tribune that had the famous picture of the fuselage on the ground in Scotland.

Q: Lockerbie.

BROWN: The flight attendant asked me to turn it over so people couldn't see it. And then coming back to me later and asking to see the article. It was haunting.

From 1987 to 1989, we had a young woman named Sara Fenander working for us and living with us. We didn't have small children but nevertheless, it was very useful to have someone who would help out at receptions and do a little bit of the housework. She had just received a Master's in Russian from Stanford. A very attractive young woman,

particularly to the Marines, who picked her out. But Sara was at arm's length with the Marines. She had no interest in that world at all. We gave her a great deal of liberty, far more than we were allowed to under the restrictions at the time, to go out with friends and have interaction with Russians just because we had a great deal of confidence in her. She had excellent Russian.

We were fortunate that by the time she came, there were any number of people in their 20's who were recruited as nannies or under the PA&E contract. Many of them were very bright, wonderfully outgoing young people. I remember one fellow who I realized was the great-grandson of Robert Frost.

Sometime in 1988, Sara and a group of these people went to a part of the Soviet Union, a part of Russia, that to this day very few people visit; Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk at the southern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula. It is that peninsula where the Korean airliner was shot down. They came back with the stories, amazing stories about salmon and people who had seldom met anyone from outside their own villages. It was a tribute to these people to go out and explore but it was also another example of what you could do at that time.

We attended the wedding of Susan Eisenhower and Roald Sagdeev, one of the Soviet Union's eminent scientists. A nice wedding at Spaso house on the same weekend that Secretary of State Baker was in town but we managed to find time in that high level visit.

I went back to Paris for the dedication of a new organ at the American Church in Paris. I sang in the choir (what a wonderful balance that was to my busy life in Paris) and to go back for the organ dedication; Ambassador Rodgers had been very "instrumental" in fundraising.

We found time even when the USIA inspectors were coming to make a weeklong trip to Ireland. I was pretty casual at that time about travel; I had so many opportunities to travel and I said to my wife that I would make this trip only if we simply winged it, no advance planning. So we got on this midnight Aeroflot flight from Moscow to Shannon. All the Russian planes refueled in Shannon and if there were 150 of us on the plane, 148 went on to Havana. My wife and I got off, rented a car and had a wonderful week completely spontaneous, unplanned, just going from one B&B to the next and then flew back to Moscow.

The Aeroflot return flight began in Lima, went from Lima to Havana, from Havana to Gander to refuel, from Gander to Shannon, from Shannon to Luxemburg and from Luxemburg to Moscow. If you had boarded in Lima on Friday, you would not get back to Moscow until Sunday. It was not an atypical Aeroflot connection. Even when it landed in Ireland, it was accompanied by some fire trucks.

I mentioned that Ambassador Matlock wrote a masterful book on the Soviet Union as did David Remnick of the Washington Post. We were privileged to be in the company of outstanding American journalists. One night, we were invited to a party for Bill Keller of The New York Times. He had just won the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting from Moscow.

P&C finally was assigned a couple of these young Americans under the PA&E contract. I was fortunate enough to pull away from Spaso House a young woman named Nancy Carney. She came and worked for me for the last six months of my assignment. She was so enthusiastic and so delighted to move away from the situation which she was serving drinks to actually come over and do something of substance. It seemed like the more assignments I gave to her, the more she thrived.

As I thought about saying farewell to people, I recalled that you could actually rent for a night an entire boat, a large boat, and do it with rubles. You could use it as a party boat for a night and I said, "Nancy, could you help me with this?"

She did help me. We did it on two separate nights, once for my official contacts and again for friends. It was summer so the days lasted long and we went out for several hours on the Moscow River to a big, wide bay. You had drinks and food. Even my Soviet contacts were awestruck by the fact that I could arrange this. What a nice way it was to say farewell to people rather than just another cocktail party.

Our tour ended on a weekend and on Sunday, we were invited to the Rostropovich dacha. He was not living there anymore but we were friends with his sister and her husband and they said, "Come out to the dacha" and we did. What a lovely place it was, the furnishings, the furniture, the hangings on the wall.

I have two distinct memories of that day. First was how relaxed I felt. I had a great job but I was pushing all the way for three years and that weekend, I knew I didn't have to go to a country team meeting the next morning. I was totally relaxed.

The other recollection was that out in a corner of the garden was where Solzhenitsyn, with Rostropovich providing him refuge, sat and wrote *Cancer Ward*. I found it inspiring.

The next day, before we flew Aeroflot to Beijing, we had a meal at the newly-opened McDonald's on Gorky Street. McDonald's was attracting a huge crowd of Russians just because it was the first McDonald's in Moscow. It was like a vicarious trip to the United States. McDonald's soon learned they couldn't put out trays because the trays walked out the door real fast but Russians were lined up outside for the McDonald's experience.

My wife and I had decided we'd come home via China. We flew to Beijing and spent the better part of two weeks there and in Hong Kong. It was great to be able to look at China and think about the Moscow we had left behind. We had a hotel in Beijing that ran circles around any hotel we ever experienced in Moscow.

We had made the arrangements for our trip through American Express in Moscow. We got to Beijing and were escorted up to our room. There was a bowl of fruit on the table. I called American Express and said we are here for our tour. The man said, "Tour? The only tours we have here are going to Singapore" or something like that. I explained how I had made the reservation through American Express in Moscow and his tone changed.

He said, “Oh, Mr. Brown, you are the tour.” This was one year after Tiananmen Square. There were no American tourists. So for ten days or more, my wife and I had a driver and a guide and we were it.

Q: Where do we go from here?

BROWN: During the course of one of my visits back to Washington, I learned about my next assignment. I had thought that I would now occupy a relatively senior position in the area office, something like European area director. After all, I’d served five years in Paris, six years in Moscow and I was now senior Foreign Service. But I was better served to let the system work and I was assigned as the Edward R. Murrow Fellow at the Fletcher School in Boston.

Q: Today is the 26th of June, 2012 continuing with Phil Brown.

You are off to Fletcher School. When were you there?

BROWN: Just to review. The year is 1990 and I have just finished 13 consecutive years overseas, long by Foreign Service standards. We had gone overseas in 1977 and we had two tours in the Soviet Union, one in the late 1970s and one in the late 1980s and in between five years in Paris. This was the height of my professional career. I was overseas during entire Reagan presidency, all during the 1980s and I had seen the enormous changes in the Soviet Union.

When I describe this to people and I mention Paris, they sometimes smile as if that was just wine, women and song but it wasn’t. Paris was a very intense job as well.

Q: Before we move to that, what was your impression at the time and maybe even later about the foreign press, the media in the Soviet Union and their competence in interpreting what was happening during this very significant period?

BROWN: The competence of the Soviet press in general was never to be underestimated. Even when they were a controlled press, they were very adept at doing their job as official propaganda and so they managed to write things that supported the government line. In terms of competence, even if you scoffed at what they wrote, they were very effective in doing their job.

More in the context of what you are asking, by the late ‘80s they were emerging out of their restrictions. They were probing into all aspects of Soviet history, the Stalin period. They were taking full advantage of the new freedoms.

They still looked at the United States through the prism of communism. I was never in anything other than the Soviet Union. The collapse didn’t come until a year later so it was still communism. There were people who were beginning to think independently. Views were being printed in the media that you never would have imagined before. I would never underestimate the intellectual competence of the Soviet era journalists. They were

well educated, they knew how to do their job but they also knew how to keep their job and didn't want to push too far.

Medford, Massachusetts, Murrow Fellow, Fletcher School (1990-1991)

As I said before, I thought my next assignment would be in Washington in a fairly senior position. I'd served in both Western and Eastern Europe. I thought I'd have a fairly senior job in the area office but not so. I was assigned to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and to a program there established by USIA called the Edward R. Murrow Program.

At first I was a little bit surprised but as I thought more, it was a wonderful way to come back to the United States. I wasn't coming right back to Washington and to the bureaucracy. We knew the Boston area very well. I would be coming back to teach exactly 25 years after I had graduated from the Fletcher School.

This was where I had met my wife and it was two years after our daughter had graduated from Tufts. It was familiar territory. We had a lot of friends in the Boston area and coincidentally, we had a cabin on a lake four hours away in Maine so it was a soft landing.

For many years, I had never paid rent. I didn't want to pay rent so I bought a condo in Arlington, Massachusetts, and commuted from there to Medford where Tufts University is located.

The dean at the time was Jess Salacuse. The program I was involved in was headed by a retired USIA officer named Hewson Ryan. He had been an ambassador in Central America and was referred to either as Ambassador Ryan or Professor Ryan.

A soft landing and yet I realized right away that I was among intellectuals and I felt a kind of insecurity. People would ask me questions about the Soviet Union. I had been doing my job really hard for three years and I knew what I needed to do but they'd ask me what seemed like intellectual or philosophical or name-dropping questions. I did feel a sense of insecurity.

I had to go back and say to myself "you did your job well. You can talk about those areas that you know well." I felt this insecurity when I went to my first faculty meeting at the beginning of the academic year. The dean went around the table and each of the professors talked in rather glowing terms about all the articles he or she had written, the books they were working on and all the intellectual enterprises they had undertaken. I didn't think I had anything to match that.

When it came my turn, I wanted to say with a straight face that I was involved in international trade and deficit financing and then explained that that meant that I had just

borrowed money to buy a Toyota but I didn't dare to do so. I was afraid it might seem disrespectful.

At the end, the faculty members moaned and groaned about how they had to endure this meeting and couldn't wait until it ended. It reminded me of when I was in Moscow. Ambassador Matlock brought out an academic as part of his staff. Peter Fisher was a wonderful colleague who spoke excellent Russian. The first time he came to a staff meeting, he walked out saying "oh, that was so interesting. I learned so much" and all the staff people like me were wondering. Now it was the reverse. Here I was going to a faculty meeting saying "yeah, it's interesting. Getting to know who some of the people are and some of the issues and that kind of thing." The faculty members were all groaning that they had to go to one faculty meeting a year or per semester.

The first semester, I was free to do whatever I needed in order to teach a course during the second semester. The Fletcher School is located in an old building that had a lot of charm but was fairly inefficient when I was a student there. By the time I came back in 1990, they'd put on a nice new shiny wing but the Murrow Center was still located up in a part of the building you didn't find on your own. If I was going to interact with students, I had to take the initiative, go down to the cafeteria or the library and that kind of thing.

Q: How would you describe at this time, 1990, the composition of the school student body?

BROWN: Even when I was there, it was diverse with a large number of foreign students. By 1990, forty percent of the students at Fletcher were foreign students and there were more women, not surprisingly. There were also, in addition to myself, some military officers and mid-careerists who were there on specialized assignments.

In 1963, I graduated from a small liberal arts college in Ohio, Wooster College and went to Boston to Fletcher School and wow, was my mind opened then. I saw the diversity in 1963 -- foreign students, people from different parts of the United States, people with very different backgrounds than mine; much more heterogeneous even in 1963. I think that heterogeneity and that diversity was even more pronounced in 1990. I first went there when I was 21, almost 22, right after I graduated from college and that was not unusual at the time. By 1990, most students had had travel, work or other experience and were a little bit older than when I went there.

When I taught the course the second semester, I realized they were like students everywhere. There were some that were good, some that were not so good. Some that took it a little more seriously than others. I graded one person's paper real critically one time, not for substance but for grammar and syntax, and she said to me, "Oh, I didn't realize you were also looking at that part of the paper."

Before I began to teach my course in the second semester, I wrote the standard Christmas letter. To quote from it: "We are farther from Washington and the so-called real world

here in suburban Boston than we ever were in Paris or Moscow. This is a transition year; one that allows us to evaluate experiences and opportunities we've had, to reacquaint ourselves with America and to prepare for our return to Washington."

Looking back, I think that was pretty insightful. We really were farther away from Washington, DC than we ever were in Paris or Moscow simply because of the nature of the job. It was a transition year, one that allowed us to evaluate the experiences and opportunities. I was smart enough to realize I had had wonderful overseas experiences leading up to that time. That is something that this oral history experience has also allowed me to do.

So come second semester, Professor Brown taught a course, Diplomacy 287, a Colloquium on Public Diplomacy or Public Diplomacy in Practice. I prepared a multi-page, week-by-week outline of what we would be doing. I prepared a reading list. I really went about my work quite conscientiously. I had 22 students and maybe a third of them were foreign students.

Q: The foreign students were these foreign students that were interested in the subject matter but no particular tie to the subject matter at that time or were you essentially being used as a training institution for foreign schools of other countries?

BROWN: I do recall several of them were practitioners. They were already part of their foreign ministries and they were at Fletcher as a mid-career training year, the kind of thing I had a couple of points along the way. Others were basically students.

I said to them, especially those that were practitioners in their own foreign ministries, that I hoped the course wouldn't simply be about how Americans do public diplomacy. One of the things we were going to do was to try to shape a public diplomacy program for your country, to demonstrate that Kiribati could just legitimately as the United States have a public diplomacy program. You wouldn't have all the bells and whistles and resources but you could try to establish the priorities for your country and ask how you would try to address these on the world stage.

So I had 22 students. The course ran from 1 to 3 o'clock on Monday afternoon. It didn't take me too long to figure out that that was not an ideal teaching time. That's what the low guy on the totem pole gets assigned because about 2 o'clock, people begin to fall asleep. They are recovering from the weekend. It wasn't the ideal teaching time so I had to adapt to that.

I did the course outline; I had a reading list, a glossary. I gave a mid-term exam and I asked everyone to do a research paper, a report. On the mid-term exam, I did something tricky. There was a required question that was worth 35% and then there was "choose two of the following, each for 30%," so that it added up to 95%.

Then I had a 5% required question required and it was "who was Edward R. Murrow?" We're in the Edward R. Murrow Center; I am the Edward R. Murrow Fellow but we have

not discussed Edward R. Murrow. The answers were all over the board. There were also howls of protest. “We never discussed Edward R. Murrow.” “How can you expect us to know who he was?”

My answer, with a smile on my face, was, “Look, guys. Everything isn’t going to be delivered to you on a silver platter. You are in the Edward R. Murrow Center. I am the Edward R. Murrow professor. I am simply reminding you to look around the world where you are and ask questions.” In the end, I didn’t penalize anybody for not knowing who Edward R. Murrow was but it was fun to see both the variety of answers and the reaction.

I assigned everybody to do a paper with certain parameters and then I said you will have five minutes to tell us about your paper and there were again some protests. “I have done so much work on this paper, how can I ever present it in five minutes?” Well, in practical terms, we’ve got 22 students in the class so if we are not going to be here well beyond the assigned time, I am going to have to limit you to five minutes.

But more importantly, in your professional career, you are often going to be lucky if you have five minutes to present your ideas. You are going to be lucky in some cases if you have thirty seconds or two minutes with somebody senior so it is good discipline. As I recall, I sat there with a bell or timer to keep people within the five minute limit. The papers, some were a lot better than others.

Q: It’s an excellent drill. You are absolutely right. In the real world, OK, you’ve got three minutes to determine how we are going to establish peace with country X or something like that.

BROWN: The memory I have was one time with Secretary Shultz in Paris. I had gone to a press conference by his counterpart, Foreign Minister Cheysson. John Hughes was the press spokesman for Shultz. Instead of him taking my information and feeding it to Shultz, he invited me to come in. I wasn’t too used to briefing the secretary of state. I had about a minute to tell him what Cheysson said and I did it pretty well. I answered his questions and that was it. I certainly didn’t have five minutes to sit there and spell out all the details.

I went through what public diplomacy is and the U.S. approach to it, the tools and a couple of other things but by far the best single lecture that I did was one called “Cultural and Information Exchanges as Elements in U.S./Soviet Relations between 1955 and 1991.” 1955 was the first cultural exchange agreement.

I described cultural and information programs in a political context and how they reflected the political context? How do they affect the politics? Everything from exhibits to symphony orchestras over that period. I thought it was my best single lecture. It was more like a case study and case studies are more than just lists on a piece of paper.

Q: Did you use student questions or planned say how does one talk in positive terms about the dark side of one’s country?

BROWN: Inevitably this or a variation on it is the question you get more than any other. What do you do when you are asked to espouse policy that you really don't believe in? It is a fundamental question that any Foreign Service Officer or employee of any company faces and there are various ways of answering. Do I resign in the case of Vietnam? I used to cite our policy in Central America as one that I was not particularly comfortable with. But it didn't lead me to resign. It's a fundamental question. How do you personally deal with it when you are asked to associate yourself with or espouse a policy that you disagree with?

The other frequently asked question is "Isn't this just all propaganda? Do you ever tell bad things about your country?"

For the past three weeks, I have been traveling around the United States with foreign visitors invited here by the State Department. This was a group of 24 investigative journalists from 24 countries. Everyone came from a very different background representing different media and different working conditions from Burma to Iceland.

Our primary interest is that they have a changed impression of the United States, that some of their misimpressions of the United States be corrected. We want to correct misimpressions of the United States but not just the bad impressions. Sometimes, visitors have an exaggerated good impression of this country. We want them to understand that maybe it isn't quite as good as they think. If they think that everything in this country operates efficiently and is well organized and nobody is ever impolite, we would like to correct that as well. They are going to meet some impolite people and sometimes, things are going to be badly organized.

I never felt in foreign policy terms or in my job that there was anything wrong with being critical of my country as long as I was fair.

Q: I remember in Italy explaining to the incredulous Italians the election of Ronald Reagan. I said, "Well, you know he was the governor of a state which I think has a gross product of more than Italy. It is a large entity and he ran it, he ran the place and it's still there."

BROWN: So back to Fletcher. After my course, I turned in the grades and I think I gave only one A and nothing lower than a B, not because of grade inflation but because the students had all done reasonably well. They also evaluated me and I got the results. It was all on a number system. 1 was very good and 5 was very bad. I concluded I had basically earned a B+ for my teaching efforts and I felt pretty pleased with that for several reasons.

One is I am not a career teacher. I was learning on the job. Secondly, these were confidential evaluations. They didn't have to hand them to me. They just filled them out and turned them in. They didn't have to face me as I did when I graded them.

Thirdly, as I said to them very honestly at the end of the course, public diplomacy in the classroom is somewhat boring. I said this at the end. I explained that there was nothing I would enjoy more than taking the students and going to a particular country to run a public diplomacy program there. We would go out and meet journalists, visit college campuses, schedule exhibits, bring in symphony orchestras and that kind of thing. Then they would find public diplomacy really quite interesting. In a classroom, it is not the most scintillating subject. I worked as hard as I could to make it interesting. I would be the first to admit it wouldn't be the first course I would sign up for.

Considering those three factors -- I am not a professional teacher, these were anonymous evaluations and the nature of the course -- I was pretty pleased with a B+ grade.

Q: Did you sense any bias or mindset or something of the faculty there towards government and all or not?

BROWN: No, none in particular. My time there coincided with the first Gulf War. There were a couple of lectures that were based on international law and thus very critical of U.S. actions but I didn't find a particular bias toward the U.S. government and certainly not towards me personally.

The chief criticism of my course, the area where I got the lowest evaluation, was that the pace was too slow, the workload was not sufficiently demanding. I wished I could have gone back and increased the reading list. Other than that, I don't know how I would have made the course more demanding.

In addition to teaching, I tried to respond to any outside invitations and did some lectures at other schools. I went to the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard for a similar program and tried to meet with any students who were interested in the Foreign Service as a career. I tried to be ready willing and available for those opportunities.

I mentioned Ambassador Hewson Ryan, a very nice man. He was retired. They had a lovely home that reflected on his many travels all over the world. I was shocked just a couple of months after leaving Fletcher that fall to hear that he had died very suddenly of a heart attack. The fellow who replaced me, Len Baldyga, had to take over and do both jobs. That was my 1990-1991 year.

Washington (1991-1994)

So after 14 years away, it was inevitable that we would move back to the Washington area; we came back to the same house in Chevy Chase we left in 1977. But I was really lucky. Once again I escaped the clutches of the bureaucracy and did not end up in the area office or the USIA headquarters. I became director of the Foreign Press Centers. We had facilities in Washington, New York and Los Angeles.

As today, we were in the National Press Building on 14th Street. Our job was to promote U.S. interests through services to foreign journalists. We offered a wide variety of facilities, briefings, ideas and whatever to foreign journalists, either to those large numbers of foreign journalists who were resident and accredited here or to those who came on short term assignments.

It was more like an overseas assignment than a Washington one. We had several hundred resident foreign journalists and a directory that listed them by country. Some were more active than others, some were obviously better than others but bottom line, there were and are a lot of foreign journalists in Washington.

Q: I am told the Japanese have a surprising number.

BROWN: They do. I think the Japanese have the single largest number.

My staff consisted of people responsible for geographic areas. The fellow who did Asia was probably the best person on the staff; he regularly had journalists in his office and on the phone and at our briefings.

We also had an office in New York, not quite as large, but very centrally located in midtown Manhattan, and a one-person operation in Los Angeles. I was in charge of all three Foreign Press Centers.

I had hardly started the job and my predecessor hadn't even left when the U.S. arranged a Middle East peace conference in Madrid. Somebody suggested that it would be useful for me to go. This was the conference where Syrians, Israelis and the PLO came together with President Bush and a lot of foreign journalists were on hand.

Q: Was Secretary Baker was there.

BROWN: Secretary Baker, yes. At the time, they thought they were going to make some serious breakthroughs in that part of the world. I remember there being what I called winners and losers. I thought the winner was the PLO because they seemed to be reasonable. Hanan Ashrawi was their spokesperson and she presented a very reasonable and persuasive face.

Another winner was CNN. Everyone watched and many reporters probably reported based on CNN. The Syrians were losers because they came but wouldn't show the minimal courtesy towards the Israelis or anybody else. That conference was a pretty fast way to start the job.

At the Foreign Press Center, we had what seemed like a well-equipped briefing room and we were constantly trying to bring in high-level officials to brief the foreign press. Foreign journalists are important but they are never going to be treated as well as the American press, whether it be at the White House or State Department or elsewhere around town.

Over the course of my three years, we brought in a long list of people. Among the best known names were the late Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, White House advisor David Gergen, Labor Secretary Robert Reich. But that was atypical. More often we'd get somebody farther down the bureaucracy. We would also get people from think tanks who came in not to express an official position but who were experts on a given subject. If you were lucky, you got them to come in on a subject that was in the news, maybe health care or how the Supreme Court operates.

We had hangers on, people who found the Foreign Press Center to be an easy place to hang their hat. There were certain journalists who would not come except in the rarest of circumstances but by and large, we had quality journalists who used that facility.

We had a librarian who had done traditional library work but now she was able to do something called "search." She could take a term or a subject and do a quick search for it. It says something about the period we were going through that this was a new feature that only our librarian could offer.

Q: One forgets but the '90s the computer was pretty much a

BROWN: People were lined up at her door to use Lexus Nexus as we exploited this new technology.

One thing that had been done before but not quite as actively and that I pushed partly because I enjoyed it and partly because I thought it was important was organizing for foreign journalists to visit cities around the United States. They quite often would have the means to do it but they didn't enjoy the access that we could set up particularly if we had a group. We could arrange access for them and that was really more important to them than the cost of the plane fares and the hotels.

For example, my ambassador in France was a man named Joe Rodgers from Nashville, Tennessee. He used to brag about Nashville, the new south and what a wonderful city it was and I imagined that was the case so I called him up. He was now back in Nashville and I was the director of the Foreign Press Center and I described my position and asked, "If I could bring a group of journalists to Nashville, would you be able . . ." I think I went that far in the sentence and he said, "I am right here. You can bring a group of foreign journalists here. I will set you up with my friends in the business world and academic world."

We took some 20 journalists to Nashville for, I think, two nights and three days. Because Nashville was then an American airlines hub and Joe Rodgers had good connections, we didn't have to pay for travel. We stayed at the Grand Ole Opry Hotel. We went to the Rodgers' home one night in a gated community for a large reception. We talked to business and civic leaders. We went to Vanderbilt University. We went to one of the Japanese car factories. We were very, very well treated over a period of several days, and of course, we had a night at the Grand Ole Opry.

And there was a payoff. The correspondent for The Times of India wrote an article headlined "Nashville, the New South." The tone was "here is a city I had never known before and with all these wonderful resources and changes," etcetera. We had several articles like that. No journalist was being forced to write these articles. We didn't show them the seamier sides of Nashville but it was a win-win situation. Ambassador Rodgers asked some of his friends to cooperate. They were very happy to do it.

I have a long list of similar trips that I set up or asked people on the staff to set up. 1992 was a presidential election year and we went to Atlanta and Chicago to help journalists cover the primaries. I remember being in the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago for the 1992 primary and Hillary and Bill Clinton came out to cheers. He had won the primary. After the cheers had died down and everything was over, I went to a bar on the top floor and who should come wandering in but Bill Clinton to talk to some journalist friends. We had a couple of foreign journalists there and he chatted with them -- typical Bill Clinton.

Also at the conventions, the Foreign Press Center would have a facility to help foreign journalists.

We went to San Antonio. President Bush organized a drug summit down there. We took journalists to Los Angeles less than a year after the riots; we took journalists to the corner of Florence and Normandy in the center of Watts to see what had happened but also to see what had improved, what changes were being made.

Our office was on the eighth floor of the National Press Building and on the top floor is the National Press Club. I went up one night to a reception featuring the very young mayor of Phoenix, Arizona. His name was Paul Johnson. There weren't many people at the reception. I introduced myself and went through the same spiel. I am in contact with foreign journalists. If I could bring a group of foreign journalists to Phoenix, could we work together cooperatively? He passed me to an assistant and we took a group of people to Phoenix for meetings with a cross-section of local leaders. They even arranged for us to go up to the Grand Canyon.

Of course, they are watching TV because they've got to be careful they are not missing some big news story and the visit to Phoenix and the Grand Canyon coincided with the Waco Branch Davidian siege. Several of my poor journalists were inside watching and reporting on that when they could have been out looking at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon.

We also went to Brownsville, Texas, right across from Matamoros, Mexico. This was at the time of NAFTA negotiations and there were all these cross border activities with manufacturing done on the Mexican side. I discovered that Brownsville, Texas is the poorest city in the United States or at least has the highest level of poverty of any major city in the United States.

We went to Detroit with a group of Mideast journalists. I did not realize that Dearborn, Michigan has the largest Middle East population of any city in the United States. These guys from Lebanon, Israel and Jordan got to Dearborn, Michigan, and thought they were home because there are so many Arab-Americans, Arab cuisine and the like.

One beautiful day, I took a group of journalists out on the Chesapeake Bay just to report on environmental issues. I think it was the Chesapeake Bay Foundation who arranged for it. It was a story idea the journalists might not have had on their own. They didn't have to worry about the organizational aspects of it and they had a nice little story.

In 1994, our Los Angeles Foreign Press Center arranged a program based on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bomb. We went to Los Alamos, to another facility in Albuquerque, New Mexico and then we went to a place outside Carlsbad, New Mexico called the "waste isolation pilot project." We went way down underground in these limestone caves where they could store low-grade nuclear waste.

For an enterprising writer and one who could convince his editors it was an interesting story, they had extraordinary access. They had access to closed door laboratories. They could never call on their own and say, "I am so and so from a foreign paper and I'd like to come out and interview you." But as a group and with us setting it up and providing the local ground transportation, they had an excellent program.

We also set up a facility in Seattle, Washington, for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting. And one in Vancouver when Yeltsin and Clinton had a summit meeting. These are examples of things we did outside the Washington office. I guess one reason they have stuck with me is that they just made my job interesting while over on the other side of town, people were shuffling papers and doing the bureaucratic things.

Q: We sometimes forget but the United States is a huge country and it is very hard to tackle it. It is very handy to have somebody. I remember talking to the Polish consul in Chicago and he covered, his beat covered Alaska and Hawaii as well. It was just incredible.

BROWN: I recently went back to the Foreign Press Center with a group of visiting foreign journalists. A couple of resident foreign journalists talked to the group. One was from Africa, one from Mexico. One of the questions for them was "how do you go about covering the United States?" Consistently the answer is it is overwhelming. There is so much information here. There are policy makers, there are academics. There are think tanks, everything else outside the beltway. The question is not access to information. It is how you whittle it down and focus on what's really important and of course, satisfy your editors back home.

Q: Did you find any particular interest in what you were doing on the part of the information agency and the State Department?

BROWN: We were part of USIA. Today, the Foreign Press Center is part of the State Department. It was an uphill battle. You had to work to convince State Department to take us seriously. From our facility, journalists could monitor the daily White House and State Department briefings. It may have just been audio, I can't recall right now. We were just getting into that facet of technology where you could sit in one place and monitor a lot of other briefings. We also had transcripts available. One stop shopping is not an overstatement. There were a lot of things you could do right from the comfort of our offices there.

But it was always an uphill battle to get people to come over from State Department. Some bureaus and some people were more willing to speak than others but part of our job was to remind people that foreign journalists are an important audience.

I enjoyed the job. I enjoyed working with foreign journalists. I had a good staff. I had the opportunity to go to New York from time to time and see similar programs there and a couple of times I went to Los Angeles where we had the one-man operation.

Before the G-7 meetings, President Clinton would do an interview with seven journalists, one from each of the other six countries plus somebody from the European community, and we could get involved somewhat in picking the journalists. I managed to go along on at least one occasion so I have a picture of myself against the wall in the Oval Office with the journalists in a horseshoe facing the president.

I especially remember Clinton's demeanor. He was sitting here in his chair. Each journalist would get one question and maybe one follow-up. Clinton was so good. He would turn and look that person in the eye and he would come up with a really well-crafted, articulate, quotable answer. For three or four minutes, it seemed as if that journalist and Bill Clinton were the only people in the room. The eye contact was there, the focus. Clinton really knew how to do his side of the equation. The journalists walked away saying "in my exclusive interview today with President Clinton, he told me." It was perfect. Much better than some other presidents.

Two years into the assignment, in 1993, I was beginning to wonder, what's next? I had now passed 50 years of age. I knew my days in the Foreign Service were numbered. I was in the senior Foreign Service so I was up against time in class. I really felt I had had a wonderful Foreign Service experience and I didn't want it to end on a low note. I didn't want to end up in some uninteresting job. I was looking at some overseas assignments. A colleague came to me one time; he was our area director for Latin America. He said, "Phil, would you be interesting in PAO Mexico?"

My first thought was I don't know anything about Mexico. But there would be the chance to learn Spanish and I could learn the requirements of the job. I saw him about six months later and told him I was really thinking seriously about the assignment. He said, "Forget it. I am taking the job." He was the area director for Latin America.

RPO Vienna (1994-1996)

Then someone asked me about RPO/Vienna. I hadn't ever given it much thought. RPO stood for Regional Program Office, Vienna, Austria. Historically many, many organizations, government and otherwise, had set up offices in Vienna to serve programs in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, given the proximity, the ease of working in Vienna. Of course, I was familiar with RPO from my Moscow years. It had provided us programs and materials. If you wanted a brochure printed, if you wanted some technical support, you could find a really competent staff in Vienna.

So I mulled it over and I accepted it. It was a challenge because my wife was now settled in Chevy Chase. She had a teaching job at Sidwell Friends School. She did not want to pack up and move overseas again. We agreed that I would go by myself and she would stay here and do her thing.

At the time, I put down on paper two pages of thoughts about the job, what it meant for me. Why I was doing it and what the challenges and what the prospects were. It worked out. It stands up pretty well. It did not turn out to be four years. I was only there for two years, less than two years before I retired.

In July, 1994, my last year at the Foreign Press Center, there was a presidential visit to Riga, Latvia. President Clinton was going there and the Lithuanian and Estonian heads of state were coming in to meet with him. The White House was shopping around; they wanted some staff. They needed people to go to Riga to help out with press operations and people were turning it down. It was the wrong time of the year. I accepted.

Basically what the White House did was to rent the town for a few days. We, the U.S., paid for everything. We purchased rights to the center square. There were outdoor activities. Of course, the Latvians loved it. They were in the news and we injected a lot of dollars in the economy.

So I asked to go through Vienna on the way back. I wanted to see the job and I am so glad I did. They had set aside an apartment for me in a place far from the center of town. I would have needed a car and I would have been isolated. I knew I didn't want to live out there. They said there is nothing else we can think of right now. Nothing available so you'll have to live in a hotel. So when I got to Vienna, I did live in a hotel for well over a month but I ended up with a wonderful apartment on Josefstadterstrasse, an easy walk from our office, just up from the Ring Road. I was near the old historic part of town and for 21 months, I took full advantage of that.

I had an apartment with a mansard roof. At first, I thought I would be ducking my head all the time but it had great charm. I could lie in bed and look through the skylight right up to the sky. The downtown location, city center location was what was great.

One challenge was the fact that I didn't speak German. I wished that I had worked harder on that. I learned enough German to order meals and do the basic necessities but not having conversational competence was a handicap.

One of the ways my wife and I stayed in touch was e-mail. This was the first time, 1994, that e-mail was taken for granted. We both got the user IDs that we use today.

RPO was housed in a building that had been -- at one time I think prior to or during the Second World War -- a hospital running by a Jewish family with a big garden in the back. They lost the hospital during the war and after the war, it was turned over to Americans. It was part of our diplomatic presence in Vienna.

There were many multilateral organizations in Vienna. During most of my Foreign Service career, talk about "the agency" meant the CIA. In Vienna, the "agency" meant the International Atomic Energy. They had a huge presence there.

We had an embassy but I was really not part of the bilateral mission at all. Never in my Foreign Service career overseas, except when I was in Garmisch studying Russian, did I have less involvement in the bilateral relationship. No evening activities. I was not involved in the bilateral program at all.

RPO had an outstanding staff of some 40-50 Austrian employees, many of whom have served there for many years. I informally restructured the operation so that I met with three of them every day -- Hannes Schmiedt, who handled all the budgetary and administrative support that we gave to the field; Marie Stephen, who headed the unit that provided program support to the field; and Joe Kocsi, who directed the printing operation.

Marie was actually Czech-born and I recall going to Prague with her one time in connection with a meeting of the USIA Advisory Commission. She was going to offer them a side trip and when they turned it down, she and I went instead to the town of Cesky Krumlov. What a treat it was to go there with someone like Marie. I made return trips with both my wife and my parents.

Once again, I did a lot of traveling. One of my jobs was to go to all the posts served by RPO, meet with the PAO and see what their needs were and how we could help. By now, we were setting up embassies in all the constituent republics of the former Soviet Union so I went back to all those capitals that I had been to when I was in Moscow. I also had a chance to return to Moscow, my first trip back there in five years.

In addition to going back to Moscow, and in spite of budget cuts, I was still involved in presidential visits. President Clinton went to Ukraine in May, 1995, to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. I was there when he was in Kiev. I was smart enough to say to myself, on the one hand you are just a little cog in the big machinery but on the other hand, outside my hotel, I watched this victory parade marking

the 50th anniversary of the Second World War with all these elderly Ukrainian veterans bedecked with medals. I thought a lot about what this meant to the people of Ukraine.

I was present when Clinton visited Babi Yar, the spot outside Kiev where in 1941, Jews were massacred. The Russian poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, wrote a poem called, Babi Yar. Jews were lined up and shot and the bodies fell into a mass grave. Clinton, wearing a yarmulke, made appropriate remarks. I thought to myself here I am this guy who grew up in western Pennsylvania and now I am standing on this historic site near the President of the United States.

The ambassador to Austria was a woman named Swanee Hunt. She was the daughter of H. L. Hunt, the big oil magnate from Texas. She was part heiress to that fortune. He was a very conservative Republican, she was anything but. She was a Clinton appointee, very progressive in her ideas and particularly focused on women's issues. This was also the time of the war in the Balkans and she became very, very involved in raising money to restore the library in Sarajevo, this kind of thing.

She had a staff meeting at her house one day, at the residence, that I was invited to attend. Something I said caught her attention and from that day on, she included me in the country team meetings and treated me very nicely, as if my opinion counted. Up to that point, RPO had not really been a part of the country team. I appreciated that.

But the elections in 1994 produced a big shift and a government shutdown. Al Gore came out with his reorganization of government plan and all of a sudden, our mission changed. Printing and publishing were passé. Budgets were being cut. It seemed almost as soon as we had the opportunity to open libraries and cultural centers in Eastern Europe, we were being told they were no longer needed. We'd won the Cold War; we needed to save money, etcetera, etcetera.

Our mission was changed to include training for some of the newly hired Foreign Service national employees in Eastern Europe and that seemed to me a very legitimate enterprise. We'd bring in these very bright, very talented people we were hiring from everywhere from Riga to Vladivostok and give them training. That was good to see but on the other hand, it was hard to swallow cuts and reductions in some of the more traditional activities.

Somewhere along the line in late 1995 with the government shutdown . . .

Q: This was a dispute between the executive and Congress. It was not a nice period.

BROWN: It wasn't. It was discouraging.

RPO was faced with severe staff reductions. I now had 30 years service, I was over 50 years of age and I was thus eligible for retirement so when one of the telegrams came out offering retirement, I decided to retire. Before I left Vienna, I put down my thoughts in a two-page paper that I titled "Challenges and Resources: Some Parting Thoughts." In it, I

contrasted my second tour in Moscow, where we had enormous challenges but very limited resources other than the excellent staff and RPO Vienna, where we had wonderful resources but where the challenge was primarily to fend off ideas such as moving the operation to Vilnius (to save money) and demands that we reduce the excellent staff.

The penultimate paragraph read: “And so, to my USIA colleagues, especially to those assigned to the world’s hot spots, to those FSOs and FSNs struggling to keep ahead of the game and wishing for just a bit more support, I say count your blessings. When it’s all over and you look back, you will probably have achieved most of what you set out to accomplish and your sense of satisfaction will be great. At the same time, pity your colleagues who have the desire and means to take on a demanding assignment but who don’t have the challenge.”

Washington (1996)

I came back to Washington at the end of March, 1996. I did a month-long transition course at the Foreign Service Institute. My official retirement date was May 31, 1996.

I tried to leave without bitterness but neither did I part with any great sense of gratitude to the institution or to its leaders. I had not the slightest desire to change places with people in senior positions nor did I miss the work after I retired. I really felt that the leadership of USIA at that time was the most ineffective we had ever had.

Q: This was Joe Duffy.

BROWN: He had no devotion to the institution. As much as people maligned Mr. Wick during the Reagan years, he believed in what we did. He sought out resources and once his view changed on the Foreign Service, he loved us. We were his guys out there. One day, he’d want to fire us all but the next day he’d be singing our praises. Joe Duffy had no loyalty to the institution and showed no respect to people who had made it their career.

I remember coming back to Washington somewhere in the year before I retired and a lot of senior people were at a meeting chaired by Mr. Duffy. He told us two anecdotes and then he said “those are two stories in search of a theme and I am not sure what the theme is.” I thought “why are we wasting our time with this man?”

I have a number of friends in the military, one of whom retired about that time. When he retired as a general, they had a ceremony at Fort Myer with all the military protocol. I didn’t even get invited to the USIA director’s office to shake hands. I didn’t want it. We weren’t given any respect for what we were trying to accomplish and did accomplish. I am not talking just about myself.

I came back to Washington in March. They gave us a month long transition course in which they talked about everything from health benefits to financial planning to career planning. And they asked “What are you going to do for a second career?”

At some point, somebody asked who had a résumé. Many hands went up. “Throw them out,” they said. So we rewrote our résumés, we imagined the job we would like to have and we did model job interviews. We did our elevator presentation. You are riding an elevator and need to make your pitch in 30 seconds so we learned how to do our 30-second pitch.

So I took my résumé and I wrote letters to various organizations and said I would like to do public affairs work for an environmental organization. I picked out a few in Washington and for the most part I got no response. There didn’t seem to be much respect for my résumé or my experience.

In one case, a fellow did say his organization would be doing a presentation at the National Press Club and invited me to come and observe. So I came down. I don’t know what organization it was, Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth, they were rolling out their report and the journalists were there taking notes. At the end, the guy was going around seeing what journalists were there and I am sure he was going to do follow-up work on the reporting and I asked myself if this was what I wanted to do. Basically, my feeling was “been there, done that.” I had been doing public affairs work much of my career and in fact under in more interesting circumstances. I had no interest in it.

So if someone had called me up and said “Mr. Brown, we want to hire you as our deputy public affairs person. Please report on Monday morning for a 9 to 5 job,” they would have called my bluff. I did not want that at all.

Meanwhile, just by chance, I picked one of these free newspapers on the street that advertised courses for a place near Dupont Circle that offered courses on everything from collecting wine to improving your health to yoga. There was one titled “So you want to be a travel agent” or something to that effect. Well, I’ve always loved to travel so I bought a ticket and went to this talk on being a travel agent. At the end, they give a little test and I remember one of the things on the test asked what is LAX on a baggage ticket? I knew that’s Los Angeles airport and I think I got nine out of ten or 19 out of 20 on the test. I tested well but I came out thinking I don’t want to be a travel agent. This was not at all interesting even though I had done very well on the exam.

But I looked a little further in the brochure and found a talk called “so you want to be a Washington DC tour guide” and I went to this lecture by a woman named Jeanne Fogle and wow, was it interesting. It really grabbed my attention. She gave us a little exam, most of which had to do with the history of Washington. I think I got 1 out of 20 correct. But the fact that I knew nothing about Washington made it potentially interesting.

I remember one day walking along 16th Street past a statue of a man named John Wesley. He was on horseback, a Methodist missionary.

Q: A circuit rider.

BROWN: Yes. It is really fascinating. It is Washington's history.

Q: Do you know where what the Temperance Monument is?

BROWN: Yes, down on 7th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

I know that and a lot of other trivia about Washington because Jeanne Fogle made it sound interesting to be a tour guide. She cited three aspects that appealed to me: you are constantly learning, you are working with people and you are self-employed. You can set your own schedule. Since I was about to go off (as I am today) to two months in Maine where we have a cabin and I wanted to be able to follow my own schedule, this really appealed to me.

I came back in the fall and Jeanne Fogle offered a course at Northern Virginia Community College every Saturday. The first Saturday was in the classroom but on subsequent Saturdays, we would meet somewhere downtown and play tour guide. I just loved it. You'd have to prepare for a place. And do your whole spiel with Jeanne and others critiquing.

Jeanne would say, "We need a volunteer" and my hand always went up. I was one of her star pupils, if I do say so. I became a licensed tour guide in Washington and I still am a licensed tour guide in Washington. I joined the Washington DC Guild of Professional Tour Guides. I also participated in many of the educational programs of the guild, learning more than I ever needed to know to be a guide but gaining a deeper appreciation of the city and the area.

For the better part of ten years, particularly in the spring, I led people around the city, quite often groups of 8th graders but sometimes adults and occasionally special tours. But at a certain point, I realized two things. One was that I was spending more time on the administrative parts of guiding than on substance. Where could you meet your bus or what was open and when, how long were the lines going to be? This became even worse after 9/11. Secondly, I kept going back to the same places over and over and I was getting tired of taking people to the Lincoln Memorial and to Mount Vernon. I still do some tour guiding and quite often I do a three hour tour for groups of international visitors just because I like to show them Washington.

That led to what is called tour directing, weeklong bus trips up and down the East Coast with seniors, very demanding work. That in turn led to what I do now -- contract work with State Department periodically accompanying groups of international visitors on their two and three week visits to the United States. It is not tourism which means you do sit sometimes through some fairly boring presentations in, of all places, the State Department. Sometimes they are good but some are pretty boring.

But each group is different. The participants come from different countries. Each project has a different theme and a different itinerary. I have just come back from New York, Boston, Minneapolis and Denver with my latest group, 24 investigative journalists from 24 different countries. The programs take me to parts of the United States that I would not visit otherwise and in addition to the foreign visitors, I meet some interesting Americans.

In Minneapolis, I was telling our visitors that Germans and Scandinavians settled in this area back in the 19th century. What's the biggest immigrant group in Minneapolis right now? Somalis. And Hmong. I could tell that the fellow who set up our local program there was not Scandinavian or German and so I asked. Turns out he was born in California. I said, "What is your background?" He said, "My father is Ethiopian and my mother is Austrian." I said, "That's what America is all about." The diversity of this country.

So that's the type of work I enjoy doing right now.

Q: I want to thank you very much.

End of interview