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BETSY H. BROWN

Interviewed by: Linda Lippner
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INTERVIEW

Q: All right. My name is Linda Lippner. I'm interviewing Betsy Brown today. Today is October 11, 2022, and this is the first of possibly two or three interviews.

So, Betsy, I have reviewed your CV that you sent very nicely. It's very extensive. AID (United States Agency for International Development) has requested ADST to do interviews. So, that's great that we're going to do this. But we're going to start earlier than what you have on your CV. Does all this make sense so far?

BROWN: Sure.

Q: Okay, very good. Betsy, where did you grow up? Where were your beginnings?

BROWN: I was born in upstate New York, in Albany, New York. And then moved to Irvington, New York downstate. I went to high school there, summered in the Adirondacks in the north country, where I ultimately ended up. So, I'm a product of all of those locations, in New York.

Q: And what was the name of your high school?

BROWN: Irvington High School.

Q: Okay. And Irvington, for those who are not familiar with New York, could you be a little more specific about where the town that you grew up is.

BROWN: Irvington is a small town along the Hudson River, and it's about twenty miles outside of New York City in Westchester County.

Q: Okay, very good. And so, you moved there, and tell us about your family members, your parents, did you have brothers and sisters?

BROWN: We are three girls. My mom and dad were both working parents. Dad was a lawyer, originally from the Bronx, and Mom was a teacher for abandoned and neglected children, a remedial reading specialist, and worked in a variety of special schools for abandoned and neglected children her whole career.

Q: So, she must have had quite an influence on you, reviewing your employment history. I can see where it started.

BROWN: Yes, my mother had a great influence on our career choices. Both of my parents were involved in socially oriented causes. My dad was involved in local politics and ran for office at one time, unsuccessfully. But we all got involved in his campaign and went to a lot of political events growing up. I benefitted and was influenced by having two socially oriented, socially conscious parents.

Q: Yeah, yeah. And what about your sisters? What direction did they go?

BROWN: Both of my sisters also ended up doing socially conscious work. One of my sisters worked for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. She became a fundraiser for various nonprofits. And she ended up raising lots of money for different organizations that she believed in, good causes. And then, she and her husband started an environmental consulting firm and focused on green consulting in the early days of environmental consciousness and doing environmental analysis. My sister ran the company, and my brother-in-law, Paul, is an environmental engineer. Paul provided the technical assistance. So, it was a small, woman-owned, women-run company that my sister led. , and then he was the technical person. My youngest sister ended up first with Planned Parenthood, managing a clinic in Bisbee Arizona and then branched out into counseling in schools for international students including holding a long-term student advisory position at World Learning/School for International Training (SIT) (the former Experiment in International Living) in Vermont, where she specifically worked with international students, helping them navigate coming to the U.S. and their two years of graduate school training in Brattleboro, Vermont. My sister is still doing this important work with international students at Middlebury College.

Q: Which is in Vermont as well.

BROWN: Mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. Brattleboro. I know it well. I didn't know about this. Okay. We'll start in high school. What courses did you enjoy when you were in your high school years? And maybe what teachers were influential on you.

BROWN: I think the first very influential teacher I had was actually in sixth grade, a teacher that brought in someone from the Peace Corps to talk to our class. And my mom says that from that moment on I was absolutely fixated on the Peace Corps. She would bring home the *Weekly Reader newsletters* and books on the Peace Corps, and I remember reading about Micronesia and what the Peace Corps volunteers were doing. And so, learning about the Peace Corps and having that particular teacher was very influential for me at a very early age. And then, I had a Latvian elementary school teacher as well, who told us about what it was like to flee the Soviet Union.. So, I think those two teachers at a very early age were very influential. Then later on, in high school, I loved social studies. I'd take any social studies classes offered. I loved history and I loved languages. So, I took both French and Spanish in High School. And then it was recommended by my school that I apply to become an Experiment in International Living scholarship winner for a summer abroad program. The program was funded by our town's local Rotary and Kiwanis Club. Two students were selected each year for a summer abroad scholarship. And you had to apply, and you would be sent to live for a summer in the country of your choice. So, you could pick wherever you wanted to go, and the local clubs would pay for it. And that was really my first overseas experience away from my family. I was fifteen. And I went to Northern Italy for the summer and learned Italian, which became a language I felt passionate about as well and studied in college. So, the teachers that encouraged me to apply for this opportunity were the social studies teachers from Irvington High School. And yes, I'm grateful for all of that encouragement because my family wasn't particularly international.

Q: What is your family background? I know we all come from somewhere. What is the background of your family, like German or whatever? What is it?

BROWN: Russian Hungarian.

Q: Okay. All right. So, did you have any extracurricular activities in your schooling that you loved or liked or influenced you?

BROWN: Tons. I was so fortunate to have a wonderful high school experience where we had women's sports, played hockey, field hockey, volleyball, and sports night. These are women-run teams. And after school I was a cheerleader, varsity cheerleader. That went on for two years. I was involved in drama, dance, both in school and then became absolutely passionate about ballet.

Q: That would take a lot of time. How did you fit that in?

BROWN: I often ask myself, how did my mother do it? I really have no idea how my mother worked and took us, all three of us, for all of our different activities, round and round, and cooked dinner and did everything. But I'm grateful to her that she allowed us to sample lots of extracurricular activities and then get more involved in certain things. I am also grateful that my mother let us drop out of the ones that we were really bad at. (Laughs)

Q: But the point is you sampled a lot.

BROWN: Right. I was really bad at piano and the piano teacher begged, actually went to my mother and father and said—he would come to our house for the three of us, and he actually said to my father, "I think you're wasting your money on Betsy." (Laughs/indiscernible)

Q: Completely understand. Had the same situation. I think the teacher begged me to stop taking lessons, yeah. Okay.

So, did you do any ancestor research? Have you done anything like that through your family with the connections to Europe, Hungary and Russia? Anything that you found out that was interesting to you?

BROWN: My father did a lot of genealogy research for his legal estate cases and clients. At that time he used to take cases where he would go back to the former Soviet Union and find distant relatives of clients in New York that left their estates. My dad traveled all around Eastern Europe, almost like the Prize Patrol. He'd get in touch with a local lawyer and say, "Your relative in New York City has left this money and there is no other known beneficiary." And he would go to the family and give them these U.S. dollar accounts or whatever assets remained in the estate. In doing so, my dad on one trip was able to go back to an area on the Russian-Polish border, Bialystok, where we believe our family was from. But both of my grandparents on both sides were American, so this was going back several generations. My grandparents, all four of them, grew up in New York City on the lower Lower East Side and in the Bronx.

Q: So, along with the locations in Europe, there is some Jewish background there too. Was there any loss of family, extended family during—?

BROWN: Not that we know of. Very interestingly, just this summer, through Ancestry.com, a woman reached out to my sister and I on Facebook and said she was my father's cousin. And she had found these pictures of a man, who she thought was my dad, and she ended up coming and visiting us, she and her family, in the Adirondacks, and we had this reunion. It is a whole side of the family we never knew. They live in Texas. We had never met them before. These are distant cousins, going way back. And yeah, so both sides of the family, all Jewish originating in the former Soviet Union, at some point left their villages, escaped, and came to New York. But I don't have much information about what they were escaping from, which is very much in sharp contrast to my husband. My husband Steve's father was a Holocaust survivor who lost all his family in Poland during World War II. So Steve is a child of a holocaust survivor and a first generation American. Steve's dad, Carl, just passed away. He was brought to the U.S. by Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). Carl was an orphan who lost both younger sisters and his mother and father, killed in Polonij, Poland. Carl was saved because he was hidden in a hole underground in a barn for two years and nine months. When Carl came to America, he was adopted by Jewish foster parents at age 15. Through Steve and Carl I have learned so

much about what his family went through, the terror and peril of being a Holocaust survivor and what it is like to grow up without your family, missing school and leading a normal life. In comparison, my family did not have that experience. While my grandparents grew up very poor, on the Lower East Side, their families were intact.

Q: Okay. All right. So, it sounded like you had a very active and good secondary school education. Just to continue in that part of your life, besides family there are friends, and did you find that your social circle understood what you were interested in, or what was the relationship with you and people in your school?

BROWN: I had a good circle of friends, but very few of them were internationally oriented. The one friend I had was the young woman who was given a scholarship to participate in the Experiment in International Living the same year that I won the scholarship. She went to Bolivia and I went to Italy. We became very friendly and we're still friends and we stay in touch. Most of my other friends were into sports and life in small towns, suburbs, and football games and you know, all that good stuff, homecoming, dances, you know. It was really a very quiet, almost bucolic childhood. I was really, really fortunate. And I never moved. So, I went from nursery school through the end of high school in that one small town, and I grew up knowing so many people and they knew us, they knew our family. My dad also worked in a neighboring town. So, I didn't have the experience of moving to different schools and having to adjust.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Yeah. And a very, I guess you'd say comfortable culture. Everyone was pretty much together on the same page. Unless that's not true, unless you had people in your school that were not of your liberal or political—

BROWN: Okay, so no. I would have to say that in the town, Irvington, there were very few Jews in the town. So, if we had to look at the ethnic mix of the town it was predominantly Irish Catholic and Protestant and very few Jews. There was no synagogue in that town and so, we had to drive two towns over to go to the synagogue. And the few Jewish friends that I had, we all knew each other, and a few of them I'm also actually still in touch with through Facebook. I think our family was considered different because we were Jewish and we were not Catholic or Christian and we didn't go to Mass and you know, we didn't have all of that connection. We didn't go to catechism and Catholic school, and we were on a different schedule with our religious education. So, in that sense, you know, we were different, although we were all white ethnicity, we were different, for sure.

Q: And how did that make you feel? Did you notice anything about that situation that you had to go to another town to go to synagogue or celebrate holidays? You were an outsider in a way.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Yeah.

BROWN: I think we were aware from very early on that, you know, people were crossing themselves and taking these days off and going to first communion. A lot of kids would ask us to go to mass with them and my parents were very open, and we were Reformed Jews, so we were not raised in a highly religious household. But my grandparents really wanted us to have a religious education and felt very strongly about celebrating the holidays and obviously, our holidays were different from all of the Christian holidays, so we grew up with religious education.

Q: Did you have a bat mitzvah?

BROWN: I did not. I'm the only one of my family who was not bat mitzvahed. And that was my own choosing. And I just wasn't really drawn to it that much, the religion. I liked the ethnic part of Judaism, but in those years I was not. I would say I've become more religious and more drawn to it and made sure that my son was bar mitzvahed even though his father was Christian. And in some ways, I wish that my parents had enforced it. I didn't learn Hebrew; I don't read Hebrew; my sisters do. And I wish I had learned it. And so, there are some times that you wish that your parents actually imposed certain requirements, but my parents weren't like that. You know, their philosophy was if something feels good to you, we are going to offer it to you, and if you don't want to do it, you don't have to do it.

Q: Okay. So, I know you graduated with high honors and then what—how did you do your research for where you wanted to go to undergraduate school? Or how did you decide where you were going to go?

BROWN: I wanted to go to school on the East Coast and liked the Boston and New England region. From college I went directly into Peace Corps in West Africa. I was in Peace Corps Togo, and I took the GREs and from, I guess it was the Peace Corps office in Lomé, and I had two primary interests. I was interested in, either public health, going straight for a master's in public health, or international relations. And I applied to both types of graduate schools and got accepted into the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, which is part of Tufts University. Since I had been a Tufts undergraduate, it just felt like a good fit for me to go back to Tufts for my graduate work. Tufts offered courses in nutrition with Harvard Public Health, and they had started a new nutrition school, so I felt like I could get it all by just going back to Tufts. I went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy with a concentration in nutrition and economic development.

Q: Well, with the idea of covering everything, we skipped over undergraduate there. So, can you tell me a little bit more about your undergraduate at Tufts?

BROWN: I was a political science international relations major. I was always in a hurry, so I finished college in three years. And I also graduated early from high school. I don't know why I was in such a hurry, but I went to summer school to try and get as many college credits so I could move on with my life and save my dad a year of college tuition. I also at some point felt like my poor dad was supporting all three of us in college at

about the same time, and why should we waste money on another year, and I really wanted to get out. And so, I studied political science, international relations and languages, and studied French and Italian. I got really into Italian. Oh boy, I loved Italian. And that was my passion. And right out of college I was recruited by the Peace Corps. They came on campus. I think my political science professor said, "Oh, you know, the Peace Corps' coming to do on-campus interviews. You might be interested in this. What are you doing after you graduate?" And I was pretty young, nineteen and a half or something, and I said, "Well, you know, I'd love to work overseas. I'd love to get back to Europe or go overseas." "So, the Peace Corps' coming, why don't you go to the interview." So, that was the first place I interviewed, and they offered me a position in Togo as a Peace Corps volunteer. And I said, "Wow. I can't believe it. I've always wanted to be a Peace Corps volunteer. Okay." And much to my parents' chagrin, my dad asked me, and this is very telling. I mean, I was quite young, I didn't have much of any international experience. He said, "Do you even know where Togo is?" My dad was a lawyer and he was questioning me, grilling me, and my response was, "I have to admit, Dad, I don't know where Togo is." "Well, it's in West Africa. And where are you going? Do you understand where you're going and what this could mean in terms of your future? And did you sign anything?" A typical lawyer. And I said, "Yes, Dad, I did. It looks like I'm shipping out in July." I graduated at the end of May, and I was leaving in July. And oh, my parents were just so upset. This was not the career path they had pictured for a Jewish daughter, you know. And again, I was completely committed. Once my dad pointed out that I knew nothing about what I was going to do or where I was headed, I proceeded to try and learn as much as I could about the offer I had just accepted. Happily, I became more committed to going and it didn't change my mind. If anything, I wanted to do it even more. And so, I left. And it was by far the best decision I've ever made going into the Peace Corps. Peace Corps Togo I loved the program and that period of my life.

Q: So, when you came back from Peace Corps Togo, is that when you went into your master's program?

BROWN: Yes, as soon as I returned from Togo I entered graduate school at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Q: I see. Okay. Okay. Okay. All right. So, it sounds like from the very, very early part of your career it's been Peace Corps and the segueing in a way to AID, and I know that there are a lot of people who have had that route. This would be generalizing here; did you ever think about just staying with Peace Corps?

BROWN: Yes. I totally did. I loved my inspirational Peace Corps/Togo Director. He was phenomenal. Carl Beck. He ended up being Peace Corps director in three or four different countries, his last assignment was in Ukraine. And we saw each other years later in Moscow; he came to visit me. Carl was so instrumental in encouraging our volunteer group in Togo to advance our development training. We had over a hundred volunteers in Togo ranging in age from 20 -70. Carl was a really professional, stable, wise, practical and very reinforcing leader. And I went to him at the end, close to the end of the two years and said, "I'd like to stay on, you know, could I reup, stay a third year." Because

you have to request to do that. And he said, "You know, I really don't think you should do that. I think you should consider going to graduate school. Your passion for public health is important and the work you have done on nutrition interventions here in Togo was important. Go and get a Masters. You're able to do that now." So, he influenced me to take the GREs. There were three of us Peace Corps Volunteers who took the test in the Peace Corps office. It happened to be the day of a coup in Togo. So, we were inside the Peace Corps office taking the GREs. It was burning hot. And there was all this civil unrest going on outside and we could hear sirens in the background. I can't say any of us did super well on the GREs. I mean, it was a bit distracting, the whole situation of test taking. But if it weren't for Carl, I probably would have tried to stay in Africa longer and not come home right away and delayed going to graduate school.

Q: So, you came home. You probably did the right thing for getting more education, which academically could be a good thing for anyone's career. So, it sounds like he was a great influence, and the right influence.

So, you come back, you get into graduate school. You said you were in a hurry, so you finished graduate school pretty quickly as well?

BROWN: I finished in the time allotted, It was a two year program. I ended up getting into graduate school, starting school and met my husband in graduate school in the French club, (Alliance Française) during the first few weeks of school. Fletcher is an international graduate school and a requirement is to speak a second language, and you have to test out of it in order to get your degree, and so they had a French circle, and I was, right from the beginning in the French circle. And they asked everybody, Oh, where'd you learn French? And in my very thick West African French accent I said that I learned it in Peace Corps. And then my future-husband Chris said, "Oh." And they said, "Where did you learn French?" And he said, "Oh, ma mère est française." (my mother is French). And then, I immediately saw him differently and remembered thinking okay, your mother's French, that's great. You know, it caught my attention. And I guess my accent caught his attention because he just thought it was different compared to the Parisian French that he spoke and that his family spoke.

Q: And did you marry while you were in graduate school?

BROWN: Yes. We finished the first year of graduate school and we got married. And then, we both graduated and then Chris went back for his doctorate, and I started working as a consultant in Boston and for Tufts on some international projects that my nutrition professor had been awarded. And then, we applied to USAID together. And we applied to a bunch of other things, and USAID was one of the few opportunities where we both got in and USAID made us an offer to come together to start the same day.

Q: But in different aspects of USAID?

BROWN: Yes. Chris had a background in agriculture economics and program development, and mine was in health, but they weren't hiring any health people at the

time, and they actually believed that my background would also lend itself to program development. So they offered us two positions in the same function to enter the class. No sooner had we joined when they explained, you can't ever work together, you won't be in the same country because we don't have a lot of new officer positions in the same function and same backstop. You'll need to diversify if you're going to be assigned to the same country. And I said, "Well, I really wanted to be a health officer." And they said, Okay. Well, we will panel you in health. You have a lot of health background, academic background, and your Peace Corps service was in health. We will re-panel you. And it was very informal at that time to cross over into another backstop, and they allowed me to, in the Africa bureau, to re-panel as a health officer. So we never served in the same backstop for our entire career. I was always primarily working in health overseas and then Chris did a number of things over the many years of his service.

Q: But did that require that you not be in the same country or ever in the continent during those early days?

BROWN: No. We were always together—we were the fifth tandem couple in USAID. So, we were an oddity in that sense, but we were fortunate to have known one of the other couples. Chris's family knew them, actually. So, we knew that it was not an easy thing to navigate, but we never served in a different post, we always served together, we always had a tandem assignment in the same post. So, we were very fortunate. To the extent possible USAID tries to accommodate tandem couples. There are more and more tandems. Whereas in those days there were five tandem couples, it has grown exponentially now.

Q: Was that during a time that the State Department was probably in my maybe unfounded opinion not quite so, I don't know, giving chances for couples to serve in the same assignments or even, now I think you're too young, but I know in the seventies, before there was a suit called against the State Department, women weren't even able to have a career in the Foreign Service. So, what decade was this that you had the chance—?

BROWN: The eighties, the early eighties. So, we arrived, I think, in Nouakchott in Mauritania in 1982. And we joined USAID in 1981. We had a whole year in Washington. And so, the program that we were in, the international development intern program (IDI), allowed you to do rotations in Washington and then they assigned you to a country. And there was a lot of opportunity, especially since we spoke French, and there was a dearth of French speakers in the Africa bureau. We were mostly courted by the Africa bureau and our direct assignment, our first assignment was to Mauritania, where we actually met two other tandem couples at post. So, what we found was that in the difficult to serve posts, the hardship posts, you might find more tandem couples because they would have more vacancies than other posts.

Q: Yeah, yeah. Interesting. Huh.

BROWN: I never felt that joining as a woman was an issue.By the time I joined women were joining USAID. I think half of—maybe a third of our class were women in the IDI (International Development Intern) program and then, you know, gradually more and more women entered the service. And in the health field, in those days there were more women than men.

Q: Was your language training or the general AID training, was that at the Foreign Service Institute or somewhere else? Did AID have their own set up for training?

BROWN: No, FSI was our point of reference for language testing, but in my husband's case, he had native French proficiency, so he tested out. And even though my Peace Corps grade in French was very high, when I went to take the French test, FSI felt that I needed to brush up my French and polish up my grammar. And because I had not, you know, really grown up in French, USAID sent me to a language contractor. Two of us were in the class, another former Peace Corps Cameroon volunteer who also had the exact same grammar problems as I did. We both got sent to a language contractor because we were doing brush up. And then, at the end of that brush up we both scored very high on the French test, but we both felt like it was so much value added, what they gave us in that language class. It was invaluable. So, I'm grateful to the State Department for the brush up, for the reminder that we need to speak diplomatic French and language skills. I subsequently, later in my career, went to FSI for Russian.

Q: Yeah, because I got the feeling that there seems to be two kinds of French out there, maybe every language, your background in Africa and French former colonies, and then, as you said, more of the diplomatic French. So, they had to kind of get you over to the more European French through your contract training?

BROWN: I mean, to pass the test you have to speak at a high level. You have to be able to translate *Le Monde* articles and you know, actual newspapers . In Peace Corps you don't really need to do that, and you don't do a lot of reading in French and translations and things like that. And when we served in francophone posts I remember communicating with ministers and technical people and people in the government, they weren't interested in hearing broken French. So, it was extremely helpful to feel more polished and confident in French. And it didn't matter so much about the accent, but the actual grammatically correct French was very important in Haiti. It was very important in Mauritania as well. Many of our host country counterparts were trained in Paris themselves or Canada and they spoke really beautiful French. So, I'm grateful that we did that.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

BROWN: I did it. My husband didn't have to, so I did it.

Q: Did your husband, was he raised in France? You said la mère, but was he, was Chris, raised in France?

BROWN: Chris was born in Paris to a French mother, and his family was assigned to Tunisia, and then the Congo, so they were in francophone countries in the beginning of his life. He didn't go to school in the lycée in any of those countries; he went to American schools. But his sister did, actually attend a French lycée in Côte d'Ivoire, and her French was even better than Chris's, which is amazing as it was hard to actually find anybody's French who was better than Chris's. He spoke gorgeous French. And he was going back and forth with his cousins, his first cousins were in Paris and his cousins were coming to AID posts to visit them, so they spoke French at home with their mother. French was Chris' maternal language. His father also spoke great French.

Q: Well, you mentioned that his family was assigned. Does that mean his mother or father were part of the diplomatic service of France?

BROWN: No. His father was with USAID. So, Chris was a second generation USAID child. And my father-in-law was one of the original AID officers in the Point Four Program, Vince Brown.

Q: Point Four Program. Could you explain what that is?

BROWN: That was what the AID, the foreign aid program was called. The Marshall Plan ushered in this period of foreign aid. And Vince Brown (my father-inlaw) had a very interesting story about how he was recruited into the Foreign Service.After the war, after World War II, (Vince Brown), he and a friend hitchhiked across Europe and they ended up in Paris. They had been in the military, and they ended up going to the U.S. Embassy and the Embassy needed security guards. And they said, Oh, how would you like to work at the embassy? You speak French. You graduated from college. You went to UCLA. And he and Vince's friend were recruited into the embassy as security guards. After that, they were recruited into USAID, and they became one of the original AID officers. But it was hilarious because of the way he entered. And they said, We need officers who speak French. Would you be willing to go to francophone countries? He said, "Yes, my wife is French, and I'd love to." And so began the Brown legacy in USAID.

Q: I see. Huh. Interesting.

Well, back to your immediate family, did you and Chris start having a family? Did you have children during this period, or did you defer this or what happened there?

BROWN: We were in Mauritania for three years and we had our first child the second year that we were at post.

Q: Okay, okay. Did you feel that AID supported family life?

BROWN: Oh, yes. It was fantastic. Many of our co-workers had children. The U.S. embassy and USAID officers had children slightly older than ours. I felt that it was a family friendly career. USAID offered a very accommodating career path, actually, because you're able to work overseas, we're able to get help so that I could continue

working during my career. I ended up having two children and raising them in the Foreign Service. The second one was born while we were in Liberia.

Q: Education-wise, I mean, I know when kids are little, you know, you're going to have help or whatever, but were there educational possibilities for your children in these rather small postings? Or what did you do for that, your kids?

BROWN: There were little play groups, you know, in both of our first two countries, Mauritania and Liberia. They were in international setting schools, like daycare, and Nigerian kindergarten in Liberia. And then, by the time we got to Haiti and Jamaicathere were American schools or international quality schools. So yes, I would say that the USAID assignment team in Human Resources was very sensitive to the need for schooling for your children, so it was never an issue for my kids. There was always, you know, an opportunity or a school for their needs.

Q: Okay, okay. That's great to hear. Did your family, your sisters or your parents come out to visit or did they come to see your life out there?

BROWN: They did. It was a real eye opener for them. My parents didn't come to Mauritania. But my in-laws, who were a former Foreign Service family, came everywhere, every single post they would be there, and they would help us get settled in. My mother-in-law would usually come to post as soon as I would arrive, and I would have to go to work, as soon as a day after I got off the plane. My mother-in-law would usually come with us and make sure that the kids were not alone and that there was continuity. And she loved doing that. And, my family did end up coming to Liberia, our second post, right after the coup, a little bit after the coup when things had quieted down, and then we went from Liberia to Senegal on break. And so, my parents got a chance to see West Africa and what that was all about. But my in-laws, you know, they knew what it was about. They had been stationed in Abidjan. Our careers were like just a prolonged version of their career.

Q: Mm-hm. I've noticed that typically AID assignments are four years. Maybe I got that wrong, but that seems like a longer period of time than a typical Foreign Service State Department assignment. Can you comment on that? Was it always four years for you or was it more flexible?

BROWN: Some posts, similar to State Department, are for two years or four years, depending on the degree of hardship. So, if it's a two-year post like Nouakchott, Mauritania, and you want to stay or they need you to say, they'll ask you and you'll get a third year. If you want to do another tour, they're very flexible. If it's a hard to serve post they're grateful. And many people in Nouakchott, it was a 25 percent post, and many families stayed four years. We were there for three years because we were junior officers and they wanted us to move into regular positions, so within the Africa bureau they asked us to move to Liberia. And we were in Liberia for almost three and a half years.

Q: You mentioned, and we'll get to it that you then moved over to Haiti. Would that have been typical to, like your specialty seemed to be Africa or francophone countries, and then suddenly you're going to a different continent. So, we will get into that a little more, but would that have been typical of AID to do that sort of thing?

BROWN: Yes, in USAID the Agency offered the opportunity to switch bureaus, especially after you've done two tours in the same bureau. You are allowed to bid worldwide. But as a tandem there are a limited range of options worldwide, and so Haiti was an option for both of us and the same thing with Jamaica. For our family situation they look at how many kids you have, is there a school, your medical needs. And so after weighing all of these as a tandem couple we did not have a long list of choices. It becomes sort of like a needle in a haystack.

Q: Yeah, it sounds like you were there and ready for them. I also noticed where we served in Moscow that the housing was separate, that AID housing was a separate entity in Moscow, but I don't know if that was only there or is that typical of the different countries you served in?

BROWN: When we first started USAID had its own administration and executive office functions, separate and apart from the State Department. We would have our own building, our own drivers, our own cars, everything separate from the rest of the embassy. And then, somewhere along, maybe eight to ten years in, USAID entered into an interagency administrative agreement with State where everything would be consolidated under the State Department administrative support office and executive office, and there would be one housing pool, one GSO, (General Service Office). I'm sure it was a cost savings measure and I think an efficiency measure because previously also Peace Corps had their own administrative and housing team and each Agency even had their own guards. And at some point, there has to be an economy of scale where it's easier to hire one guard force company to secure the whole slew of housing as opposed to everybody going out for individual contracts. So, I think it was more cost effective. We had our own furniture, too. AID furniture was different from State Department furniture. We used to say, Oh, gosh, we have such inferior furniture (laughs/indiscernible) and then the Peace Corps would say, Oh, look at our furniture. You AID people, you have much better furniture, you know. And then, we finally got to the point where we all had the same furniture.

Q: Well, it must have taken a while for different postings because Russia 2003 to 2008, it was still separate. And you didn't get that merging. Your housing was separate, your furniture, because that was part of my job.

All right. Betsy, so we have covered your earlier career I guess we'd say in your field of choice. But let's go more into that in those early years of your public health, anything to do with your specialty while you were in those early years in Africa. What was your typical outreach to the community and was the government of these countries and your contacts in them, were they totally cooperative, somewhat cooperative, wanting to get the

funding that AID would allow them, or resentful, or if you could comment on a few of those things in your earlier year in Africa.

BROWN: My early assignments in the Africa bureau in West Africa in Mauritania and Liberia, I'd say in Mauritania there were some bristly relations because it was the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and the country was sympathetic to the Palestinians. The PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) had their office there. Gaddafi was going in and out of Nouakchott and there was the war going on in the Sahara. And that had just ended by the time we got there, so we couldn't travel in a certain part of the desert because there were still landmines in that area. So, there was a frostiness. A lot of our counterparts including the government officials were trained in Paris, but a whole group of them were trained in Moscow. Of those trained in Moscow some had Russian wives, they would either be really friendly or not. So, it was very interesting. There was a lot of political tension depending on what region of Mauritania we were traveling in.

In those early days we were all focused on primary health care, cost recovery, setting up primary care systems, community health and village health worker programs. It was the golden years for a Peace Corps volunteer coming into AID to be able to get out to the field. I mean, we were out in the field two weeks of every month. Some months we'd be gone the whole time out in the desert, traveling around. Our projects were everywhere. We were doing supervision and we didn't hire a lot of consultants; we did our own work. So, myself and another officer, we did a nutritional status survey with CDC (Centers for Disease Control) to document the drought and the famine that was going on in the early eighties in Mauritania. We observed Vitamin A deficiency, which caused people to go blind from Xerophthalmia. These are highly treatable conditions.

And in the internship program (IDI) I was in, on your first tour, you would rotate to several offices within the mission; you didn't just work in the health office. USAID headquarters wanted us to work across the mission. So I was in the Food for Peace office and got to go out on the food aid distribution sites and see the mothers and children getting the food, learn about food leakage when it wasn't getting to people, why it wasn't getting to people, food storage, and the supply chain for food aid. We did rotations with the procurement office to understand how to order equipment and supplies. So, we literally were learning the nuts and bolts of development. And as I said, there were three tandem couples in the mission, we may have had fifteen people and three of them were tandem couples. And everyone was so friendly, and you know, it was a very small American community overall, and there were lots of fun things that our mission director did that we never did again. For example,our mission director, organized a mission wide camping expedition that included . the entire USAID mission, It was like team building. Americans and Mauritanians.. But we were out in the desert all together for, I think it was two nights that we did that.

And then, for of our projects, we had to do our own supervision and discussions with our counterparts out in the field. So, we'd go region to region, and we had to sleep there, and there was no hotels. So, the embassy, well USAID, had purchased its own four-wheel drive vehicles, we had our own drivers, and there were cots that they put on the bed and

literally we'd just sleep outside on the cots and form like an encampment, and there would be like two vehicles. And we'd be out in the middle of the desert during sandstorms. Sometimes we would get stuck for a couple of days because of sandstorms. These sandstorms were so strong that in one place we went we were on an evaluation of a health project, and the windows in the guest house where we were staying,almost blew out because the pressure from the sand was amazing.

Mauritania was a very conservative Islamic society. Women are not allowed to appear with their head uncovered or in a short dress or skirt, so we wore these, traditional clothes, (boubous), and we had our hair covered (with head scarves), and because of the dust we would have our face covered. And I have some incredible photos of us in those early years in our traditional clothing. And the building we were in, the windows were porous and the sand would just pour through the windows, and it was so bad that they decided—we didn't have computers for everyone at that point, and they kept all the computers in one, I think it was just like a temporary building, and we had to go out there to use the computer. And then, there was one place where a printer was and you had to go around, and I remember the printing. The Mauritanian who was in charge of communications and records, Youdali. We'd have to go to Youdali to get a copy. And the secretaries were typing everything. And the translator, we had to walk over to these other buildings. And meanwhile, this was a USAID building, it was like a little compound and in the middle was open and the sand would be pouring in. And the sandstorm would come and like, sometimes you couldn't get out of a door. Because the sand was so heavy, they'd have to bring in people to shovel. So, it was no small feat living in Nouakchott and working in that environment.

And the embassy was not, we weren't co-located, and that wasn't much better, to tell you the truth. And there was a little swimming pool and one, I think one tennis court there, but you know, most of the time it would be closed because there's so much sand in it. And the same thing would happen with the tennis court. Like, the sand would blow in and if you wanted to play tennis, you know, somebody had to sweep the court off to—. So, what did we do for fun? One of the officers, one of the AID officers, was an iconic executive officer, Max. He said, "Look. When I retire, I want to become a tennis instructor. Could I train you people who don't know anything about tennis?" So, none of us had played. "I want to be your coach. Would you allow me to do it?" So, for free we'd meet him after work and the mission director happened to be one of those people. So, here you have a mission director playing with junior officers. It was so fun.
I mean, we had wonderful parties in Nouakchott, wonderful, where we'd have local traditional drummers come and come to the house. We'd pitch tents and they'd have meshwi, big barbecues and stuff like that. So, I have wonderful, wonderful memories of what was a very difficult post.

But it was not smooth sailing U.S.-Mauritanian relations. It was built progressively, during every field trip, as a former Peace Corps volunteer, I believe that every field trip, when we took government people with us, this was a forging of friendship beyond anything that we were givingIn foreign aid. It was one-on-one, getting to know your counterparts and relating to them as a working mother. Getting to know people at a

fundamental level that broke down this idea that Americans were X or Y. It was a super important part of USAID in those years. And again, in Liberia we were very, very fortunate to spend a great deal of time traveling before the coup, to get out to every single region of Liberia. And this has become less feasible in the current AID but was very much a part of how we did business before.

Q: You said when you were dealing with the government you meant not our government, but you meant the—

BROWN: The Mauritanian, local host government.

Q: Right, right. Perhaps they expected Americans with USAID to be more bureaucratic and stay in their offices or—?

BROWN: No, I mean, in those days if you stayed in your office, you'd get nothing done. We had no internet; we had no way to communicate with you. There were, like, three telephones in Nouakchott. There was only one telephone outside of the mission director's office in our mission in USAID Mauritania that you could get an outside call from. So, if Washington was calling you, you had to walk out of your office up to the reception, and the receptionist would say, Ah, Madam Betsy, you have a call from Washington. And they'd had you the phone and you'd be standing there in the reception area, like basically in the hallway taking the call. The amount—I can't even stress the comparison in terms of technology. By the time we got to Liberia everybody had a computer on their desk, but there was no fax and there was no internet, but you had a computer. It was basically for typing, you know, and sending a document, but it wasn't interoffice communication. So, it took two posts overseas and then coming to Washington for me to even know what a fax machine was.

Q: Wow.

BROWN: I literally had no idea by the time I got to Washington to my job there in the Office of Population that there was such a piece of equipment.

Q: And that was still the 1980s, I'm guessing, or the mid, late 1980s.

BROWN: Yep.

Q: Okay.

BROWN: And I was really happy to be in a really forward-thinking Office of Population where they had the most advanced technology that USAID had at that time including desktop networked computers. It's still the case today, they are (the Global Health Bureau) a very well equipped operation. But at the field missions, everything was done by cable, and it took forever to draft a cable and to get the cable cleared and you had to hand carry cables around the mission for clearances. Other impediments to getting work done was that in Nouakchott there would be the sandstorms that would practically shut

down the office. While in Liberia you had the torrential rains in the rainy season which made it impossible to leave Monrovia. The logistics of transmitting and clearing documents in the rainy season was also difficult when the documents needed to be signed cross town at the Embassy. You know, just the logistics of getting communication moving, it was really what today we would consider to be stone age technology that we were using.

Q: Right, right.

So, you mentioned earlier that contractors were not so much in evidence in these early days. You all did more than maybe later. So, did that change, did that—was that a welcome change? Did you get some of the burden taken off of some of these long treks to different places? What's your opinion about contractors in those early days?

BROWN: I mean, I personally loved those early days. I loved being close to beneficiaries. I've always loved that, that's why I joined the Peace Corps. I've always loved that part of the job, coming in contact with people in need. So, moving back, stepping back farther and farther into management I think was probably hard for me in the beginning. But once I understood the job, there's no way that I personally, with my limited public health training over a twenty-year period or twenty-five-year period could keep up and provide to our host countries the level of technical expertise that they were asking for just by using us. You know, there was no way that we could fulfill that. And as our mission became more and more complicated, they were looking for infectious disease specialists and TB specialists and family planning experts and OB-GYNs. So, we moved to this technical assistance model,projectized technical assistance where basically we would fund high-level expertise to countries in specific areas in mutually agreed upon areas. So, while personally, you know, I had less opportunity, not in those two posts, but along the way to get out as much as I would have loved to. I think it was a good thing. I mean, we need to provide high-level, state of the art technical expertise. That is our value added, that's what we're all about is helping countries and matching what the host country needs with the expertise and financing. And it shouldn't be, oh, we have this stable of people and you know, they're going to just give you any old advice. She's in nutrition, but now she's going to be advising you in pandemic preparedness. You know, there's no way that you could stay up to date in all of those areas. So, it became more complicated. And Global Health is, it's billions and billions of dollars and new pandemics and emerging infections and so on and so forth, and we need to keep up with that and give countries the top-level expertise that we as a country have.

Q; Mm-hm. And so, the route towards that was through contractors who can expand your reach, so to speak.

BROWN: And not just contractors. We also used, in those days, a lot of interagency agreements, so CDC, the Centers for Disease Control, ever since I started was an interagency partner that you could tap when you needed medical epidemiologists on site, or you needed them to provide advice on a host country national nutritional status survey. So, they would send medical epidemiologists with a nutrition background and help you to

frame the sample and then you would go carry it out. So, we had an agreement with CDC and with USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture and nutrition people, that included top, top talent. And they weren't contractors. We also had the Bureau of the Census (BUCENS) who provided technical assistance to USAID on demographic and health surveys, and that became like a trademark of USAID assistance, in every country. The country would ask for that expertise to do population-based national health status surveys.

Q: Mm-hm. So, you were in communication with the local governments about what they were looking for and trying to accommodate or maybe push back, I don't know, but usually you were in agreement with the local government?

BROWN: I mean, I would say that in some cases we were not in agreement. You know, they would ask us for things that—they'd ask us for cars. We want you to buy us a fleet of cars in Nouakchott. And what do you need them for? Oh well, our doctors that are out there, medical directors, each one needs a car. And we'd be like, okay, well, the U.S. government doesn't have to supply your doctors cars. You know, they can buy their cars, or you can buy them cars. So, very frequently, and it still happens, you know, host governments will ask for things that USAID either doesn't fund such as new construction or major renovations to existing health facilities. Additionally, our strength and comparative advantage was building a strong primary care system. In those days, in the early days in West Africa USAID focused on primary health care and building that primary prevention system. The French and the Japanese and now the Chinese do hospitals and fund hospital equipment. A real issue is that Hospitals were not and still are not functioning optimally and there was and still is a weak referral network beginning with no community health at all. And we were working on the community primary care level. So, there was tension, there is tension and negotiation around what USAID will or won't fund. And governments who work with USAID frequently understand that, and they know, okay, we're going to ask USAID for this, we're going to ask the Germans for this, we're going to ask the Japanese for this. But in the case of Mauritania, they didn't have a lot of donors. They had us and the French and maybe the UN, and so they'd always ask us for the same things from all of us. (Laughs) And they didn't particularly, you know, as I told you, there was a lot of anti-American feeling at that time, and so when you didn't provide what they wanted they may not want to speak to you, or they may take it to the ambassador, you know. Mr. Ambassador, we already asked USAID for this, we want twenty cars. Or they wanted gas. That was the other thing. A lot of negotiation in the Africa bureau with host countries asking us for gas coupons, you know, to underwrite basically the gas for their outreach vehicle fleet.

Q: Yeah, interesting. Huh. Back to the contractors. You're out in the field, so to speak, and these contractors are American-based, American-owned, I'm guessing. You didn't do international contractors or based elsewhere. So, how did those—did you get input into choosing the contractors or was that decision made in Washington and you were told? What was the way it worked?

BROWN: In USAID there are centrally funded contracts and there are bilateral contracts. The bilateral contracts, if you had a bilateral agreement with a country, you would issue a request for proposals. Your government counterparts would help you write the specifications for what you needed, you would agree to a project, you had a memorandum of understanding, you had a signed agreement, bilateral agreement with this country, and then you would issue a request for proposals and companies or consortia would bid. And then, we typically have host country representation on the panel to select contractors. So, we're reading together the bids, the offers, and you know, voting. So, we typically—and then, in countries where we don't work with the government, we would try to have other representation. It was not just Americans picking American companies, you know, that we were getting the input that was needed to first and foremost define the needs of the country and then to determine the best technical approach. Local representation and USAID's FSN staff are best suited to determine if the approach described by a contractor is truly feasible and suited to that country setting. It's not a wholly American in-house selection process. It's a tested and effective cooperative business practice that USAID uses.

Q: Interesting. Okay. All right. So, did you see that evolve over the years into any other technique, or did that pretty much stay in the way it was done throughout your career?

BROWN: So, in those early years there were few centrally funded contracts, so Global Health then started awarding in Washington these big umbrella agreements to consortium that were multifaceted, like a cross cutting umbrella agreement for, let's say, local capacity development for NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), just to pick something. And in that, there were, like, four contractors who would do it. It would be a large envelope that missions could buy into. Instead of everyone issuing their own contract for local capacity development you would go to Washington, they had a menu, and you'd say, Oh, you already have a contractor who does X and Y and Z. You'd go to your host country and say, Look, does this resonate with you? Do you—look at this consortia's credentials, look at their corporate capability. Does this resonate with you? And they would say, Yes for example we'd love to work with Johns Hopkins University, or other top well known internationally recognized US global health companies. Over time the host governments knew firsthand who were the centers of excellence in the U.S. on specific topics and they would want to work with Harvard, or with Johns Hopkins University because of their track record and published expertise. So host countries would opt to use the USAID money to buy into these central mechanisms. And now, that has gotten bigger and bigger. I don't know how many, we call them implementing partners, there are centrally in Global Health, but there are a lot, there's a whole book that you can pick from. So, you have a decision to make when you design an activity with the host country or with local organizations, what contracting mechanism way are you going to do the business. It's not just the what, it's how. And all that takes a long time before you get the contractor in the field. Typically, if it's a big program, the company will set up an office in the country and they'll have a presence, and they'll have an office, so they've got the administrative capacity to manage their health team.

Q: Right there in your, where you're working as well. So—

BROWN: Yeah, you mean now or?

Q: Well, both, then and now, it's evolved into having a presence in the country.

BROWN: Absolutely. I mean, some of the countries, like Bangkok, is a hub for USG and UN technical assistance organizations. Nairobi is a hub. South Africa, Pretoria, is a hub. You'll see all the major health contractors will have regional offices that have contracts in the region. Nigeria is another hub. And you'll see the major Global Health contractors present there, and they not only have USAID contracts, they have UN contracts too and may also have direct contracts with the host government.

Q: Hmm. Mm-hm. Hmm. Interesting. Okay. So, jumping along, how did it happen that you got from Africa to Haiti or Jamaica? Which? Which came first? Haiti?

BROWN: It was Jamaica. We were in Washington, and we had a very serious medical issue in my family come up, and we were about to go overseas to Morocco, but learned that due to this medical issue we were not going to be able to go to Morocco and that we would have to stay in Washington. And because of that medical issue there were only a handful of posts that we could go to as a tandem couple with children, that could accommodate that medical issue So Jamaica came up and they said, This is good, you know, you can get back to the U.S., and that's how we ended up in Jamaica. It was the misfortune of the medical issue that gave us the good fortune of moving from West Africa to the Caribbean.

Q: And what year was that?

BROWN: That's a good question of when the actual—we moved to—I think it was 1989 that we went to Jamaica, and then in 1993 we went to Haiti. So, then we were in Jamaica and Washington was trying to staff up the Haiti mission. Aristide had returned to power, and Bill Clinton was president. The White House wanted to strengthen our relations with Haiti. Aristide was the president, he was elected and it was very tumultuous, and they searched around in theLAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) bureau, and they said, Ah, we have two francophones right next door in Kingston, Jamaica. They reached out to us, and they said, Would you like to go? It was February. Would you like to go in the middle of the school year to Haiti, would you consider it? And as luck would have it, Chris and I had been on our honeymoon in Haiti, and I had gone to Haiti as a child, and then again as a population officer from our DC headquarters. so were.

Q: Wow.

BROWN: So we agreed we love Haiti, we love francophone countries and we want to serve our country. Okay, we'll do it. And we left, I think, in April and my kids had to finish the school year in Haiti, and it was a very tumultuous time. The U.S. military was there and it was a very tough time to be there. But we felt like we were doing service for our country. I mean, I really do. The fifth day we were there Bill Clinton arrived at the

US military base And we have pictures of Bill Clinton walking the receiving line with me shaking his hand, my husband shaking his hand, and my children looking up at him in awe and he looking down. And it was so reminiscent of Bill Clinton looking up at John F. Kennedy, that same kind of look, my son looking at him like, oh my gosh, this is the president. And he (President Clinton) thanked us for our service. My in-laws happened to be there because they were trying to help get my kids settled in the middle of the school year. My in-laws also got to go with us as well to meet Bill Clinton. So, it was wonderful, our fifth day. We knew it was going to be a tough assignment, but he (Bill Clinton) was so inspirational, the whole time we were there we felt like the administration was really supporting what we were doing. And yes, that was a good beginning to our Haiti experience and tour of duty.

Q: And you mentioned that it was going to be a tough assignment. Do you mean that there are different challenges working with the Haitian government than where you were in Africa or what did you anticipate there as a tough assignment?

BROWN: Well, there was a lot of civil unrest and civil society was just getting started again when—under the dictatorship of prior regimes they hadn't allowed civil society to emerge, really. And so, for education, you know, people weren't being educated. Literacy was low. For me it was a huge step up in terms of office responsibilities. I was supervising both the health, the education, and the food aid programs. And thank goodness, in the beginning of my career in Nouakchott I had had that rotation in the food aid program, and I had a background in nutrition. It's been—we were at that time it was one of the largest feeding programs. We (USAID) and its implementing partners were feeding a million people a meal a day. And we had so many complicated supply chain problems to move and distribute the food. So, the fact that I had that opportunity to go to warehouses, to understand how you get from Point A to Point B, in Haiti it was a huge problem getting the food out of the port and into the mouths of mothers and children. And because I was dealing with three sectors we had, you know, triple the amount of contractors and much more money than I had been working with in West Africa.

Q: Mm-hm. And when you say three sectors, you mean the three different areas that you were—

BROWN: Right. Typically, in a USAID mission, if it's a big program you'll have a food aid office, you'll have an education office, you'll have a health office. In those days, it was called the General Development Office and I was the Supervisory General Development Officer, so I was overseeing three separate teams. There were probably twenty-five people (staff) on board in the General Development Office, which at that time was big, a big office for a USAID mission. Now the offices, the health office alone may have sixty people in some of the larger USAID missions.

Q: Mm-hm. Yeah. I was thinking that as we go to our next interview, we would continue to go through the chronological places that you worked, but also to get more into the details of the public health and the different programs, so you could kind of, like, think about that before November 7, which is our next appointment, if you're still available.

We've covered a lot today, but pretty much more of it over general view, so next time we'll get more into the details about the different postings of where you've been. You've been to a lot of places. (Laughs) Georgia, Moscow, just—

BROWN: Mongolia.

Q: Yeah. So, Mongolia. And also, just because I'm thinking of it and I'm kind of like winging it here, did you serve any time in DC, any length of time in between these international assignments?

BROWN: Yes. We ended up spending four years in DC where I was in the Office of Population and then, another tour in DC where I was—maybe that was three years the first time. And we joined, we spent a year as a junior officer, then we came back, and we spent three years. And then we went out again. And then, we came back, and I did four years, and that was in the Management Bureau, so I literally switched out of health and went into management and started as a career counselor, and then worked up into staffing and assignments for the Europe and Eurasia bureau. aThen I became the Director of Personnel Operations. And so, my job consisted of all management for the whole time, the four years I was there in HR. And then, I went to become the Director of the Office of Health, Infectious Disease and Nutrition, which at the time included HIV-AIDS. This was a supervisory management job where there were a ton of health people. So, I found myself getting farther and farther away from development and health beneficiaries and more and more into the management side of the house and keeping the money flowing and the people on-board and hiring and growing the operation.

Q: Did you feel that that was a natural progression? Were you happy with that type of progression or were you missing anything about being out in the field?

BROWN: Oh, I totally missed being in the field. I always missed it. And I think one of the good things was that my own career counselor in HR (Human Resources) said, I think you should come to HR. I think you are going to really like this. It's going to resonate with you. You will be dealing with people, that's all you do in HR. It will be people oriented, it's just not host country people, it's your USAID colleagues. And she was so right. I loved it. I absolutely loved my four years in HR. It was a terrific experience, and I was great to have that in Washington, and it was a platform then to take on other supervisory jobs that all included a ton of HR management and organizational management. I never could have been a CEO of a Planned Parenthood affiliate if I had not had that management assignment in USAID's/HR.

Q: Yeah, yeah. I see. But was it a bit of a surprise to you and when you thought about it that this has happened with your career? Maybe before that HR management thing happened, did you have any idea that it would happen?

BROWN: I knew that I wasn't going to get ahead as a health specialist. I knew that there were very few technical senior Foreign Service officers promoted through the health field up to Senior Foreign Service without management experience. and I was ambitious

enough to want to do that and to become a Senior Foreign Service Officer especially after I got into the Management Bureau and saw that it felt like a good fit. So, did I know it was going to feel like a good fit? I'm not sure. But you know, I've been fortunate that there are a few things that feel like they're good fits, you know. So, at different times in my life, I have tried new career avenues and found them to be a good fit. So, I'm glad I worked in Management in HR as I would not be doing what I'm doing now with new officers if I didn't believe in HR management and the power and the need for good HR management. Without good HR management, organizations come unglued and fail.

Q: Of course.

BROWN: Additionally, in all development sectors including health, if you don't have good people or supported people or people who are prepared to do the jobs that they're being assigned to, everything falls apart.

Q: I see.

BROWN: You can have the money, the contractors, everything, but you need the people.

Q: Yeah, yeah, I see what you're saying. All right, well, I think we're going to stop at this point. I'd like to go with that is when we next meet go through each one of those, well maybe not all the way back to Monrovia, but go back to what you were doing at each one of these posts, a little more detail on that, including coming back to Washington and getting into that job. I think that's going to be another two hours, Betsy, if you're okay. We might—I'm going to talk with Heather, but we might want to have another, at least an hour about what you're doing now because I think AID is interested in getting the full career of this person, of you being one of these people, and see where you've gone after you retire.

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Q: All right. My name is Linda Lippner and I'm recording an interview with Betsy Brown. Today is November 7, 2022, and it is our second interview for approximately two hours.

So, Betsy, you were spending a lot of time in Eastern Europe and then you and your family were transferred to Central America, I guess we'd say, or I'm not sure how you would want to identify the places you were there.

BROWN: After Eastern Europe I ended my formal tours, and retired from my career appointment. For clarificationI was in the Caribbean before I went to Russia.

Q: Okay. So, we will cover all of that then. So, let's talk about your time in the Caribbean, and that is the more accurate way to talk about where you were.

BROWN: Mm-hm.

Q: So, your first assignment was where?

BROWN: The first assignment was to Jamaica for four years. And in the late 1980s, and then following that we were called up to go to Haiti during the return of Aristide. And so, we left, so we did a total of about six and a half years in the Caribbean, two and a half in Haiti and four in Jamaica.

Q: So, what were your specific past assignments when you first got to Jamaica?

BROWN: In Jamaica I was a supervisor of the General Development Office by the time I left. And I had the health sector, social services including drug prevention, substance abuse prevention, and the education sector, which included higher and basic education. So, it was a very interesting set of programming and very diverse. We had an all-Jamaican staff other than myself and it was such a delight working with that team. As it turned out, all women. Then, after that, we were in Haiti for two and a half years. By the time there was the return of Aristide, and we got to Haiti because we both, my husband and I both spoke French, we were asked to move mid-cycle. My kids ended school in March, and we transferred. So, it was a bit tumultuous, and I was lucky to have my in-laws, who were very experienced Foreign Service family to go with us to Haiti, and probably the only ones who would have agreed to go with us to Haiti. (Laughs) We got there and maybe five days after Bill Clinton arrived, and did this wonderful meet and greet , and all of the embassy families were invited. So, my in-laws and my children were able to meet Bill Clinton. There was a receiving line out at the army base, so we were very much on a secure compound—we had a military presence at that point in Haiti, just securing the country after the return of Aristide. I have such vivid memories of my son looking up at Bill Clinton with just awe. You know, we were all in awe, is it possible that we're here? How could we have arrived at a better moment, right? (Laughs) So, that was inspiring.

Q: That's interesting. There was a military base, an American military base there?

BROWN: Yes, it was set up to preserve the peace in Haiti with the United Nations military mission, and yep, there we were. And the program I was assigned was one of the larger, if not the largest food aid programs in USAID that I had to manage, in addition to health and population and nutrition and education. So, a very promising education portfolio as well, but didn't include higher education, it was all basic education and more fundamental education. It was extremely busy. And we worked constantly, around the clock it seemed. So, it was a very busy mission under the leadership of an incredible ambassador.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

BROWN: Ambassador Swing, Willliam Lacy Swing. And he had come from South Africa to Haiti. So, he had just had the experience of experiencing South Africa move towards democracy, and he had also been our ambassador in Liberia. So, we knew that

we were in great hands and that the embassy was really well run. And the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), Stan Schrager had been in Mauritania when we were in Mauritania. So, it was a wonderful assignment in that sense. And my good friend from Peace Corps ended up being the head of the UNICEF office in Haiti as well, and she lived just down the street when I was in Togo and then again after so many years in Petionville. So, there was an incredible team of international experts working hard on this program. Haiti was going through a really difficult transition at that point and our embassy was supporting the country as it moved through this historic moment.

Q: And I'm not sure if we indicated for this recording the years that you were there, so if you could state the years that you were in Haiti.

BROWN: Nineteen ninety-four up until 1997.

Q: Okay, okay. Clinton being president at the time, that's true, okay.

So, with AID, you had a wide range of projects and concerns with Haiti, not just Planned Parenthood, not just food aid or anything, a lot of different things going on there.

BROWN: Right. And a big staff. At that time, we had two other Americans in the office and then, probably fifteen to sixteen Haitian staff, a few of them, maybe one is still there. I ended up actually meeting this staff again when I later went back to Haiti as a consultant… so Haiti seemed to have been in my path. I first went to Haiti with Chris Brown on our honeymoon. And that was, you know, our first adult experience in Haiti. And then, AID sent me there several times from Washington for family planning work, and then we turned up in Haiti again. So, I knew the country a bit. I had traveled around the country by the time I got there in the late 1990s, and we did even more traveling at that time across the country, inspecting food aid programs to see if the food aid was getting out. We opened and reopened many health clinics and relaunched primary care services. We held meetings with civil society leaders, mayors, and then structuring visits for senior leaders. NSC Director Tony Lake came while we were in Haiti to look at programming and meet some civil society leaders. He was the national security advisor at the time. And we had lots of high-level visits coming into Haiti with a keen interest.

Q: And so many disasters have happened in Haiti. It must be very sad, discouraging to you to see the ups and downs of that particular country since the time that you were there.

BROWN: It is very sad. It's very—it's hard, actually. So after I retired from USAID I went back after the earthquake and I was on the earthquake response team as a contractor , so that was in 2010. And then, I went back again in 2019, just before COVID, and was working on actually some follow-on programming to primary health care and integrated care.At that time in 2019, things were very tense and their security situation was, I would say not good, but probably nothing like what has been happening now. So, now you have a confluence of things with COVID on top of it and elections and the assassination of different people, key leaders. And yeah, very, very sad. But even in 2019 I was not able

to go out and see many people, we were not allowed to go out. So, during the earthquake we remarkably were able to get out to sites to see the devastation and to start planning rubble removal. I did rubble removal and resettlement shelters in different locations. So, I got to go up-country to one town I had worked with when I was in Haiti as an officer, Léogâne. Hôpital Sainte Croix, this hospital that had this amazing, amazing program of integrating care with food aid. And I literally had almost vanished because of the earthquake, because the earthquake was fairly close to there. And Petit Goave, , the town after Léogâne and there were palm trees in the water. The water had come up and had washed into the town and was just sitting there, so they lost land. You could visibly see that, you know, the town was washed away. Petit Goave. That's the name of the town, Petit Goave. And I asked how it is now and they just, they are pounded all the time by hurricanes and then the earthquake, so it's a low-lying spot and the village was too close, I guess, to the water, and yeah. So, lots of challenges.

Q: Yeah. Do you feel that AID is participating from what you know as a consultant and your work now to what's going on in Haiti now, or do you feel that the United States—

BROWN: Yes. Absolutely vital what USAID is doing. Life affirming, essential services, keeping things—supporting the infrastructure that's there, supporting civil society, very much supporting non-governmental health facilities and feeding sites. The Catholic Church had their infrastructure through, when I was there Catholic Relief Services, so these were other points, sites for maternal and child health and feeding services. I was able during the earthquake to go out to ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), the Adventists, who were also an AID recipient for food aid, and see their operation. And they were very much helping, they had a resettlement, tent encampment at their main site outside of Port-au-Prince and I mean, it was absolutely vital. And they could not have kept going now. In 2019, all of those, there may have been other players, World Vision, you know, other humanitarian providers, but there's so many connections between the U.S. and Haiti and U.S. humanitarian missions in Haiti, the state of Florida in Haiti, so tremendous assistance to Haiti. A partnership between the state of Florida that was started when I was first there years before, they helped set up the trauma center and the emergency room in the main hospital, so the exchanges of doctors, U.S. medical teams going out during the earthquake in 2010. And then, many of those organizations tended then to stay, like Partners in Health and Doctors Without Borders, Médecins Sans Frontières, they have been with Haiti all along. So, it's been absolutely vital.

Q: Do you feel that part of the ongoing problem then is the Haitian government, not so much the aid that's coming into the country from outside and all these cooperating organizations? What happens when they hit the government, the Haitian government?

BROWN: Building civil society and governance is a long, long process. It's not going to happen easily. Haiti has a very distinct, unique history emanating at the beginning from slavery and Benin and decades and decades and decades of difficult political situations. And it's hard to work beyond that history. And the other main support for Haiti is Haitian Americans, the diaspora that are in Florida and all over the U.S. at the highest levels. Haitians need to find a solution, an internal solution and they are not blessed with a

wonderful natural resource base. There are parts of the country that are constantly in drought and then constantly flooding, lowlands, and the poverty is huge. How do you put all those pieces together? It's one of the most fragile states, probably, in the world. But the Haitians need and have incredibly talented and hardworking people. How do you put those pieces together? Obviously, you can't assassinate your president, you know. I mean, it's just not the way to move through transitions. So, they're not transitioning well and their political leadership, even when they've had good leadership it's fraught with issues.

Q: Yeah, you're quite honest. You're very frank when you just said that it's hard to assassinate the head of the government, yes, of course. I've always wondered why there is another country on the same island that seems to be doing just fine.

BROWN: They didn't have the same colonization history as the Haitians, and they've been blessed with a different political system, higher literacy, higher education. Haiti, during Papa Doc's time the Haitians weren't allowed to go to school. I mean, if you had tried to plan for failure, that was a good way to fail, keep everybody illiterate, do not allow any economic innovation, keep the power and the money in the hands of a few. And see, that's their tradition, that is what they're building on. The DR (Dominican Republic) did not build on that same set of circumstances, and hence—and they also, the DR hasn't had the same earthquake issues, so they're kind of blessed by being on another side of a mountain range, Peak Duarte. It's pretty impressive. The mountains in Haiti are impressive. I've done mountain climbing, so during our time in Haiti many of us used to go out into the mountains. So, in those days we could get out even on the weekends. We could do mountain climbing, go out in villages, out to the countryside, go to the beach. I mean, you could get out and you would see people and you could be part of a country. You can't do that now.

Q: I see. Well, it sounded like it was a very significant part of your career.

BROWN: I will always be committed to Haiti. There's a part of me in Haiti and we continue to have, as many AID families do, people that worked for us who we remain in very close contact with and feel a real connection to. That's why I responded to the earthquake. That's why I went back. And as soon as I saw it, I said, "I have to go back. I have to help." If there's even a shred of information that I can offer I want to be there to help and I want to make sure that people are moving forward, including the FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals).

Q: Including the what?

BROWN: The FSNs, the Foreign Service Nationals. So, many, many of the—at the time of the earthquake many of the FSNs, my drivers, our program drivers, assistants, others were there. Our chief medical officer in our USAID Health office, she ended up becoming the head of the Haitian Red Cross. During the earthquake I had to go see her. So, having those contacts and connections. Another doctor who worked for us, he ended up running the TB hospital before the earthquake, and then he was right there with services, keep them going. So, the assistance that AID provided, the leadership and the

opportunity that AID has provided Haitian medical, public health professionals helps keep things going for sure. I know in those two instances absolutely for sure.

Q: Wow. All right. Where did your career go after Haiti?

BROWN: After Haiti—

Q: Was that the Moscow assignment?

BROWN: Yes. After Haiti—no. After Haiti I decided to have a career transition and I went into the Management bureau, and I became a career counselor, assignments and career counselor in the Management bureau in the HR department, and I ended up spending four years in HR in the Management bureau, and then rose from being a counselor to four functions that were outside of my expertise, which I did deliberately. So, I counseled and coached executive officers and democracy officers and portfolios of people that I didn't work on before. And I then took over the Europe and Eurasia staffing and then following that, I was the director of personnel operations. So, that was for assignments, that was Civil Service and Foreign Service, hiring, performance, benefits, classification of new positions, and then we dealt with HR issues every week, cases. So, I got to work directly, so I had nothing to do with the programming of AID resources per se or the technical fields that I had been working in. It was like here's the undergirding of the agency and working specifically with U.S. direct hires.

Q: Okay. Just for our record then, what year did you make that transition?

BROWN: I was there from—I'm going to have to look back. I stayed there until 9/11, it was like right around 9/11, so that was 2001, so those four years.

Q: Yeah. That was back in Washington, of course. AID separate HR?

BROWN: Yes.

Q: Nothing to do with State Department.

BROWN: No, we (USAID) have our own HR still. It's called Human Capital Talent Management now. And AID manages its own benefits and classification and staff. But we follow OPM (Officer of Personal Management) and State Department guidance, and we are part of the ICASS (International Cooperative Administrative Support Services) and the interagency agreements with State. So, for example, the overseas schools. The State Department manages the overseas schools that USAID employees' families attend. So, there are services, the medical clearance unit, all of that is at State Department, so there's a connection between the USAID HR branch and those pieces of Management Bureau of State Department that connect us.

Q: Yeah. And I did think at one point the early aughts there was more thought of merging the two together, but I never thought that it actually happened, other than those shared services that you were mentioning.

BROWN: Well, I mean, in that—of course AID is an independent agency, but it is established and financed under the Foreign Assistance Act alongside the State Department , all AID officers work under the chief of mission leadership. In general, when I was in the field, even in Moscow, we had our own buildings, and we would be separate. In that case, we were sort of on the compound in our own building, but now everyone's together in the one embassy building, so there are large, new secure embassy facilities and they'll have a floor for AID or two floors for AID on a compound, on an embassy compound. So, the actual vision when you look at how AID works now, it is quite different because physically we are in the building with our embassy colleagues every single day.

Q: And you're talking about the building where you're working. Housing is different, but where you're working, okay. Yeah. All right.

Yeah, that's quite a turnaround. I get the feeling you like challenges, but what was your thought process when you went from on the ground, hands-on Haiti back to DC where you were working with people who were going to go out in the field in an HR position? Do you remember how you came to those decisions or what made you do that?

BROWN: I wanted a change. I wanted, I think, to step out of health. And as I had mentioned, I knew that in order to move up in AID, in management you to know how to manage, you had to be in—you know, if you had gone, if you were a health officer you might not make it to any leadership positions at that time, but getting out of health, branching out, going into management, it turned out to be the best decision I probably ever made because every organization has an HR. It doesn't matter what the organization is, little or big. And that continuity, the skills that I got in HR, there are lots of training in—formal training while I was in HR. And then, I supervised a very large staff, and then what we were dealing with in terms of our daily workload was cases helping officers move through decisions and changes in their life and all their HR personnel issues. So, it turned out that it resonated with me just as much as working with beneficiaries in the field because I was working with people and I think for me, that's what is so important in AID is that people connection part, making sure assistance gets to people So, in HR you're doing exactly the same thing. It's not money, it's all about helping people. And they're your colleagues and you know, maybe former co-workers.

Q: And sort of like the next generation was going to be going out into the field. How did that affect your husband's career?

BROWN: Chris had more of a technical career. He was an economist and when he went back to Washington he started in the Europe and Eurasia bureau, and he was working on private sector initiatives in Europe and Eurasia and possibly, but I don't totally think so, that might be one reason that we were looking at for Russia, I think it—I'm not quite

sure. We were supposed to be going to Honduras and we were going to learn Spanish, that was my dream. Okay, so I was thinking about our last post and we discussed the fact that we speak French, this may be our last tour in the field, so let's learn Spanish, you know. So, we bid on a Spanish speaking post, and we were on our way, we were signed up for Spanish, and I was going to leave my job and he was leaving his job. I was in Global Health at that time, and we ended up with Russia. They called us and said, Nope, you're not going to Spanish, you're going into Russian. And how would you like that? Terry Myers, who was going to USAID/Russia as mission director called me and Carol Peasley, who was the then-mission director, and they both said this is going to be the greatest assignment of our careers.

Q: They were going to be there, Terry and—Terry was going to be there? He would be your mission director

BROWN: Yes. Terry was our mission director. As a tandem couple, especially as you move up, there become fewer and fewer spots where a foreign service couple can be assigned that offers career growth and opportunity and your children can come to post . So, as I said in the beginning, we were the fifth Foreign Service tandem couple in USAID history, and Russia was going to be our last post. We would be close to retirement, we knew. And so, we did it. We jumped in and we went into Russian. And how did that affect our careers? I mean, Chris just did so well in Russian, like from day one. He had no Russian, but he taught himself the alphabet. He was just so gifted in languages, and he was in the faster beginning class, and I was in the normal beginning class. But that was also a great opportunity, being in Russian. I mean, we never thought that would happen. Nor did we think, Oh. my gosh. Is this a useful language that we're ever going to use again? And as it turns out, both of us ended up retiring and then doing consulting work in Europe and Eurasia, and we have used Russian, and used it sometimes in Africa with Russian-speaking colleagues. So, I think every—the lesson, the takeaway for me, that I tell new officers is, you don't know when these skills are going to be relevant in your life, but when you're given these opportunities, think of them as opportunities as opposed to, wow, they didn't give me much time to pivot from Spanish to Russian, and you never know where it's going to take you. The unfolding, your career unfolds. You can't also be viciously trying to navigate it as if you really control everything. Have faith that the system does have a good sense of what might be a good fit for you. And we had terrific, terrific leadership in Russia at every level. One of our Ambassadors was Ambassador Bill Burns. The ambassador before had been ambassador to Korea after Russia and just prior to that was the ambassador to NATO. The leadership that we had in Moscow was simply superb. So, getting that opportunity to work with senior leaders also can help your career once you leave AID because you have had the opportunity to see good leadership in action and I think, to develop into a good leader you need to have good role models.

Q: Mm-hm. And I think the third ambassador, I don't remember when you left Moscow, but my five years there, there were three ambassador and Ambassador Beyrle, I think, has been, since he retired in—

BROWN: Oh, I worked closely with him. So, DCM Beyrle was in Moscow and he was our leader and chaired the HIV-AIDS coordination through PEPFAR (United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) and so, by that point, we were working on embassy integrated teams, and he was our leader. So, I did get a chance to meet with him. He had absolutely fluent, amazing Russian. And his commitment and life and his family's commitment to the region. So, yeah, I can't even fathom another team that had that level of experience, at every level, all the officers.

Q: What I was going to say about Ambassador Beyrle is that he went on to be quite involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the Russian Chamber of Commerce, so more connections after his Foreign Service career, continuing that. So, yeah, three different ambassadors who expanded their—

BROWN: Right, yeah. Oh, and—

Q: —Byerle was ambassador to which country? After he left Moscow for the first time, I think he went on to be in even further Eastern Europe, but I can't remember which country.

BROWN: I'm not sure which country it was. But there was Ambassador Tefft in Georgia. Immediately upon retirement, I was asked to go to Georgia and Ambassador Tefft, who had been in Russia for, I think two previous tours, and he had worked with the same really incredible group. He was also an incredible leader at the US Embassy in Georgia.

Q: Okay. But there you are, you have been in DC for four years, going, making that pivot that you really wanted to do. But now you're going out into the field again.

BROWN: Mm-hm. And I loved it, but it was a good opportunity for my children. My son was at Princeton and so, he was well on his pathway, and my daughter was a senior, going to be a senior in high school. And so, you know, we thought, Wow, this might not be a good time to transition her, but she ended up going to boarding school in Switzerland, which ended up being the best thing for her. And then, she went on to University of Virginia. So our being in Russia led to my daughter becoming a Russian major in college. So, how did Russia, you know, spin off and affect them? They would come back to Russia. She ended up speaking fantastic Russian. Both of my children ended up working in the summers for the embassy for—in Moscow, in different offices, and got to go out and see programs and projects that the embassy was sponsoring, and work on assignments. My daughter was up in Irkutsk around the Lake Baikal area, my son was down in Samara. Yeah, so it was—they would go out on field trips with their embassy colleagues. And I was very happy, one of the best things, I think, in terms of taking care of families, the embassy community and offices offer summer employment options for the extended family members of officers, so getting to see and work with several family members, years later they would become public health leaders (laughs/indiscernible) out in the field. Their first encounter had been in the Moscow office where their first experience was working on the HIV-AIDS program, and that kind of whet their appetite to do more development. So, the nurturing and the thought that

went into making sure that the whole family is, you know, taken care of, that the extended family do not miss opportunities to work. If they had been in the U.S. they would have worked in the summers, and yeah, that's one of the HR programs I thought, Wow, this is terrific. Great opportunity.

Q: And I know that Moscow has that, and I've talked to other families with kids, college age, high school age, and you're right, they had or have opportunity, I don't know what's going on right now there, but not all embassies, unfortunately, have that. I have talked to other people about the term trailing spouse, man or woman, it's not always that case. I wish it was, but I think if the—

BROWN: AID has an extended eligible family member EFM, focal point in HCTM (Human Capital and Talent Management), in HR now.

Q: Oh.

BROWN: I'm really fortunate right now to be working with new officers and many of whom have EFMs who want to work and that is something—there's a lot more coaching and advisory services available now.

Q: That's good to hear. That's very good to hear because I heard some other stories, you know, ten years ago that it wasn't so available in other places. Okay.

Well, so, then, all right, you're in Moscow. So, let's talk about the programs that you were heading, supervising there under Terry. And I know you had a lot of responsibility there, so tell us all about that.

BROWN: Moscow was a unique AID post because Russia has the means to do some foreign aid, so we had some presidential initiatives, U.S. and Russian entities working together in Third Countries in Africa, so we were working together in Ethiopia and Namibia, and that was structured, that relationship and partnership during my time there and work with Terry. We had an HIV-AIDS United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program because the HIV-AIDS problem was spinning out of control. And we had an education portfolio. We worked together but the education office was separate. We had orphans and vulnerable children, abandoned and neglected children, AIDS _____ orphans, the victims of substance abuse and their families, so we worked very closely. That was called the ARROW program - a very, very popular program. And we worked in partnership with the New York Children's Aid Society to help Russians understand the foster care and the systems that were working in the U.S., so we did a lot of partnering. That was one of our strategies, so we didn't do typical technical assistance programming. We paired our hospitals with St. Petersburg Hospital and their HIV program was working with Yale University and so on and so forth. So, we had those kinds of structured partnerships around the country where different communities in the U.S. would develop close ties with the Russian communities. And even when we graduated assistance many of those communities, for example in Wisconsin, they continued their relationship with the civil society organizations in that part of the country. Now, I don't know how that is

right now once the AID program closed. It's hard to know. Our USAID FSNs were extraordinary. I had at least three doctors on staff at any time, including a full time lung doctor. Our TB program was absolutely fantastic.

Q: Are these American doctors?

BROWN: These are all Russian doctors.

Q: Okay.

BROWN: And some have stayed and are in Moscow now. One went on to work for WHO (World Health Organization) in Moscow. One migrated to the U.S. And I believe—some of them have retired. They were eligible so they didn't continue. So, I assume they're in Russia. But it's hard to connect with them now..

Q: Yeah, exactly. Did you get any pushback from the Russian government? I just know that the Peace Corps was ended in Russia. I think you mentioned AID is—

BROWN: Ended.

Q: Ended, yeah. Russian children's adoption was stopped.

BROWN: Right.

Q: A lot of interactive programs didn't last, including I thought that the Russian government was maybe not now, in denial about HIV, so any thoughts about that and how you—

BROWN: Well, I think we made a huge difference because when I was there from 2003 to 2007, the government of Russia had got Global Fund grant financing, so foundation funding to expand their HIV-AIDS services, HIV and AIDS treatment and TB treatment, multidrug resistant TB, which is incredibly important for our country, that multidrug resistant TB be treated and treated properly. And because of the movement of people, now you see what happens with COVID, multidrug resistant TB is also spread in the air and can spread quickly. So, the former Soviet Union, because of treatment patterns and poor ventilation, a lot of factors developed multi-drug resistant and then extremely-drug resistant, (XDR-TB). So, our TB program was front and center in supporting Russians in bringing state-of-the-art treatment methods, ventilation systems into existing facilities. So, by the time we left there were local, for example, ventilation companies in certain towns, in Vladimir, for example, that were able then to go and service the ventilation systems in hospitals themselves. The Russians definitely have the capacity to do that, so the exchange of good and best practices, I think, is absolutely essential. So, it's heartbreaking when you can't do it, but there has always been a deep connection to share best practices, and hopefully in the future, down the road, we'll be able to renew that. And our program was not a traditional foreign aid program, so it was very, very different from the programs that I had worked in in other countries. There was absolutely almost,

you know, it was very, very different because we worked with a lot of local entities and local capacity development. The Russians had one of the oldest and largest, for example, Red Crosses across the country, so the largest civil society organization, and so, we had a lot of work that we did with the Red Cross on HIV-AIDS and other issues.

Q: Huh. The staffing in Moscow, was it mostly the local hires or—?

BROWN: We also were a training mission, so we had some new officers come in and we were training them as well. So, because, as I mentioned, our mission was blessed with such incredible talent that was a priority for AID, to make sure that the new officers were put in missions where they could get the supervision they needed to be successful in their next assignments.

Q: So, you're in Moscow for?

BROWN: Four years.

Q: Four years, which is a typical AID assignment, isn't it, four years? Yeah. Okay.

So, after Moscow, at the end of your tour in Moscow, ending in 2007, mid-year, you retired. So, how many years total with AID?

BROWN: I served with AID for twenty years, and then I had been with Peace Corps.

Q: Yeah, that's right, that's right. So, you leave Moscow. Did you go back to DC to sort of like resettle or where did you go, you and Chris?

BROWN: After retiring from USAID, we moved, Chris and I moved to Lake Placid, and we began consulting work from Lake Placid. We both, Chris went to work for a company in Vermont and he commuted and was working primarily on Afghanistan, and I was an independent consultant, working on different consulting assignments, either personal service contracts for different AID missions. I also went to work for the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Mongolia, —so these are short-term assignments and in Mongolia it was with the government's public health program that they had gotten funding for from the Millennium Challenge Corporation. And that was phenomenal. But again, the importance of learning Russian was a factor in my getting that job. I would never have thought I'd be using the Russian, so being able to speak it in Georgia, I worked in Ukraine for the Ukraine mission, and Mongolia, those were the three countries where I was speaking Russian again, and so grateful that I had that capacity to do that and to actually continue to reinforce it, and other places. And then the Haiti earthquake and Ethiopia, I started doing evaluations for USAID in health programs, so doing different types of consulting assignments. Some were covering offices when someone, you know, when there would be a gap, and other assignments were more specific. Like, for the earthquake response team I was part of USAID's team and we each had specific roles we were playing on that team, development roles, emergency response development, humanitarian assistance type roles. So, it changed. It was very varied. When I was in

Ukraine I was mostly working on HIV-AIDS and TB. Again, those were threads from what I had done in Russia and then, the other countries in the region were also working on that type of programming and needed help.

Q: So, you really never stopped.

BROWN: No.

Q: (Laughs)

BROWN: And then I did a year as a chief of party for a malaria program, for an indoor residual spray program that was under the President's Malaria Initiative, where I actually worked for a company full-time - RTI Research Triangle Institute, and I had a large staff. So, the thread in my career was managing large teams, and of course there were a lot of HR issues, managing, hiring and the like, and I worked in both humanitarian assistance, fragile countries, and then more developed countries. So, I was really fortunate to have experienced that spectrum of countries. This prepared me to do some consulting and I did that, I liked that.

And then, I had a hankering to work domestically.

Q: A hankering. (Laughs)

BROWN: I always wanted to work domestically in public health and my father really wanted me to work domestically. And then, we had a very difficult medical situation we were dealing with, with my husband and so, it became much more logical that I could not travel at a certain point and that I look for, in 2012, something domestically and Planned Parenthood needed a CEO, and with HR expertise, organizational development expertise. And so, one thing led to the next and the next thing I know I'm the CEO of a Planned Parenthood for a domestic affiliate in charge of six health centers. And we had anywhere at any time between fifty-eight to sixty-five people spread in all of our different districts and counties. And I was on the road visiting clinics. I mean, there were a lot of similarities. We had community health worker programs, so very similar to some of the AID development work. I found myself in rural New York out looking at clinics and I learned a lot. There's a lot to learn in domestic public health about the health insurance industry and running health centers and accreditation and how you keep those operations going with all of the variables that they deal with, how do you fund them. The first time in my career I was responsible for fundraising and so, this was something I had not done. So, Planned Parenthood gave me the opportunity to learn incredibly new skills. And again, incredible leadership. Cecille Richards was our CEO, the head of PPFA ((Planned Parenthood Federation of America) and she was our boss, the boss of all the CEOs. And then, I got to meet the CEOs from all of the neighboring states, and within New York State we had like, five different CEOs that had different territories that we meet and met with the independent lobbying groups that lobby for women's reproductive health and got to be trained in advocacy, something that I didn't do in my government career. And so, I say advocacy and fundraising were two completely new areas for me, and I'm grateful to

Planned Parenthood for having, you know, introduced me to that and to introduce me to what domestic politics looks like.

Q: Yes. Up to this moment I don't know if you're—

BROWN: Yes.

Q: —involved at all with the Supreme Court decision.

BROWN: Oh, yeah.

Q: Okay, okay. Planned Parenthood is so much more than just abortion and I don't know if people even understand that, other than at the local level when they have to use the services of Planned Parenthood. So, yeah. So, but I see the dates here, president and CEO in North Country New York, 2012-2014, and so, between 2008 and 2012—

BROWN: I was consulting pretty much non-stop. I would be gone six months of the year, sometimes more, to different assignments. I would be going out as needed or working virtually if even at that time if some of the work was mission support, field support. So, I worked for different small business contractors who hire independent consultants like myself and I'm still doing that now. So, in 2014 my husband passed away. It was an extremely difficult time for me and my children and a difficult life altering transition. Before Chris died, we talked a lot about next steps. And he was very much in favor of me returning to overseas work. Planned Parenthood is very much something, your whole family is involved in.

Q: Really?

BROWN: It just, there are so many events, it's so time intensive, and it draws in your whole family to be part of the events and go from town to town. And with Chris's passing I just knew that I needed to return to more familiar and perhaps my original development work. And so, it was a very difficult decision to leave PPNCNY but our affiliate was blessed, I had a good vice president, and she became the president and CEO and I was able to help. I continue to work as a volunteer now for PPNCNY whenever they need me, and fundraise and attend advocacy events for them. And it also led to my work with the Democratic Committee in our town, which I again never intended to get that involved in and all of a sudden, I was working on local campaigns, first for one in particular and then, I ended up being elected the chair. I became a delegate to the North Elba Democratic Committee, the Essex County Democratic Committee, and then I was doing Essex County-wide canvassing and petitioning and looking for local candidates and supporting their campaigns and events planning. And you know, I happily did that, but again, where did those skills come from? Okay, the skills for events planning and managing implementation of campaigns and identifying slates of candidates and figuring out with colleagues how to get them electedThat strategic process, that strategic planning, the discussions, the forming of consensus groups, those things I would attribute to the skills I learned in USAID as an officer right from the beginning, how do you do that, how do you

build consensus, how do you work with multicultural teams. I will say that working in Upstate New York feels like a different country. It's rural America, so you need to use a lot of those basic economic development and planning skills including listening and teaming and meeting people where they are. So, since retiring— in addition to working as a consultant I have served as a volunteer for the Democratic Party. My work with Planned Parenthood as a volunteer led to my local volunteer work. .

Q: Do you have some family connection to that part of New York State? How did you end up in that area?

BROWN: Yes. Chris and I wanted to be closer to my parents and my parents had retired in Tupper Lake, New York, where I actually physically live right this moment, down the road from my mom's house, and that worked. And then, my daughter became a nurse practitioner and was an expert in rural health. She decided to move back home and married a local guy and she's very rural, she's a rural nurse practitioner. And she worked on one of the federally qualified health centers up in Malone after she got her nurse practitioner degree. So, I was really happy. She also got a master's in public health, so she felt the public health pull, but it was really pulling her domestically. Let's help my own town, my own communities, and we have incredible poverty here in Upstate New York.

Q: Oh, really?

BROWN: The St. Lawrence County, the county I live next to right now, is the second poorest county after the Bronx in New York State, so people don't associate rural poverty in the same way that they think about urban poverty, but it's ever so much valid and teenage pregnancy, high teenage pregnancy, a lot of the things you would see in West Africa or places I served, same patterns you would start to see here. And I think that's actually what drew me to Planned Parenthood, was that they were able to address different aspects of this problem, not just the health part of it, not just the family planning services, but the counseling, the sexual assault, you know, being there for whole families when they're going through these terrible transitions. And now, doing adult primary care. So, Planned Parenthood does adult primary care which, again, is a thread back to my time in Peace Corps and then with USAID. I was working on primary care with USAID in Haiti, in Liberia, in Mauritania, and we had village health workers in those programs that were going out, and we were working with communities on community empowerment. So, I feel like the skills, while it may not have been obvious to me when I left USAID that I had the skills to apply them or how I would apply them, just being open to opportunities and then somehow things come together in careers. But if I hadn't been in HR, so going back to what helps it, this learning about personnel issues and management, your basic management, it helps you to move forward on the rest of your life and career. And because there is a life after USAID. We enter young, we retire young, hence we will work after USAID, and what is it that we're going to do. We need to make sure that while we're in USAID that we're getting the skills for life, both through the current job but, you know, what is going to help you with your development journey.

Q: Yeah. I see that. Is there mandatory retirement with USAID like there is in the Foreign Service?

BROWN: Yes. But I retired at fifty, so I had my whole, you know, adult life after age fifty to think about what is it that I'm going to do. And we're fortunate in AID, we have a retirement program to counsel and coach people. And when I was in HR, I was able to participate in a lot of different programs. Another benefit of the State Department and USAID career is that you're able to do career transition training information before you leave.

Q: Yeah, and take advantage of what's available.

Now, so you're doing the Planned Parenthood, you stepped back. You're doing some Democratic political type of work.

BROWN: Which I could never do before. So, the work I did with Planned Parenthood, the advocacy, the fundraising and now the political work I could never do before.

Q: Are you saying that being a federal employee would not—

BROWN: Right. Because of the Hatch Act you are not permitted to do those things in advocacy, petitioning, canvassing, going to the state government and on family planning day where I was able to meet, you know, some really incredible leaders, leaders advocating for women's reproductive rights in New York State.

Q: So, tomorrow might be a very busy day for you, election day?

BROWN: Well, I moved from Essex County and so, I had to give up my democratic party chair position. But I was lucky to have good co-workers, co-delegates, and so it's really busy for them. Here in Tupper Lake, NY we don't have a Democratic Party. So a few people are very interested in grassroots starting it, but it's a heavy lift and I need to, you know, see how I can fit in. Right now, I'm learning, like a good Foreign Service officer, learning the culture and why it is that they don't have one.

Q: Yeah. In a state like New York that's surprising to me.

BROWN: Right. This is a very Republican area.

Q: Uh-huh.

BROWN: And so, we need to tread cautiously and understand what we're getting into here and whether, you know, we can have the same results that we had in the neighboring counties.

Q: Yeah, it could be a long slog.

BROWN: So, New York twenty-one is actually very much in the news because our representative is Elise Stefanik.

Q: Okay. When you say New York twenty-one is that the—

BROWN: That's our district. Yeah, that's our district.

Q: Okay, I'll be watching that. My son lives in New York, in the Catskills.

BROWN: Right. It doesn't go down that far, so it goes down to Queensbury, Falls, Glen Falls and stops.

Q: Oh.

BROWN: This district, and it goes all the way up to Watertown. It's a huge territory and really is what the Planned Parenthood territory as well.

Q: I see.

BROWN: Yeah, but that's a big one to watch, what's going to happen. We have a former CIA agent operative who is running as a Democrat against Elise Stefanik.

Q: I don't know if that will help that person's career or not, yeah, with that kind of background. But who knows.

BROWN: Who knows? So, it's just interesting to see career transitions.

Q: Oh, yes, for sure. I'm actually going to talk to my son about what you're doing. Oh, I forget which county he's in, but he's Green County, maybe, but it's near Margaretville, that sort of area in New York State, and he goes to Albany a lot for his consulting job.

How about your son, the young man who went to Princeton. What kind of career is he doing?

BROWN: My son went from Princeton to Yale Law School, and he ended up clerking for a federal judge in New Orleans. And with his passion for the environment led him to where he is now. First, he was with a private law firm working on environmental action and now he works for Earth Justice in Louisiana and Mississippi, Alabama, on cases where he is part—well, I'm going to stop there. He's in the news. He was in the *New York Times* recently. It looked like he was at a protest, and I said, "Oh my gosh. Your dad would be so proud of you, and your grandfather would be so proud of you." Yeah. But he has a passion for dealing with issues of climate change and on the very nitty gritty polluters who are polluting the environment, predominantly of marginalized populations who don't have a voice. So, Earth Justice is a wonderful organization.

Q: And in Louisiana, yeah, there's a lot of pollution along the edge of the Gulf there, yeah.

Let's see. Could you talk a little bit more of Research Triangle Institute?

BROWN: I was only there for a year, and I was heading up their indoor residual spraying team in Africa to spray houses to prevent and protect families from malaria, which is one of the tools. It's a huge organization and they also have a domestic portfolio, an international portfolio. But I was not in their headquarters in North Carolina.

Q: Okay. Yes, I see the African connection, yeah.

BROWN: Yeah. So, we had offices in different parts of Africa, so I was working virtually and then getting out to the field with those African specialists, entomologists, malariologists all over Africa in the countries most severely affected by malaria. And the malaria eradication, elimination programs that AID has worked on is singularly, I mean it is one of the most stunning programs because we brought down rates in malaria which is one of the biggest child killers and killers of women, pregnant women. So, using some really fantastic science, evidence and different tools like mosquito nets and spraying and other tools for on-site treatment malaria is declining, thank God.

Q: I know from someone that I knew from the Department of Health involved with the United Nations that I thought malaria had been eradicated.

BROWN: No, not yet.

Q: This would have been in the 1970s.

BROWN: Oh, okay. Well, there may have been discussion, but it's always been there. When I was Peace Corps volunteer in the late seventies I had malaria in Togo, so I got to feel firsthand what it was like. And believe me, the consultants and all the programs are very cognizant of it and it's still very much out there but diminishing with lots of good tools. So, that's a real success story.

The other success story that I wanted to reflect on, which is also a thread that I worked on, both domestically and internationally, is family planning. So, the family planning program that USAID worked on and developed and supported brought to the market internationally and here in the U.S. new contraceptive devices where AID did the initial research on these methods and different versions of the IUD, implants, Norplant. AID was involved in the original funding of some of the trials of Norplant. Now we have the next generation of these contraceptives that are being used. So, the USAID funded family planning program was absolutely successful. Fertility went down in countries that were dealing with extremely high fertility when I started in AID. So, like Kenya that had a total fertility rate (TFR) of eight— 8 children born to the average woman, now has a TFR of 3.2 (three live children born to the average woman). Kenya is just one example. Across

Africa and other USAID assisted countries fertility has come way down. So, that changed the scope of what we do in development.

Q: When you say fertility rate—

BROWN: The number of live births born to a woman.

Q: Okay. Okay.

BROWN: So, it was eight and now it is at 3.2. It's a stunning success if it's at eight and it comes down to three, it's a stunning success. The other indicator is adolescent pregnancy. This is a really big problem here domestically here in the U.S. in urban, poor communities and then in many of the countries that we work in. And here for us, for example in rural Upstate New York teenage pregnancy is a very difficult problem, young girls are dropping out of school, not seeing any other option but to have a child, an unplanned child. When family planning works it gives women and girls an option—it's a tool that gives women the opportunity to get education. Along with female literacy it has, which AID also supports, those are concrete, absolute concrete approaches in technologies that AID has worked on for decades. And now—

Q: That connection from AID to programs that you're working on domestically, locally, incredible connection for a career that I'm guessing you're going to continue at least, what, another ten years. Do you ever see yourself as really retiring? Do you have any interests that you could pursue if you weren't doing all of this?

BROWN: I just take it year by year. I think you; you know, you have to—I didn't really plan my time leaving AID. I didn't like, block it out and say, I'm going to work this long or do this. What I've been really grateful for is to have opportunities and then to move and have the benefit of a Foreign Service pension and annuity to give you the opportunity—again, another great benefit of the Foreign Service, of serving in USAID is you retire, and you can have a cushion so that you can do other things and explore other avenues. And I believe that Foreign Service officers are serving in numerous capacities. Former USAID officers who are making a continued contribution in America, whether it be political or through non-governmental organizations, domestic consulting. So, I'm not unique.

Q: Okay. That's interesting to hear. And as I interview more people, I'll probably see that.

Now, in looking at your CV, after 2010-2014, I see various things that you might want to talk about. You've got Jefferson Consulting Company where you worked in Senegal on projects. The Mitchell Group in Nigeria. Multiple HIV-AIDS program. The Dexis Consulting Group, again Africa. So, Brazzaville. Okay, Congo. Do you want to comment on any of those, I guess short-term—

BROWN: As an independent consultant I don't usually go into what I'm doing for different clients.

Q: Oh, of course, of course.

BROWN: So, yeah, so I just to sum it up, in terms of my consulting practice, I do a lot of organizational development consulting, HR consulting, building teams, supporting teams that are going through consulting, helping their staff and a lot of mentoring and coaching. Even before I started in the last two years since COVID doing what I'm presently doing, which is uniquely for USAID and I'm not working on anything else right now, is coaching our new officers.

Q: Yes.

BROWN: USAID, like the State Department, has a cadre of retired former Foreign Service officers that are working part-time as needed to help onboard and support the integration, quick integration and uptake on tasks for new officers, so.

Q: Yeah, and I think that that's where we will, instead of, let's see, what time is it? It's like twenty-five of one, instead of trying to fit, if it's okay with you, fit your new full-time AID mentoring—

BROWN: Oh, it's part-time, it's still part-time.

Q: Sorry. But you've stepped away from some of these consulting type of—yeah, because I think AID, who is asking us to do these interview processes would—it would be great to have that and instead of you know, having it to be let's try to get this done by 1:00, that's where I would—and it might only be an hour or less on our next appointment.

BROWN: Sure. We can make it less because it's more focused.

Q: Yeah.

BROWN: But I don't know if we have a bit of time right now or you want to talk about women in leadership.

Q: Yes, because I don't recall that, Heather did. So, yeah, let's talk about that now. We don't want to forget that. So, we certainly have the time for that. So, I'm keeping recording.

BROWN: Yes, so AID really was inspired, probably, maybe it's as much as twenty years ago, so early on in my career they offered women leadership courses for female managers or aspiring female managers. And then, they offered middle management and senior leadership training, where they work on your communication skills, your time management skills, team building skills, and it was really important. When I joined USAID in the Africa bureau I would walk into a room and there would be one other woman or two other women in the room and it would be packed, the room would be packed. And you could count how many women were outside of the technical area, like

health, how many female desk officers there were, how many female leaders or office directors or desk officers and you know, as you looked up the chain of command. And it has really taken a concerted effort. Now we have a female administrator. Just amazing to have this kind of dynamic leadership and to be focused on diversity, equity, inclusion and accommodation as one of the objectives and themes. And it's not easy for—it wasn't easy for a female senior leader. I was lucky to have one of the agency's most senior, seasoned leaders as my mission director in Liberia, and she was my mentor. But I also had a number of male bosses who made it a concerted part of their work as a supervisor to look for opportunities and to say, Go get it, you can do this, encouraging you, even as a working mother. Still there was not a lot of pathway or clear path for a working mother, a working mother whose husband was also working in the Foreign Service, so the two careers and the two kids and the how are we going to balance all of this, and can you move forward in a career path and work you way up if that's what you want to do, balancing all of this. So, over the years there have been more courses in coaching and counseling. We have a terrific employee counseling service, Staff Care, that is offered now when you run into your family problems and issues that you can reach out immediately to get elder care advice or other advice. And those things didn't exist when I started and so, you were kind of on your own, like, what about breastfeeding in the workplace, how am I going to do that? How am I going to be a mother and also have a career? But the Foreign Service has a lot of benefits. Working overseas provides an opportunity to have some other support that allows you to work where it might not be the case. Coming back to Washington is very difficult to juggle and balance all of it. But there's a real—much more awareness now. Flex time, there's paid parental leave. None of this existed when I started in AID, so if you had a pregnancy, you took all your sick leave and that was that. And you just borrowed from the future, pretending you would never get sick. And so, it was much, in that sense it was, the benefits weren't there to support working mothers. And I'm happy to see that the federal government overall has moved in that direction and then, but that AID in many cases offers other benefits beyond—each agency has the opportunity to look at their benefit package, so you can have a breastfeeding, new mother on a Zoom call or in the office or where daycare in the Ronald Reagan Building and in other locations that allow you to be a working mother. That pathway was not clear so the women leaders that were in the agency, many of them had not married and many of them did not have children, so having the full gamut of women in the workplace and recognizing that, it's been a good transition, but it took men and women, lots of men who supported this happening, it wouldn't have happened.

Q: So, there was—was there any need for a legal action to make these things happen, or was this, you know?

BROWN: I'm not aware of what, like if there were lawsuits within—I don't believe in USAID. I mean, the thing is, the federal government writ large started moving in this direction and the benefits package, the Office of Personnel Management structures benefit programs. Now we have a loan repayment. Things that just didn't exist. And so, you struggled as a new officer to pay back your loans and to juggle coming at a government salary versus a private sector salary perhaps at a very low level, and how am

I going to, you know, put all of this together. We were very fortunate, we were a tandem couple, so we had two careers and, in that sense, we had those benefits.

Q: Sure. Two salaries too, yeah.

BROWN: Yes, but like, you know, we had health insurance, so when my husband got very, very ill the care he got was very, very good because he had excellent health insurance. And so, if I had not had the opportunity to grow in my career it would have been a terrible thing for my family because my husband was gravely ill and then he passed away very young. And so, I think it is important for women in government, women in the Foreign Service, women leaders to think about their career, taking a very long view that you're going to be working from your twenties or early thirties way forward and many life changes are going to happen. You're going to be, you know, maybe a mother, maybe you'll be responsible for yourself as a single mother or a single, unmarried woman who does not have children but can't count on other benefits. You have to think forward. And I am grateful that perhaps one of the things that made this so apparent in that my husband got cancer at such a young age, at thirty-two, that I knew from that moment that at some point, and I never knew when it was going to be, there would be a huge responsibility that I would have to take care of my children and their livelihood going forward. And when people talk about, I want to leave this job, I don't like it, you know, you can't predict what will happen in your life. Liking and livelihood are two different concepts. You want to be very fulfilled in your career, but you also have to think about your livelihood and the benefits that you have. So, the Foreign Service benefit package is very, very generous. And I am a great supporter of what that has afforded me as a woman and has helped me to navigate some really high periods and really low.

Q: Yeah. But it's in tandem with your career, which is you've made some pivots here and there to get some, you know, additional skills, things that perhaps by instinct you thought, Oh, this is the way I should go. But there did seem to be a trend of, Let' see what happens. Let me go here or there and see how this develops. But underneath it sounds like you had a strong commitment to a career path that would give you some professional, financial, personal security.

BROWN: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q: Yeah. It's an interesting combination.

BROWN: And I have to thank my in-laws, my husband's family who had been through the Foreign Service for their wise counsel on, you know, pursuing a career in the Foreign Service and staying the course, and my father, a lawyer in the private sector who provided great advice on, you know, and support.

Q: Yeah. Career advice too.

BROWN: Career advice and also family advice. The Foreign Service is a family adventure, and you bring with you your extended family who host you in the summers on leave and this and that, so my children had the benefit when we were overseas in the summers they would come up to the Adirondacks and stay with their grandparents up here for whole summer and we'd be working. So, they were able to have rural summers in America when they were smaller. It was wonderful that they could have that experience. So, without that, without their help, you know, you can think of other options, but many Foreign Service families rely very heavily on their extended family for a variety of support.

Q: Yeah, it is interesting that both your children, if I include your son, had this worldwide experience, neither went into the Foreign Service or anything that would take them abroad and are working in generally rural areas. Do you have any theories or thoughts about the way they went in their direction?

BROWN: I mean, I think sometimes it's generational. My mother was a Planned Parenthood volunteer and crusader in Westchester County, NY where she was teaching low-income, abandoned and neglected children literacy, and my dad was practicing law in the Bronx, and my father-in-law was working in Afghanistan. (Laughs)

Q: (Laughs) I know.

BROWN: I think they got it through osmosis, you know. Like, building a socially responsible child is—it requires those socially responsible models, I believe, around them, so it's normal, they see it their whole lives, the volunteer work and that part of your life and they start to like it. Maybe they don't know anything else. Like, at one point I used to say to my kids, "Doesn't anybody want to go into the private sector?" Like, is anybody interested in this? (Both laugh) And yeah, yeah.

Q: Well, maybe the next generation will go—

BROWN: Potentially. I'm a grandmother—

Q: —to make money.

BROWN: I'm a grandmother now and I have two little granddaughters, so I hope that they will be socially responsible, strong women who will be able to, you know, weather what comes in the future, lots of challenges. But it starts right in the beginning when my mom used to take us to family planning protests, pro-choice rallies, and stuff when we were kids. You know, I think it starts young.

Q: I agree with you. I think by teenage and college years children are in the direction that they probably will stick with unless they go through a midlife crisis and then change. I see that (crosstalk/indiscernible).

BROWN: My dad was involved in politics. He was involved in Democratic politics. So, I don't see any thread as unique. He ran for office unsuccessfully, but he was campaign manager for Bobby Kennedy, and worked for Hubert Humphrey. I saw it upfront, up close, what is it like to get out of the train station and hand out leaflets and you know.

Q: Yeah.

BROWN: So, I don't know if any of these threads would have come together for me if I hadn't had those role models in my life.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

BROWN: So, becoming a successful woman leader, I don't think it's just inside the person or is just the organization. It's like a combination of things and it's having those opportunities, having the framework within your family, having the sense of the ambition, and having people, I think, advance you, like, help you to make a decision when you're like, Oh, no, no, no, I'm too busy, I can't do this. Or, This is way too much. Or, you know, I can't do this and this. And you know, having people who have, are doing all of this stuff, it's having the Hillary Clintons and people like this who, as role models out there. We forget that without her, you know, and Madeleine Albright, and Condoleezza Rice having been in those jobs we wouldn't have seen women at that level, right? And they were all so accomplished. It gives you, like, a pathway, it gives you role models and leaders that you can look up to. It's important. So, I believe very strongly that the emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion as a theme is important for our government if we're going to attract and diversify ideas and innovation, bringing innovation. It's just a different way of looking at it, you know. Not everyone in the room, having the same old idea over and over again.

Q: Yeah. I worked for a company that replaced me when I got divorced, and that was an interesting insight that this company provided professional family with support on buying, selling a house, having the insurance, having a network of professional friends, a lot of support that I lost when I got a divorce and was far away from my kids. I don't know if they recognized their role, but they were very much like that, that they were able to replace, and this was a private company. So, they're everywhere, there are a lot of good companies like that. But it's good to hear about AID. You're not the first person that's told me similar stories, that women can take advantage.

BROWN: There were probably affirmative action and others, but I'm not aware and wasn't part of any of that. I just observed over years, and AID's a small organization, so very, very small number of direct hires and total workforce very small compared to the State Department, so it's very much of a family thing. So, when someone gets sick or you have a huge challenge in your life, you're more likely than not to have a supportive boss and supervisor who will help you navigate that, whereas potentially another larger organization may not do that. I mean, Planned Parenthood obviously does do that as well in a nurturing environment, but you need to, I guess develop resilience. The Foreign Service helps you to develop resilience because you have to expect the unexpected.

You're going to Honduras; you end up in Russia. You know, this is supposed to happen, now this is going to happen. There's a school, oh, there's no school here. Okay, what are we going to do? You know, you have to develop that resilience and flexibility. It is a workplace that is evolving every year more and more towards that, of giving you the opportunity for new benefits so that you can move forward.

Q: Well, and so, that's what we will talk about in our next session, your role in really being a mentor and how you're working with USAID people coming up, so we want to hear about that as well. But we will stop now.

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Q: All right. So, today is November 22. My name is Linda Lippner and we are doing our third interview with Betsy Brown, formerly retired of AID but still very active in the world of AID and we're going to talk about what she's doing now, today, with what she's doing now with AID people as a, I guess retired but still involved on the outside.

So, let's start. And during our time together, Betsy, we've talked a lot about everywhere you've been, everything you've done, but it's all, I'm sure, been culminating in what you're doing now. You're never not active. So, tell us how you relate to AID at this point and when did it start and what do you see for the future?

BROWN: I have been, for the last two years, I was asked to consider coaching new officers. AID has planned a surge of new officers, and recognizing that they were stretched considerably they reactivated a program of coaching by function and there are five of us, retired senior Foreign Service officers, who have been hired to coach each incoming cohort, and I've been doing it for two years. There have been times in the past two years where we've had people coming back to back, every four weeks, every five weeks we've had a class of twenty, a class of fifteen, a class of twenty-five, and depending on the surge, I've coached twelve people at a time. Right now I have a total of maybe fifty-seven new officers that I'm coaching. And we coach them from the day that they're onboarded until the end of their two-year assignment overseas. So, it's a total of three years of coaching per person. And we're available on-demand to help them navigate the system. Particularly in COVID it's been quite difficult. People had never seen the workplace, never reported to work, and so, it is very difficult to navigate a corporate culture when you're never entered it physically. So, trying to help them envision what it's like and who they can call, how to network, and we help them with their CVs, a job-related CV so that they can call other officers and look for rotations. So, they have at least between twelve to sixteen months in Washington where they are rotating from office to office. So, I help them plan their rotations, work with their supervisors on what deliverables, you know, the officers should achieve. And we have officers coming in right out of grad schools, these are Payne fellows who are on a track right out of grad school, a wonderful fellowship program that AID instituted. But they have very minimal international experience. We have mid-level people, and then we have some who have worked for USAID for years who were contractors and then enter now as a career officer. So, the levels are very, very different and each one has an individual development plan

and we help them to craft that to get the most out of their time in Washington before they go overseas. So, that's basically it in a nutshell. It's called the C-3 Program.

Q: Could you give me the name of the fellowship again? I didn't catch the nave of the fellowship.

BROWN: So, the fellowship program is called Payne Fellowship. It is named for Donald Payne, and it's in his memory. The fellowship reaches out to diverse populations all across America and it offers graduate school into a career track at AID. And it started out small and now it's growing and growing. It's been a wonderful program to bring in diverse new ideas and vision and talent. Very exciting. I used to do minority recruitment when I was in HR, in human resources, and it was very, very, very difficult to attract talent outside of our normal channels of international relations schools. And the Payne Fellowship has just been fantastic. So, AID is really innovating in terms of how they're going to achieve President Biden's vision of a diverse diplomatic corps.

Q: Why do you think it was difficult in those earlier days? Was AID not—what was going on then? Did they not want to be diverse? Or can you tell us a little bit about that?

BROWN: No, I think it's not a high-paying career track and if you are a talented person who's come out of a top graduate program you may be thinking that the private sector might offer more opportunities. And so, I think in order to stay competitive AID has really learned that it needs to attract people right out of graduate school and excite them about what a career in the Foreign Service looks like. So, it's a partnership with Howard University, so Howard University does the intake, the selection of candidates, and then the new officers select which graduate school they want to go to and they have to apply. So, we have incredible candidates coming out of fantastic schools across the country. And so, the attraction of having a graduate school program paid for and a career track bundled has given us the opportunity to bring in talent that we didn't have before. So, I think it's an incentivized system.

Q: Wow. That is very exciting and organized and actually planned out instead of just being random. You mentioned you have a group that you're in charge of, I'll use that term. Over fifty people, over fifty candidates?

BROWN: Yes. So, I've been doing it for two years and the intakes have been so frequent and I also inherited some of the mentees. I'm the coach and they're the mentee, and so I ended up taking all the Global Health new employees, now I have all the education officers and one lawyer. So it's very exciting to also have people outside of my direct specialty. It's really fun to contribute this way. And I love the other people I'm coaching with as well.

Q: So, I'm guessing you're doing a lot of this coaching remotely. They could not all be in Washington or some of them in Washington. And what's the percentage of that?

BROWN: So, now I have probably about fifteen in Washington, so they're in various stages of the program, so they do these rotations, technical rotations, and then they go into language training. They're assigned a country, they go into language training for the country of assignment, and then they have to do all sorts of required training. And we just started going back in person for the training, for the onboarding, so the first day they get there, I've done it now three times where—and in the last round we did a live simulation as well as a strategy where an officer played a mission director, we had someone as the program officer and the finance officer, and they were given a task of working together in teams and coming up with a program, with a development program and explaining to the mission director why it is that they picked the mix that they picked. And this something that AID used to do in person intensively when I joined the agency, was to drill you in real life activities that you're going to be finding as soon as you get overseas. And we've been able to return to that now with just, yeah. So, I have met the last two groups in person. Really fun.

Q: Does that mean you come down to Washington to meet with them?

BROWN: Yes. And with my other coaches and organizers, facilitators for the program. And it was so interesting never to have met them over two years in person and then all of a sudden to meet. We were just so filled with joy at meeting each other in-person. We'd been working with new officers and working out through problem solving and navigation and regulations and learning about the agency, but we'd never physically seen each other. So, this is a treat.

Q: Can you give an example of maybe what one of the meeting projects were, I mean, without naming a country. Is there anything in particular that your group was working on, if you can?

BROWN: Yes, sure. We have a live simulation where there's a case study of a prototypical country. It's not a real country, but we provide the data, you know, high rates of illiteracy, the GNP (Gross National Product), the role of women in society, so we give them a framework and you know, we had roles and people were actually talking through, okay, I'm the controller, my job is to do this and my job is to do this and this and this, and then the task is okay, you've got, you know, three hours to budget, and we give them the budget level and here's you're operating budget. And the scenario is a retreat, which is something that USAID does frequently to plan its strategy. They'll hold a retreat first with the senior leadership, and then with the entire mission to engage on what programs are in our comparative advantage, and then put together a framework that will be presented to the governate and resonate with the governate. And the new officers need to role play and imagine why these programs would be helpful to the government, you know. And so, it helps the new officers to imagine their work when they leave Washington. They will all have a host country that they are assigned to. They will also have an internal set of colleagues that they are working with and each new officer will have an interagency context with an ambassador who is their chief of mission.

Q: That sounds like a wonderful free, going out into the field program. That's incredible. You just have been so excited about getting involved in this, especially when you can look back and realize that you didn't have that kind of support and that now it's happened and happening and you know, that's great.

I know money is so much a part of everything and AID has to live on money, so do these mentees, do they get involved at all in the money aspects? Do they have to worry about budget, or is that all taken away from them and they don't have to worry about what things cost?

BROWN: Oh, no, they are very much engaged in budget discussions and the new officers take courses in the budget cycle. They go into their own professional technical area and they learn about what the operating year budget is by country, how money comes in from the Congress, the earmarks, what they can do with the funding and what they can't do. They go office to office, operating unit to operating unit within their parent bureau, so the health people are going to, the infectious disease team, the HIV team, the family planning team, the nutrition team, so it is all about money and strategy and what we do as an agency and what we can't do as an agency. So, they are definitely learning about all those parameters before they get to post.

Q: So, you've mentioned diversity. I assume you mean more women, more racial diversity.

BROWN: Gender diversity, yeah. I mean, it's refreshing to see the mix of people that are coming in.

Q: Well, I have to ask, has that diversity—are men still in that mix?

BROWN: Yes, sure. We have a lot of men. We have men of color, we have men from the LGBTQ community.

Q: Really? This is great.

BROWN: And we have women from the LGBTQ community. It is just a refreshing mix of new faces and staff that are now going to take up the difficult task of forging development programs in the world that we're facing, and we need everybody's perspective and view, you know, at very difficult times, a very difficult set of circumstances that the new officers are facing. So, as a coach we don't leave. As they get assigned overseas they can call us whenever, and there's no quota, like you can only call me twice or, you know, you met your three times, so different times of the year when they're getting evaluated they may have a really tough assignment and they want to just reflect, am I seeing this correctly, you know, here's what I'm doing, or I'm having a problem relating to this or that, here's my issues. And what, you know, kinds of advisory services are out there, who can help me untangle what I'm finding so that we don't lose people. It's very costly to recruit Foreign Service officers, so we're very humbled by the fact that we've had very low attrition.

Q: Has this whole program, when did it start? Has it been since the presidential election or—?

BROWN: It's actually something that goes back maybe even fifteen or twenty years, the availability of coaches, but the definition and the amount of time that is available and now the intensity, because AID had stopped recruiting at different times. During one administration they, you know, were not recruiting at all. So, you didn't need many coaches or you maybe only coached, you know, once a year if you're not bringing anybody in. But if you're bringing people in frequently, then the program has gotten built accordingly.

Q: I guess I'm assuming it was the previous administration where there was no recruiting going on or—?

BROWN: There were issues of you know, even thinking about cutbacks, you know, cutting the family planning and population program, hence we don't need to recruit any population people, you know. So, the fluctuations in staffing have definitely been an issue for government period, and I think what COVID has taught us, I was even hearing today that Mike Pence was asked a question about conservative pro-government, and you know, there have been administrations that have not been in favor of a big government and government support, so that's waxed and waned. And unfortunately, the Foreign Service numbers go with that philosophy, and have fluctuated. Right now we're in a hiring surge and I imagine the rest of the Foreign Service is as well outside of USAID.

Q: Where—overseas, is there a particular part of the world that is getting most of this new hire and trained surge of AID? I never thought of AID being in South America, but where are these people going?

BROWN: They're worldwide available and the majority are serving in Africa because we have the most posts in Africa. But they are assigned to missions that have supervisors that have a good, broad development program in general, so you'll tend to find them in medium to larger sized missions, although we have assigned a few officers to small missions. We have a number of disaster relief, humanitarian assistance types that have been coming in, and so they're going where the disasters are. So, it depends on the functional area of the trainee, mentee, and new officer. They are new officers.

Q: Well, yeah, and I was wondering about Central America versus South America.

BROWN: Right. Yeah, so the LAC region we call it, Latin America and the Caribbean, have fewer new officers. The missions had a peak build up more than a decade ago, and then many have been graduating because of prosperous economic, flourishing democracies or advancement on multiple levels, they didn't need as big development programs. But again, this goes up and down depending on the administration and depending on the priorities. So, COVID changed a lot, so we have been sending new

health officers, for example, into the LAC region to work on programming COVID relief funds.

Q: Mm-hm, mm-hm. I know that currently Indonesia is having problems with earthquakes and are there aid people in Indonesia?

BROWN: Yes.. I have two people that I'm coaching that are there now, and we have a whole host of humanitarian assistance, disaster response teams that are there, and some of them are the new officers who are joining the ranks, and none too soon. These are trying times and you need new staff to keep the energy going and to keep the passing and the energy. And so, you will see all of those types of officers now in the field, new officers coming in. And mission directors and supervisors know it's part of their job to train the next generation of development staff.

Q: How does the staff coordinate with contractors? I know AID has always had a lot of contractors on the ground. So, do you give them any kind of training, communication skills with the contractors?

BROWN: A lot. . And one part of the orientation, we have a whole day of FSNs who are on panels and then they work in small groups through exercises to talk about the importance of Foreign Service Nationals, what they believe makes a good officer, and what they believe makes a not a good officer.

Q: Interesting.

BROWN: Yeah. And to get feedback on how to make it. I know there's at least one mission, so different missions are trying different things where they actually partner new officers with experienced Foreign Service Nationals who have been in the embassy for decades to help them navigate once they get, you know, navigate the new culture, navigate the workplace, navigate the corporation culture of the Foreign Service National staff. So, AID has a very large Foreign Service National staff in all of its missions.

Q: But what about the—when I mentioned contractors, I mean that—

BROWN: The implementing partners?

Q: Yeah, the U.S. partners. I know that the AID staff can't take care of everything, and they recruit, hire, and get contractors involved. They could be large corporations or smaller ones who have bid on jobs with AID. Can you comment about that?

BROWN: Sure, that's part of our Foreign Service officers job responsibilities, is to oversee and approve grants and activities and action plans and work plans and budgets and procurements that are for the most part led by contractors. Now, a very big shift has been in the last two administrations with heavy emphasis in this administration on locally led contractors, so these are not U.S. contractors, these are local, non-governmental, civil society organizations that are obtaining funding to carry out a scope with local experts

and specialists. And that shift began with, in a heavy way with the PEPFAR, with the HIV-AIDS funding, that stipulated a certain percentage needed to be programmed through local entities. And now it has spread across USAID. So, there's a very heavy emphasis on capacity building for local organizations to lead the development work. And it's very exciting that we are working our way out of doing everything. It is not—it was never the vision that we would have a lifetime of contractors engaging and carrying out and strategizing, it was always the vision that host countries would lead the way and local organizations would forge. Because otherwise, you have no sustainability. If something happens and the U.S. government needs to pull back, you have no infrastructure to continue the development, and this is a very sound approach, and it's also very rewarding to see it unfold. And the new officers are right on the forefront of this and it's in every region.

Q: Yeah, that's a great direction that things have gone because yeah, they're going to, they being those locally directed contractors, they're going to be there. I mean, they're going to stay. Your staff, your mentored staff come and go.

BROWN: Right, exactly. You've got to lay that foundation and it has to be solid because the countries that need to weather all sorts of storms, development upheaval, and you need that infrastructure, that capacity locally. And so, whereas USAID helps out in humanitarian assistance, emergencies like you're seeing in Indonesia, the Indonesians are also extremely strong in their response teams, and they've benefitted over many years from support to strengthen the local capacity to respond. They're on the ground, they're the ones that need to deploy immediately, and then be able when it's beyond to be able to ask for specifically what will fill the gap that they are not able to fill

Q: Do you run into pushback from any countries? I know that not all small or medium-sized countries want, encourage USAID, either through lots of different ways or AID. Have you heard of any pushback from certain countries for health? And maybe not, I'm just wondering.

BROWN: You know, the number of countries has not been USAID's problem. The problem has been getting enough dollars to do the work that needs to be done. So, now, not all forms of assistance might be appropriate in every country. I mean, we have—

Q: Or welcome.

BROWN: Or welcome. I mean, some countries, you know, are heavily dependent on food to meet and fill the assistance needs. Not all countries want to be dependent in any way for certain things. But AID has countries that are poised to graduate or may have been poised to graduate and provide assistance to other countries in its own neighborhood. So, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market), the Caribbean countries, they have their own—SADAC (Southern African Development Community) is another sub regional organization in South Africa. So, these countries are already forming the networks and consortia, country to country, neighbor to neighbor to be able to work through problems.

But not all subregions of any continent are open to the same mix of tools in the AID toolbox. And you're able as a country to say, I'm not, you know, we don't need that.

Q: Well, I like that the last word of AID is development, and that is promoting your mission really, to help those countries develop their international development unless there are political conflicts, I met you in Russia. Russia invited AID to leave as they invited the Peace Corps to leave. That may have been based on something other than their need for development and cooperation, but I just didn't know if Russia was the only one that I had heard of that said, No, we don't want you, okay.

BROWN: Well—the funding for Europe and Eurasia went down. Poland, for example, Eastern Europe, where we had, after the fall of the Soviet Union, supported. The funding gradually tapered off, but now with the situation in Ukraine we are looking very closely at the neighboring countries, Moldova, Poland, that are implicated by virtue of being close to this conflict. So, I think that AID is flexible enough, it's what I've loved about the organization (USAID), that when the need changes there's enough right minds and thinking about what makes sense, what makes sense for national security, what makes sense for development, and countries have the networks and channels to be able through their embassies, our embassies overseas and then through other organizations to express what is it that they need to the United Nations, here's what we need. We need food, we need vaccines, you know, we need PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), protective gear for COVID. These are the things we need; international community, can you help us fulfill this portion of our need? So, the system has good infrastructure. This administration has also been supporting the leadership, for example, in WHO, the World Health Organization, where you have the whole globe of nations contributing and responding to international humanitarian assistance appeals. And being a part of that is one of USAID's responsibilities, is to serve on delegations to these international organizations. The State Department leads these delegations and USAID has representation on these delegations.

Q: Well, I saw something on the radio, TV last night about the population and the refugee situation in Somalia. And I forget what the other countries– was it Niger? But those two countries have the highest rate of population. I think Niger has like five children on average per mother and how difficult that is to develop a country when you have that kind of population growth. Is it a sensitive issue these days or can AID help with population control?

BROWN: Well, we talk about contraceptive security and family planning, so we don't talk about, you know, population control per se. The objective is, for the most part, child spacing, and limitation based on the desire for contraception. So, USAID is the largest bilateral donor in terms of contraceptives and contraceptive security. Our family planning program is still the largest bilateral support for family planning, for international family planning. So, countries are increasingly paying for portions of their family planning requirements and their contraceptive needs, but there's still gaps, and there are not enough dollars in public health, for example, in the field that I've grown up in to pay for everything that needs to be done, especially when you have a pandemic. So, if you're a

poor country and you only have a certain amount of dollars for public health and prevention and you're faced with this epidemic, pandemic that you never even envisioned you are going to have to tackle, there are real constraints to what you're going to pay for and your own sustainability. I think our own public health system in America has proven to be very stretched by COVID and likewise in developing countries that we serve in even more so. So, our commitment, our country's commitment to supply lifesaving contraceptives, TB drugs, HIV-AIDS antivirals, all—laboratory strengthening, all of these inputs to prevent disease has never probably been more important. This is not the moment to step back and say, Nope, you're on your own. Take this on your own. Stop, whatever you have to do, just use whatever dollars you have, because what will end up happening are the services for women and children like family planning or vaccination for children, which like malaria control, prevention, these are the programs which have saved lives. We don't want, the countries don't want to roll back to where they were because of a lack of funding. So, that kind of commitment requires regional governments to band together to provide that safety net and then to make very specific requests where they see a need. And I believe that AID has never been more important than we are right now. Right now USAID is helping organize a rapid response to global problems, and then helping put in place the systems to that when the next epidemic comes, if it's Ebola or another wave of Ebola or God forbid, another SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), COVID, zoonotic disease that the countries that we're working in now have the infrastructure, the staff trained who can track, follow, make the request. During every epidemic we have seen more and more capacity. It is building that capacity which is going to help especially the African countries that have the most resource constraints. They have been the most severely affected because of the waves, drought, famine, HIV, multidrug resistant TB, Ebola, Ebola coming multiple times and now COVID.

Q: Yeah. And climate change.

BROWN: Climate change, which is advancing many of these zoonotic diseases. So, multidrug resistance due to climate change and new bacteria, new viruses, things that we don't know yet to come, as a global community we need to ban together and put all of our thinking together. So, the president, the had of WHO, the World Health Organization, used to be the minister of health in Ethiopia and I had the great honor to evaluate the family planning/population program in Ethiopia, and he was a young man as minister, and I remember him calling us in on a Saturday and what the delight for him to hear our findings and then to reflect back to us his vision of what he saw needed to take place in family planning and population at the grassroots level and at the regional, at the hospitals. A brilliant man.

Q: And you all were on the same page, basically?

BROWN: Well, you know, his page made the most difference, okay? He was the minister, and he had his vision and strategy, and as donors, we need to be responsive to the vision.

Q: Mm-hm, yeah.

BROWN: And the Ethiopians have been very effective in communicating their vision and the Jamaicans were very, very effective in communicating here's what we're going to do to battle HIV and we would like the U.S. to do this and this country to do that and this donor to do this. That's always the best environment to work in, is when you have that leadership in the host government.

Q: Yeah, I see what you mean. Wow.

Well, so personally, you see yourself staying with this role, with AID for a bit longer? And I'm being a little sarcastic. (Laughs)

BROWN: I don't know, you know. I didn't expect it to last this long to be a coach, frankly. And I've been asked by my local colleagues am I going to come back into local politics and help do some community organizing in my local community. And I just don't know what's around the corner. I think that what is so exciting about being in the Foreign Service is you enter young, you retire young, you can have many different career paths over time, and I have no idea what the next chapter is going to be, if there's a calling. I didn't know that I was going to work in local politics for three years. I was recruited to work on one campaign, and it ended up being a three-year commitment to the North Elba Democratic Committee. And now that I've moved to Franklin County we're just going to have to see, you know, where the needs are. But I will, I'm sure in one way or another, continue to be active in volunteering. I started as a Peace Corps volunteer, and I will probably end as some kind of a community volunteer in my rural area. So, but I don't know what it will look like. I'm not sure, given family needs, how much more, like in-country work I'll be doing. COVID kind of brought that to a close, but if I needed, I would respond to an appeal. I responded after the Haiti earthquake and went in for the earthquake response, so I never say never. And I think that people need to, now that I'm a career coach, have a long view of their career. There are chapters in your career and your life, in your professional life and growth, and it's not always linear, and I'm not sure what leads you from one thing to the next. It may be an opportunity, but the interest in serving is something I've seen as a constant with most of my colleagues in the Foreign Service.

Q: Mm-hm. Okay. Well, that's encouraging. I hope you choose to stay with AID, but not at the expense of going on other directions, especially locally in New York State, which in my opinion, having relatives there, needs your involvements in—

BROWN: Yeah, we had a bad showing this round, and this is despite having quite a bit of grassroots engagement. And unfortunately, this campaign, this midterm I was not actively like I was in the past because of family issues. But I will consider actually running probably for town council—

Q: Excellent.

BROWN: —should an opportunity arise. Because there are not enough women, there are not enough diverse viewpoints, particularly in rural communities, and just being able to

speak out and not being afraid and the skills that you get in the Foreign Service over time, hopefully I can give back to my community because there are so many issues we need to tackle here, climate change, teen pregnancy, poverty, and we could lose the good representation that we've had, progressive representation. It can slip away very easily. And so—

Q: Oh, wow. So, you're going to run. So, this is Franklin County, so I want to keep that in my mind so when I hear about things going on in that part of New York State I'll think of you.

BROWN: Where is your family?

Q: Well, my son lives, oh gosh, I think it's the Arkville-Fleischmann area, and I don't know the county could be Green County, but I'm really not sure.

BROWN: Okay, sure.

Q: Yeah, northwest of Kingston.And he's getting a little restless with his NGO job there and I've told him about you—

BROWN: Oh, good.

Q: —but he's going in different kinds of directions, and so, but I'm seeing him. Starting tomorrow I'll be traveling up to Arkville-Fleischmann's—

BROWN: Okay. We have a lot of snow up here. It was seven yesterday.

Q: Seven inches or seven degrees?

BROWN: Seven degrees. And we have about eight inches of snow. We didn't get the Buffalo wave, but ski mountains are open and we're all out doing backcountry and in the woods, so we have a lot of snow for this time of year.

Q: Yeah, I'd heard about Buffalo. So, I think I might contact my son to see if I need to bring my snow boots.

BROWN: Oh, you have to bring your boots. (Both laugh)

Q: Okay. Oh, that's great. Oh, this has been so enjoyable.

End of interview