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

THOMAS R. CARMICHAEL

Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background
- Born I Iowa, raised in Illinois and Florida
- University of Florida and Florida State University
- Study in Florence, Italy
- Computer specialist, State of Florida
- Private work, New Orleans, LA
- Teacher, US Navy (Florida College programs)
- Joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1984
- Marriage

Madrid, Spain: (USIA) Rotation Officer 1984-1986
- Ambassador Tom Enders
- Spain and NATO
- President Reagan visit
- Relations
- Government
- Charles Wick
- Cultural program
- Congressional visits
- Anti-US/NATO demonstration
- US military bases
- Basques

La Paz, Bolivia: Cultural Affairs Officer 1986-1988
- President Victor Paz Estenssoro
- Relations
- Economy
- Anti-Americanism
- Ambassador Ed Rowell

Wife
Cultural programs
USAID scholarships
Partners of America
Fulbright Program
Bi-National Centers
National Symphony
Speakers program
Natural gas
University
Bolivian Indians
Bolivia/Chile relations
Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

Polish Language and Foreign Affairs study 1988-1989

Poznan, Poland: Cultural Affairs Officer 1989-1992
Economy
Environment
Government
Communist downfall
Contacts
Attitudes toward US and its art
Opera
Fulbright Conferences
School for Polish Economic Professors
Cultural programs
Transition to democracy
Peace Corps
English teaching program
"Press and Cultural Center"
International Media Fund
Catholic Church
Exchange programs
Agriculture
Social contacts

Washington, DC: USIA; Deputy Policy Officer, East Asian and Pacific Affairs 1992-1994
WorldNet programs

Relations with State Department
China
Assistant Secretary Winston Lord
Operations
Japanese
Treasury Secretary Robert Reich
South Korea

Malay Language and Area Studies 1994-1995

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Press Attaché 1995-1997
North Korea Nuclear talks
Relations
Prime Minister Mahathir
Human Rights
Muslims
Fundamental Islam
Local press
University programs
Chinese
Singapore
Borneo
Vice President's APEC Conference remarks
USIA programs

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia: Public Affairs Officer 1998-2000
WorldNet antenna
Offices
Living environment
North Korea
Foreign diplomatic presence
China/Mongolia relations
Media programs
Climate
Food
Soviet legacy
Fulbright program
Post-Communism changes
Cultural programs
Modernization

Degradation of infrastructure

State Department: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Citizen Exchanges 2000-2001

Arts America
Programs and Exhibits
State/USIA merger
Managing program production

State Department: FSI; Vietnamese language study 2001-2002

Hanoi, Vietnam: Public Affairs Officer 2002-2004

Ho Chi Minh City
US naval visit
Relations
USAID
Fulbright Program
Explaining US policy
Local media
Communist Party
Government
Economic, political and human rights
Operations
Economy
Internet
Chinese influence
General feeling re Americans
Abu Ghraib
MIAs issue
Vietnam War

State Department: Office of the Inspector General; Public Diplomacy Inspector 2004-2009

Operations
Issues

INTERVIEW

Q: Let's start at the beginning; when and where were you born?

CARMICHAEL: I was born December 11, 1948 in Waterloo, Iowa. I lived there for six months only. That was actually the hometown of my father's family. My grandfather on my father's side was a rancher and Dad grew up around cattle and the beef packing business, etcetera, but he wasn't living there then. I guess times were tough, and he was earning his living elsewhere, while Mother was staying there with his mother and sister during the period I was born.

Q: What do you know, say about on your father's side? Where did the Carmichaels come from?

CARMICHAEL: My grandfather on my father's was Scotch Irish. He married a German lady. He died when I was fairly young, and I've some pictures of myself and my brother with him, but I did not know him as well as my grandmother who was German and lived until I was in college. I believe she moved to the United States from Germany, but I don't know from what part of Germany.

Q: On your father's side, what was the family involved in? Was it ranching, farming or business or what?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, basically ranching. My grandfather had, the best I recall from the little I was told, a family farm that raised cattle and sold meat, and my dad picked that up as the field in which he could do well. Through what ways, I am not sure, but he ended up in Chicago working in and eventually running beef packing plants for some of the old, big names in…

Q: Swift?

CARMICHAEL: Swift, E.W. Kneip, Rath and others there. He was actually in his last quarter of law school, clerking for some company, and he realized he could make more money selling meat than he could in law at that time, so he decided he was going to be in the meat and provisions business. He was a restless man, but he loved Florida, and always wanted to make his living there. He would make money in Chicago in the meat-packing plants, then move the family down to Florida, and find he could not make it there, and he'd be forced to move us back to Chicago to make his living there again. Then he'd go back to Florida -- I think this was Miami, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota and he'd keep going back and forth between different suburbs in Chicago and Florida. On the fifth or sixth time, about '63 or '62, when he decided to move to Florida, and my mother said, "This time is the last time we are going to move. If we move down to Florida, that's it." But he was always in the meat business, always in the restaurant business.

Q: He had gone through college then?

CARMICHAEL: Right.

Q: Where?

CARMICHAEL: These were Iowa universities. Nothing particularly special.

Q: What about on your mother's side? What do you know about that them?

CARMICHAEL: Her family was a poorer family from around Texas and Kansas with a lot of ethnic roots. I guess there was a little bit of American Indian blood among them, some German, but beyond that, it is not clear. In terms of what my mother's side did, I don't know. I know that her father was one of these flawed, but extraordinary guys. He was a master mechanic; and sheriff in his Texas town where they lived in for a while. They also lived in Kansas City. He was a barber and my mom used to say that she could remember him coming back from these work projects during the Depression, you know, with his hands covered with blisters.

He was a cool guy. He raised his own pepper plants to make his Texas hot sauce. When my Mom's parents lived in Kansas City, my Grandmother managed an apartment building, and he had his own little apartment downstairs in the building. He had this little apartment rigged up with buttons above his bed that he would press and the radio would go on or lights would go on different rooms. He had a storeroom there where he would do handyman work for the apartment and fiddle with his devices. I grew up visiting them and going down into the workshop seeing what granddad did with the tools and projects. He was the fellow that would set up our electric train set on Christmas, and he once made us an all-metal soap-box derby (style) car.

Q: That's fun. That's a great memory to have.

I take it your mother did not graduate from college?

CARMICHAEL: Right. She went to high school, but wanted to get off on her own and work. She was actually artistic, always wanting to decorate the home and even did some painting.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

CARMICHAEL: You know, she never explained how they met. I don't know why, but we just didn't talk about a lot of these things as much as I guess we should have, but she said Dad just met her and just "swept her off her feet." She said they would go out dancing because she loved to dance and that they would go out dancing and drinking and having a good time. This is a little hazy about when and exactly where some of this was going on, but it was mostly in the Midwest.

Q: As a kid you were growing up in Chicago and Florida, right?

CARMICHAEL: Right. Chicago and Florida.

Q: Do you have siblings?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I have one brother, sixteen months older than I am.

Q: What are some of your earliest memories about where you lived and what you were up to?

CARMICHAEL: I remember going into downtown Chicago for special trips. Mom would take my brother and me or we would go on school field trips into Chicago to see the Natural History Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry. I recall that the Natural History Museum had a mock coal mine that you would go down into. On a school field strip, our class visited a WWII captured German submarine, the U-235, I believe, in the Museum of Science and Industry. You could entered and walk through it, which was quite a memory. My mom was more responsible for giving my brother and me this sort of exposure, and she was always working with the PTA and that sort of thing. I remember that from Chicago. I do remember, however, both parents reading to us at night, but mom was always the most supportive in these aspects.

I remember riding around on our bicycles with a couple of good friends on the high school basketball, outside basketball courts. I remember a little bit about the incredibly high snow drifts and building snow forts in the snow banks.

I remember very well one of the places we lived outside of Chicago, Addison was really semi rural, and the small cluster of maybe ten houses was surrounded by cornfields and soybean fields and scruffy woods, so I had some great outdoor experiences. I remember very well taking long walks alone with just my dog, Tuxedo, a black spaniel, through the cornfields. My dog would run like crazy along the rows and jump up above the corn so he could see where I was. So I would see him running around, jumping up and twisting his head at the top of the arch, looking to spot me, keep me in his eyes. My brother and other buddies built a tree house way out in the trees on the other side of the cornfields, which was great on summer afternoons. "Grandpa Rosenwinkle" was the clan patriarch of several families in the cluster of homes and owner of the farm that surrounded us. He let the children ride in the wagon pulled behind the corn picker, and then we'd also gather to help him shuck corn as it went into the silo. We also wrestled with other kids in the back of his soybean truck.

We had this pond near our house in Sarasota, and there was an alligator in the pond near the house that they would always warn us about, not to get too close to the pond because the alligator was there. I guess he got one of the neighbor's dogs, ate it. I remember that and going out because at that time Sarasota really wasn't developed like it is now and we could go out and chase fiddler crabs at the shore, and Siesta Key, which is now a built up was truly picturesque and isolated. I remember there were two bridges to get onto that Key. The southernmost, smallest one I remember stopping one night. My dad loved cars, and he had a convertible, and we parked in the road with our engine off waiting for the bridge to open. It was a single lane bridge and a guy would sit in a little shed waiting for a single to open the bridge to allow boats with masts to pass. He had a large L-shaped pipe, and he'd walk to the center of this bridge, stick it in a hole in the bridge walk

around the key, and would move this bridge so it would sit parallel to, from perpendicular to parallel, with the inland waterway. And these sailboats that couldn't get under the bridge unless it was were turned that way, moved slowly through with running lights on. It was a beautiful sight.

Q: How about the foreign side of things?

CARMICHAEL: I guess I was introduced early to foreign culture through food, and it has served me well in my travels. I learned to enjoy whatever my host served and have always looked forward to the unusual. In Chicago dad would bring home from work all sorts of Jewish and other foreign sausages, sweetbreads, smoked tongue, and other foods that clients in his meat sales would give him as presents. And we went out to dinner to hotels and restaurants where he had sold meat, so I remember going to Italian and Chinese restaurants early on. Mom also liked to cook Greek, Italian, and Mexican food, so even now, I approach cultures through their food. I also recall going to a long-established Greek restaurant, Pappas's, in Tarpon Springs, Florida with them, and at that time the sponge boats were still active. In those days, you ate turtle soup. We visited them, and I remember to this day the smell of the sponges drying in the rigging on the ships.

During two separate relocations from Chicago to Florida, including their final, permanent move, we lived in Sarasota on the West Cost. I remember being down in Sarasota, Florida which was always kind of a special city in Florida because the Ringling Brothers, was a circus town but also Ringling had built a lavish private residence in a Venetian style and a museum in Italian style to house his collection -- which was a first rate baroque art collection and still is an outstanding thing to find down there.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

CARMICHAEL: You know, my brother and I were both good students. We were expected to work hard in school but, you know, my family simply was not intellectually-oriented. My parents did not embrace high-brow culture of any sort. Both read to us as young children, but we just didn't have many books in the house, and I never recall discussing a book at the dinner table. Nevertheless, I do remember clearly Mom taking us to the public library. An aunt on my father's side, his sister, was a school teacher, so there was that sort of push for educational success. For books around the house I remember most clearly a long row of Readers Digest condensed books kept on a book case. That's what we had in the house. We also had <u>The Greatest Story Ever Told.</u> We didn't really keep up on literature. This was not a highly literate family at all.

Q: How about for news and all? Was your family much of newspaper readers?

CARMICHAEL: No, but I remember very well that we watched TV, we watched the news. We were, I guess, the prototypical American family, watching news while we ate dinner. I remember Dad reading the newspaper; however, but little discussion came from it. On Sunday, we did however read the Sunday newspaper a bit more as a family.

Q: Where did they fall politically? Do you have any idea?

CARMICHAEL: I think that we didn't talk much about politics, because my parents had very opposing political views. My mother, a Democrat from a working, and sometimes working poor family background, worshipped Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To her, FDR was a great man. My dad, a Republican from Iowa, you know, would snap with great conviction that FDR was a Communist, so they just didn't talk that much about politics.

I wasn't brought up in a house where measured reason and civil political discourse among family members was practiced and part of my experience growing up – or even as a college student and beyond.

Q: Was religion important or involved your family or not?

CARMICHAEL: Well, no. My dad, I think he was a Methodist, but I'm not sure if he was a deacon or some other officer in the church. We went to church, but it was a chore for him. It seems to me now that this was something he did to assume a more responsible identity. He had this great friend, Rudy Larson, who would come over with his wife, and I remember we'd go to church together – and Dad and Rudy would have a shot of Early Times before they left for church. So, I don't recall my spiritual upbringing as particularly earnest or thoughtful – although I went through catechism classes, etc.

Q: How about in school? Let's talk about elementary school. How did you do?

CARMICHAEL: I did well, I mean, we did well. Mom was very interested in the PTA, and really worked for our education. We went to public schools. I remember the different disputes going on; the question of whether we would have a band in our school or not, so this was a public school, and it wasn't a Duke Ellington type school at all. But I do remember good teachers. I remember very well my fourth grade teacher, an Italian lady whose name I forgot, but we students would refinish her antiques for her. They were nothing fine, but sometimes during breaks we would work on objects – I remember well cleaning up a "sauerkraut stomper" for her. In any case, this lady let me know that it's OK to work on this stuff and to be interested in antiques and objects from different times and places."

Q: Did you develop an interest in antiques?

CARMICHAEL: I always liked antiques after that – even now I prefer old things to new. Somehow patina on anything is interesting. I ended up with a degree in History and then an MA in Art History Education. Even now I'd rather have an older car than a new car, and it is irrational, and I know it.

Q: Did you find you had a particular interest in, are there any books that sort of stick in your mind that you read that stuck in your mind?

CARMICHAEL: We read the Hardy Boys. This was at a young age; fourth and fifth grade. I remember very well the book I probably mention most to my brother -- that we both remember well -- called The Buckskin Book for Buckskin Men and Boys. This was the book of sort of wood lore -- you know, how to make a "figure four trap," how to start a fire, how to make moccasins and that sort of thing. With a name like that, you've gotta remember the book. It fit in very well with our childhood in a semi rural area around Chicago, and we always kind of liked going out in the woods.

Q: Were you a movie buff or not?

CARMICHAEL: We went to the movies. I remember very well that movies were where our parents would let us off when they wanted to go out. They could take us to the movies and get quite a few hours off, because there were double features at that time. One of the things I will mention to you so it is posterity is our going to the Michael Todd Theater located downtown Chicago, which was set up for 'smell-o-vision.' Now movies equipped for 'smell-o-vision" had special ventilation so machinery could pump in a smell and they could pull out the smell very, very quickly. There was two, maybe three different 'smellovision' films made. We saw one of them which was called 'The Scent of Mystery'. It was set to start off along the French Riviera in an open car driving along a Riviera road, through blooms on both sides of the road – and you could smell all the blossoms via the "smell-o-vision" technology. The major clue to solve the mystery in the movie was the smell of pipe smoke that the detective smelled along with the audience at the scene of the crime and then later on.

In any case, we weren't that much of a buff. I remember Jeff Chandler in "Broken Arrow" and we loved "Rio Bravo" We liked films, but I think TV was probably more of interest to us.

Q: Any particular programs that stick in your mind?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yes. There was '77 Sunset Strip', 'Bourbon Street Beat' and a third Warner Brothers detective team series set in Hawaii, that we watched. I remember watching those, thinking they were special. You know, we also watched "Alfred Hitchcock" and 'The Twilight Zone,' of course.

Q: Was there any place you went most of the time to high school or where you still back and 'forthing'?

CARMICHAEL: Well, you see, by the time I was scheduled to go to high school, the family had moved down to Florida for the last time, so I went to Riverview High School. It was a three- year high school, and I remember that it was considered progressive and pretty good.

Q: Was this in or sort of around Sarasota?

CARMICHAEL: This was in Sarasota. It was not a big school, you know, because at that time Sarasota was only 60,000 people.

Q: What was the high school like?

CARMICHAEL: It was a good high school, I remember. It was built by one of Frank Lloyd Wright's disciples, and, unfortunately, it was just torn down. It was a modern building with no air conditioning, just big windows that would open upon in each classroom. It was mostly glass and girder. In retrospect it was an interesting high school in terms of the architecture.

I remember three teachers that I think were special for what I did later in life. There was one teacher, my world history teacher, Mrs. Burdine, who was clearly special to everybody, I think, in my class. She had lived in Colonial India as a British child, and then she married an American and moved to Sarasota, where she taught World History. She could talk about Hinduism with affection and authority. She would talk about how different it would be living in other countries. So she was a special person.

Then there was Dr. Marani, a former Fulbrighter. She taught 'Americanism versus Communism,' which not heavy-handed anti-Communism, but rather an exploration of ideas. She was a smart person who respected students and wanted conversation and discussion.

Then there was Mr. Nations. He had gone to some sort of summer internship at a think-tank or some sort of institution, returning with an enthusiasm for foreign affairs, and spoke to us about the concept of the United Nations and questions of national sovereignty and disarmament -- and those sorts of things that still are relevant to me. He was not quite as popular as the two ladies, but nevertheless was able to get us thinking.

Q: It sounds like you were intellectually challenged. In other words, these were people who didn't do just their routine job.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, right.

Q: What was the consistency of the class? Was it pretty much an Anglo Saxon type school?

CARMICHAEL: It's interesting. There was a black high school in Sarasota, and I think there were maybe one or two blacks in our class in a school of 475 students, so we didn't have that experience of getting to know Black Americans very well. However, there was a full range of very wealthy to poor students in our classes, and we also had special education classes for children that had trouble with normal studies. We also had 4H members who came from a rural, farming background. So, even though I never knew Afro-Americans, I certainly was exposed to different strata of society.

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

CARMICHAEL: ’63 to ’66.

Q: Did you feel for this being a southern area, did you feel the civil rights movement down there?

CARMICHAEL: Not really. When we first moved down there from Chicago, I felt we were going to go to some primitive state. I mean, that’s what Northerners thought about Southerners at that time. But in terms of the civil rights movement, I don’t recall that much discussion. Of course, my Dad felt that Martin Luther King was Communist. He was adamant about that. Rational discussion about those things on the TV news didn’t go over very well, which is a shame.

I remember going up to Boys State, which was a mock-government exercise in Tallahassee..

Q: It’s like this program, UN program for young people, I mean it’s one of these

CARMICHAEL: I can’t remember exactly, but I believe the American Legion ran the program. In any case, I remember going up to Tallahassee with this group on the Boys State program. We had elections for officials, of course, as part of our parliamentary training. We were going to elect one of the participants as President for that session of Boys State, and he was a Black American. The organizers wouldn’t let us do it. They said, “No, this is not going to be. You cannot elect a Black as your president here.” Of course, it was all cloaked in different language. I don’t remember all the details, but that this guy was an outstanding young man, but the organization wasn’t up for supporting our thoughts on the subject.

Q: That must have had an effect on all of you, didn’t it? The fact that you had authority, quote, leaning on you to do the wrong thing.

CARMICHAEL: Well, it was aggravating, but, you know, we were only high school students, and we could not do much, but it did feed my cynicism about politics and power. It is something I don’t forget now.

Q: Did the outside world intrude much on you?

CARMICHAEL: I was in high school when JFK was killed, and that was the biggest intrusion, but I just don’t recall that much. I do remember the War in Congo and the reports of mercenaries and their atrocities; I also recall Dag Hammarskjöld’s death.

I must tell you about the Ringling Museum -- one of the things John Ringling did that has left a mark on Sarasota and was part of its international feel. Ringling bought an 18th century theater from some northern Italian town, I can’t remember which, shipped it to Florida and had it reconstructed inside a modern shell he had built next to his museum. So there was a repertory actors’ company that put on plays inside this theater. The theater

also showed art movies, so my friends and I would go to these things when we were in high school, but also later on when I'd come back from college on summer vacation. It was a place you could go. That's a pretty sophisticated thing for some little Florida town.

In terms of there be something international there, there was always something international there. Helmut Schmidt used to vacation down there. I remember once when I was there on summer vacation and a former British Prime Minister was there in the museum for a ceremony in the courtyard there for British fighter pilot trainers that had died and been buried near Sarasota. There were some training grounds for the Brits there during World War II so that was an international sense there. Remember as well that the circus troupe was pretty international.

Q: Did you know what you wanted to do or where you wanted to go to college?

CARMICHAEL: No. My brother went to Cornell on scholarship, and I just really didn't think or plan that much. I considered even going to a junior college, a local junior college. I had good grades. I could have gotten into other schools, but it just didn't seem like the thing I wanted. I didn't really think of myself in those terms.

I ended up going to the University of Florida as a freshman. It was the largest Florida university, but most of my friends went to Florida State University in Tallahassee. I did very, very well at the University of Florida, but I transferred up to Florida State University for my sophomore year, basically to be with friends. It had a smaller campus; it was still a big school, but it had smaller classes. Florida State used to be a women's college, and maintained its humanities and that sort of emphasis.

Q: What did you major in?

CARMICHAEL: I majored in history because I liked history, and I had a minor in psychology because I liked psychology, but it wasn't a course that was planned truly and set. I think a lot of people my age during that time were more interested in the moment rather than getting right to a career. In part the world was more forgiving. I mean, for instance, when I started college, a graduate with a BA degree could teach in most public schools. You didn't have to go through specialized teaching courses or anything like that, so that was a positive, responsible, stimulating career easily available. So I just did what interested me and those subjects interested me.

Q: Did you get any particular area of history?

CARMICHAEL: It was mostly European history – but this morphed into interest in Art History. Florida's university system had established a study abroad program over in Florence, Italy, a six-month liberal arts program housed in a 19th century villa. Maybe you recall there was a disastrous flood in 66 in Florence? The student center had been housed for several years in a hotel – about 100 American students lived and study at the center. When the flood took place our students pitched in and pulled paintings out of churches and museums, as many students and young people did, and as a symbol of

gratitude, the Italian Government offered the program at a reduce rental rate a villa in downtown Florence to house the student center. The villa, Villa Fabbricotti, was quite historic – Queen Victoria and some of Napoleon's family had lived or vacationed there. It had not been maintained in pristine condition, of course, but it did have grounds and good study facilities.

I went there during my senior year and then my first graduate year in Florence. You could go as a student and it was cheaper to go for six months there, including air fare and food, than it was for the same amount of time in Tallahassee, Florida. But, in any case, this whet my appetite for Art History, and this has been a constant interest of mine wherever I was posted.

Q: You were there from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I would have been there as an undergraduate for six months in '69, finishing up my B.A. and went back another six months in Florence to start working on a master's degree.

Q: How did Italy strike you?

CARMICHAEL: At that time it was just so much more exotic than it is now to Americans. For instance, now in the downtown area of Florence cars are forbidden. When we were there, the little Fiats buzzed all around. It was exotic, but it was terribly easy to get around. The dollar was strong, and a student could hitchhike around Italy and the rest of Europe, if you wanted to save some money or just wanted the adventure. Heck, our guidebook was "Europe on $5 a Day." So you had a great deal of freedom there, and it was very exciting to be learning about art and history with the stuff right in front of you and with our incredibly qualified professors taking you into churches or through back alleys to small chapels and other treasures. It was just a very exciting experience.

Italy, it was 'exotic.' This sounds to me to be about right. It was quite different. The male and female relationships were really quite different. The first day I arrived and went out for a walk with several ladies, and an entire barber shop emptied out, including one patron who was half-shaven with his apron still tied around his neck, just to look at the ladies – of course, they whistled, etc. And, of course, Italian style in fashion and their theatrics had a charm that was attractive to young Americans.

I remember too there was some politics going on. There was a near coup of the Italian government when we were there. It was a little unnerving for us, but we were having the time or our lives.

Q: Was the Red Brigade doing things at that time? That came a little later?

CARMICHAEL: Much later, several years later. No, I mean we were learning a foreign language, we were looking at art, and we had history classes at the same time. I mean, it was just intellectually very, very, very exciting.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Foreign Service or our consulate there or not?

CARMICHAEL: No, we had no association with the consulate. I know that only a few years ago a State Department friend who roomed with me in Florence went back to Florence on business and offered to give a talk on Foreign Service careers to the students there on the program, but the school administration was not particularly interested. I think there may have been some miscommunication, or the school had its own agenda, and learning about the Foreign Service just wasn't part of that agenda.

Q: Did you go back to Florida to sort of top off your degree?

CARMICHAEL: Right. I got a job running computers in the State of Florida Comptroller Department, printing out checks and things like that, while I was finishing up my degree. At the time, Florida State had a master's degree program and they were finding that people weren't finishing the programs because of the long, torturous process of writing a thesis, so the department developed a master's program in Art History Education. This program allowed students to substitute completing extra classes for writing a thesis. I was not a great scholar, but enjoyed education, so I took that new option which conceded I wouldn't be going on for a PhD – getting my degree more quickly.

Q: You graduated. You got your master's degree when?

CARMICHAEL: I think it was '72 or '73. It took me a while. I had time off. One of the reasons I took Art History was because I knew if I was an art history student my chances of going back to Florence as a graduate student counselor were very, very sizably increased. But when I got back I worked, at that time you could work a job, study, take out a student loan , and get yourself through school -- but you did it slowly.

Q: What did you do? You got your art degree in '73, about?

CARMICHAEL: Yes.

Q: And so then what did you do?

CARMICHAEL: I ended up working a couple years with the State of Florida running their computers and then I

Q: Computers in those days were?

CARMICHAEL: Monsters -- big machines.

Q: With tapes and all?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, tapes and disc drives and all that. We had a massive room to hold all the equipment. Today a much smaller space would be adequate. The work was

computer operations, unlike programming which requires greater interest -- it was basically a shift job. There's really not much to say about it except that I worked from 3 to 11, which is of course the worst shift you can have because you miss all the social life. I think even the midnight shift would be better. On the other hand, I had productive time during the mornings for reading and study.

Q: After that, what?

CARMICHAEL: I went over to New Orleans. Remember that in the mid-'70s, early or so, New Orleans was the culturally interesting place in the South. What other interesting cities are there even now? Jacksonville, Florida? No. Atlanta? Well, not that interesting. New Orleans, however, was the interesting place and stylishly decadent – and international in history --- so I moved there in hopes to land a job working in an art gallery or antique shop. Those didn't work out. I mean, I was a little naive at the time. I went there in the heart of the summer, thinking I could get a job. That was when the tourists weren't there, because nobody goes there in the summer when it is so hot. I ended up working in a little residential mental institution for just a little bit, then in a store running their billing computers and that sort of thing. My lady friend who was with me at the time was very much into tarot cards, so she worked on Bourbon Street in a fortune telling shop, doing tarot readings.

We had this little apartment in the French Quarter a few steps from the Old Mint, where I would walk down Bourbon street to work at mid afternoon or return around midnight -- I could go down Bourbon Street at midnight and come back home early in the morning, dropping by Café du Monde for café au lait and beignets. New Orleans wasn't quite as 'Disneyfied' as it is now.

Q: Were you sort of feeling that you were having a good time drifting?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, a pretty good time drifting, and really didn't have the social skills and personal perspective I recognize now would be necessary for a more focused life. I liked art, but, as you know, just liking art doesn't make you a good salesperson. I tried to find teaching positions, but that had become a terribly difficult thing to do at the time.

Q: Did you get any feel for New Orleans as far as its government or something as a city?

CARMICHAEL: I was only there for six months, so I really didn't get into that as much, except for the various ethnic neighborhoods. I moved back to Tallahassee. I worked another year at that job at computers, and I was taking non-degree classes at Florida State University. I was talking advanced classes and I would go and stop at the student advisement center, you know, the job counseling center, to review jobs postings. I saw one that said "Teach classes aboard ships." I said, "Well, I can't miss that!" That sounded like a good thing to do. It turns out it was teaching mostly enlisted men aboard U.S. Navy ships. The University of Jacksonville and North Florida Junior College University were hiring adjunct faculty for a program they ran for the Navy. The schools would sign up students aboard a ship ready for deployment, then give their adjunct faculty, like myself,

a class roster and text books. I'd board the ships and teach classes during their time overseas. I taught basic World and American History and Psychology classes, as well as GED preparation classes in grammar.

I would work on a ship for six months during its deployment, and then I'd be off for three months, unemployed basically, and then I'd be rehired and assigned to another ship for six months.

Q: What kind of ships?

CARMICHAEL: I traveled on practically everything – surface ships only however. I first was on an ammunition ship, actually the USS Suribachi, which is named after the volcano on Iwo Jima where our Marines raised the flag. I also sailed on fast frigates and destroyers. I also worked on the aircraft carriers Saratoga and Forrestal. They were still plowing around out there in those days.

We'd generally sail the Mediterranean then, so we would pull in often in Naples and Barcelona for repairs, provisions, or just liberty. Majorca was another place we could visit. There were plenty of places to land in Italy, including Sicily. We also pulled into the Greek Islands a couple of times. I was able to see protests against the military ships in Greece. I was aboard one of the aircraft carriers one time when our planes got into dog fights with Libyan jets. When our pilots returned from meeting and shooting down a Libyan plane, the young, enlisted men were excited and smiling, asking, "You get um, you get um?" But the pilots' concern was whether the Libyan pilots had bailed out. They wanted to learn if they had gotten out alive. The pilots, older and more mature, knew what they were doing, and the younger sailors could see no further than the glamour of the fight.

Q: What was your battle station, just to get the Hell out of the way?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I had to get the Hell out of the way. Generally, if I knew there was going to be some activity that day that called for "general quarters," I knew that interior as well as exterior hatches were going to be closed for hours. In any case, I made sure I had a book to read and headed to the wardroom when I expected a scheduled drill. It was actually a fairly disciplined, monkish existence on those days.

This enforced study was very useful, particularly because I subscribed to newspapers aboard the ship, The New York Times and The Christian Science Monitor, and could study for the Foreign Service exam.

Q: How did the Foreign Service exam come across your horizon?

CARMICHAEL: I had a friend that joined the State Department, and seeing him join made it a concrete option for me. I figured, "If he can do it, I can do it." By that time, after my experiences in Florence and abroad teaching with the U.S. Navy, I had "the bug." Living in one place was no longer attractive.

Q: Your father set the pattern of moving around a bit, hadn't he?

CARMICHAEL: Right, yes.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam?

CARMICHAEL: I joined in '84. I applied three times, passing the written section each time, but succeeding on the oral exam only on my third attempt. I must have started in '81 taking the exam. My ships would leave on deployment, but would return to their U.S. homeport by December each year. The annual written exam was always scheduled during that time.

Q: It used to be the first Saturday in December.

CARMICHAEL: The oral exams were given around the country for those who passed the written section, but by the time they were scheduled I was overseas on deployment, so I had to take my oral exams in Washington when I was back in the United States. This was fine with me. Who wouldn't want to go to Washington, catch up with friends, and take the exam?

Q: Do you recall any of the questions on the oral exams?

CARMICHAEL: I remember one of the panelists asked me about Count Basie's three most important works after I had named him one of our most important Black American artists. I forget what I said. I recall it sounded right, but was pretty far off the mark. I was over my head – which the panelist's question as follow-up was meant to reveal. I often have wondered if they gave points for a good bluff.

Q: Was this a time, were you taking this for the Information agency or?

CARMICHAEL: At that time, the testers had three rosters -- for the Commerce Department, the State Department and the U.S. Information Agency. You took the same exam, and they put your scores down on each one of three rosters.

Q: And which one did you name?

CARMICHAEL: They put me on all three rosters. Any one of the three agencies would offer you a position, if its hiring process reached your name on that agency's roster before other agencies reached your name on their rosters.

Q: When did you come in?

CARMICHAEL: '84, June, '84.

Q: What was your initial class like coming in, training class? What were the people like?

CARMICHAEL: First of all, it was pretty small; we had 20 people. We had a wide variety of people in terms of age. One young man couldn't have been 21, 22, and two ladies were in their 50s. Most everybody, I recall, was wondering how he or she would fit in. There were no Ivy League characters among us. We had former journalists, we had former lawyers, but we also had one fellow, for instance, that openly said, "Yeah. I was lifting grain in the feed store just to make ends meet, but I took the exam and got in." These were smart folks, respected one another, were excited, and we had a good time.

USIA held classes on K Street in a building other than SA-44, where most of its offices were then located. They had a senior Foreign Service officer handling the training. He loved the Foreign Service and was keenly supportive of a core value than that he pushed -- respect for our Foreign Service Nationals and their cultures. It was a good lesson that served me well and made service more interesting and fun.

Our class included one young man who was just too young to make the transition. He ended up taking Arabic, but he just didn't seem to thrive in the Foreign Service. One of the ladies in our class had a long, responsible career in education and was assigned at her first post as an assistant cultural affairs officer doing exchanges. I heard she found it difficult to adjust to this position of lesser responsibility and left, but I don't know if that was truly accurate.

Q: Did you have a place in mind? Did you plan to go back to Florence or what?

CARMICHAEL: Not really. I figured I'd go where I had to go and do what I had to do. I was ready for about anything. My wife was only concerned about safety – not about level of development or the political climate in our posts. However, because I had spent time in Spain while deployed I had learned to appreciate Spain. I saw Spain on the bid list of assignments, but I did not expect such a desirable first posting.

In fact, during that time period before I joined the Foreign Service I had taken flamenco dance classes – one of the few passions in my life. So, I bid on Spain, but I didn't lobby for the position. I have never been good at that. I believe that because USIA was small, people could get to know you and your work. It was kind of nice that lobbying wasn't quite as important for assignments in USIA as, I understand, it is in the State Department. I just put my list down and they sent me to Madrid. I had no thought specifically about where I wanted to go. To me I wasn't dead set on Europe by any means. I had traveled there quite a bit so it wasn't like it was the end all.

I had met a great lady a year or so before I "received the call," and she gave up her career to join me. We got married while I was in Washington training, and I think going to Madrid for my initial post was an attractive introduction to our future life together for her.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

CARMICHAEL: She worked for Burdines Department store in Florida. She was from New Jersey. Her father died when she was ten, and her mother worked as a salad chef -- that plus the pension from the father was their income. So my wife had always worked, and so she went to a two year retailing and secretarial school down in Florida. It was an all-girls school. Upon graduating, she immediately went from there into a junior executive program with the Burdines department store chain.

She was working in sales. After a couple years she saw that the people doing the design work and display were having more fun than sales stuff, so she transferred into that area. She moved from store to store every two years or so. She'd set it up a design department in a new store, and after about two to three years she moved to another new store and set up its department. That was how she advanced in her career. She got used to moving from place to place. She was working in St. Petersburg, Florida when I was living in St. Petersburg, we met in a laundromat, and dated for about a year and a half, before I was invited to join USIA, and I asked her to marry me. She had no idea what she was getting herself into.

Q: You were in Madrid from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: '84 to '86, something like that. USIA would send their recruits to their first post for a "junior officer trainee" position, and then, if there was a follow-on position, you could stay on. There was no follow on for me there; however, and I was assigned to Bolivia as cultural affairs officer after 18 months or so.

Q: Let's talk about Madrid. How did you find the embassy?

CARMICHAEL: It was a big embassy, so for training there was sufficient staff that I could leave my core assignment in the USIA press section and rotate through practically all the USIA and State Department elements. I worked not only in our information section and cultural section, but I also worked in GSO and handled basic consular section work for a bit. I got to know political and economic section work, as well. This whole experience told me that everybody's working in an embassy, it just looks different in different sections. The first time I walked in the political section after working in the press section where everybody is yelling, sort of a "press pen" attitude; I was surprised that the section seemed so quiet. I thought, "Heck, these guys aren't doing anything – just reading papers." Then I handled a couple assignments during my rotation there, and, yeah, it occurred to me "That's why they are so quiet -- because they are thinking."

The same thing with GSO. They may have had a lot of very competent FSNs, but problems still percolate up and an officer has to put in some hard work to get things back on track. So I gained a respect for everybody's role in the embassy simply by passing through the embassy. Interestingly enough, you know what they say about State Department managers not being able to manage. Well at that time I don't think our Foreign service culture had reached the understanding that you just can't yell at people to make things happen. There was more yelling then.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

CARMICHAEL: Tom Enders. One of my assignments in the political section was to write a cable about the monarchy and its background and speculate what we thought could happen to the monarchy. So I wrote the cable, and my supervisor in the political section was pretty complimentary about it, but we sent it up to the ambassador and nothing ever came back. I asked, “Doesn’t he say anything – good, bad or neutral feedback?” The political officer said that he hardly talked to the political section. He was just one of these aloof guys. Now, I think that Foreign Service culture expects ambassadors to be more personable with their staff.

Q: Enders is considered by many to be one of the most intellectual of the ambassadors, and has quite a reputation for that but not for being warm and fuzzy.

CARMICHAEL: Right, I can’t argue. His wife was quite a charming, but theatrically inclined, and rather aloof as well.

We had a good DCM there. Bob Service was the DCM.

Q: Oh, yes. His father was John Stewart Service of China fame.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I was always impressed with him. I remember one day watching him review a cable. Someone had asked him to look at the cable. He glanced at it, and penciled out a couple lines with a swift stroke – and the whole thought of the cable was clarified. He was a guy that had that sort of focus that was impressive. I still see him every once in a while at Main State.

Q: What was the political situation in Spain at the time?

CARMICHAEL: The big issue at that time was getting Spain to join NATO. Franco had not died all that long ago, and the Right still was a political force. We wanted the Spanish to go into NATO so that was one issue, and the Right was having a resurgence. Some Spanish were aggravated with changes under Socialist Prime Minister Gonzalez. I remember being out on the square one time after there had been a robbery, and everybody was at the window and screaming about the Socialists not protecting us. But NATO membership was the big hot issue.

When I got there Ronald Reagan was coming over for a state visit with Gonzalez. I, being the junior guy in the service, actually got the best job. I got to go every night to the “countdown meeting” and report back to our offices how the schedule and our assignments were changing in the run-up to the visit -- how the logistics had changed and all that stuff. The “countdown” was held each evening at one of the major, historic old grand hotels, I believe the Ritz, where Hemingway used to stay – in its grand ballroom.

The Reagan advance team was the best led group I ever encountered in my career. Their advance people were led by a doctor. That group has always set the standard in my mind

in terms of quality, in terms of professionalism for running one of these state visits. They never skipped meetings. They drilled down on every detail, of course.

Q: I realize you were sort of at the end of the food chain, but how did the visit go?

CARMICHAEL: It went pretty well. They were able to get positive statements from King Juan Carlos about U.S.– Spanish relations, which was helpful. The leftists want to focus on U.S. support for Franco. I guess there was one big image that the media there loved – that of General Vernon Walters shaking Franco's hand -- which is what the left wing always wanted to bring out for us. Nevertheless, we did push changes in Spanish attitudes. It was going to be a long process, we knew it, but the Spanish also wanted to become part of the European Union and they weren't going to get membership to one without the other.

Q: Did you get much USIA work?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I did some press stuff. At that time Charles Wick was still head of the USIA and he'd come up with this WorldNet proposition. People didn't want to deal with it. I mean, to me it was a smart thing to do, but Foreign Service officers, USIA whatever, are sometimes conservative, and didn't care for it, but I worked with it and saw some great press work. At that time things in Spain were booming in our budget because of Wick, and also this was an important place to work. We had renovated a two million dollar cultural center near the embassy and held the WorldNet programs in it. I got talking points to the speakers in Washington for the program, and made sure they knew what media people were going to be in the audience.

I also worked on the cultural side. I remember that we hosted a poet who read his work for about an hour and a half for a honorarium of about $100. It seemed like a lot of money to me at the time for sitting around reading poetry. But only five Spaniards showed up for this thing. It was a small format meeting, so I know now it wouldn't be tragic. I came back from the program and mentioned to my older, more established colleagues that I was disappointed that "You know, we had five Spaniards there. We gave this guy a hundred dollars." The fellows just laughed and said, "Yeah, but were they the right five people?"

I also got to work with the traveling White House press and the Spanish press during the officials visits, the most important being the Reagan visit. During that visit, I was site officer for several room in the National Palace. As site officer, I had to move all this press around and escort them through back corridors and through the kitchens, back through the old museums room in the Palace to make sure they came out the right doors so they got the right photos of the President and others. That was important. This was all, you know, as big as you get – the White House press catching the King and the President in a room together and asking questions while they are taking photos of them. It was exciting USIA work, knowing your site by heart and all the passage ways in and out, leading the press through the bowels of the palace for the shots.

We also got to work with Congressmen on CODELs from time to time.

Q: The House of Representatives.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and there was some agriculture issue at the time I recall and the head of an agricultural committee was visiting Spain to address some touchy issue with the Europeans. In any case, I was sent over there to make sure an important Spanish editor was given access to the congressman for an interview. Just as the editor was supposed to arrive for the interview, one of the congressman's aides began telling me how he really wanted me to go out and find a certain type of olive for them -- "You know, the one with the little red things in it." I said, "Well, I've got this thing to do. I am pretty sure the Congressmen wants me to help him with the interview." And the aide started steaming that I wouldn't go out and get olives for him. It was just an interesting insight in the way things run early on in my career. Just like it was interesting the first time I ever saw an American flag burned by an angry mob -- just as I was getting ready to go into the National Palace to do my site work there. I didn't think it would feel so profoundly unsettling – but it did.

Q: Who was, was this?

CARMICHAEL: It was the communist, anti-U.S., and anti- NATO group.

Q: How did NATO fit within the Spanish context, did you feel when they were entering? Was it something they basically welcomed? Was there opposition or was it sort of forced on the Spanish people or what?

CARMICHAEL: It is hard to remember what was really going on, but it was one of these things that they didn't particularly care for. They had had American bases there for a long time there, so it shouldn't have been a big leap – the Spanish just expected a difference after they elected the Socialists. Some also pressed for reductions in our base presence. But they finally figured out that NATO participation was one of the responsibilities that go with European Union membership. You can't get the goodies without doing this. As I recall, it that was the way it was accepted. You have responsibilities, if you want to be a major power and move out of the Franco era and the isolation it had meant. NATO was just what you have to do. As I recall it, in our negotiations, we also suddenly announced unilaterally shrinking our bases around 10%, without even giving them a chance to pressure us, nullifying the PR advantage of standing up the U.S., making it clear that we were not to be pushed around, and underlining that base reductions were a mixed bag on economic level.

Q: You weren't there when we bombed Libya, were you?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, in fact, that was interesting. We bombed Libya while I was there. I think we bombed them more than once, but, in any case, after one bombing the press attaché was very careful about being photographed by the press. It would have made him a known target. But there were other bombing besides those related to Libya.

Q: This was the?

CARMICHAEL: The Basque, ETA, and I just mention that because I remember two mornings waking up and looking out the window of our apartment near the U.S. Embassy and seeing big clouds of black smoke rising a few blocks away. The Basques were targeting the Spanish, but some of the targets were close to embassy activities.

Q: You were there about a year and a half?

CARMICHAEL: Yes.

Q: Then off to Lima?

CARMICHAEL: No, off to La Paz.

Q: How did that suit you?

CARMICHAEL: I had a great time. It was probably nice for my wife to have gone to Madrid before going to La Paz, but I remember well when the captain over the airplane loudspeaker announced, "Well, we're going to be landing in about 10 minutes" and my wife was looking out the window. "Where are the lights? Isn't there a city down there?"

But on the plus side, we had a good friend who is a friend of mine still who met us there at the airport.

Q: You were there how long?

CARMICHAEL: Two years. I was at a greater hardship post at the time, and I didn't extend. It was a rough period in history there. They had just gotten through a period of 12,000 % inflation, so they were still in dire economic straits, and it was a very, very rough scene in the sense that there were people that had been injured in mining accidents on the streets without arms, and a lot of beggars -- most were Indians who carried their children around, obviously not in particularly clean and sanitary conditions. But also, safety was also just something that people were not interested in. So you would be walking down the streets, and there would be just sort of gaps in the sidewalk where steps would lead down into a little apartment or store -- no railing to prevent you from walking into the gap. And the poverty!

I remember very well watching guys cutting the lawns at the fancy hotel with the tops of tin cans. They just cut the tops of cans, and that made a cutting edge. USAID veterans said to us, when they were there they felt they were working in Africa rather than Latin America. Bolivia was like second, I think, at the level of Haiti in terms of income at the time.

I was cultural affairs officer which I had never done, so I got to learn about the Fulbright program and other exchange programs which I had not been exposed to at a hands-on level. For the first time I met with scholarship recipients who were going to the United States, coming back, and making a difference in their world and Bolivia. This was exciting stuff.

Q: You were there from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: This would have been '86 to '88.

Q: How were relations between Bolivia and the United States at that time?

CARMICHAEL: There was a lot of rhetoric at that time from some of their leftists -- anti-Americanism. They had taken over part of the bi-national center, a joint U.S.-Bolivian learning center in La Paz, a few years before I arrived, and I remember watching public television footage on Bolivia before I left, and you know, there was the minister of education with his white shirt sleeves rolled up, waving his fist in the air, ranting about the "American imperialists." So I'm thinking, "Oh great, this is the guy I'm going to be working with!"

On the other hand, at the time, the president was Victor Paz Estenssoro, an American-educated economist. I think he received an advanced degree from University of Chicago. This was his third term as president, and the terms were not consecutive. In fact, he was elected president for the first time when John Kennedy was our president, but he was still a very, very disciplined guy and a serious politician. He was interested in getting his country back on the right path so he looked to American free enterprise in a positive fashion. There was anti-American sentiment but it wasn't something that was terribly extraordinary.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

CARMICHAEL: The ambassador was Ed Rowell.

Q: Ed was the president of our association at one time and I have interviewed him.

CARMICHAEL: His wife of course, is wonderful and my wife and his wife got along very, very well together because my wife's professional background was commercial merchandise display; she knew how to display. Mrs. Rowell had been very involved in quilts as an American cultural expression, and my wife really enjoyed working with her on an exhibition of quilts primarily from the Embassy community. My wife, June, enjoyed going out with her when she visited hospitals or schools, and Mrs. Rowell was a very, very active and very, very positive person. It was nice to see my wife, we were still junior officers, being able to get along with the ambassador's wife.

Q: It makes so much difference. As the cultural affairs officer, what were you doing?

CARMICHAEL: We were really seeking to give the Bolivians a bit more idea about who we are and I think that mutual understanding served pretty well, because they really didn't know. At that time there was no internet. TV wasn't very functional, so we did cultural performances and exchanges. USIA sent down a Zydeco band, which we took not only to La Paz, but we also traveled down to where there were two binational centers – in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

We worked with scholarships quite a bit. The USAID at that time had college university scholarships, a much bigger program than USIA sponsored. USIA emphasized leadership-oriented programs. We also worked with a group called Partners of America. I think at that time we were sort of waking up to the issues related to the indigenous culture – as in fact were the Bolivians themselves. We were trying to show more respect for the indigenous cultures so we worked with the Partners of America to bring down some conservationists in textiles and in paper, sculpture, etcetera, one of whom I stay in touch with even today. I also worked on one of the first agreements under our the Cultural Properties Division, now in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which helped prevent important indigenous textile pieces from one particular village from being imported into the United States for sale. These were not just pieces of art, but represented the very cultural and even ceremonially empowering governmental fabric of that village.

Q: Particularly at that time but I would think at any time it would be Bolivia because the indigenous side has taken over the government but during the time you were there it was rather hard to make contact with the indigenous side wasn't it or not?

CARMICHAEL: You know, we did some things. Under the Fulbright program, we brought an expert on stone preservation to work over a period of a year with a national conservation laboratory to protect major ancient stone monoliths that had earlier been moved from Tiahuanaco to the center of La Paz. This location in the middle of traffic pollution and vibration was threatening their health.

Through the Fulbright program, we also supported an archeologist carrying out field digs.

We also used the Fulbright program to support exchanges in the arts. We brought a Fulbright scholar studying in Peru up to La Paz for several concerts, one I remember very well. We held it in a lovely 17th century church on the Alto Plano not far from La Paz. A group of indigenous musicians played their flutes and then our flutist played her pieces as an exchange.

USAID at the time was working more closely with some of the indigenous groups; through women's programs and such. Of course, USAID was also working to provide alternate development routes that could substitute for growing coca.

Our section worked very closely with the bi-national centers, but, you know, we did not address the real indigenous racial issues that the State Department is now addressing. For instance, we never sought out Bolivians of black heritage. We were aiming at leaders; that's who we generally sought out to develop relations. That did include some from the

indigenous groups, but they were not our targets. When we did work with them, we didn't target them because they were indigenous; we targeted them because they had leadership potentials.

Q: Leadership came mainly from those of Spanish heritage, didn't it?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, but at the same time some of the socialists were closer to the indigenous people that the more conservative politicians in power. My residence in La Paz was once the home of Vice President Jaime Paz Zamora, who was a favorite of the indigenous, and every once in a while we would get a ring at the door and open the door to a "campesino" who was looking for "Companero Jaime." Generally, when we told them that Zamora no longer lived there, they would try to look past us, thinking, I guess, that we were trying to hide him. But we worked with liberal and socialist groups at times because they were the ones who were most interested in the indigenous and gave us insight into these movements. I understand this is different now, but at that time they were the ones that were championing the respect for the indigenous groups. Of course, we were personally as well as professionally supportive of this sort of respect and the need for understanding indigenous groups. I don't think they were considered the key to Bolivia's political future like today, but we embraced them out of respect for their culture.

Q: Did you find that our operation was taking us sort of the indigenous side of things seriously?

CARMICHAEL: Well, I think so, yes. We were looking at this issue, but probably not as seriously as we could have.

Q: I would think with a group like that it would be difficult to use, for example one of our major tools, the bi-national center or an exchange program to make contact with, you know; we are talking about this Indian population, indigenous population to bring them sort of into the mainstream when they weren't in the mainstream in Bolivia itself.

CARMICHAEL: My last assignment was with the Inspector General. When I visited Bolivia on an inspection visit, I saw that the bi-national center in La Paz had opened up a new English-teaching center, a new branch up in El Alto, a major population center of La Paz, where there are a lot of poor and indigenous. Among them you have some pretty radical people. Nevertheless, they want good things for their children, including better education, and that included English teaching. When President Morales moved to close down a branch of the La Paz binational center there, the local people, local laborers which are pretty much indigenous said, "No, you are not going to close down the center. This is the future of our children," and they kept him from closing it.

When the embassy cultural section worked closely with the National Symphony, some observers insisted that the National Symphony must be an elitist institution. Well, the head of the bi-national center in La Paz, Lupe Andrade, started a program of cooperation between the National Symphony and the Bolivian army. The army would help them

transport the orchestra to churches outside the capitals to perform in churches – often in places where the audience would be indigenous.

Q: Did you see any problems of, how did you work say with the political and economic sections of the embassy?

CARMICHAEL: I thought it worked well. If there was a speaker, you would always work with them to make sure that speakers addressed groups the embassy wanted to work with. For example, working with our labor attaché; we scheduled an official speaker who came down to talk about our labor arbitration system and how it works in the United States. The labor unions there, they basically had one tactic. It's strike for your goals. That was all they knew to do. To their mind, if you want something for your workers; you go strike until you get it. I remember going out with this labor speaker who had done a lot of arbitration work so that he could talk to a meeting of labor union members. I recall clearly looking out the window of the conference room. I saw members showing up on very basic, very old bicycles wearing tire tread sandals. They were primarily indigenous and didn't have much of anything, but they wanted to learn, and they wanted to be effective.

Sometimes you'd run into a problem with cooperation, but it was primarily because our section did not necessarily have the resources appropriate for Bolivian audiences. For instance, the economic and political section would make contact with groups that wanted books, for instance, a labor union may want to have a labor library or something like that. At that time the books that we had were generally at a pretty high level. They were closer to university texts. USIA would identify fine books and translate them into Spanish. They were excellent books, but they were not something that unsophisticated Bolivian academics and professionals could put to good use. They might have been perfectly all right for Buenos Aires and Santiago, with more highly educated populations, but La Paz's needs were more basic.

Q: You left there in?

CARMICHAEL: '88 and then I had about a year when I studied Polish, before I went to Poznan, Poland.

Q: You were in Bolivia from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: We were in Bolivia about '86 to '88.

Q: Was there sort of a difference in our program between the capital and the lowlands? It is practically a different country, isn't it?

CARMICHAEL: Yes. I was working with USIA and there had been long established bi-national centers in La Paz, in Cochabamba in the midlands, and then down in Santa Cruz. Working with them gave me a real sense of the differences in the cultures. I was very,

very fortunate to be able to spend a good deal of time going back and forth between the bi-national centers and all the places.

Q: How would you describe the differences in cultures between Cochabamba and La Paz and Santa Cruz?

CARMICHAEL: Santa Cruz is in the lowlands. That was the actually the area that was most oriented towards business. In the lowlands there were very few indigenous Indians. In the highlands, La Paz, that was where we had a great deal of the indigenous groups and this continues to today. Santa Cruz was sort of chaffing at their subservience to the central government and particularly to La Paz. They had a lot of natural gas. They were a source of income for the country, and at times through President Banzer had a political role in the central government. In general they were generally a bit lighter in spirit. The whole environment was greener, more relaxed and more entrepreneurial than in the highlands in La Paz. That really continues to today.

Q: Did the cultivation of coca and all intrude on your work or was it a factor?

CARMICHAEL: Not as much as on the press section. The press section were the people who led these programs, the information officer was given the job of working with USAID, even directing a large – by USIA standards – public education program. His section was given more money to work with for the anti-coca public campaigns and that sort of thing. In terms of my cultural work, it really didn't impinge upon it, for the information officer, it was a constant. Not only did he have to oversee that advertising and that public affairs campaign, but he also had to respond to all the questions, concerning U.S. activities and policy towards coca, etcetera.

Q: You mentioned sort of the cultural side. Looking at it in a practical way, you've got this very large Indian population. Was there much interest in a culture beyond their own culture?

CARMICHAEL: Theirs? Not a tremendous amount. It is the second poorest country in Latin America and they were at the survivor level in a lot of places. Their outlook was not really an international outlook. The Pope came while I was there, and, I guess, this was the only time he had come. The University of San Andreas in La Paz, so this would be in the highlands, of course, where there were a lot of Indians had a lot of indigenous students. I believe within several years before I arrived at post, there were accusations that the radicals among the students had caches of arms hidden at the university. I was told by my cultural adviser that I should probably even stay out of that university because of these truly radical students who had embraced the violent side of the nativist movement. In any case, when the Pope came to La Paz, the students had lowered this big flag on the grand central tower of the university a gigantic banner, saying, 'Down with the White Man's God, up with Pachamama" Pachamama was the indigenous Mother Earth God. That was their greeting to the Pope when he came. It was one of the only times my cultural affairs assistant told me that the university president had ever

apologized to the population of the city for his students' activities. It was a pretty radical thing.

If you talk to anybody that's been around Bolivian Indians, they recognize that many had little or no education. People who had worked in Africa as Peace Corps people and then were there in USAID would tell me that this was really more like working in Africa than in South America. Some folks down there were just very, very isolated – they were struggling to survive.

Q: Was there much connection, Bolivia does, it's got a whole bunch of neighbors partly because of wars it has lost. It's got Peru, Chile Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil. Was there much cross border relations there or did you see much?

CARMICHAEL: The cross border "relations" that we would run into had more to do with sort of residual aggravation on the part of the Bolivians for having lost their access to the sea in the War of the Pacific. Every once in a while the Bolivians would boycott Chilean products as a protest, once again to protest their losing their access to the sea to Chile. I remember looking at the bottom of a Bolivian government form and saw it was written, "We demand our Access to the Sea." That was just sort of a slogan around which they could unite. That was an unfortunate way that they looked at their foreign affairs.

I remember Shining Path still active in Peru, so that was not a place, for instance, where we would go by car. Because they remained active, fewer tourists were going to Bolivia, because tour groups generally avoided the area.

Q: Did you have much sort of cultural exchange, I mean, USIA with Chile or Argentina or anything? I mean you know, would somebody come to one country and then to the next as part of the tour?

CARMICHAEL: If USIA speakers were to go to Chile or to Argentina or anyplace close by and there was a chance to visit, they may have done it. That's the way programs were arranged - Washington would broadcast an offering to several countries that had expressed interest on a topic in their embassy USIA Country Plans, and the embassies would read the offering cable and basically bid on a visit, telling Washington what they would do with the person and if the topic was appropriate to them. Then the program element in Washington routes them among the countries. Or we might have had a target of opportunity speaker where you just happen to know that somebody is in another country that is working with us or on an independent visit.

For example, I mentioned we had a Fulbright flautist who was teaching in Lima, and we heard about her so we invited her to come up and do a concert, paying her expenses. Then there are other entrepreneurial performers that make their living and just loved going out on these sorts of trips. They would contact us individually, but they won't come down just for Bolivia. We don't have, we didn't have the big halls like in Argentina or Brazil or Chile to offer them, but, you know, they wanted to get out and if they were

next door, certainly they wanted to try to take advantage of that trip to visit and see its culture.

Q: Did you feel much contact with the United States immigrant groups or not? The reason I am saying this is I was astounded around Christmas time in my little community of Annandale, five miles from here and there were five different Bolivian dance teams here. I mean these were local clubs that Bolivians and apparently there is a big Bolivian community here. Did you note their impact on coming back, you know, feed back?

CARMICHAEL: We had more strictly between different community organizations in the U.S., NGOs that would work with Partners of America in exchanges, rather than Bolivian communities trying to reach back into the country and work with us. I am sure that there was this sort of thing going on but in terms of what we were doing, it wasn't a big thing. We had people with whom we worked that had long Bolivian connections; doctors that had been educated and come to Bolivia and then moved back to the States, or Bolivian immigrants, and we would hear the names and they would be involved in this type of activity. We didn't have for instance any folkloric groups visiting us from the U.S. because we had plenty of Bolivian folkloric groups down there.

Q: You left there when?

CARMICHAEL: The Bolivian cultures are just very interesting cultures and it is attractive to people so we had some people who came down from Santa Fe to look for an authentic Andean music group they could invite to Santa Fe for a cultural festival.

Q: I must say looking at these Bolivian folk dances just by mentioning Santa Fe and all, there seemed to be sort of a kindred spirit in sort of the birdlike dancing and bells and all.

CARMICHAEL: Yes. Well, I've seen a little bit from Peru and from the Indian area, and there are some similarities. When you are going up to Lake Titicaca, and you see that Peru is on one side and Bolivia on the other shore, the differences are not going to be that great.

Q: You left there in, when did you leave?

CARMICHAEL: '88.

Q: Where did you go?

CARMICHAEL: I thought Bolivia was a really interesting place to work, but in our agency if you spoke Spanish pretty well and developed an expertise in Latin America, that's where you stayed; so I was interested in not falling into that trap and bid on a lot of posts in Eastern Europe. Eventually I was assigned to a post, so I had to go back to the U.S. to take my Polish and do my foreign affairs studies before I went to Poznan, Poland.

Q: You were in Poznan from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I would have been in Poznan from '89 to '92.

Q: I am a survivor of Serbian training but Polish is much harder, isn't it? Polish is a pretty hard Slavic language.

CARMICHAEL: I don't have anything to compare it with. I understand they are all pretty hard. There were a lot of noun cases that you had to learn, but it was a tough language. Because I was in USIA, I did not go out to FSI to study, but was sent to private schools, and my wife and I had our own one-on-one tutoring. The idea was USIA officers could invite our spouses -- if they wanted to join us -- and we could take our languages at the same time, so my wife and I took our Polish together. We were sort of proud that our marriage survived that.

Q: Poznan in the late '80s; the Wall had not fallen yet?

CARMICHAEL: No. We actually flew into Warsaw and into this decrepit little airport, which I thought reflected a general policy that the government did not invite people with open arms to their country. After arriving, we went to the embassy. After meeting and speaking with people there, an embassy car took us to Poznan. Poznan is in the west, the former German area of Poland. It was one of the more, I guess you could say, "tightly organized" culture. Its culture was more Germanic compared to Krakow in the southeast. The culture there in the region around Krakow reflected Americans' ideas of the Poles -- a light hearted culture, dancing the polka, etc. There were more peasants near Krakow. The folks in Poznan were more businesslike. Poznan also hosted an international fair, as well, which, by the way, U.S. representative from Chicago Dan Rostenkowski visited regularly. Nevertheless, most of the immigrants to America in late 19th and early 20th century came from the region around Krakow, skewing our image of all Poles towards a peasant character.

So even driving down there, we saw what was really about the nadir of the communist economic collapse; you know, people with a little basket of apples beside the road and a nickel for a basket, very, very low prices. When we got to Poznan, we went into a delicatessen, perhaps the first or second day that we were there, and all they had on the shelves was maybe a few beets and maybe a couple of bags of coffee.

At that time we had to stand in line for bread. They had this system, which I think they may still have in some places, where you stand outside the shop where shoppers waited for store baskets before entering. The shop would let people buy their items, and as shoppers walked out, they left their basket for a shopper in line. This controlled the number of people in the shop. They were terribly poorly stocked. The meat was terribly greasy. We used to buy a filled, sweet roll, and you could taste there was simply very, very little butter in them, and they weren't sweet; they were dry. Often if you didn't get to a bread store in the morning, then you wouldn't get bread.

We were fortunate because we were about three and a half hours from Berlin, so consulate officials in Poznan could drive there and stock up at the commissary there on a military base. We were also privileged as diplomats because the Polish government distributed very, very nice meat delivered to us. In terms of vegetables and things like that, we basically got by on the local economy – which in our first year there meant only root vegetables during the winter.

Q: You arrived when?

CARMICHAEL: The late summer of '89. So we arrived two weeks before Mazowiecki was named as the first non-Communist prime minister. A couple of months after that we went to Warsaw for the Marine Ball which was held in one of the big hotels there.

Q: In the middle of November.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we were getting ready to go down from our room to the ballroom. We had been watching the news, of course, but looking at the TV, we saw a backhoe banging against some wall, and wondered what was going on. Then we realized -- whoa, the Wall was coming down." They were broadcasting the backhoe breaking it down!.

Q: Was there, well, let's go before the Wall came down. In Poznan what was sort of the situation? Was the Communist party running things or was it, did you have the feeling that everything was sort of changing?

CARMICHAEL: Within two weeks there, the Poles had a non-Communist prime minister, but Communist officials were still ruining local affairs. I remember very well making my calls to the cultural affairs officer in cities in my region, and I could feel they felt, you know, "this is the end." I walked into offices in Szczecin, and the fellow there came out to meet me, and he obviously had been drinking or was hung over. It was like there was just nothing going. I went to the Soviet Day at their consulate in Poznan, just after I arrived. It was like some sort of funeral. They were not happy at all.

Q: You really did have the feeling that sort of the Communist apparatus which these were city officials and all, but were, they weren't just automatically switching over to sort of the democratic side?

CARMICHAEL: It didn't just switch right over. In fact, before I left I met a lady working in policy in our USIA European area office, and she told me that the goal for officers like myself was to meet as many people as we could to build a contact base. They felt the opening was not going to last very long, and they figured that we've about six months or so to meet as many people as we can before the Soviets got tough and changes would start to reverse.

I remember talking to a lady -- a progressive and useful contact -- in a restaurant soon after arriving, but after the Communist government was no longer there. I just wanted to

give her our packet of materials we typically distribute, and she just didn't want to take it. She said, "No, this is not the time to be taking things from Americans." At that time, the notion that everything was okay was not established, although it seems clearer in hindsight.

Q: Waiting for the other shoe to drop.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, there was still that. When we were there our colleagues who had been there earlier told us about being followed openly by the secret police. That wasn't going on too much anymore, but we could still go into our apartments and find, you know, a cigarette in the toilet or just something being left out of place – the way they would say they were watching. In the cultural field, there were people who were distinguished and believed in the arts, and worked hard for Polish arts; but their background meant they were not interested in American art. They still would have liked to have Russian opera, music, painting, etc. Also, they still saw the arts as state run, rather than private, and saw the changes as switching benefactors rather than going to a new support philosophy and system.

Q: It had to be rather difficult. I think probably one of the groups that suffered almost the most were the artists in the Soviet Union or the former Soviet Union and in other places because the arts have always been heavily supported by the state. All of a sudden when you move into a democratic, non-Soviet style you wouldn't, the subsidies are often cut.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and in Poznan about two blocks from the consulate there was a wonderful opera house with tremendous performances. Originally, it was 50 or 75 cents to get a ticket and prices rose to five dollars or so after two years or so. Tickets became more expensive and, of course, the Poles complained about having to pay five dollars, They suffered quite a bit, but in former times there were also more opportunities for artists to be involved in exchanges and tours as well. These would benefit them both financially and artistically.

Q: Let's talk about your work; in the first place, who was the consul general while you were there?

CARMICHAEL: Peter Perenyi was the first consul and then James Kennedy took the position.

Q: What was your job? What activities were you up to?

CARMICHAEL: The main activity I had was getting out and making contacts – I had a large area, including four university cities. I had Poznan which had a major university and a world-class English language center run by a strong Communist – actually more a self-promoter than anything else. Then I also had Wroclaw, Torun, and Szczecin, so I made quite a number of trips to find teachers that I could nurture, who could be involved in the Fulbright program. I was there promoting that program, so I developed an annual

Fulbright conference, where I gathered people involved in American studies in Poznan in that English language center, advertising our activities and the Fulbright Program.

We brought speakers over in media development, constitutional law, economics, and U.S. government. We even addressed issues such as political cartoons and political dialogue, bringing Jules Feiffer and Ward Just.

I also helped set up an economics summer school for Polish economics professors. This was in conjunction with our program section in USIA Washington, American teachers it recruited, and the Economic Institute in Poznan. The summer school allowed the Polish economics professors to learn more about the free-enterprise, market system – a system about which they had not studied extensively in some cases, and which they did not know how to properly teach.

We also brought in some of the cultural programs, which at that time hadn't been greatly cut in USIA, but Poland had good enough cultural institutions and they could handle these things. For example I recall that Alvin Ailey (or another big name dance company), Michael Brecker, and an American Indian Dance group visited. The Poles were well organized and supported, so they could properly support our big name troops. They could go to Warsaw, then they would also come down to Wroclaw, which had a strong performing arts tradition, or Poznan.

Q: Were these well attended?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, very well attended. Then Poznan hosted a large, one of the last big cultural exhibitions. USIA supported an exhibition on American cinema that came down and set up in Poznan in one of its historic buildings, attracting large audiences. The consulate also hosted a tap dance orchestra. Actually, there were only about eight tap dancers from a larger American tap dance orchestra. This sort of performing group was bizarre to the Poles, who were conservative and still skeptical about arts from the U.S.

I think it was typical cultural outreach then, and you worked with your exchange programs to promote linkages developed from these exchanges. I think we also looked at targeting our aid a bit more closely to reflect new priorities and opportunities. For instance, we had a certain budget for providing periodicals that would come over by the pouch and then we would distribute. Before the transition, we distributed these to doctors and engineers -- any sort of person in any profession, who we felt could show progressive ideas and be friendly to the United States. A group of Polish academics in the Poznan University, including, Hanna Suchocka, a congressional representative who later became Prime Minister, developed a human rights and constitutional center there. It again was one of these things where you make their acquaintance; you bring a couple of speakers specifically that would address new constitutional issues because, of course, the Poles had to write a new constitution. So we brought specialists there to have discussions with them on issues and got to know them and concentrated our budget on making sure they had a good collection of American legal constitutional and human rights journals. With a

finite budget, we had to curtail bringing medical and engineering journals for our long-time contacts and instead donate journals in the law field to the center.

Q: Even under the Communist regime, they developed quite close ties between universities in the States and Poland hadn't they?

CARMICHAEL: There were some. It is interesting when we would meet with Americans that in the past had been involved with the Poles and thought they knew their Polish partners. Once I had an American tell me that this particular professor they had been working with was a real fighter for Polish American relations and really one of the real democrats whom they had brought over to the U.S. several times. I was listening to this, and my Polish cultural assistant would be listening to this, and afterward she would say, "You know, this is not true. This guy has not been this real supporter of democracy at all." These exchanges were, after all, a way for Poles to earn hard currency. That was a very big attraction for Poles to participate in exchanges. Also, because the Polish officials approved overseas travel, it would be hard for real champions of democracy to leave the country. Some people who started going after the transition were primarily interested in that aspect of exchanges. After the transition however exchanges were opened to Poles who were really active opposition candidates, people who wanted to teach American history, people that wanted to expand their political science beyond what could be taught under the Communists. Exchanges became wider, deeper, and, I think, they were probably a bit more honest too.

Q: Were you keeping tabs on who was studying Russian and who was studying English?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, there was a big controversy in Poland, but the question was, "Should we be learning English now, or should we be learning Russian?" Of course, Russian would continue to have great importance, but Poles wanted to embrace English as a tie with the West. Nevertheless, the Poles decided former Russian-language teachers had the capacity to teach a language, so they could be retrained to teach English.

The Peace Corps began a major program in Poland and taught English, a different area for the Peace Corps. USIA had been watching English-teaching pretty carefully for a long time. Of course, the English literature, American history, American literature had been taught in the context of English-language and linguistics, which were really the only place they could be justified for attention under the old system. So Americans had partners in the English teaching academies. USIA sent a very, very large number, I think about 18 or 19 well-qualified graduate-level teachers in Poland at one time to teach English teaching to professors, not to teach English teachers directly.

Q: Were we sending or bringing in experts on democracy?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yes. You know, in terms of culture this was interesting. USIA brought a, just as an example, a group of conservators and fundraisers that had worked in the arts in the United States to build the Poles' understanding of true community support for your arts that could replace state support. We took these folks to Wroclaw and

Szczecin to discuss with our arts contacts -- and our city contacts as well -- how groups can band together to build support for the arts from a community that really hadn't worried about it before, because there was always funding by the state.

Q: Did you have much contact with, it would still be the Soviet consulate?

CARMICHAEL: No, our consulate's cultural outreach really didn't have much contact with them. They had their own agenda, but we did not work very closely with the Soviets. Maybe the consul and political officers would talk with them on political affairs, but I had plenty to do without involvement in this. They really didn't fit into our plans, and I am not sure it would have been easily understood by the Poles, if we would have worked with them.

Q: Do we have bi-national centers there?

CARMICHAEL: No.

Q: That wasn't doable in a Communist world, was it?

CARMICHAEL: No, and, in fact, in Poland and I believe in some of the other Eastern Bloc countries, our offices were not called "U.S. Information Service", or "USIS," but the "Press and Culture" section. We understand that Stalin didn't like USIA, and therefore we changed our name and that seemed to be acceptable. For instance, in the consulate we had a small USIS library, and it was open to the public. Before the transition, people were hesitant about coming in, because they knew that their government would watch them for using our resources.

It expanded a bit after the transition. It was really the only place in town where people could get American books and American magazines. We were on a dead end street, so everyone had to enter through a single door, and somebody kept an eye on who was coming into the American consulate.

Q: Was that beginning to fall off towards the end while you were there?

CARMICHAEL: It fell off pretty quickly after I arrived. As more people came in, I tried to offer more of interest to the times. I made a personal effort to locate and buy a lot of materials from some of these associations of American city governments, state governments and such, just so there was more information on local governments for the Poles. Many wanted to have access to information on the organization of local U.S. governments, etcetera.

Q: You mentioned that while you were there, some people were saying let's not go too fast. You don't know when it is going to change. Did you find others sort of enthusiastically moving ahead and using what we were making available or not?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I mean, there were many people who wanted to move forward. For instance, I worked in Wroclaw with an American group, the International Media Fund. It was basically a group that USIA supported to carry out media development initiatives that we did not have the manpower to initiate. It supported media freedom and also importantly media that could run in the open market. Wherever the group went, they were really embraced. The editors wanted to know more about running a newspaper without money from the state. The reporters needed and were being pushed by their editors as well to learn about ethically sourcing stories; you know, following ethical guidelines of balanced coverage rather than simply promoting a particular line.

Q: You are saying doing sourcing you are saying, you know, find it and check on it, which never happened in the, because the it was one source and that was it.

CARMICHAEL: That's right. They were interested in that. Other speakers we supported talked about, for instance, forming support for the arts. The Poles were very eager to talk to them. There were a lot of arts that were generally accepted. Sometimes the Poles didn't understand that we have a bit broader view. For instance, you know, if they had a fine opera, but when we brought the tap dance orchestra I mentioned, the opera house did not want to host it in the building, purely because it did not fit their definition of fine arts. Their building was for opera and opera only. They were very, very rigorous in their definition of the arts, etcetera, more vigorous than we were, and that left them unable to provide something people wanted to see from America.

Q: How about in the arts? I am thinking about painting and all. Had the, when I think of Soviet art tractors and paintings of tractors and factories and all, abstractions?

CARMICHAEL: There was quite a bit of abstract art that was actually gaining some recognition in the U.S.; but there was simply a greater chance for more people to travel to Poland from the U.S. to buy. What you needed was development in Poland of an art market, so there could be some values placed on the art and prices assigned.

Q: Did you get any feel for the power of the church, the Catholic Church during the time you were there?

CARMICHAEL: Solidarity was linked to the Catholic Church, so it was considered at the forefronts of the changeover. The Church looked at what we were doing, approved of the things we were doing, etcetera, but we were not working in lockstep with the church in Poland.

Q: No, of course not. But

CARMICHAEL: But they were very, very powerful and we would go down to for instance, I remember going down to Wroclaw, and meeting with some Solidarity activists down there, and I remember very well meeting with them in a church; in the church recreation center, where they had their temporary offices, before the transition, until they actually moved to the city hall. The church was quite powerful.

Q: Were you there John Paul, the Pope make any visits?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, he made a visit, but it was up in Warsaw. It wasn't down in Poznan. When he came, it was a big deal - like a presidential visit from the Polish point of view.

Q: What about exchanges? Were they all of a sudden, did the flood gates open?

CARMICHAEL: Poles were popular. They had a good system of education so that they were very, very valuable for exchanges. They went to a lot of different countries in Europe and the United States that hadn't been available before, both business graduate students and undergraduates. I had my hands full just trying to keep track of all the things that USIA would support because they would support what they called 'university partnerships' where a U.S. university and its Polish partner would start sending professors back and forth, generally because they were trying to build course competency and exchanges. There were so many of those partnerships popping up around that I couldn't really follow them all. I had to concentrate on U.S. government-supported, specifically USIA, programs, because of the volume of activity. I just couldn't know everything that was going on.

I was always grateful when an American university began an exchange in my district and told me what they were doing. We were pleased that they made sure that their students registered with our consulate, so we could help them out if there were any problems, but there was really so much going on that I had to stay focused on programs with direct USG money.

Q: This was just sort of what we had been working for for 50 years and all of a sudden, the flood gates open. There you were.

CARMICHAEL: Yes. There we were, but you could only work so many hours in a day and part of what we support is independence as well. We wanted to keep an eye on things, we wanted to take every advantage when we could. Showing interest in and a personal presence at U.S. programs was a really, really good way to make contacts. For instance; make sure you go to a dinner, make sure you watch one of the classes to see how they are going on, meet the director, meet the head of the section so you could identify good people to send on an International Visitor's program. When a U.S. university contacted me and asks, "We would like to establish a program. What are the strong faculties down in such and such a city?" you want a good answer. At the same time you want to be honest if a Polish university is overwhelmed with offers and would not be a responsive partner. You try to become a useful guide to the university officials – Polish and American -- that want to carry out exchange programs.

Q: Were you aware of beginning of Soviet pullout of troops and all that around you or was that sort of over the horizon?

CARMICHAEL: We knew they were pulling their troops out, but their troops were not stationed so that they were that obvious to us in Poznan. It was more just a dramatic decrease in their numbers, you know, diplomatically that you could see.

Q: When the Wall came down, you say you were seeing the backhoes going in. Were there demonstrations in the streets or anything like that?

CARMICHAEL: Not in Poland. Embassy people would go from both Warsaw and Poznan on a two lane road over to Berlin, going through Poznan to the American base there to so they could get some fresh vegetables. The first winter we were there in Poznan, in '89, in the wintertime there were no green vegetables. The only green thing you had was cabbage. It was all roots and that sort of stuff. Remember that we went to Berlin through East Germany, so we weren't passing through Soviet guards, but through East German guards.

My wife and I tried not to go to Berlin very much. We tried to stay most of our time in Poland. We felt we were assigned there, and, our point of view, was that our goal was to know that country. People said there was just such a marked changed attitude of the East German soldiers than before the Wall came down. The East Germans were always, you know, very, very stern. They'd look in the back of the car, and you really had to assert your diplomatic rights not to be searched every time you went through the checkpoint, but after the Wall came down, they were just the friendliest people that you could imagine.

We didn't go to Berlin before the Wall had come down. We only went afterwards, so we really didn't get the stern, nasty East German guard experience when we were there.

Q: How was social life there?

CARMICHAEL: The Poles were not particularly socially gregarious. They are a little bit reserved and rarely invited us to their homes, but there were a lot of receptions, there was a lot of that type of diplomatic entertaining, and we spent a lot of time doing that. I made a point of going out and meeting folks.

But in terms of social, we had very, very good relations with our Foreign Service nationals there who, after all, were really closely watched, closely monitored. My driver had been tossed in jail for several months before I was assigned and relations with the Soviets were low. Our librarian also had been pretty much hauled in and questioned a couple of times about what she was doing. In any case, we appreciated the work they did for us and the hardship it must have meant for them, so we had very good relations with our Foreign Service nationals.

I had very, very, I think, good relationships with my contacts, but we invited people more into our home than we were invited into their homes, but that was the thing that you really wanted – personally and professionally - to be invited into their home. Towards the end of my time, we did get invitations from some of best contacts – whom I considered

friends. I had this great contact, a long-time contact of the consulate, down in Wroclaw who made a point of inviting me over to his house, but he was a very, very prominent doctor, with an international reputation, and also apolitical, so he could take that sort of stance.

Q: How were relations with the embassy?

CARMICHAEL: I had good relations with the embassy in that they trusted me and they left me alone. Krakow was the home of the Catholic press -- the intellectual capital and the Pope's home town. So, Warsaw and Krakow were the two cities that got most of the congressional interest and most of the visits. The embassy was very involved with those cities, so they left me, I won't say "on my own" because that sounds negative, but I just told them what I was doing and I just went out and did it. I could travel by car to all of my towns for which I was responsible, so I could stay on the road much more than anybody else.

Q: You weren't followed?

CARMICHAEL: No. I don't think I was followed. My driver said that we were followed a couple of times, but by my time there, once they get an idea of what you do, they are not quite as interested. Besides that, they didn't have money. Always our assumption was we were not being followed, not because the people in the secret service had all changed their attitudes, but because they didn't have any money, and why would they fight for money to do something which the government wasn't really interested in anymore?

Q: You left there when?

CARMICHAEL: '92

Q: Where did you go?

CARMICHAEL: I went back to Washington. I was looking for a job as USIA's Polish desk office. Somebody from South America got that position – no background in the country. I looked around the available jobs, but I wanted a position in an area office because they were the sections that resemble overseas diplomacy in USIA, but in Washington. So I ended up getting a job in the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Office as the deputy policy officer. That allowed me to work with the press, it allowed me to work with the press officers in State Department, and I worked quite a bit with the WorldNet staff as well.

Q: How was the WorldNet working at that point?

CARMICHAEL: I thought the Worldnet Dialogues were working very, very well, in terms of providing real access to reporters. I mean, it was not perfect, it was one-way only; and not a real dialogue, but more like a press conference – certainly not a real dialogue on most programs. If you worked it right, and I thought I did when I was in the

East Asia office, you could get really top people as guests for the shows, and ensure coverage of our policy statements.

In Poland it wasn't quite as good because the infrastructure there was so weak, and that includes infrastructure in telephone lines. Remember WorldNet worked as TV, but you also had to use the telephones to call in questions. In East Asian Pacific area office we could get assistant secretaries to go on and could respond to questions. We had White House economic advisers, we had real policy-makers. We even worked with the Secretary of State every once in a while -- which was a big, big deal to get on the WorldNet.

Q: Were the Chinese open to this, pretty much?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, to a point, but the Chinese generally did not make Worldnet programs available for broadcast widely. For instance when we did a WorldNet to Australia, you would have the networks there picking up portions of the broadcast. If you had the right topic for a country's audience, a network might make the Worldnet a special program event. In China, it would be a dialogue with a small group in a broadcast studio only and not meant for rebroadcast. The audience would include political elites, some political scientists, some people who worked in the think-tanks and things like that, but the Chinese would not give broadcast access to the wider broadcast audience.

Q: Actually in a way wasn't the WorldNet designed for this essentially; to get to the opinion makers? It's not the type of broadcast that normally would be very popular in the greater world.

CARMICHAEL: Some Worldnet Dialogues could work as a program, but, you're right, most couldn't stand by themselves as programs, but they had plenty of clips that could have been used on news, etc. – if the authorities allowed it. You have to remember that Worldnet, the network, carried those "Dialogue" policy programs, but it also carried a lot of other types of programming that more fit the needs of broadcasters worldwide. In some places it was appropriate and in some places it wasn't. After all, they posted English teaching, science, nature, and other programs over WorldNet that networks around the world could and did pick up for use. In some places an individual could pick up the broadcast; in most places, however, it had to be brought down by a broadcasting entity of some sort and then rebroadcast. Some of these programs are made obsolete by internet now, but back then they provided good programming of interest to world audiences – at no cost.

We had science shows on it, you had English teaching programs on it, and you had some democracy-supporting programs on it, history programs on it, and that sort of thing. The Worldnet Dialogue programs served very well in terms of addressing small group of political elites -- in circumstances such China or other closed societies where this limited programming was an advance. Sometimes you'd have officials of some substance in the Chinese studios, but it wasn't broadcast more broadly. Heck, that had its value there.

Q: Well, Tom you had been overseas quite a bit. How did you find the atmosphere of the State Department and Information Agency and all when you came back? How was it working in the bureaucracy rather than getting out doing your thing?

CARMICHAEL: I came back to a great job. I chose to work in the East Asia area office in deputy policy work, so my job was to keep track of everything that was going on in the newspapers and look for issues USIA might have to address and try to stay ahead of things. I went in early morning, every morning and read the newspapers and briefed my office director, and then I went to a meeting of all of the representatives of the various sections in USIA that might have to address an issue with pamphlet or a film or anything like that -- just to discuss and give direction to what was going on each morning. For two years when I was in that position I felt I was right up current with things that needed saying so that to me was exciting. I also got to work on the WorldNets, so I went after work to the WorldNet building when a major U.S. official did a program. Assistant Secretary Winston Lord was on our program a couple of times -- always a gracious guy – and I briefed him on who was going to be on the other side of the program and what issues we expected. So I felt I was in a moving position, sort of on the cutting edge of the agency's work.

Honestly though, I am not much of a bureaucrat and coming from Poznan where I was pretty much by myself, sometimes getting something done in D.C. did strike me as a little bit difficult. Moving anything through the Director's office was time-consuming beyond the substance of the request – particularly at a time when computers were still relatively new.

Q: Looking at some of the Asian matters, how did you find the Japanese connection? What were the problems there or the plus things?

CARMICHAEL: You know, I did from time to time work with the Japanese media when I was working with WorldNet programs, for example, we had Japanese reporters and journalists on the other side. They were fairly predictable. They are fairly straight forward in their questions, so they weren't at all problematic. One of the things that was nice when you worked with the Japanese was that both sides really wanted to speak to each other. If I had a request from our embassy for a high level speaker on a WorldNet from a small country, it was hard to get that speaker; but if I had a request from Japanese newspapers, it was much easier to get a speaker from the State Department or elsewhere. For instance, we had Robert Reich for a Worldnet with Japan and Australia, and he was happy to appear for the Japanese, but had much less interest in the Australians..

Q: Secretary of the Treasury at the time?

CARMICHAEL: Reich was Labor Secretary. He was happy to speak to the Japanese, but the Australians could get on that program to talk to him only because he was also talking to the Japanese at the same time.

In terms of programming, of course, there was so much exchange already, and the communications were so wealthy, inserting the U.S. government into the mix, wasn't quite as necessary. Tokyo would say that basically they had the budget, they had the connections, they could do so much by themselves, that they really didn't need much Washington-organized USIA programming outside of arranging high-level U.S. government officials. Even these types of speakers regularly went to Tokyo and were accessible.

Q: How about the South Koreans?

CARMICHAEL: The South Koreans were an important ally and moving up, and they were still somebody that could command attention. Unlike the Japanese, the South Korean reporters are terribly aggressive.

Q: As someone who served three years in Seoul, the Koreans are always on full throttled ahead.

CARMICHAEL: Absolutely so that was always something you just had to be prepared for, make sure your speaker understood that and, most of the time, they understood that.

Q: How about the Chinese?

CARMICHAEL: We were actually going through a transition with them, moving the relation forward positively. The Chinese were always very interested in working with us. I remember somebody from exchanges saying that the Chinese were always very grateful when they were invited on International Visitor program or invited to participate in about anything. We were always careful with the Chinese, however. I would always go to the desk officer with questions about programs with the Chinese, because they were more difficult to understand than any other nationality; what was possible and what wasn't possible. You really had to talk to someone who had been in China and really knew it. It was very different than the other countries. It really took Chinese expertise to understand them.

Q: Did you run into in any of these countries, particularly China, were there any of these crises that all of a sudden develop, like when there was a midair collision of a Chinese fighter with Soviet navy craft.

CARMICHAEL: I don't recall any of that. When you get something like that you really are going to be going to the State Department, getting the words and getting it very, very right and getting so many clearances on anything you would say. There is little creativity involved in that. You just must make certain everyone is talking from the same book, and it is always the State Department that provides you with that book.

Q: You did this for what?

CARMICHAEL: Just two years.

Q: And then what?

CARMICHAEL: Then I went to Kuala Lumpur as the information officer, the press officer. So I had a year of training in Malay and area studies and I ended up going there.

Q: So you were there from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I guess that would have been about ’95 to ’97.

Q: What was the situation in Malaysia?

CARMICHAEL: I became the press attaché just as the North Koreans were meeting with us and others in our K.L. embassy to talk about the nuclear program in North Korea and addressing the issue of what we could do to keep them from going nuclear. So I walked into that one – intense international attention. That was probably the most international coverage there at any time, and I walked into that as the former press attaché was on his way out. That was the setting.

In terms of press attaché work, it was great, because right off the bat I got to learn all the players, got to meet CNN people that I would be working with later on during Presidential and Secretary of State visits. Malaysia then was our sixth largest trading partner, depending upon how you messed with the numbers, so we wanted to make clear that in fact we had a good relationship with the Malaysians – the government and the people. We had this very, very good business relationship, some good exchanges with the Malaysians but Prime Minister Mahathir was constantly giving us heck about everything -- about being imperialism, etc. and that was a time when there was this big question about human rights and whether human rights was applicable to the Asian context. Mahathir’s point was that we were looking at these issues from an entirely Western view. According to him, Asian culture was not so obsessive with political freedom and human rights. Asians needed a more authoritative government than we have in the West. This was clearly a self-serving reading of things.

Q: What was, you might say, the attitude of you all at the embassy towards Mahathir?

CARMICHAEL: Well, you know. He’s the leader of the country and you’re respectful to him in print and all that, but you just can’t take some of the things he says. And you can’t get too upset about it when he is directing some pettiness at America, misspeaking and that sort of thing. The things that would aggravate you and drove you crazy, such as when he got into some anti-Semitic comments, you could release a statement, and, of course, the political section and Ambassador would express views forcefully directly to the government, rather than actually build up Mahathir’s image with a public back and forth.

Q: I am probably phrasing this wrong but did you almost deal with him as, not as a nut case but I mean, just always like that and sort of dismiss it and sort of deal with it at a lower level with more rational people or what?

CARMICHAEL: We can deal with the more rational people, you know. There were certain things in the press which simply weren't going to be said but in terms of their foreign affairs, as I understand it, there would be problems, but there are problems a lot of different places. We had a good economic, social relationship with the government. He had a more difficult image than the rest of the government. Again, we had things that Malaysians wanted; such as technology, including our educational technology, and that meant a lot. They had a respect for our society.

The thing is though, you gotta remember that beyond Mahathir and the moderates …and he had his own detractors among these Muslims -- were very conservative Muslims. Mahathir had his own political situation which he had to handle -- and that included resorting to some of his statements about the U.S., etcetera. He had his own problems that he had to work with too. In retrospect, I see that our approach in public affairs to engaging conservative Muslims however did not fully recognize the necessity to maintain energy in our exchanges with the conservatives --- working and working and working, despite their continued rejection of our efforts. We should not have accepted over the long term their constant "no." We should have kept doggedly working and watching them as closely as we did the moderates with whom we could do a lot of interesting things.

Q: Were you feeling an overall oppression of fundamentalist Islam?

CARMICHAEL: Yes. Even if you'd go up to what they called the "fundamentalist states" near Thailand – that assessment would probably be excessive. Even then they had lines at grocery stores for men and women, you'd notice sometimes one sex being in the wrong like, there wasn't going to be a fuss made about it.

But we want to be positive, we want to go out, but we'd find there's a limit to how much we can work with a Muslim newspaper, a Malay language paper as opposed to the Chinese papers or the English language papers. They would generally be run by a Malay. When you couldn't work with a Malay paper, that's not something which you should accept. You continue working with the Malay-language paper, and, I think, we just, we found them too difficult to work with, to place articles, or even have a dialogue with editors. It was immediately more productive working with Chinese and English-language press, and maybe that wasn't in the long term the right posture.

Q: How did the Malay government deal with newspapers? Were they under pretty heavy constraints?

CARMICHAEL: There were constraints. They were private newspapers, but there was government control over the newspapers. There were certain things they simply wouldn't print, certain issues that just would never come up. And certain things when we talked to the Malay press and or any press, the journalists would say, "We're not going to cover that event, issue, or program, because we can't print anything." What's the sense of showing up for something if, you know, they couldn't turn that story in?

They had, I thought, within those constraints a very active, very good press that I could work with well. We had, for instance, an official that came over working on getting Malaysian support for our work in Bosnia, financial support for aid, I believe. The newspapers got right on that and worked with me to cover the visit and the issue pretty closely. In terms of educational exchanges, I could get them, you know, the English language papers, to work very closely with me on putting out some good messages about the United States. They had no problem with that.

Q: There were a lot of Malays going to the United States, weren't there?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, yes. Many of them were just leaving, some going to Australia, for instance, or the United States. There were a good 20 programs where an American university partnered with a Malaysian university, and provided the second two years of their education for a college degree, so students might have some classes in Malaysia for the first two years and then they could go to the United States and finish up their degree. There were U.S. professors and administrators on these programs who came over to Malaysia. They had money to do that. There were a lot of Chinese. I am making a distinction between the Chinese Malaysians and the Malay Malaysians. A lot of Chinese Malaysians at that time would go outside the country for their education and study in Singapore, Australia, the United States, Great Britain; because they were not given equal opportunities with the Malays in their native country. There was an affirmative action program for majority Malays in Malaysia. In terms of housing, some of them got first choice of housing areas. There were whole subdivisions where only Malay could buy. They also had preferential treatment for university acceptance, they had preferential treatment in jobs as well. The ethnic Chinese might be good Malaysians, but if they wanted more advancement, they would sometimes have to leave and go elsewhere for their education and for their job.

I knew an ethnic Chinese newscaster who I enjoyed working with at one of the private stations in Kuala Lumpur. He eventually went down to Singapore where he could advance.

Q: Were things as happens when you've got this type of situation, where the Chinese basically said, "OK, you're the entrepreneurial class. You go run the businesses and the government is run by Malays?

CARMICHAEL: That was basically one of the things that you looked at and how true that was in terms of how much influence the very wealthy Chinese could have on the government. In general, however, the Chinese were relegated more to the economic sphere than the political sphere. But that doesn't mean that all the Malays were able to harness the government for their benefit, nor does it mean all the Chinese were well-off either. There were a lot of, there were poor Chinese obviously, and some Malays lived in pretty nasty conditions in the cities as well. But that was the bargain. The Malays said, "Give us the government, and you can do the economic stuff."

Q: Did Singapore play much of a role or influence or was it sort of an escape valve for the Chinese or what?

CARMICHAEL: Actually, Singapore served as sort of a thorn in Mahathir's side, because one thing you didn't want to say publicly was compare Malaysia with Singapore -- particularly if they came off second, which they often did in terms of governmental efficiencies and entrepreneurial spirit, you know, moving their people upward. Anything such as public health, you name it. These were the things that worried Mahathir, things that Mahathir always had to keep an eye on, because if they weren't doing as well as Singapore, Malaysians might have found his leadership at fault and lacking.

Q: What about the sort of Borneo part of Malaysia? Did that play much of a role?

CARMICHAEL: In internal politics, yes, but I really, not that much that I can recall. We had some exchanges with their educational institutions, but at the time, Sarawak and Sabah, the two provinces on Borneo, simply didn't have the educational infrastructure that could support exchanges that we, that USIA, were interested in.

Q: Did you get down there at all?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, I visited Sabah and Sarawak, and went to the different universities. They couldn't be my main focus. I would get down there. Because I was the press officer, I would meet with some of the newspapers down there, but the big newspapers that we watched most closely were in the capital, in Kuala Lumpur.

Q: While you were there, did Mahathir get into any real face off with the United States or not? I was wondering if there were any incidents or something came out that caused him to sound off or something.

CARMICHAEL: He was always saying something, but it was mostly routine aggravation. After all, our mission's premise was that the U.S. government had a better relationship with Malaysia than the Mahathir government admitted. The big blow-up really came just after I left just after they arrested Anwar Ibrahim, the deputy prime minister, on trumped up charges. Just about a month after I left Kuala Lumpur, there was an APEC conference, and Vice President Gore at a public event said very bluntly that Malaysia needed openness and freedom, referring obviously to Anwar's arrest. That really got the Malaysians ticked off. I was kind of happy not to have been there for the mess, to tell you the truth.

However, some interesting things happened. There was a very popular live TV audience participation program every Sunday night, and I would often go to it and sit in the studio audience. It was one of these panel shows with its studio audience asking questions at the end of the panel discussion. For one of the panels, the program had booked an American Fulbright lecturer and Malaysia's secretary of defense on the same panel. They were talking about security and the secretary of defense said they had purchased U.S. fighter jets for the task of patrolling for smugglers along the coast. The Fulbrighter, who was a

defense expert, said, “Fighter planes are not used for anti-smuggling efforts. What is this really about?” It really put the Secretary of Defense on the defense, so I heard some aggravation from one of our defense officers, simply because I didn’t tell him there would be an American Fulbrighter, and an American might be putting this question to the secretary. My feeling was that a secretary of defense should be able to answer a question like that. Don’t blame the questioner.

Q: Where did you go after this?

CARMICHAEL: I was there for two years, and USIA was going to downsize our post there. That meant rather than having an information officer, a cultural affairs officer and a public affairs officer and a deputy public affairs officer. Typically the public affairs officer takes the press responsibilities, if there are only two people at post, so the public affairs officer would have taken my press portfolio, and I would have been, I would get the cultural portfolio -- or leave. I felt it would be better career wise to leave, and USIA was really looking for somebody up in Ulaanbaatar, so I bid on that post. I didn’t have to raise my hand very high for that at all. In fact, it was also the first time my wife used the internet. I said, “What do you think about Ulaanbaatar?” She used my office computer one Saturday to looked it up on the internet, and said, “Oh, that looks pretty interesting.” So we had to go back to Washington to take Mongolian and then we went to Ulaanbaatar for two years.

That post had really opened up just a little while ago. I had visited Ulaanbaatar back in ’93 when I was working in the East Asian and Pacific Area office -- just to look at the post and report on what it was doing. We had no facility up there, USIA, but we had donated a dish to the Mongolian government radio and TV station for use with Worldnet programming.

Q: You are talking about an antenna?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, a dish antenna, and it wasn’t working properly, so my boss wanted me to take a look at it and try to figure out why it wasn’t working in terms of whether there was no maintenance support or what the deal was. That was just part of a larger trip, so I had been up there before and thought to myself as I left, “I’m never coming back here!” -- primarily because I was there in January, it was cold, and infrastructure was very ragged. The lights in the hotel went out several times while I was there, for instance. In any case, I wanted to stay in East Asia and U.B. was the job that was opening up in East Asia and the Pacific, if I were to leave Malaysia. I was only the third public affairs officer up there in Ulaanbaatar. The one just before me had left, just quit and resigned the Foreign Service. I was going into a rather disorganized office at the time.

We had, I think, the old Bulgarian embassy, and USIA had been given the old auditorium in that embassy as our offices. It had a little stage on one end. The only furniture we had was what State Department had given us, and my office was a steel desk and three steel file cabinets that were placed side by side as a wall to separate me from the rest of the auditorium where my four-person staff sat, including two who had desks on top of the

stage in the auditorium. The inspectors from USIA's Office of Inspector General had come up to visit Ulaanbaatar, and had said that this is not acceptable. You can't have a post where you don't have your own furniture, you don't have any sort of real facility or even the sort of support you need. If USIA was going to have a post there, they had to do a better job, so part of my job was not only to run the section, but also to oversee a renovation of that space.

My wife and I lived, and all the embassy staff lived, across a vacant lot from our embassy. The field used to be, we were told and I am pretty sure it was, the location of a slaughter house, so we called the field "the boneyard." Every once in a while, a bone would just sort of rise up through the soil. We lived in what was the end of an old Soviet blockhouse, and we'd just taken the last little wing of that structure, and put extra heat in it, kept it clean, and painted it and that sort of thing. It was still just an old blockhouse. They put a couple of these very small Soviet-style apartments together so that we would have a real apartment, but it was wired pretty basically. You could see the wiring inside and the trim work looked like they had cut it out with a scythe rather than a saw. We called the building 'Faulty Towers' after the British comedy show. They could refer to it in cables as 'Faulty Towers,' because it was so well known. Everybody lived there, however, and it was a nice little community – as pleasant as I experienced. The ambassador was the only person who lived in a different place -- in the embassy itself. He had a smallish place there – certainly no elegant living, but his wife entertained beautifully. In any case it was just pretty rugged living. The Mongolians would store things in big railroad containers just placed wherever they could fit them. There was a line of these old, rusty containers between 'Faulty Towers' and the embassy. We had our own containers for storage scattered about as well. Not very pretty.

Q: You did this from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I did this from '98 into 2000, so I saw the millennium there in 2000.

Q: What was the main work you were doing?

CARMICHAEL: I was the only public affairs officer, and my main work was really getting to know the Mongolians, and USIA had to establish a more active presence there. As you know, the Mongolians didn't kick out the Russians; the Russians left -- the Mongolians looked at the Russians for a long time as their bulwark against the Chinese. Between Ulaanbaatar and the Chinese border, there were hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops who really just sort of left. In a very short time, they just got on the trains and pulled out of their bases -- leaving several cities almost ghost towns.

The Mongolians were looking for new friends. They had to have new allies, and so they looked at the United States to be their new patron, their new friend, and, you know, we had to be that friend. We had to help support some democratic growth in the country, help economic growth in the country, look at what they had to offer on the international scene and work with them, illustrating that we had an interest in their stability. They were

a buffer between two historically hostile countries and maintaining that buffer was to everybody's advantage.

Q: Did you find yourself betwixt and between the Russian and the Chinese spheres? Was this that quite apparent?

CARMICHAEL: That's what we were there for. You couldn't run and hide from that fact. That didn't make things difficult; that made things easy because they wanted us to stay. They typically wanted to be quite helpful and be a partner to us on such issues as the North Koreans, who had an embassy there. The Mongolians had good relations with the North Koreans, relatively good, at least.

Q: What were the North Koreans up to there?

CARMICHAEL: That's a good point. In fact the North Koreans decreased their presence there and were at the edge of closing their embassy while I was there. There were several former East Bloc countries' embassies, such as Rumanians and Bulgarian, as well as the Lao embassy. The Soviets had a big embassy, which became a ghost embassy pretty quickly. The Chinese had a presence there, and they continued to have interest in increased trade to Mongolia, the Mongolians would say larger interests, whatever interests the Chinese have in countries on their borders. Over the decades as Chinese-Russians tensions had risen, the Mongolian government and people showed an increasing hostility towards Chinese and Mongolians of Chinese decent in their country.

Q: Was there much activity on the Chinese part?

CARMICHAEL: They had an active student exchange programs, because, of course, they were very inexpensive to run with little transportation costs and they wanted to bring down Mongolians for education in China that could really just dwarf anything we did. Just getting the flights, getting people in and out of the place for a speaker was very, very difficult for us, but the Chinese you know had very large programs of education exchange with the Mongolians which they could more easily afford.

Q: How did the Mongolians view the Chinese? The history had been pretty much Mongolians going into China more than the Chinese coming into Mongolia or not?

CARMICHAEL: They looked down on the Autonomous Region of Mongolia which was, you know, a part of China; and the movement of the Han into that territory was disturbing. They saw their country as just another step for China in their movement for more land. Mongolia had all the land with no people on it. China has a lot of people, and they want land so the Mongolians were more concerned about the Chinese coming up than the Soviets coming back. They were very concerned about Chinese expansion and watched Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan issues closely.

So they had Chinese expertise. People may laugh at a think tank, it might just be a few people there, but, nevertheless, it was a group of people that needed to think about these

things and provide support to the government. So they had some Chinese expertise that was, of course, of interest to us and they would have to be a partner in any sort of discussions in the region, about disarmament, or confidence-building measures, etcetera.

Q: Were the Mongolians able to build a viable state?

CARMICHAEL: They were working on it while we were there. They once had a very solid state, a Communist state. It was the second oldest Communist state after Russia. They were as tightly knit and successful, I guess you would call it, knit into the Soviet economic system so they had, it was not that they had to build a viable state; they had to get into the transition to a free-market system.

In some areas they were handicapped by their former integration in the Soviet economic and military systems. For instance, they had very large wheat cooperatives which were no longer were viable. They had an army that was not, did not have the full spectrum of capacity it needed, rather it had just elements of certain capacities that fit well with the Soviets capacities there, and when the Soviets left, there were all these gaps in their military and they needed to build that up. They needed to build up their military education system, for instance. The Mongolians also needed a civil society that works with their political system.

One of our program goals was to promote free-enterprise in the media, and we brought some excellent speakers to address private sector media, including some opportunities for our speakers to speak directly to Parliamentary committees and other officials about these goals. Secretary of State James Baker even did a Worldnet from his Texas office supporting the continuation of advertising in radio and TV.

Q: What about the winters there?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yeah, the winters. It was a long, long, long, long winter. It gets down, it would be typically for a couple of months minus 20 everyday, but, frankly, it makes it easy because you don't have to worry about what to wear. You didn't need to ask, "Do I have to wear a heavy coat today??" You just always had to have everything on.

Of course, it limited your activity to a certain extent, as I recall because speakers were not as likely to come during the winter to Mongolia. But to me, it was when the culture was really at its finest. You could go down to the open markets – these would be found in large unheated buildings in which your breath would turn white. In the first year we were there during the wintertime, and there were no green vegetables, just like in Poland. More and more in response to the need feed the expatriates there, and some Mongolians were adapting a Western diet, we started to see more lettuce and some nicer things in the markets being brought up by train from Beijing.

In these markets were kiosks with big hunks of meat -- a lot of sheep carcasses. The Mongolians didn't like to eat fish, and their traditional diet was primarily meat and dairy.

That is what they think of as their basic diet. A lot of Westerners would go up there for trout fishing, because Mongolia had mammoth trout in the streams, so you'd see these wealthy guys arrive at the airport with leather cases with brass tags for their fancy fly rods. They'd go out as well -- as guys that would come with big, fancy guns to hunt mountain goats, etcetera. What it meant was the waters were full of fish that the Mongolians weren't particularly interested in, but every once in a while you would see someone bring in fish into these markets in the wintertime. They'd be carrying the fish just like logs, because the fish would just be frozen stiff, stacked in their arms like firewood. You would see, outside on the walls around these markets, sheep carcasses that would be frozen stiff and sort of stacked like lumber against the walls. Massive trucks would come in, massive, old Russian trucks- with lamb skins lashed on top of the engine hoods to keep in the heat. It was quite a scene.

It was a rough, rough place, but at the same time in front of that same market you would have old Mongolian women that would be sitting out in the cold next to a bucket of yogurt or milk in the tin cans and they'd have on their dells, their long native coats, and felt boots. They would be wearing silver fox hats that would be a thousand dollars in New York City today, just doling out 25 cents of yogurt. It was really a beautiful sight.

Q: How about Mongolian hospitality? How did you find that? Was there much contact?

CARMICHAEL: When you were out in the countryside, when we would be taking trips, the roads were pretty minimal. Someone could have a 'ger,' the native round tent, and a little camp pretty close to the road. If we would drop in there with our guide, we'd always get invited in, and they would always want to show us their "ger," the round tents called "yurts" in Russia, and offer us fermented mare's milk. We often would take a picture of them. They really liked that. We could generally send the photos back to them. They were very, very hospitable people. They liked us. We treated them well, and they treated us well.

Q: What about the cultural side? Mongolia has been fairly well known by a couple of films that have come out of there. Camels Crying and there is another one. Was there a lively cultural side of things?

CARMICHAEL: There was. The Soviets had always promoted the arts, and so the Mongolians had opera there, an opera house and two symphonies in this little town of Ulaanbaatar that had perhaps 600,000 total people. So they had that type of formal, Western-oriented thing, and they were very, very proud of their own culture. They generally performed their dances whenever we went out to a small town, for whatever reason. The embassy sent around an exhibit, a photographic exhibit of life in America, that had gone all through Asia on its travel schedule, and it ended up in Ulaanbaatar as its final embassy for showing. My cultural affairs assistant, a great guy, would keep the thing patched together, and we would take it out to little towns and put it in their high school auditoriums to show the local population. They always had a dance troupe in the town that would perform their indigenous dances for the opening. Whether they were

truly original, indigenous dances or not, was really sort of beside the point. It was still a promotion of the arts throughout the country.

Q: Was there any real student exchange or visitor exchange going on?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, we had a Fulbright program. We sent about three people from Mongolia to the United States each year and brought teachers there to teach business, English language, and American culture. I was proud of the types of academics we got to come to Mongolia during the years I was there. During the years I was there, we sent a young Mongolian violinist to the U.S. for an M.A. We recorded her demo tape and sent it to the Fulbright program that said, “Yes, this is wonderful.” Because they had good schools there, relatively good schools, there was an educated elite. They were often educated in Eastern Europe, but both in their bureaucracy and in some of their businesses you would find pretty well educated people.

People have a very negative view of Mongolians. It’s true that some of them weren’t very well educated and a little rough around the edges outside, but some of their bureaucrats and diplomats were sophisticated, well educated people. They had gone to schools in Bulgaria, in Poland, in Russia, etcetera. We saw some Mongolian politicians and diplomats in discussions with Japanese, Koreans, and they held up their own with diplomats from these countries. If we got the Chinese together, we knew they had a line that they had to give in whatever conference discussion, and the Koreans weren’t as active in conversations, and the Japanese were more reserved, but the Mongolians didn’t feel quite so rigid. They were a little more creative and generally spoke a bit better -- which I thought was great. But I still met colleagues who would infer or say outright their assumption that Mongolians had second-rate minds. But this just missed the reality of things.

Q: Where did you go afterwards?

CARMICHAEL: After that I went back to Washington where I worked for a year in what was left in the State Department of what USIA had called ‘Arts America’ which carried out cultural programs. Then I went to Hanoi for my last assignment.

Q: You were mentioning there was an incident when you were there.

CARMICHAEL: The president there continued to be from the Mongolian People’s Party. New parties grew up, and they were able to take over the parliament, so when I went there, there was new hope for the country with a more democratic group in power there. One of the more dynamic and progressive politicians from that era, one of the ministers, was assassinated fairly soon after I arrived -- nothing having to do with my arrival by any means -- but the question about who killed him continued as a nagging question in the political environment throughout the time I was there. The fear of a renewed Communist resurgence of the People’s Party was constantly there those two years I was there.

One of the embassy's International Visitors during the years before I arrived was the Mongolian cultural minister, who was from the only party, the Mongolian People's Party at the time, and was later to become the prime minister. The questions about how truly interested some of these politicians were in full democracy for everybody, in sharing some of the mineral wealth, and the wealth of the state and some of the benefits of foreign aid, was always kind of in doubt.

Q: This was a period too that the Russians were going through the oligarchy time, basically the apparatchiks in the party taking over the wealth in the country. Was there anything like that happening while you were there?

CARMICHAEL: There wasn't an even distribution of wealth and during the transition from communism to capitalism, you know, that has been goal that is often kind of lost. It didn't seem to be that all the Mongolians were happy, because they were basically dropped from a system, which in some aspects appeared to work relatively well.

Q: They were on the receiving end of things.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, the receiving end of things and also their authoritarianism was something for which there was a certain nostalgia – and such sentiments seemed understandable. For instance, the Communists had strict rules about herders not leading their animal into Ulaanbaatar. By the time I got there, several years after the Communist government, those laws had been pretty relaxed, so that herders would bring in horses and sheep, and you'd see animals at the side of the streets, in the median strips. You might have a cow there and such. Foreigners would look at this and say, "Oh, how picturesque this is," but Mongolians saw this as a loss of what they had been working to establish for years and years and years -- to have urban areas that were civilized, and you didn't have country animals wandering around their streets.

They had large communal farms that fit into the Soviet Union system that had acres and acres of grain and big silos that, by the time I got there, by the end of my stay, I could see they had been basically abandoned and the fields were fallow for years, the buildings collapsing. How do you reconcile the image of fields of grain that are no longer there with what capitalists spoke of as progress towards the future?

I saw this paradox elsewhere, whenever my cultural assistant and I walked around Ulaanbaatar, it was always pretty dangerous because you were walking on ice – the sidewalks didn't get cleaned, and he sometimes said, "You know, under the communists the sidewalks were clean. You could walk the streets." We had a couple of our officers hurt, falling on ice. It's not just a little thing. And there were open manhole everyone, because scavengers had stolen the covers -- because people had pulled them out, pulled the manhole covers, so they could sell the metal. Earlier the children of herders had to go to schools that the government had built throughout the country, but long before I was arrived, the new government had closed the schools because they were not efficient and relaxed enforcement of compulsory education for herders' children.

Q: I remember I was in Bishkek in the '90s and in the Kyrgyz Republic and you didn't really dare walk at night without a flashlight because there were manhole covers gone and no lights.

CARMICHAEL: That was exactly the case in Ulaanbaatar, yes. Their symphony and opera which were an achievement, they were proud of them. Those were marks of civilization, but while I was there, the finest artists were sometimes being hired elsewhere -- outside the country. I worked with a dance festival in the U.S., I think it was in New York, and they wanted to get visas for a couple of Mongolian dancers, so that they could have a Mongolian representative at their event. Our embassy said, "Well, are these guy going to come back?" "Oh, yes," they responded, "they're going to come back. We are going to walk them to the plane to make sure they come back, but we really need some Mongolian representatives here to make this a full, rich festival. We want our festival in New York to be full and rich."

So one of these dances goes, performs, and doesn't go back. He's washing dishes in New York someplace. To me, I ask who was the beneficiary there? The beneficiary was an American festival, arts, good people all of that, but it was not even a brain drain. They just took a body that had great talent, and they used all of his talents and now he is washing dishes. What was the benefit there? Who benefited? Well, I guess the dance festival was full and rich, the organizers' goal, but Mongolia and the dancer himself lost a lot.

I do have to mention that one of the things that we did to work with the Mongolians was to support a production of Porgy and Bess – the choral version only because of rights restrictions. The Mongolian National opera director had been on a State Department-sponsored trip to the U.S., and he met an orchestra director, who had done Porgy and Bess for years who was working in Santa Fe. The director, an older guy, but very active, had done a version of Porgy and Bess with Cab Calloway. The director wanted this director to come to Mongolia and do Porgy and Bess there, and so I and the State Department Office of Cultural Programs arranged for this director to come. They could only do the choral version, because of the rights that the Gershwin estate permitted. The Mongolians did a choral version of Porgy and Bess, we brought a American culture specialist to talk about the meaning of Porgy and Bess and U.S. racial relations, and had a State Department exhibit on Duke Ellington at the same time in the opera house. I also ordered a bunch of posters of Porgy and Bess opera presentations in the U.S. to put on display at the same time. It was just kind of a great, crazy thing -- a good thing to do which won us great favor with one of the institutions, the National Opera, which was had been built during the Soviet era, but remained something several generations respected. A program like this recognized our respect Mongolia's established arts achievements.

Q: You left in 2000?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, 2000, right. I went back to Washington to work in their arts section – the same section that helped with the Porgy and Bess project, and then I went to Hanoi.

I had worked in Mongolia for two years as the last USIA public affairs officer, there because at the end of 1999, USIA was transitioned into State Department. I left there and went back to work in Washington, D.C. I bid on my domestic assignment, and was assigned to a position in what was the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affair's Office in the office of Citizen Exchanges, specifically in an office that was the remnants of the old Arts in America program.

Q: There is one question I would like to ask about Mongolia. There have been at least two films that have come out of Mongolia; one about camels crying and then there is another one I have seen.

CARMICHAEL: Julia Roberts also had a little film.

Q: Was there a nascent Mongolian film industry? Did you have any contact with that?

CARMICHAEL: Yes, we had contact with that movement. It was not an indigenous Mongolian effort. There was one young Mongolian gentleman, a director, but he worked with others --either a Danish or Dutch director, I can't recall which, and did a couple of films, one called State of Dogs. This was quite a controversial film in the sense that it was comparing Mongolia to a dog that had been abandoned by nomadic shepherds who left one morning while he slept. This was a metaphor to the Russians taking off and leaving the Mongolians on their own. There was that nascent film industry developing through foreign cooperation, but there was also a longstanding Soviet sponsored academy that had created films, as part of the Soviets arts program. Every once in a while at night on Mongolian TV, they'd show an old Mongolian movie. I don't think that academy exists anymore or produces film. It is a shame, because some of these old movies represent Mongolia's history.

Q: OK, you were in Washington from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: I was actually in Washington for one year. I left Mongolia in 2000 and then after that I curtailed after a year in Washington. Of course, it was a two-year assignment to go to Vietnam, but I was in Washington for one year. As I mentioned this was a time of transition between USIA and State Department, and I was the office manager of this small group of dedicated, fine civil servants who years earlier did practically everything in Arts America. Some of these ladies used to manage large offices with a whole team of staff for, each one of their specialties, but as Arts America was trimmed down drastically, sometimes the head of the office was the only person left in a thematic or program area..

We had one lady who worked directly with the movie industry to acquire full length films - not videos but films – on the behalf of our embassies to enter into film festivals in their host countries. She often would contract a director or a critic to accompany the actual film or films to this film festival and speak to its audience, as well as address film academies and others.

Q: Were these American films?

CARMICHAEL: These were always American films. So one of our embassies would pick a theme and she would have to build a festival around that theme, or they might want one film of a director and the director himself to come and talk at a film festival.

We had one lady, she used to have an office with staff in Arts America, but by the time I took over the office she was by herself getting films, and we had another lady who worked with what we called "cultural specialists" who would go out and maybe work with an embassy's program partner for three weeks, it could be a month, it just all depended upon the needs of, let's say a dance company. It could be in Italy, could be in Africa, it could be anyplace, and the "cultural specialists" staff would recruit and make arrangements for the appropriate artists to go out to the country. In any case, this lady was alone in that section. This same lady worked with a program through which the State Department gave grants to artistic groups to take part in arts festivals around the world.

We also had another lady who was in charge of what was called the Jazz Ambassador program, which was a long-standing program. It is known more for its early years when we had people like Glenn Miller and Dizzy Gillespie, even Louis Armstrong out touring foreign countries. That had been transitioned into a joint partnership with Kennedy Center where the Kennedy Center would identify small jazz trios. That is -- all we could afford were jazz trios -- and the Kennedy Center would set up auditions in New York for trios for a day. The Center could provide seven, maybe eight groups each year, and our office would work with the posts to schedule them and make arrangements for their flights, etc. Sometimes this included overland travel, depending on where they were going and what they were doing.

Q: Could you explain, this is for the record, what was the point of all this? In other words, the movie festival, the arts program, the dance program, the jazz program. Why were we doing this?

CARMICHAEL: Well, you know there is a broader reason to get people to understand and know our arts, because television and the Hollywood movie industry doesn't present American culture at its finest. It is meant to draw out the dramatic, not portray the real. We want overseas audiences to understand our culture, and appreciate it. This fits with the notion of "soft power" that believes that if the foreign public can understand our culture, the fine things we do, those audiences will be more willing to listen to our other ideas, including economic and political policies and actions.

These programs are done with or through our embassies. These programs are designed; many times to reflect what these countries respect most about our culture to allow engagement – one size does not fit all and our embassies help Washington elements tailor their products. We need personal and institutional access to a host country's thinkers and artists. In many countries they are the "gate keepers" to public opinion.

Q: Well, a part of this is there are forces out there that are trying to portray us as barbarians and therefore not to be trusted, reckoned with or dealt with.

CARMICHAEL: Well, as I say, when you can show that you've got fine directors, good films that have good ideas and the arts, it is countering exactly what you point out others are saying.

Q: This is a period of transition. How did you find the powers that be in the State Department? They hadn't had to deal with these things before. Many of them had dealt with them at embassies and consulates but how was the fit?

CARMICHAEL: The arts and culture had been really suffering under USIA – as was the entire public diplomacy budget, the number of people we had working on these projects, the number of USIA posts and cultural centers, were really suffering under the Clinton administration. I think you can't just think of USIA as a full-blown, strong and healthy agency when it was merged into the State Department. It was pretty much a crippled agency to begin with when it was folded in.

That whole controversy about whether culture was doing any good really predated the USIA merger with State Department. I found that the State Department was as, in many cases, as open to these types of things as USIA was. Ambassadors want these things at their posts. Many of them feel this is part of their position and what their embassy should be doing, and so, generally, they specifically wanted those things that we were providing.

Some of the issues however had to do with how programs were prioritized in terms of what countries received them, and also it could be that different administrations have their own ideas about who should be receiving grants and the level of involvement of our bureaucrats. Some felt that giving grants to U.S. based groups to carry out programs in foreign countries was a great idea, but sometimes the artistic competency of these groups did not include the logistical experience or cultural sensitivities our Washington employees had developed.

For instance, the lady who ran the Jazz Ambassadors had been doing this for more than a decade; and she knew, for instance, how these groups needed to be routed through Central American countries. The philosophy that I had to deal with during my time, was the felt need to privatize operations and give it to a U.S. partner, which is a political thing, in this case to give it to the Kennedy Center and have them do operations as well as their traditional role of supporting trios recruitment of which they did a magnificent job. They may know the arts, but we worried that they did not know how to get a small group through a Central American country like our lady who had been doing it for years and years. And they don't understand the difficulties that a post may have in programming fine artists.

So just the way things were funded and the sort of flexibility that some of the management people had under USIA to do the things – well these were more difficult under the State Department. There was a bit more flexibility when I got there. The

gentleman in my office that was sending out and programming our last major painting exhibit by Andy Warhol left. He didn't have all the State Department regulations down for payment of contracts for transporting the exhibit. I had to set things up anew in the middle of the exhibition run with new types of grants for the exhibit to continue to several host countries. There were some people in the State Department that didn't understand that these things had to be programmed six, seven months before, and you might not know how much it was going to cost. My predecessor who set up this exhibit included one large painting, a key element in the show, but it would fit into one particular type of Russian plane only, so once we used that plane and sent that exhibit out in the field, the rest of the time we were tied in to using this company that had that plane – the only company that had this type of plane. It was getting fairly costly to move the exhibit around, but there was nothing much we could do. We couldn't tell the ambassadors something that they had been promising a minister of culture would not show up on time. After all, these programs do have to do with governments moving together; it's called public diplomacy but it has to do with governments working together. We couldn't really tell them, "Well, we can't do that because we don't have the extra dollars that we would need to get this exhibit to you – like we had promised."

There was more emphasis on thematic and relevant themes; that is to say, there was a program where we had hip-hop artists going over to Africa and speaking about HIV/AIDS. It wasn't so much that hip-hop as cutting edge culture was something we had not done before, but to carry a specific HIV/AIDS message was something new. A message would come down from above saying, "You guys are going to address this message on HIV/AIDS through the arts programs," and so we did it that way. Just the notion that, as you said and I said, if we show our arts, we are making a good case for the sophistication and the progressive nature of our society was increasingly insufficient as a justification for skeptics about "soft power.".

Q: During the time you were there, were there any problems with films? Films, the more arty type films usually have a message and it is not always a message that a government wants to proclaim and I was wondering if you had any problems?

CARMICHAEL: No, there weren't any problems with that when I was there. None that I can recall. It was really getting the right films to the right place. There were logistical issues, and the fact that we had one person, one person that was supposed to get these films for free from movie companies to send to multiple festivals going on around the world, that strain on the logistics was the issue. After all, the film festivals themselves don't want to get too involved in controversy, and we were responding to them. It is not as though we are going to send the embassy something, because we want to preach a message to you. There is dialogue among the embassies, the festival producers, and the Washington elements. Of course, sometimes this system would break down, but it ran well, thank God, while I was there.

Q: You must have been the whole time there monitoring the health of these people because each one was sort of unique. If something happened to them on your watch, you were in deep trouble.

CARMICHAEL: That was the case when the guy left who used to do the exhibitions and had started out the Warhol exhibit. We also had two other exhibits that were traveling around, and so I stepped in and had to do his job; not as well as he did it, but I had to do his job as well. That would mean for instance, if we had an exhibit that was moving around the Middle East, a photography exhibit, it wasn't a major costly thing to do, if there is a problem in one country and it is just not the time to do the exhibit (though it had been scheduled) because of some new issue with audiences and themes, my office had to reroute it someplace, you've got to find someplace to send it, and the embassy staff there need to be able to gear up for it.

Q: In 2001, was it that you left?

CARMICHAEL: I think it would be in the fall of 2001. I was talking to a friend in the East Asia office and I got a call from the director of the East Asia office who said, "Would you like to go to Hanoi and be the PAO there?" I hadn't even been thinking about Hanoi. I really enjoyed working in East Asia, as I mentioned earlier, but I hadn't thought about Hanoi. At 50 plus years old, I was hesitant about the language more than anything else. If you go to the country, you gotta take the language, so it's a package deal. I couldn't miss going to Hanoi; however, I just couldn't miss that.

Q: So you took Vietnamese. Is it five tonal?

CARMICHAEL: A six tonal language. I tell you, it was a struggle. We have good teachers over here, hard working, and they are proud of their language. It worked out OK.

Q: Was there a point in doing this where all of a sudden you could tell the difference between the tones? Did it just suddenly dawn on you?

CARMICHAEL: I would say that sounds too easy. It was more of a real struggle to internalize that sort of thing, and it was easier to understand eventually others than it was to speak. Americans don't speak clearly and the Vietnamese demand you speak very clearly with the tones and pronunciation, or they can't understand what you are saying. A lot of it is just like anything else; vocabulary work, vocabulary work, vocabulary work.

Q: I had just a touch of it before I went to Saigon. This was '69, '70 and I didn't make an inch of progress.

CARMICHAEL: I could get along a little bit on the street, and I could read and I could watch Vietnamese TV, and get basically what was going on which was quite valuable, because their TV represented government policy and government attitudes.

Q: You went to Hanoi and you were there from when to when?

CARMICHAEL: That would have been '02 through '04.

Q: How stood things with Vietnam at that point?

CARMICHAEL: We had our first ambassador just before I got there, Pete Peterson, and when he left and Ray Burghardt took over, and Ray was a long time Asia hand. I must say, I felt blessed to have had an ambassador that really understood the country and appreciated it for all of its complexities and difficulties. It had all been getting better. Things had all been moving well after President Clinton had left, the embargo had ended, and the Vietnamese wanted to be close to us in a balanced way, moving forward with the Chinese to the north, but they want to do things on their terms and, of course, when it has to do with human rights and religious rights, we just have to move them along slowly and surely. We were moving forward, and, of course, Americans want to go in there and move right ahead, and the Vietnamese, particularly because they have a structure with the Communist Party in so much control, when wanted to move sometimes results were unpredictable. It wasn't a consistent policy throughout the government to be friendly to us. Certain parts of the government got more advantages working with us; certainly the health sector for instance, and they were open to a lot of different programs – and USAID had a very good director there that was active and wanted to move forward.

The military was there for the first time. While I was there we had the first U.S. military ship visit since the war ended down in Saigon, in Ho Chi Minh City.

Q: What did people cal it? Was it "Saigon" pretty much?

CARMICHAEL: They called it Ho Chi Minh City, but there is a port in Ho Chi Minh City that is called Saigon. Up in the North where I was, that was my perspective on things, and my folks would call it Ho Chi Minh City, but if somebody slipped and called it Saigon, nobody had any dire problem with that.

Q: I was there when Ho Chi Minh was not a word you bandied about.

Public affairs officers; could you explain what your major concentrations were?

CARMICHAEL: We have the biggest U.S. government-sponsored Fulbright program in the world there. There are other countries that have bigger programs, if you include host-country contributions, but ours had the largest U.S. government sponsorship. Plus while I was there, when things were getting better, Congress developed a fund called "Vietnam Education Foundation," which was another five million dollars a year for scholarships for science and technology studies. This was a congressional fund, a congressional program, not an executive branch initiative and so we had congressional visits and the Foundation's oversight board wanted to open up an office there, separate from the embassy, not supported by the embassy. You are thinking, "How could they do that?" And they had a hard time doing it. It was a difficult thing to do.

Q: What was the idea? They didn't trust the embassy or was this a power grab of somebody on a staff somewhere wanted?

CARMICHAEL: I think they just wanted the freedom to do things differently, and without the program restraints the executive branch must acknowledge, and I have no reason to think poorly of their motivation, except that no one wants to get involved in all the rules and regulations that executive branch must follow, but we have to live by them. We do get results, and others in the government should be able to acknowledge the validity of rules they impose on somebody else.

Like most places, we had plenty of speakers that would come over, often speaking on foreign policy issues, a question of U.S. activity, U.S. presence in Southeast Asia, our observations and our trying to explain our policy toward China and policies toward Southeast Asia, so the Vietnamese could understand our actions. With China on the north, the Vietnamese did not want their understanding of our presence to stand still with the Vietnam War.

I was in FSI when 9/11 occurred, taking my Vietnamese, so when I got over there, and there was the invasion of Afghanistan and then Iraq, those events took up a lot of media space in the government media. We could explain our policy there, but they weren't really interested in explanations. The government media found that it was a good time to hammer us pretty hard about going into another country.

Q: How does one counter that?

CARMICHAEL: You really have to counter some of truly rabid government sentiment through your programs and contact with institutions, because the press was pretty much closed to us. I could write letters to the editor, and I felt wrote some pretty good letters to the editor, but they were not going to get published; they're simply not going to get published.

What our thing was and what I started to do was to start being factual in terms of releases about what our two countries were doing together. When we brought in military advisers on mine sweeping or bomb cleaning or anything on training or disaster relief, we made sure news of this activity ended up in the paper -- and papers would accept factual releases on our USAID programs, on our health programs, and on our cultural programs.

But they wouldn't accept opinion pieces or policy discussions. For example, as I recall, USAID could do programs on HIV/AIDS and we could place releases on the programs, but when we sent a "letter to the editor" from the ambassador, talking about AIDS and the way we need to work together on the issue, speaking about our cooperation, they printed the facts of cooperation, but dropped the major text with our ambassador's words on our international AIDS policy. The piece hardly controversial, but they were not interested in a policy statement in the paper or were not permitted to print.

Q: You've been sort of around the block on this. How Communist was the country, you know the ideology and that sort of thing?

CARMICHAEL: The Party was still in control. I could have a program, my colleagues in the military and other places could have a program, and there could suddenly be an unexplained “complication” that would prevent it from going through. Most of the time that was because someone or some group in the Party would insist upon a cancellation, but you wouldn’t know who had the objection or know where in the Party it came from. Someone could say, “This cannot happen” and it wouldn’t happen. If you say, Vietnam is a Communist country, well, what is called the Communist Party makes those sorts of shots on things, modulating the pace of how our countries get together.

Some of the economic rights that the people could enjoy were increasing, so some of the things people there miss, we don’t even think about here in terms of human rights - like being able to work in another part of the city than the one the government has specified for you. Those things were cleaning up and were changing. Economic rights were increasing, but in political rights, it was still considered a monopoly of the Communist Party.

One other thing about the ideology, in terms of being able to start your own business; I think one of my staff said it pretty well. That was, “Here in Vietnam you can start your own business now, you can start making your own money, but you just don’t want to get too big because once you get too big and too successful, the Party or the government will look at what you are doing and say, “I’d like a little of that”, “I want some of that.” You would lose your business.

Q: It sounds as what has happened other places before really almost the revolution of turning down Communists that the real ideology was over and now it was a matter of power or a piece of the action.

CARMICHAEL: Some people feel that was the case that you saw there. There were still some people in my analysis, after all, in the Communist Party who could claim indeed that they had won a war, that they were the ones that brought independence to Vietnam, and we were the people they had been fighting -- among others. As you know, it was a coalition; it wasn’t just the Americans there. They of the old cadre, the revolutionaries, they need to maintain that myth of their being about able to run the country. They led it down a pretty nasty economic road, before it was able to recover. Until they died off, they wanted to maintain their position as liberators of the country. They have to do that under a Communist ideology and the Communist Party, so they are going to always keep up that façade, even though it may be for their sons and their daughters. Their families are the ones that are really benefiting from this economic wealth.

Q: Who were the exchange people sitting in a big exchange program, Fulbright? What were we doing?

CARMICHAEL: They were perfectly happy, we had both master’s degrees, and we had a full, open competition -- that was something which we held as a principle. We couldn’t get the Vietnamese government involved in competitions, because they were not merit-oriented. Their merit is ‘have you supported the Party lately?’ The embassy didn’t have a

bi-national commission, because there was no partner there who could provide money, but, more importantly, could follow merit principles.

We also would entertain nominees from the different universities, but, once again, we couldn't just take those students that had been nominated by the universities themselves, because they didn't necessarily nominate by merit.

One of the things my executive director had to do was make sure when a teacher from a university applied for a Fulbright, that he would not be ostracized when he came back -- that his position was still there. There were some deans, some university presidents who understood that sending somebody over to the U.S. and ensuring they would have their position upon return was a chance to enhance their faculties. Other people saw that as 'I want to send the person I want to send, and if I can't send that person, then nobody is going to be going, because I am weakened. It seemed sometimes that the Communists were more interested in using access to the outside for their own internal political agenda. I saw that in Poland too. They use access to the outside as one of the perks of being a good Party member, being a loyal citizen to the Communist government. You know, that's what you earned for following the party line. It was a patronage game.

Q: One of the things I noted, this goes back to the early '60s in Yugoslavia for example, we would send bright, young people to the united states in exchange and they would come back ready to pass on their knowledge and their way of doing things and find they are completely frozen out because Herr Professor who was head of the faculty and probably studied in Austria during the '30s or so, that's not the way he wanted to do it because he'd lose control. It takes a generation to get rid of the old farts.

CARMICHAEL: It's not just under a Communist system but this is a country that is not very far from some real economic destitution, and university and student exchanges were a way to get hard currency and to reward people. In a way that is even a little bit different what happens in other countries where university administrators and entrenched faculty just don't want a Fulbrighter returning from the U.S. saying, "Hey, I just returned from an American university with some really new ideas about studies that can make a difference. " – even the returnee can offer real insight in areas such as American Studies.

Q: Did you sense that Vietnam, here it is sitting in the middle of all these little tigers like Singapore and Thailand and Malaysia, all of whom with well developed electronics businesses, getting tied to the international IT technology villages' world. In a way I would think this would be kind of difficult for Vietnam to fit into that because of its ideology.

CARMICHAEL: In terms of being part of the manufacturing, I think what a company wants is a productive, reasonably well-trained labor force, and Vietnam could provide that. There was some standard that is used in shoe manufacturing that indicates how quickly the work force can meet world standards of quality. The Vietnamese reached an acceptable level much more quickly than the Thai, for instance. They can be incredibly

detail-oriented and productive. In computer and other electronics assembly, this is more important than intellectual freedom.

Q: Yes, the Nike and

CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I can remember this businessman telling us that what Thailand took five years to develop a skill level that Vietnam was able to do in three. So they are hard working, and there is still some Confucian respect for learning, that would do them very well. Most people, when they look at Vietnam, say these people work hard. I don't think technology in terms of manufacturing was a difficult thing for them to do.

One of the problems that you had, interestingly enough, was the Vietnamese were very, very careful where they would buy their electronics - whether it was a DVD or CD player - because if a Vietnamese had repaired, re-boxed, and resold it as new, it may work like a charm for a bit, but might likely fail in the long run. The Vietnamese could fix these things and put them back, but if they were really fixed – that would be a question. They were very, very nimble that way intellectually to do that sort of thing.

Their problem is that China is right next door.

Q: Was there when you were there, was the internet an issue, a problem?

CARMICHAEL: In terms of whether we could get access?

Q: No, I mean for the Vietnamese? Not so much the government, but the individual Vietnamese. Were they plugged in or not?

CARMICHAEL: They weren't plugged in to the extent that they could be. They had internet cafes, but when I was there, they were only reaching the point where more and more could own their own computer, and there would be a chance at some access, but most of the internet access was done at internet cafes with very narrow bandwidth. They weren't quick machines, but I remember I always checked to see if VOA website was blocked or not. There were supposed experts who insisted. "Oh, they blocked the VOA website." I would go to small towns, even up in the mountains on our vacation, and I would take a little time and go to the internet café and see whether I could get on eBay and also check if the VOA website was being blocked. It was really never blocked. There was access, but it wasn't the broadband access that is anywhere near what many others countries have and could support much work – but the government there had prosecuted their citizens for very basic access to U.S. government, and basic democratic thinking.

Q: It was a matter of more or less development rather than government policy that was trying to keep it down?

CARMICHAEL: Yes. They were very, very wary of the internet. There had been some cases of Vietnamese activists downloading USIA and State Department material, like the human rights documents. I forget if they downloaded our constitution or whether it was

one of our human rights pamphlets, but the government ended up tossing this type of dissident in jail for quite a while for doing that. It was a big case, an important case but at the same time I could go down to the internet café and see that same document was still there, of course, on our website, available to anyone else who wanted to download it.

Q: Did you get any sense of a real generational change that was happening through the university and all with the college kids and early graduates sort of comparable to the other ones that you met elsewhere or were they more reserved?

CARMICHAEL: I would say that they were really just about as open. When I would take a speaker and, of course, that's what you'd do, you program a speaker in a host country institution. The goal for me was not to listen to our, but watching the young people and listening to their questions. The young people were reserved, but you would have one or two who would be more aggressive in asking questions. That would be pretty similar to anyplace else. I wouldn't say there was much more classroom aggressiveness. Vietnamese students are not a particularly aggressive group of people.

Q: Was there much sort of in a way, push back from Vietnamese here in the United States? We have a hell of a lot of them here and obviously they don't have too friendly feelings towards the government in Vietnam. Was that a problem or not?

CARMICHAEL: These things were always moving towards the more and more positive. I was there five years ago, so I am sure some things have changed, but there were some Vietnamese groups that were interested in coming back, interested in investment. Their families were buried there. Their religion says they should honor those graves, and so that access was an important thing. You would see more of that in the South, as you know, rather than in the North where I was. The Vietnamese government still was not as open, and saw the Viet Que, as they were called as "cash cows" for investment, rather than as another generation of Vietnamese. The government's attitude was 'We have nothing against these people. We can forgive their betrayal. All they have to do is say that they were wrong, that they are on the wrong side of things and that we can let them back' -- this without understanding those people fought for what they believed in too. They were just on the other side, that's all.

Q: How did Saigon or Ho Chi Minh City play? I imagine you had a branch post there? I would think that the people there had been brought up on Armed Forces Radio and American stuff that would have been a really active place.

CARMICHAEL: Yes, you know, under USIA the branch post, the branch PAO in Ho Chi Minh city would have reported to the country public affairs officer in Hanoi, but one of the arrangements they made when they moved USIA into State Department is that the public affairs officer in post reports to their the principal officer. So he reported not to me, but to the consul general in Saigon. All the cultural stereotypes which they talk about seemed to hold true; they lived in a culture that was more comfortable with free enterprise and entrepreneurial. They were a bit more open, more aggressive as individuals - the Foreign Service nationals and such. But they had their limitations down there in Ho

Chi Minh City, as well, but their staff wasn't necessarily that much smaller than the staff in Hanoi. We had one more American. I was the public affairs officer, and I had a deputy public affairs officer in Hanoi, and the public affairs officer down there in Ho Chi Minh City had a junior officer trainee working with him. The staff wasn't that much smaller either. There was a lot of interest in Saigon on the part of Americans, because, as you would expect, there are more business opportunities; it is a more open climate and that sort of thing. The public affairs officer there was an active and real positive guy down there. Hanoi had more congressional visits that wanted to visit the president and the government up there in Hanoi.

Q: How was the ambassador?

CARMICHAEL: I thought he was great. We had an ambassador that was in a State Department officer class that was assigned to Saigon when he came into the Foreign Service. Afterwards he went back to Vietnam to work on negotiations concerning the demining process up in Haiphong. He worked in Beijing and was consul general in Shanghai and then the director in AIT Taiwan. He was an Asian hand with an appreciation for the culture. So it was very good. It is nice to have somebody who's got some depth of understanding. He knew we weren't going to solve everything with the Vietnamese while he was there. He had a long view on things.

Q: What was your impression of Chinese influence and reactions in Vietnam?

CARMICHAEL: What we always noticed is if we had a major visit of an American official or a Vietnamese president, or premier going to the United States, there would be a corresponding visit with China. They balanced their demonstrations of closeness and interests pretty closely. In terms of, I thought it was interesting, is the sort of situation that Chinese products have there. One would think the Vietnamese who could work hard and work for very little would be able to compete, but I remember going in looking at ties in shops and finding Chinese silk ties in Vietnam and, of course, they have their own silk industry. The Vietnamese had little Vespa-type and small motorcycles, but they really preferred Japanese over the Chinese products. I was told over and over, that the Chinese look nice, but they just don't have any real guts to them, they were not sturdy enough for their needs.

They're concerned about China – and they'd be nuts if they weren't concerned. The last war that the Vietnamese had was with China - they are naturally concerned about China. They are not going to be that open all the time with us – and they have a ready excuse to say 'we are doing this because of China.' They have to respond to geopolitics.

Q: The universities, did they have a defined American Studies program?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, no. We had one Fulbrighter who we were going to send to the United States in American Studies, and that was what you'd call a "triumph" for this fellow, and it is a long shot in terms of his returning to Vietnam and teaching or occupying an administrative role equal to his achievement – but we felt it was worth the

gamble. American Studies is not an established field, and in a lot of countries and certainly in Vietnam, active interest in the U.S. would bring the questions, “Why are you studying about America? They are still our enemies.”

Q: I can remember being in Germany and the Germans, I mean, for God’s sake. We deluged the place with X and all that sort of thing but they really didn’t fit in, you know in the 19th century when they drew up their thing, America didn’t count for much and are still working on a 19th century schedule. That’s a problem in Europe.

CARMICHAEL: I know in Poland and even in Mongolia, if there was any American Studies it was within American literature or in the context of English teaching. It wasn’t in the context of sociology or international relations. It was all sort of down the totem pole in their minds.

Q: It represents a major problem really with our relations with the world. We study Europe and we study Asia but other people don’t study us and we are an important factor in the world and what makes us the way we are is important.

CARMICHAEL: Sometimes you think they have this mistaken notion that the media provides them all they need to know. It is so silly, it is so wrong. But here, this was something where they could actually study the United States, but it was something that was very suspect, so it didn’t develop. The number of wild ideas that foreigners have about the U.S. is astounding, as well as just factual mistakes, but I have heard too many times, “Americans are so isolated and ignorant. We know about the U.S., but they know nothing about us.” Well, we don’t know much about the world, but that doesn’t mean the world knows about us.

Q: In Vietnam. Did you run across were the scars pretty recent? Every once in awhile somebody say, “I lost my family due to your bombing” or this sort of thing come up?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yes. We did not have, ‘You Americans, you’re animals and I lost my such and such during the bombing.’ I know that I had a one of our Foreign Service nationals tell me she could not use the word American in her house, in her father’s house on the other side. Most of them are not bitter -- they like Americans. Who did they have? They had the Chinese? Why would they like the Chinese? The Chinese are this dark cloud that hangs over them. Americans were quite popular. In fact someone made the point that we were probably more popular in Vietnam than any other Asian country. Most American visitors said that they were treated well by the Vietnamese -- which I personally think really was something that the old Communist Party cadre really had a hard time accepting, I would think. After all they supposedly had grabbed independence from the Americans, but now the Americans were increasingly popular. A pole had indicated that President Clinton was the most popular world politician in Vietnam when my wife and I arrived.

Q: How did our, President Bush, the Second and the going into Iraq, how did that play?

CARMICHAEL: That was a chance for the Vietnamese government to really hammer us. They hammered us on that constantly in the press and they really hammered us on Abu Ghraib.

Q: Abu Ghraib being the mistreatment of prisoners by our prison guards.

CARMICHAEL: Yes. When that happened they laid out a full anti-American propaganda package in the newspapers, but you can't get upset about the editorials in the Vietnamese papers. That's just what they do; they just sort of hammer us. I ran into many Americans and Vietnamese who'd say, "But nobody reads this anymore, because they are always so one- sided, that there is no nuance to them, and the Vietnamese don't trust their own government, so most Vietnamese don't really take into account those editorials." I really never really believed all that. I believed that, eventually, that is how stuff somehow does stick. I would write a letter every once in a while when an editorial went over the top. You expect criticism. But in Abu Ghraib, after those pictures came out and such, the tone was really remarkably more vitriolic than anything we had seen before.

Q: How about the missing in action issue? Was that still going on in your time?

CARMICHAEL: Oh, yes, absolutely. They still have a very active program trying to find the missing in action at that time. The low hanging fruit was being picked, that is, the more easily found and accessed remains had been uncovered, but they were still finding them, they were still tracking them. There was still a separate armed forces element in Hanoi, that wasn't inside the embassy, but had their own group of people that would search and recover remains. A lot of this had to be really logistically heavy; that is to say, for example, to locate a jet fighter that had crashed with bombs on it on the side of a mountain, or full of fuel, and send in an expert on a risky mission to search around in it. In some instances, and they would have to rent the land where the remains were located, and get permissions, which was costly, to excavate the site. They had to hire engineers. They would have to hire labor to dig through the property, and some of these caustic chemicals might mean that they had to wear special hazmat suits, so these were not just guys finding some remains; they were caring out mini-engineering projects. The helicopters that crashed in rice paddies have been found long ago, but helicopters that had crashed into the side of a tree-covered mountain might still not have been found. They required specialized U.S. crews to repel down the mountain to get their crash site. That's the type of really difficult stuff that they were still doing. The Vietnamese cooperated very well. They could not afford politically to not be cooperative in that mission. And they made good money too.

Q: I still see these missing in action flags flying around, particularly firehouses and all but it was sort of the issue of the right in American politics that somehow or another there were prison camps in the middle of the jungle with Americans there. It made no sense at all but

CARMICHAEL: There might be somebody that said that, but I never got any sense that there was any chance, no matter how remote, that this was true.

There were though quite a number of Americans who had fought in the war and wanted to go back and visit the places they had fought and that sort of thing. Most of them were, trying to reconcile their memories and that sort of thing. It wasn't generally coming back with hostility.

Q: I read a book by a North Vietnamese soldier obviously in translation called, The Sorrows of War. Did you ever read that?

CARMICHAEL: Yes.

Q: Very powerful, an interesting book.

CARMICHAEL: That book came out finally in Vietnamese while I was there, but for a long time that author had not been recognized and the book was banned. He was not popular with the regime.

Q: He slams, he talks about war rather than, he talked about coming back. They were supposed to say the South Vietnamese didn't fight well and screw this. They did fight well.

CARMICHAEL: That book was banned in Vietnam, but while I was there, I'd go in the bookstores and just see what types of books were available to the Vietnamese public, and I happened to find the book on the shelves, with a different name, and I took it in to my staff. They told me it was the same book. One told me that this was a major step forward, because the book talked about the Vietnamese war, but didn't portray it as a heroic enterprise. Instead, it underlined that the Vietnamese people were deeply affected, and some soldiers didn't come back from the war full of gratefulness to the Party and their leadership. They came back traumatized and became drunks. They came back and not everybody at home was in support. They learned their wives had run off with somebody else -- and that sort of thing.

Q: Were you seeing an ability to have a more realistic view of the war, more memoirs coming around or was that?

CARMICHAEL: Somewhat, but it is a slow process. There was another lady who wrote a series of books that talked about the war in realistic ways. She still was not popular with the regime. On the other hand, I could still watch on TV or in the cinema contemporary programs, recently produced, about the bombing of Hanoi and the Vietnamese's great fight bringing down the American aircraft. And, of course, the Vietnamese had preserved for all to see a couple of U.S. jet fighters in Hanoi that had crashed landed in the town during the bombing. Those planes were upright, stuck nose-first in this little lake in the middle of town, maintained as a display. So there was an element that wants those things, the war, to be seen in the same way. It serves their purpose. They can say to their citizens, "Look, you may like the Americans now but this is what they did to us."

Q: In a way say, fair enough. We haven't let go of some things.

You left there when?

CARMICHAEL: That would have been in 2004.

Q: Then what?

CARMICHAEL: I went back to Washington and my mother was not doing well, and I came back to Washington and moved into a position in the State Department's Inspector General's office.

I ended up doing that for five years. I extended on my two year posting, and then I rebid on a higher position in the office, so it was a full five years. I retired out of that.

Q: What are some of your impressions of the inspection process?

CARMICHAEL: I was a public diplomacy inspector. We, unlike the management inspectors, don't have the prescriptive, rigorous set of management directives and regulations on how our programs are to be done. In fact, there were still out of date job descriptions based on USIA documents. They haven't even gotten to change all these things yet. In any case, my job was making sure that public diplomacy program execution, that the embassies of offices establish goals and move towards them. This was the overall umbrella. There's some technical regulations having to do with grants that we look at more closely, but the work that public diplomacy inspectors do is not quite as technical as what, let's say, a management inspector does.

Ever since I have been there, the inspectors and the management has wanted to do a productive job that gets something that aids the overseas posts and aids the Department. In that case you have to, you know, in some cases you are going to point out failings, but the attitudes of the inspectors towards their jobs is not the way it is sometimes portrayed -- as being a bunch of folks who are there to find fault.

I had a guy actually say to me, "I understand you get a bonus if you can cut a position." This is just so ridiculous. It is generally a job where you are trying to provide another view on an issue, sometimes jobs have to be done a certain way, because there are certain regulations that you gotta look at things a certain way. You try to look at what has to be done in terms of regulations, and look at the way the officers and the Foreign Service nationals are carrying out these things, and then make sure to the best of your ability and circumstances that they are doing that. Some of the inspectors have been doing these jobs for 40 years, so on inspections, they are pretty darn sharp at knowing what doesn't work. They know if they must look at the motor pool, that there are certain reoccurring problems that they have to look for, and they know how to take that look with the minimal disruption to post work. They are really good at sleuthing and picking out their trails to follow.

Q: Do you have any good inspection stories?

CARMICHAEL: I think the good inspection stories are the ones that show you a good result -- when we learn that the DCM says to an inspector, "You know, you have really helped us out here." These are what we'd call good inspection stories. In my field, we had an instance of a public affairs office in Middle Eastern country being given a lot of grants through the MEPI, which is the Middle Eastern Partner Initiative, to send people to the United States and bring them back. So the post carried out these Department-funded programs, but its discretionary budget was practically nothing. So it could send somebody to the U.S., but upon return when the grantee came to the public affairs office and as follow-up said, "There's this one particular point of law that I would like to go into more. I'd like to get for my university law faculty a couple volumes of law books for $150" – the post did not have the money in its discretionary budget to work with the contact on a grant. An inspection can point out the absurdity of that sort of budgetary imbalance in its written report and directly to officials in Washington. In this case, I helped the office get more funds.

Or in one case there was a dispute within an embassy, about who could talk to the press and who couldn't talk to the press. There were no consistent rules or understanding, so I developed a recommendations that ensured the public affairs officer, the information assistant, and the DCM gathered to develop a policy -- something written, something that people can't dispute, something that's clear rather than going through angst every other week in response to a dust up.

Q: I assume you were watching to see whether the change in the status of it is now public diplomacy, not USIA. Was the system still working well, do you think?

CARMICHAEL: The questions of tensions of integration of the two agencies were really the Washington phenomenon, not a field phenomenon. Out there everybody knows the ambassador is the boss -- practically everybody. Every once in a while there is somebody who doesn't, but that is really the tiny minority and most everybody wants to be a part of the team and understands their work is part of the mission. It is working well and that integration wasn't really the problem out in the posts, anyway. The decline in numbers of officers and FSNs at post, however, must be addressed.

Q: USIA side of public diplomacy is such an important part of the embassy's reason for being that I always found the USIA officer an extremely important part of the country team because they are usually on country teams.

CARMICHAEL: I don't think there has been a great change, except for the monies and how a public affairs officer in a particular country goes back and gets money from Washington to do a program or project. It has taken some to get clarity on that. USIA was such a small agency that you could get a reputation. If you ran your programs right and ran them tightly, that was appreciated by public diplomacy colleagues in Washington and gave you an edge when you are going back competing for grants. When you work with the State Department it is more complicated, complex process back in Washington so that

corridor reputation or just the tightness with which you run your programs doesn't seem to have quite the cache it used to. Rather now, what is more important is whether you have a savvy ambassador who can help get the money for you and your political skills with Washington.

Q: Did you find particularly until recently that the public diplomacy people had a real problem in the Bush administration, certainly at the beginning seemed to almost go out of its way to make itself unpopular with many friendly governments in Europe and elsewhere. Did you find public diplomacy people having to work hard to remedy this?

CARMICHAEL: Well, of course. You have to explain going into another country, and they have to be very, very good reasons. It may all seem perfectly logical from our point of view and that of some other countries, but a lot of countries are very, very sensitive about one country going into another country for whatever reason. So, yes, but that's their job, so it's not a matter of whether it is difficult. At least there is something you can engage the people on.

Q: OK, this is probably a good place to stop.

End of interview