

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

**STEPHEN M. CHAPLIN**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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## INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Chaplin.]

*Q: Today is January 16, 2001. This is an interview with Stephen M. Chaplin. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am*

*Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Steve?*

CHAPLIN: Steve.

*Q: Let's go at the beginning. When and where were you born?*

CHAPLIN: I was born in Charleston, South Carolina, December 28, 1940. My father was a journalist. The year I was born he had a year long fellowship up at Harvard, so at age six weeks I left Charleston and went up to Cambridge.

*Q: Your family is basically South Carolinian.*

CHAPLIN: Right.

*Q: What was your father's background?*

CHAPLIN: Well, he went to Clemson University as a chemical engineer, discovered the school newspaper and a particularly prominent English teacher. From the day he graduated, he became a reporter in Ringo, South Carolina and followed journalism for more than 50 years thereafter, editing newspapers in different cities. His last job was he was editor of the morning newspaper in Honolulu, Hawaii. He had gotten to Hawaii originally in WWII and started the Pacific edition of Stars and Stripes. Everywhere he went after the war, he would write editorials and columns in favor of Hawaiian statehood. He edited a paper in New Orleans which went out of business in 1958. At that time they were looking for a new editor in Honolulu. They remembered him, and got in touch with him, so he arrived back in Hawaii just before statehood was voted. It was still a territory.

*Q: Did the family go back a long time in South Carolina on your father's side?*

CHAPLIN: My father's father emigrated from Poland. The name originally was Chaplinski. He came at about age 14, speaking no English, with about five dollars in his pocket and the name of one person in Massachusetts. He, like millions of others, passed through Ellis Island. He met a very helpful immigration official who suggested that he change his name in order to fit in, so Chaplinski became Chaplin. Two years later a younger brother came over, similar story, by himself, knowing no English. Another immigration official gave the same advice. He cut off the first part of the name, so his name would be Linski. So you had two brothers in the country with different names. A couple of years later, when they realized there was no prospect of being deported, they flipped a coin, heads came up and the family became Chaplin instead of Linski.

*Q: Do you know where in Poland they came from?*

CHAPLIN: Yamistok. That was on my father's side. My mother's side, her parents had come from Russia, late 19th. century and got to South Carolina. My father's father started out in New England, went down to South Carolina, ran a shoe factory, had several sales

along the road. The depression came, wiped him out. He picked up the family and moved from Columbia, South Carolina to Greenville. He opened a pawn shop, and went to work six days a week for most of the rest of his life, was a wise investor in certain ways. My father told a story that as a child in the depression, when he graduated from high school he discovered his family was poor. For that reason he couldn't go to the University of Virginia as he aspired to, and he went about 40 miles down the road to Clemson which was a military school. He graduated second in his class.

*Q: Well, your mother's family, did she have an education?*

CHAPLIN: My mother didn't go beyond high school. Her family, which was in the furniture store business in Charleston on Q Street, were very orthodox. None of the children, my mother was one of seven, was sent to college from the fear of her father more than her mother, that they would go to school and kosher food wasn't served at all at the time and so forth, so none of the children ever went to college. She worked for a few years, married young. She was 21 and my father was 23 when they got married, so her education finished there. My father graduated from Clemson. He had the Harvard year, and he didn't go to graduate school.

*Q: Well your father, when you went up to Harvard for awhile, then where did your family go? We are talking about the war years.*

CHAPLIN: Right. Well soon after he came back down to South Carolina back to Greenville where he was the editor at age 24. The war came. He had gone through Clemson, got a reserve commission, went in as a lieutenant, into the army. He went first to a base in Kentucky, Fort Plasen, where they wrote manuals for dirigibles. He said every lesson he learned about journalism he threw out the window when he had to start writing these manuals. So the combination of writing the manuals and the feeling that he was too far from the action led him to write a letter to the man who had been the main person in the selection of needy fellows named Archibald MacLeish, who was then heading OWI.

*Q: Office of War Information.*

CHAPLIN: And he asked MacLeish to get me out of there to some other army place. That led to a transfer to Hawaii and starting up the Pacific issue of Stars and Stripes. After the war he went to New Jersey and worked on a paper. The man he worked with in New Jersey, his family owned a small paper in Camden, was a man who had been his second in command, a lieutenant named David Stern. If you remember WWII and shortly thereafter, there were some books and a movie series called Francis the Talking Mule?

*Q: Yes..*

CHAPLIN: Well David Stern was the author of that book and then the movies that came from it. That paper went on for a year or two. There were many troubles; it went out of business. My father went back to Charleston for the year to do PR work. He actually was



asked in '48 by an intermediary that Strom Thurmond was going to run for president that year, he needed a press secretary.

*Q: The Dixiecrat...*

CHAPLIN: The Dixiecrat ticket. My father who knew Thurmond slightly got together and very politely said he needed a PR and marketing person not a journalist and gracefully exited from that. He went to San Diego for a year where he worked on a second paper that went out of business. Then Stern who owned the New Jersey paper opened a paper called the New Orleans Item which was one of two afternoon papers in New Orleans. In 1949, I was about 8 ½ years old we moved to New Orleans. So from fourth grade through high school, I went to school in New Orleans.

*Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?*

CHAPLIN: One younger sister who is younger than I am, who eventually went into public relations and is now a laureate poet. She is doing something called poetry therapy. She says you have music therapy, dance therapy, so people can express themselves through poetry. She deals with schizophrenics, weight loss problems, a whole series of things. You get accredited for that. You can't do college courses, you do a lot of one-on-one stuff. She is just about to get accredited. She is about 7 ½ years younger than I, so she grew up in Hawaii whereas I grew up in New Orleans.

*Q: Well now at home, we have some families that sort of sit around the table and discuss events, others don't. Were you sort of intellectually engaged with the family on things or were they all going their own way?*

CHAPLIN: I think to some extent people were doing their own thing. My father and I, and perhaps I got it from him a love of history as well as international affairs and politics. So I tended to read books on history, current events, biographies. My sister's interests are very different. My mother ran the house but didn't really participate in a lot of intellectual discussions.

*Q: How orthodox or how Jewish was your upbringing?*

CHAPLIN: I had a Bar Mitzvah when I was 13. My folks I think essentially believed in the teachings of Judaism rather than the ceremonial practice of Judaism. They always supported the synagogue, probably went on the highest holy days and didn't go about weekly attendance. So I went through Sunday school and I had a confirmation as well as a Bar Mitzvah. I was actually the first one, at least in many years in the synagogue in New Orleans, who had a Bar Mitzvah. It was a reformed synagogue. So there was a feeling certainly of tolerance and the teachings of Judaism. My father has been a, I think by background but also by being a product of the south, a strong believer in racial tolerance. In fact at Harvard, his studies focused on black-white relations. This was in 1940. He has been very active in inter religious groups trying to work towards a common understanding

of ecumenical teachings. So religious in the sense of teachings, the values. He has a very strong commitment to Israel, but less so in the ceremonial aspects including eating kosher food, not driving or working on the Sabbath, less of that.

*Q: Did you find in New Orleans while you were there, was there much in the way of anti-Semitism or was that pretty long dead?*

CHAPLIN: Oh some. New Orleans was a pretty cosmopolitan city. It actually had one of the larger Jewish populations in the South, several synagogues, orthodox, reformed, and conservative. There were a few Jewish leaders in the community, businessmen. I grew up during the period of segregation, so there was a lot of tension. It was also the McCarthy period. My father never referred to a black man, he never referred to his or her race in a story. When he would write, he would say Mr. John Jones. The other papers were a little more paternalistic or something else. The second thing, they circulated a petition once a year in Jackson Square for people to sign. I think out of about 100 people approached, two people actually signed it. This was the height of the McCarthy period. People just didn't want to sign the petition. Well, what was on the petition? It was the Bill of Rights. People felt signing anything in those days was subversive. They didn't understand what they were reading, and they tended to shy away from it. They were making a point in their own way. It was the second paper in town. The Times Picayune, the morning paper, owned the afternoon competition. So the Item was always in a precarious economic position. So whereas it didn't become a bastion of liberal progressive thought, it never wrote a pro segregation editorial, and eventually did die because of economic competition, closed up. It was an interesting time. I remember segregated street cars, buses, of course segregated schools. Even though I went to a private school my last three years of high school. There were no black students there. This has all changed. There has been a black mayor for many years now in New Orleans, and councilmen, but it was an interesting and difficult period. I remember doing a school essay, I think my senior year, in English on Orval Faubus who blocked integration. He was governor of Arkansas. I wrote Faubus and got some information from him and wrote the essay. I wrote one on the Emmett Till killing in Mississippi, the young man from Chicago who allegedly whistled at a white woman and was lynched for that. So I was very aware of what was going on, and just through a general feeling of respect for other people, knew there were a lot of wrongs going on. Many of my friends shared those views. A lot of their parents who might be very nice in other ways, still had fairly rigid views in terms of race.

*Q: Where did you go to high school, before you went to private school, where was that?*

CHAPLIN: Well first it was a school called McNabe, a junior high school, seventh through ninth. That was a general run of the mill junior high school. I remember one particular class, Civics, and the teacher told us to listen to the President's state of the union address that night. This must have been 1954.

*Q: Eisenhower.*

CHAPLIN: He said because each year in the state of the union the President picks a different state to talk about, and this year it might be Louisiana. My teacher did not say what the purpose of the state of the union was.

*Q: The state of the union, yes.*

CHAPLIN: That was the quality of the instruction.

*Q: Well then you went to a private school.*

CHAPLIN: I went to a private school called Isidore Newman which had been founded as a manual arts school early in the 20th. century by a Jewish businessman and philanthropist. I went there from sophomore through senior year and graduated in a class of 60 students. It was a college prep school. I went on to college. I guess the ratio there was about even between gender. I'd say maybe 30-35% were Jewish. There were no religion classes or anything. I am not sure how it had been established originally, but by that time it was just a good solid academic school. A few of its most notable recent graduates, Walter Isaacson, managing editor of Time Magazine. A more recent graduate was Peyton Manning, quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts. Most people became businessman, lawyers, doctors.

*Q: You went to a private school mainly because the public education wasn't that great?*

CHAPLIN: Yes. I resisted it in part because I thought that they would be snobs at this small school. My father was a great believer in public education and supported public education and frankly felt that he was doing me a disservice if I continued on in New Orleans public education. So in all it was a bit of an economic sacrifice for my parents, again working on a paper with the salary he made. He felt it was important enough that I go to that school. It was uptown. It was a few blocks further, a mile further than I would have been. It was the right choice. It opened my eyes in lots of ways. I think the individual probably most responsible for my education was my father, reading books and discussing them. There were teachers at Newman who were excellent and stimulating, and interesting in literature.

*Q: Any one teacher stick out in your mind?*

CHAPLIN: Teachers at Newman. There was a man, named Frederick, an American history professor. His wife taught French. I guess he was an excellent teacher and good at drawing students out. Since I already had a predilection for history, I think it was natural affinity. He more than others. I played basketball there and worked on the school paper, but this history professor more than others was a standout teacher for me.

*Q: Well New Orleans was pretty much an international city at that time, wasn't it?*

CHAPLIN: International in some ways, but parochial in others. Socially it was a very

stratified city, very difficult to enter. Upward mobility was quite limited. My parents saw that complete contrast years later in Hawaii which is a very open frame sort of. International, interesting character, great food, interesting sights, very interesting history, but in terms of looking towards economic progress and looking forward certainly on the race relations side, it was milder than some other places. It was a stratified place compared to Atlanta.

*Q: I remember reading somewhere, maybe it was a book called The Rising Tide or something about the great quarter 28 or whatever it was but the New Orleans city fathers had everything going for them, and in a way they did not expand in their outlook and all to carry into a thriving center and Atlanta sort of took over.*

CHAPLIN: I think that's right. A lot of factors are involved, but certainly a lot of northern money came down to Atlanta after the war. A lot of people moved there. New Orleans, as I said, not necessarily by design but maybe by fate, a city that relatively few people had real power. You had politicians who essentially kept themselves in power. The mayors kept getting re-elected. Councilmen perpetuated in power. So I think there was a lack of vision, not enough pressure bubbling up from underneath to make a change. So it did fall behind Atlanta.

*Q: When you were in New Orleans, did you pick up a feel for jazz?*

CHAPLIN: I did, but not the sort of jazz you are thinking about. I became more of a modern jazz devotee. New Orleans was the sort of city where if you were old enough to reach the bar, you could get served. I was even then kind of tall for my age. So at 16 you could go downtown, you wouldn't be asked for ID (identification) if you wanted a beer or something. I enjoyed that sort of atmosphere occasionally. I don't want to give the idea that I did this every week, but you had high school fraternities. They had parties. Juniors and seniors would sometimes invite freshman girls. There were champagne parties, that kind of social environment. But modern jazz through radio and friends. It was later in life that I became interested in Dixieland and the roots of jazz. I am following the Ken Burns series now on PBS, but I like jazz very much.

*Q: Well while you were in high school, what were you looking at for further education?*

CHAPLIN: I really wasn't sure what I wanted. I was tinkering with the idea that I thought I might like to teach or be a journalist. I was preoccupied with what most teenagers are preoccupied with, getting through this high school experience.

*Q: Many of the Foreign Service people I have interviewed majored in sports and girls.*

CHAPLIN: There was some of that. I won't claim great success with the girls, but I enjoyed the sports. I knew I was going to be something connected with communications, either writing or teaching. Those were the sorts of things I saw my father do. He did them well. I thought his idea of public service was important because he looked at journalism,

he was very realistic. I mean newspapers were a business. To stay afloat they obviously had to be profitable. But they served a sort of quasi public role to keep people informed in an objective and fair minded way. He looked upon newspapers as having an educational role as well as informational. I think I picked up some of that. I wasn't quite sure how I was going to apply it. I knew I wasn't going to go into business. I knew I didn't have the skills to be a doctor or an engineer or a lawyer. So there were certain things I was aspiring to do at that age, but I wasn't quite sure where I was going to end up.

*Q: Were you picking up any feel for the state of politics in Louisiana? One thinks of the Longs (inaudible) and the parish feudal barons, Jimmy Davis and all that sort of thing.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, some of those were powerful things to get into. I was interested in politics. I remember in my senior year we had to do a paper both for English and history class. I took the '32 democratic convention, campaign up to the convention and the convention. So I went through newspaper logs as well as Ginger, Burns and other books, because I did think that politics made a difference as well as being stimulating and interesting to read about. Louisiana politics was all around us, a lot of corruption in Louisiana, a lot of unsolved murders in Louisiana. At that time there was one Long still governor, Earl Long was governor and of course Russell Long was a senator and a powerful man in those days. Our Congressman from New Orleans was Hale Boggs. Boggs later became not speaker of the house, head of the democratic party in the House. He died in a plane crash. His wife succeeded him. His son is one of the top lobbyists in Washington. I remember Tommy Boggs campaigning with his father in an election. So, yes, Louisiana politics were colorful.

*Q: What were you thinking about when you were going to college or university? Where were you pointing yourself?*

CHAPLIN: Well I depended a lot on my father. The fact is there is a fine school, Tulane University, in New Orleans. It was always looked upon as a safety net. If you couldn't get into someplace else, you'd probably get in there. So I talked to my father, a couple of others, but mainly my father. I was looking at men's liberal arts colleges. The feeling was that in a small college, you had better access to professors because the emphasis is on teaching and not research. I applied to different schools, Williams, Amherst, Oberlin, Washington and Lee, Antioch, and Kenyon. I ended up at Kenyon. I had heard of the Kenyon Review, but I had never really read an issue before. My interest was still in History and English; I knew it was a small college. I had never been to Ohio. I didn't set foot on that campus until the first day I arrived at weekend orientation. There were days when it was cold and I had gotten a bad grade on a paper; my parents were in Hawaii by then, and I was wondering what am I doing here in this place when I could be out there. But in the end it was the best place for me.

*Q: Well you were at Kenyon from when to when?*

CHAPLIN: I started in September of 1958, graduated in June of 1962. There were 520

students, all male, and there were about 108 in the freshmen class.

*Q: Wow that is a small school. Where were the young ladies kept?*

CHAPLIN: Mainly at Dennison and Ohio Wesleyan. If you wanted to have a friend you had to call. Freshmen were not allowed to have cars. For a couple of years it turned out I didn't have a car anyway. For big time partying, you would go to Columbus which was about 50 miles away. There were a lot of bars and other places around because Ohio State commanded such a presence. But you mainly had dance weekends where you had a big dance band come in, one in the fall and one in the spring. Unless you were from Ohio, and there were a fair number of students from Ohio who had girl friends that would come up, the rest of us that dated would have to ask someone from Dennison or Ohio Wesleyan or some other school to come up for our weekend. You would have to find a place to put them up. Often faculty members' homes. There were college fraternities that were small, and in that sense, the Kenyon sense, it meant three or four fraternities sharing a dorm, but the whole college ate together. So it wasn't the type of rigidity you saw in other places. It was so small you had friends that crossed fraternity lines. There weren't great rivals and so forth. Kenyon was known for its drinking. After all it was in an isolated small town. There were occasional accidents and a couple of fatal car wrecks there during my time. Paul Newman was the big name Kenyon graduate when I was there. The other name mentioned during the partying contest was comedian Jonathan Winters who came there for a semester. Legend goes that he drank his way out in a semester and went on to greater things, but not with a Kenyon degree. One President, Rutherford B Hayes, was a Kenyon graduate. One of those few times when the president didn't get the popular vote but got the electoral vote. He was looked upon as not a particularly important president but an honest, well meaning man.

*Q: Well are you majoring in History?*

CHAPLIN: I majored in history, took some English courses. For a liberal arts degree, you had to have a certain number of years of English, literature, social sciences, physical sciences and then other things. John Q. Lansing, who was one of the great poets, had retired but was still living on campus. He came, filled in once and gave a talk. A courtly person, very nice. The Kenyon Review was a publication known by people.

*Q: Tell me about the Kenyon Review because it is a well known...*

CHAPLIN: Literary magazine.

*Q: Literary magazine. How was it at your period? Were you involved with it?*

CHAPLIN: I wasn't involved with the magazine. I did a little work on the school paper. I read an occasional issue. I think its golden days had preceded my arrival. I get the impression that it never had a great circulation. That being said, it was one of the few literary magazines that was open both to academic, published authors, professional

writers. So it had that claim. I think it was read very closely by people in that community. It didn't affect the life of the campus very much. Some students subscribed; others didn't. It had a revival a few years later. In its most successful years it was headed by a man named Robie Macauley who was also teaching English then. After editing it for several years, he went on to become the fiction editor of Playboy, presumably larger resources at his disposal than he had at the Review, maybe he upped the quality of Playboy literature. I don't know.

*Q: Well '58 to '62, this is the end of the Eisenhower period and early Kennedy. Did you get involved in politics?*

CHAPLIN: I wasn't involved in campus politics but I was extremely interested in the '60 election. I wasn't old enough to vote quite yet. I didn't become eligible until '61, the end of '61. But Kennedy captured the imagination for many of us. I think indirectly, not just the lifestyle that was portrayed, but more than that the call for service and in some ways a revitalized interest in public service led to my eventual way into the Foreign Service. I didn't think in Foreign Service or civil service terms when I was a student at Kenyon when Kennedy was campaigning, but I think it did have some impact. It was an exciting election. Again because of the small size of the campus, I don't think either party had a club. If they did it was minuscule, not very vociferous. But we stayed up all night and watched the results. I was pleased that Kennedy had won. I did not like Nixon. Part of that was style, but I think it was the feeling that the Eisenhower period, however it may have been viewed by people at the time or historians since, was looked upon by 20-year-olds as being kind of boring. Time for a new generation, time to pass the torch. Here was this very attractive articulate young man. That was the main part of it. I think it was the style and secondary was the Catholic issue, and the fact that this was the first time a Catholic had been elected president.

*Q: I recall way back then that the policies of a candidate were a case in point.*

CHAPLIN: Well you had Al Smith. He hadn't made it and you hadn't had a Catholic nominated since then. Kennedy combined partly the evolution of society, partly a lot of money from his father and others, and partly his own personal attractiveness in many senses of the word. Times had changed.

*Q: Well were you following all this time international affairs, subscribing to the New York Times or some English paper.*

CHAPLIN: Well with a couple of friends we read the Times if not every day almost every day at the fraternity dorm or the library. The Cleveland Plain Dealer, local news, big paper. I was in ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) so I knew that on graduation I owed the government two years of service, so that was my immediate focus. I wanted to go on to graduate school probably to be a teacher possibly to be a journalist, but I was taking it a step at a time. So I did have an interest in international affairs. This was driven home even more when I was in the air force and went through the Cuba crisis in '62 when

I was stationed in Alabama. There were bets among air force officers whether we would go into Cuba or not, that kind of thing. At college there was a general interest but no real area specialization. I took Spanish to take care of the language requirement not thinking I would necessarily ever use it again. A general interest on some of the big issues but not really a profound depth in terms of my understanding.

*Q: Did you get involved in sort of UN clubs or, you know other organizations?*

CHAPLIN: Not really. There weren't any on campus. The Kenyon curriculum was demanding so a lot of my time was focused on that and playing sports and debating. Because of the size of the school and its remoteness, and maybe the era, there wasn't a great international issue. Occasionally we would get a speaker who would come in. I remember someone coming, M. Stanton Evans, who was then at National Review, and bringing in a film on the House on Un-American Activities Committee. He was praising it. Some of us just sort of rebelled against the idea of the McCarthy period. So we had a kind of interest in and a revulsion of suspicion of Americans for unorthodox activities or views, but not in an organized way.

*Q: Any point in the world attract you at this point?*

CHAPLIN: I was thinking of Latin America. At one point my father, partly because of his own interest and close proximity of New Orleans to Central America, went down there on occasion for newspaper reports. All of it was not hard news but commentary and analysis. He talked to me one summer when he went down to Costa Rica to report on United Fruit or some of these companies. It kind of appealed to me in a way to have exposure to another language. It became moot when I had to take a summer school course which knocked me out of the possibilities. I really am not sure I was mature enough to benefit from these experiences, but he was guiding me toward that. Again not the region as a whole but its proximity to New Orleans made Latin America more interesting to me. I read about Europe. I knew less about Asia and Africa and the Middle East. I thought if anything I would like to do in the foreign service in whatever capacity I am in, it would probably be Latin America.

*Q: The air force, was there a commitment?*

CHAPLIN: That was going to be three years of a public commitment and a part of a maturation process. I thought that in that period besides fulfilling it, I thought it was kind of an obligation and something I wanted to do at that time. I was not a cold warrior. I did not want to be a pilot. Vietnam was going on. I felt I needed some time away from academia. I knew I was going to graduate school. I knew I wasn't going to make the air force a career. I did feel that I needed to do at least three years, so that was my focus. While in the air force, as I was considering schools, I was reading a book a week. Sometimes I slipped and took two weeks. A lot of monographs on different periods of American history including diplomatic history, foreign missions, foreign relations.



*Q: Well while in New Orleans did you pick up on the Civil War?*

CHAPLIN: There was some interest. I think I had a decent grounding in the battles. I wasn't a fanatic about it. I was more interested in 20th century American history, the muckrakers, the trust busters, Roosevelt. That is what attracted me.

*Q: Well air force. In the air force did you have a special skill?*

CHAPLIN: Essentially I was doing public affairs. I was assigned to Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. That is the center for the Air Force professional schools. The Air War College is there as is the Command and Staff College. I worked at the wing level so we put out the support to the colleges. It was during George Wallace's first term when he stood in the door in Tuscaloosa trying to block integration of the University of Alabama. I met Wallace on a couple of occasions. There was a federal prison on the base itself. If the governor of Mississippi had been arrested or something similar with James Meredith, that's where he would have been sent. Later, John Mitchell, after he was found guilty as attorney general in the Watergate affair, that is where he served his time, at that prison on that base. So I didn't get out of the U.S. It was running the base newspaper, liaison with the public.

*Q: This is '62 or...*

CHAPLIN: '65. Bobby Kennedy came down when he was attorney general to try to talk about student support for the civil rights. So it was an interesting vantage point in terms of events that I knew were going to be important in American history. The Selma march for civil rights occurred while I was there. This is also when Goldwater was a candidate in '64, and the phenomena of republican conservative inroads in what had been bastions of democratic support for decades became apparent. It was an interesting time there, not so much for the work I did in the air force, as being in that community during that period. I was a second lieutenant, a first lieutenant. If I had stayed in at all I was destined for Vietnam. That gave me fits. I knew because I had received my pre orders. In fact I got released a couple of months early because of a budget crunch, and they decided to release some of the service personnel. So I was glad I did the tour. I got to see some contemporary history in the making. Found out a little bit about government. This was my first real exposure to government, the military side of it. I met some very capable, dedicated people. I met some people who were almost stereotypes like you would see in Dr. Strangelove. I remember the Kennedy assassination. It was during November in 1963. I remember coming back from lunch, hearing on the radio he had been wounded. I heard he had been killed. A ceremony was going to be at four. So I remember going up to my boss who was a civilian at the time. I said, "I guess this parade is canceled." Nothing had come down from Washington. He said, "No we are going to go ahead with it." So it struck me as at the very least being disrespectful and in poor taste to go on with a parade. But because word had not officially come down from Washington, or because the commander in chief of that base didn't think in those terms, the ceremony went ahead. There was one minute of silence. The band music was a little bit different. But the

ceremony proceeded. I think a lot of people's attention was distracted as they went ahead with this. It was not only a reminder of the chain of command and that all things come from up above. There is very little independent freedom of action taken if you have seen certain occasions like this.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the attitude of the air force which maybe later years you would see was a different breed of cat than say the army?*

CHAPLIN: I am not sure I am a good basis for comparison between the services. I think there certainly was a feeling among air force officers, and among navy and marine officers too, that the air force was a superior force. It was modern; the others were old traditional. That was particularly true among the pilots who were sort of glory guys, the gods of the air force. The war college did bring occasional representatives from other services in to attend their courses, but it was predominately air force. There certainly was the belief that air power could just about do it all. Despite I think, some proof to the contrary, that you really needed a combination of forces and bombing however precise, as the term later became surgical, by itself might in theory be able to accomplish the national goals. In fact it wasn't enough. You needed a combination of functions that the various services performed. There were some very capable people and the pilots being a special breed, and you had the feeling they might have been just as happy being pilots for the navy or marines. They just wanted to fly planes. They embodied the strategy given the special role of the air force. But the others, the planners, the strategists and some others I think really believed to the core that the air force was a superior one.

*Q: Did you ever run into Curtis LeMay?*

CHAPLIN: No. I certainly knew of the name. He was already a legend in those times, but I did not come across him.

*Q: I was going to ask about the Cuban crisis. You were pretty close to the action.*

CHAPLIN: Well it might be, yes. This was not an operational base but, nonetheless, you had pilots there and others who could be called in. So everyone was glued to TV. TV of course, in 1963, wasn't quite what it became later with satellite TV and so forth. Nonetheless, there was great suspense, and a period there, when it became public knowledge what was going on, of uncertainty. Some people in the air force, obviously eager to put their training into action, thought that we ought to take belligerent action against Cubans and probably thought it would be over very quickly. There were others who felt, no, this isn't what the U.S. should do. We shouldn't strike first. Let's try diplomacy. We of course had this new movie out which I guess got good reviews, Thirteen Days. It talks about how the president went back and forth. In many ways he was the coolest head in the room; even Dean Acheson and some other diplomats suggested military action. One of the things that influenced my understanding of the power of communication was that period in watching TV and how it affected public opinion, and then later that year the Kennedy assassination. You saw events unfold, including, as you

were watching an update on things, looking at TV when a camera goes into a Dallas jail and Jack Ruby pulls a gun and kills Lee Harvey Oswald before your eyes. It is almost like a Disney film going on. And the power of the medium to attract people, to inform people, to affect emotion, to unify people was a message that was very powerful and strong for me. It resonated, and it was a reminder again of the importance of public opinion, also the importance of the communications system, free and unfettered in terms of molding public opinion.

*Q: What was your, you know this was still the movie culture, what were some of your favorite films?*

CHAPLIN: A Man for All Seasons, Thomas More and the dilemmas he went through. Mr. Roberts, I particularly liked. On the Waterfront, the underdog triumphing over the bosses in a New York longshoreman's union. The great Leonard Bernstein music. I guess popular films more than art films. I have enjoyed documentaries very much, but in terms of things really being memorable, those were films I remember very well. The Viva Zapata film with Marlon Brando who played a very romantic and dashing Zapata back in the early '50s. The Caine Mutiny was a film that I found very powerful and well done. So a lot of films that have either an historical basis at one point or another, were dramatic in terms of their cineographic skills in order to hold the audience's attention. Great acting I greatly appreciated. There was another one, was it Seven Days in May?

*Q: Yes, it was Seven Days in May, Kirk Douglas, Burt Lancaster. I saw it just recently again.*

CHAPLIN: The military coup, the attempt to overthrow the president which is a powerful sort of thing. I read the book first. I liked The Ugly American. Part of that was because one of the co authors, William Lederer, I knew slightly. Lederer and Berman talked about again a Marlon Brandon film, talked about American presence in Asia and our attempt to stave off communism and social reformers in terms of our own strategic interest. Interesting film. What does turn me off, while I can admire the cineographic skill that goes into it, are some of the Oliver Stone films because I find things historic. And whether it was the Kennedy assassination, the Nixon who I didn't find a sympathetic character, again I felt it was sort of a caricature. Stone knows how to make great films. He is a great entertainer. Unfortunately, in the guise of presenting history, and an almost documentary film. Those who don't read widely, who are young and don't remember that period, can take that as the Cliffs Notes. I think they get misguided.

*Q: Well you were sort of, talking about films and all, as you were going on you were bringing up your repertoire for USIS.*

CHAPLIN: I guess that was sort of coming, unknowingly at the time. When I finished the air force and decided I want to go to graduate school, I knew it was going to be American history. I decided because I had gone to a small college, I wanted to go to a large university. I also decided I wanted to go on the west coast, so I applied to several schools

in the University of California system. I did apply to one smaller graduate school, Clermont. I ended up at UCLA in American history. There was an historian there, George Mauer, who wrote a great deal about the progressive period. Once I got there, I found out he taught one class of Ph.D. candidates, and was a name on the board. I never saw the great man. I never did take a class from him. But I did major in American history. The Chairman at the time was a bright youngish guy, probably not much older than we were. I remember him telling us that there were more people beginning to do graduate work in history at UCLA than there were in my undergraduate college. There were 520 at Kenyon, 100 or so doing graduate work in history at UCLA. This guy was a diplomatic historian, more of a political historian, a guy named Robert Dowley. Since then he wrote books on Johnson and others and appears on Jim Lehrer all the time commenting on presidential things. He was the chairman. I remember him saying only one of each three of you will go through and get your Ph.D. and make it all the way. I went for my masters, mainly American history courses, but I took a bit of British Empire and a political science course on Supreme Court decisions. This was when Ronald Reagan was governor. The big free speech movement was going on at Berkeley. Mario Savio among others. Vietnam was bursting all around. I thought I was really going to be a scholar. I wasn't an original thinker. I needed something more practical. I decided I would finish my masters, but then I wanted to do something else. I didn't think I had the patience, perhaps not the interest, and certainly there were a lot of economic disincentives to teach history at the high school. I knew at the university level the Ph.D. was a union card. I wasn't quite prepared to do that, and so I wasn't quite sure where I was going to go. In between semesters, I finished my first year. I was about to come back and do some courses. Then I was going to take a comprehensive exam instead of a thesis. You had your choice for a masters. A friend of my father's, who worked with him on the business side in a newspaper in San Diego before he moved, was the number two man at USIA. His name was Howard Chernoff. And Chernoff came at the behest of Leonard Marks who got appointed USIA director by Lyndon Johnson. Marks being a communications lawyer, Chernoff knowing a lot about communications proper. Howard said, "If you are not sure, why don't you come and be a summer intern." So in summer '66 I came and was a summer intern. He assigned me to work in the near east area office, with an officer named Alan Carter. Several USIA officers who were mid level, or were just beginning to get to senior level, were in that office: deputy area director, desk officers, policy officer. A couple of them went on to be ambassadors later, John Sherwin and some others, Cliff Kern. I kind of enjoyed the experience. Again I was seeing government inside. This was in '66. Actually at the end of my two months they offered me an opportunity to stay. I said, "I have got to get back and finish my masters degree." So I went back to UCLA. I found out that the foreign service exam, which in those days was offered only once a year, the first Saturday in December, was the same exact day as my Masters comps. I went to the head of the history department, a man named Dr. Fisher and I said, "Can I take the comprehensive exam the day before or take it the day after? This one day is bad for me." He said, "Absolutely not. There is no precedent. You can't do it." So I took my masters and then finished. I had gotten word in a couple of weeks or so that I had gotten through, that I was getting the degree. UCLA was on the trimester system, and I decided I wanted to come back for one trimester to take some other courses.

*Q: Your family was in Hawaii?*

CHAPLIN: Hawaii. I came back and unfortunately the first week I started taking these classes, I was hit with hepatitis, the non infectious type. In fact I was staying off my feet for a week and not having any alcohol or chocolate for a year. It didn't really affect my class schedule. I was playing some basketball. I had to stop all physical activity. I took these for a semester. Then I took about a month off in Hawaii, then went to Washington on a temporary USIA appointment. This is now late spring or early summer of '67. Shortly after I got there, there was a Cyprus crisis. Cyrus Vance was sent by the President to work on Cyprus. I remember that because that was the day I was going to take the foreign service exam, and I drew weekend watch officer duty. What happens if the balloon goes up and I am trying to study for this and so forth. So I was actually on the USIA payroll in a temporary appointment when I took the foreign service exam. Got through the written. The oral exam in those days consisted of the candidate going before a panel of officers. This was at the old civil service building, OPM building I guess. I remember going in and then sitting outside. They would call you back in and tell how you did. I remember because there were two officers from State and one from USIA. They faulted me for my lack of knowledge of economic affairs.

*Q: That is the standard. I got that.*

CHAPLIN: Perfectly correct. They asked me how I would solve the Vietnam War. We did some role playing in terms of one of the panelists saying he was a French student. He wanted me to defend American education. Only the rich can go to school. I had to say which were my favorite Russian poets. I had to put contemporary American art on the walls and in an embassy, who were the stars, all over the map. I got out and they said I did reasonably well. I went home, and I was living at that time with two young men, two State Department officers, in a townhouse on Kalorama Road just off Connecticut Avenue. That night, the night of the day when I got the word I had gotten through this thing and was just waiting for the appointment register was the night Martin Luther King was killed. The city went up in flames. Kalorama Road where we lived was not very far from Adams Road and Columbia Road. I still remember the sight from the USIA building at that time at 1750 Pennsylvania and 1776, of national guardsmen in jeeps going down Pennsylvania Avenue.

*Q: Actually I think you had the other troops in there too.*

CHAPLIN: You had a whole lot of troops. You stayed glued to television to see what areas were burning. Obviously there were certain extremists who were instigating one group or another. It kind of marred the celebration of that night for me, but again I was being right at the spot where some history was being made. I got sworn in that summer in the June class. At that time, in the A-100 entering officer class, USIA and State were combined. It was a big class. I think USIA had about 26 or so, and State had a larger number. Among my classmates on the State side was Jim Leach who later became

Congressman Leach from Iowa, Chris Ross, son of a distinguished ambassador, who later became an ambassador himself, and a couple of others, Marilyn McAfee who later became ambassador to Guatemala. It was a good group. We were close in many ways. But after six weeks we split and went our separate ways. I had expressed an interest in Latin America, and my first assignment was Argentina.

*Q: Well while this was all going on including the air force and all, was there a significant other in this process?*

CHAPLIN: I met my future wife when I was in Washington working under this temporary status before I had taken the exam. She was a lawyer with the SEC from Cleveland, had gone to the University of Pittsburgh, majored in economics, and then went to Western Reserve law school, and came to the SEC. At that time, this was '67 I guess, there weren't a lot of women lawyers around, certainly not in government. We dated for about a year and a half. We were married on February 1, 1969. I was in Spanish language training. We were married on a Saturday. I got Saturday, Sunday, and Monday off and we went to Eastern Maryland for our honeymoon in the middle of winter. Tuesday I was back in language class. She wasn't able to take the language then; she was still working. Then in April we headed off to Argentina. We stopped off in Panama and Peru. A delayed honeymoon.

*Q: She must have had some real problems with being a lawyer, having a sort of potential for a strong Career. The way things were in those days, I mean you pretty well had to give it up.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, I think it was. As I told people I convinced her the U.S. government's interests were better served if she accompanied me to Argentina than if she was regulating Wall Street and different companies in terms of the SEC. It was a big decision. I was very fortunate that she made that decision. She did hope that she was going to be able to use her law overseas. In Argentina we actually made some contacts. In good polite Latin American fashion, there was one man who even said, "Now this will be your office when you come next week. I just have to talk to one partner about this." We never heard from the person again. So that was also part of her education experience how different cultures handle turning you down in different ways. We were married in '69 and then our first son came in '73. She did have one job experience when we were up in northwestern Mexico and she worked for one of the predecessors of DEA doing secretarial, administrative work. She was doing work which was below her intellectual capabilities. Then the family came and it wasn't until many years later when we came back after the children had grown that she tried to get back into the work force. She found that not only did she have to take the Virginia bar and study for it, after already being a member of the DC bar, but there weren't jobs around. Women lawyers were a dime a dozen by this time, 20 years later. But she stuck with it and she is now a lawyer with the board of appeals at the Veterans Administration.

*Q: You were there in Argentina from when to when?*

CHAPLIN: I arrived in Argentina in April of '69 and left I think it was probably July of '70. For USIA in those days you had a one year orientation tour in an embassy. It was mainly to be spent in the USIS area, but they also wanted you to have exposure to other parts of the embassy. John Davis Lodge was the ambassador; he came a few weeks after I got there. It was a big USIS post. It had probably 12 or 13 Americans including a labor information officer as well as three or four assistant information officers and three or four cultural attaches, a deputy public affairs officer, a public affairs officer. I, as a junior officer trainee, worked in the information section in the front office. I did a month in the political section, a month in the economic section, and a month in the consular section as well. So I did get good exposure. This was the time when you had generals running the show in Argentina. I remember watching on TV as one general ousted another general. There was no bloodshed because a couple of tanks lined up in front of the palace. The general exited. Another general entered. Everyone had supper on time. Vietnam was still going on, and the civil rights movement was still going on. I dealt mainly with Argentine university students. I was struck by the fact that there were almost two poles of thought, with not very many people in between, among these people's attitudes towards what was going on in the U.S. Some would see the civil rights disturbances and say that is terrible. Why don't you give the black citizens their rights and so forth. Others would say why do you let these people protest at all. Just club them on the head and have order. Vietnam was also another thing where opinion was divided. Everyone agreed we were handling it poorly. Some said we shouldn't be in. Others were saying you need to use bombs and act like the big power you are. Argentina in those days, and to some extent still, less so in the 30 plus years that have passed, was totally European oriented. That's where the people had come from. There had been relatively little contact with the U.S. and that was because of distance. The longest, at least at that time, '69, the longest flight from the U.S. non-stop I think was New York to Buenos Aires. So you had distance; you had cultural attitudes that were really Europe focus, not U.S. focus. Relatively few people had been in the U.S. and did not have a great deal of understanding about it. So it was a challenge to try to put things into perspective, not only our institutions but what our policies were.

*Q: There were really no indigenous people there were there?*

CHAPLIN: The Argentines had taken care of them the previous century. They had essentially eliminated their Indian problem. It was always a country with potential, a strong middle class, 95% literacy. I think after W.W.II they had the third or fourth largest gold reserves in the world when the government under Peron came in. Great agricultural union products, wonderful beef. All the indices said that the country should take off. However, as one commentator once put it in the New York Times in their annual international economic review, at that time there were 23 million people in Argentina. He said you had 23 million people in a hotel, all calling room service and wanting to be served first. The country was so rich in so many ways that it could get by without uniting and making sacrifices for a common purpose. Everyone went their own way. It was only later when economic times became more difficult that the country suffered for lack of unity. One friend of mine told a story, again this bring up ties to Europe in the past, in the

mid-'20s at a party. They were talking and she said oh she really wished she were in England at this time. You know, it was spring and it was lovely, the kids in their school uniforms and bicycles and riding around. She just painted this idyllic picture. He said, "Well when were you last there?" She said, "Oh, I have never been there." So this is a mother telling you what England is like and this person thinking that England is where allegiance is, not Argentina. So you have this sort of thing going on there. At the same time, a culturally rich community, famous for its opera, theater, so on and so forth. The job was not that particularly fascinating because I was doing a lot of rather mop up work in a secondary sort of responsibility. I was paying my dues, learning the ways of the foreign service. Like every foreign service officer, you take away certain memories of your first assignment. I think they were basically positive about Argentina. My wife liked the life style. There were cafes where she could go and have afternoon tea, you know sandwiches and that sort of thing. She was fond of that sort of business. We made some friends and some of them have lasted in the 30-plus years since. But I was eager, in fact even before I went to Argentina, I had asked to be assigned to a small embassy. I wanted to get my teeth into things right away, and to send me to Argentina which was a big one, defeated my request. Then they sent me to Mexico City which is one of the largest posts in the world. There is a message here; they don't trust me out on my own or something. There again it was a new position created as sort of a special assistant to the public affairs officer. In Mexico City we had an even bigger staff than in Argentina. We had a lot of consulates and a southern branch with public affairs officer positions. A fine place to be. This was '70-'73.

*Q: '70-'73. The ambassador was...*

CHAPLIN: Robert McBride when I was there. The deputy chief of mission was Jack Kubisch. In the political section was Bob Service who later became ambassador. The political counselor was Freeman Mathews.

*Q: What a strong embassy, very professional.*

CHAPLIN: It was. It had a good staff. George Wylans was the public affairs officer. It was an interesting assignment. Mexico and Argentina are night and day. Instead of a lot of European things you see a lot of Indian things in Mexico. Mexico City bigger than Buenos Aires, less European architecture, dress style, everything. More poverty, more diversity in terms of the culture. If you wanted to see ruins, you went 50 miles one way; you wanted a colonial town you went 100 miles another way. If you wanted a beach you went this way. Whereas in Buenos Aires you had pampa and pampa and more pampa, the grasslands once you left. We did travel extensively in Argentina, but a lot of it by plane because of the distances. So Mexico was exciting. The president was Luis Echeverria, one of the old third-world style types who really looked for ways to distance himself from the U.S. Extremely critical of the U.S., very vociferous in his treatment of Mexican Americans including illegal aliens. Any time the U.S. would say something, well, that is interference in Mexico's internal affairs, but he didn't see any sort of limitation on his comments on U.S. practices. Vietnam was still going on. Civil rights was still an issue. I



left Mexico City; unexpectedly an opening came up in one of the branch posts in Hermosillo in the state of Sonora, northwest Mexico. So I was the public affairs officer for three states, Sonora, Sinaloa and Baja California. We had, I guess, four or five consulates in this region, all with big bilateral problems: Americans in jail on drugs. Agriculture exports to the U.S. which was always a neuralgic topic. Salinity of the Colorado River flowing down, so it was very interesting in terms of the subject matter. You were running your own show however modest it was. It was a time of considerable violence in Mexico, guerrilla violence, not where I was but more around the center of the country. There was an American consul kidnapped, Perry William Hardy, when I was there. So security officers told us to be watchful. The universities were very leftist. I would go and try to get speakers in. Sometimes I could, sometimes I couldn't. There were a couple of events in Mexico when I was in Hermosillo when I tried to have speakers on American foreign policy where a university classroom was barricaded, students refusing to let us in. This same speaker in this instance was to give a talk in our little library the next night. I got a call from the Mexican police who said there is a threat to blow up my building if this guy spoke and so forth. So even in that little kind of rural community there were visceral feelings about some of the issues. A lot of students in Mexico, and in many other countries including maybe our own as well, started off very leftist as students, and later moved into the establishment very easily and became businessmen and others. This was just one phase of their lives. The U.S. relationship with northwestern Mexico was good. There was a lot of travel back and forth, some investment. American tourists went over. But official American policy was something scoffed at, yelled at, criticized.

*Q: We had the Nixon administration.*

CHAPLIN: We had Watergate going on while I was there. Trying to explain that and put that in context was difficult. It was even more difficult in my next assignment, when he resigned, which was Romania. But Mexico was hard enough. Kissinger was Secretary of State, and pushed nothing about Latin America; he didn't care. Jack Kubisch who had been DCM in Mexico City then became assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs. Mexico was exciting, again it was just my wife and I. This is before kids came. We traveled a fair amount. We made good Mexican friends. I enjoyed running my own little operation. It was a good experience and a fascinating country.

*Q: Did you find there was any way to bridge the gap with the students and intellectuals on what we were doing in Vietnam, to have them understand or have a better appreciation, or was this just almost a hopeless task?*

CHAPLIN: I think it was kind of a hopeless task because there was no open mind at all. Occasionally people would listen to what you had to say, but they really weren't interested in that. They didn't see it affecting their lives. It was an easy target to get at us, to be critical of us for other reasons in the Mexican psyche. This was one more example to them of our arrogance, and so that was difficult. What I attempted to do was something I believe I did throughout my career overseas. It really hit me more and more as I went to different posts. Maybe I have a limited object, I don't know. That is, what do people look

to the United States for? To the degree that you can get beyond issues of the moment, however unpalatable they may be to a host audience. Be it a trade dispute with that country, military intervention in that country, that region, whatever it is, you have got to discuss that. But the longer lasting effects I think you have are in the realm of what does the U.S. stand for and what does it offer these people in terms of ideas. These can be political ideas on democracy; they can be a pragmatic aspect on how we develop things and how we organize ourselves. It can be certainly American pop culture which is both an entree to some places and an obstacle in explaining American values in another way. But you talk the things and you try to identify a community of interest. I did this later in Romania, a communist society, on energy alternatives. People talk about depleting energy. They talk about the problems. What are the ideas going on in the things which are environmentally friendly, practical in application that might be a benefit for a host country. New developments in agriculture, philanthropy and the role of non governmental organizations, volunteerism. Different aspects of your organizational entities or ideas that we have about how society functions and then offer them out. People can accept them or reject them for their own society, but at least it creates a little better understanding of where we come from. It is not just the fact that we have got a lot of natural resources and put a lot of money into something. It is because you allow for individual entrepreneurs and individual innovation. You give the individual, not just the government, a role in developing things. This explains how we got to where we are. That means having freedom of association, a free press, putting a lot of money into research, not politicizing universities, creating the best public education system you can. You come at it in different ways, and generally exchange programs lend themselves to this sort of understanding so that you get a multiply effect. You look at those issues, not just what is the hot button issue of the moment which is transient. It is going to be there or be replaced by something else. How do you dig below that to try to really create an understanding and a context. So I tend to focus, while not ignoring the former, a lot of effort in trying to design programs, activities, talks, speakers, exchange programs which got at what the U.S. was about and how did it achieve what it has done, and what's in it for your country X, Mexico, Romania, whoever you are in terms of saying well gee that aspect might be useful to apply within our own culture. I know that is interesting, not useful but at least I have a better insight into why you guys are who you are. We are unique. You have a lot of societies which are homogenous; we are heterogeneous. The heterogeneity makes us I think a more creative vital dynamic place, but also causes tensions. Ethnic tensions, racial tensions, whatever. Homogeneous societies where people are the same religion, same background like the Japanese or others have a different mindset because they come from the same sort of background. So we explain why we are different in that way. We don't have a president who is all powerful as you did in Mexico until recently. We have a congress that is not a rubber stamp congress, so when you do a treaty with somebody you have to explain that it is subject to congressional approval. In most cases they can say, oh, come on, that is going to happen. Well it may or may not happen. An independent judiciary. When we get to Romanian I can go into that a bit more. But to try to point out our uniqueness because most countries even though they may be favorably disposed toward us, don't understand us beyond pop culture, consumer products, marketing and advertising, the strength of our military, and then the jazzy things like space exploration.

To get to that deeper understanding, you have to approach it somewhat differently: try to identify common interests, and then just reiterate, coming back at it repetitively.

*Q: Well, Mexico has always had very strong ties to the United States. It has always been odd that the one area in which the Mexican government always has given the freedom to act with its foreign relations. It seems that the ministry of foreign affairs is sort of a hotbed of anti American leftists. Did you find this? Did you get any reflections of this?*

CHAPLIN: Yes, I think you see that historically. Part of that is because it is an easy sop to give to the left in Mexican society the idea that you are bashing the U.S. politically over the head. Part of it is because of this sense of national sovereignty, and the Mexican leadership feels that it has to demonstrate it is not in the hip pocket of the U.S. The way you do that is by making strong speeches or taking an action which is popular domestically but not popular with us. But generally not at the risk of cutting off their own nose to spite their face. So I think that is true. You now have a somewhat conservative president. I say somewhat because his party has been the very conservative party in Mexican history. He won with that party, but he is not totally of that party, and so he has appointed a leftist prime minister, Jorge Castaneda, who has taught in the United States, was critical of NAFTA, critical of the U.S. on lots of issues, but now he is governing. I think there will be times when you will disagree with him and times, because it serves Mexico's interest in an increasingly global community, that they side with us. The rhetoric may not always be that way, but the actions I think probably will be in most instances. They are also looking at us in terms of Mexico's relationship with the rest of the region. They want to be looked upon as kind of a northern power in the region, as Brazil is trying to find that same role in the south. It all comes vis-a-vis us because we are in the same region. So the rhetorical stuff, I think might continue. As Mexicans like to remind you, half of their best territory is called Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico. Those wounds will always be there below the surface. I think there is such a commonality of interest in trying to be pragmatic about it, and this is most demonstrable on the border where opportunities for collaboration exist, and some are done on a regional level without national governments getting involved. But there are also obstacles and difficulties in, say, illegal immigration, drugs. There are many problems; all occur on the border. So President Fox will focus on the border. Immigration of any sort, legal or illegal, has been a great safety valve for Mexico in it's own efforts to preserve economic development. Yet they are sensitive about Mexicans fleeing. It is ambivalent. They need it practically, but they don't like to admit that Mexicans have to leave because they can't live in their own country. So Fox has tried to come up with some new ideas on that. We are in a unique position. I am not sure where it will lead, if anywhere, but you have got a president-elect (George W. Bush) who knows something about Mexico because of Texas-Mexican relations, and I think there is an interest in Mexico. The speaker on our program today said, as have others, that Mexico probably ranks up there with the top two, three, four countries in the world in terms of U.S. national security. Not because they have got nuclear weapons or anything, but because of the human issues involved. A destabilized Mexico would be incredibly harmful to the United States. The economy, preservation of human rights, you name it, would put tremendous pressures on our system. So it is in our

interest to keep Mexico stable, have economic investment, see in their eyes democratically. I think you work at that, at the same time you realize the issues of friction that have come along and will be criticized.

*Q: When you were there, this would be '70-'73, did you see the PRI was going to be there and any cracks in that?*

CHAPLIN: I don't think so. I think back in those days one just assumed. They had all the governorships. They had the municipalities. It was all encompassing everywhere. You knew there were these groups out there making some noise, but in most cases A. they were ineffectual, and B. to some degree, this varied from Mexican president to Mexican president, they got some financial help from the PRI just to keep the appearance of opposition alive. But the PRI was not willing to risk the loss of power. In those days I don't think anyone would have predicted that less from 30 years ahead you would have a non-PRI president. They had the most hope for it, but I don't remember anyone in the embassy predicting that. I don't remember any foreign journalists predicting that. Mexicans weren't predicting that. It was just assumed that was who you had to work with, and you had to do the best you could.

*Q: Were you concerned about kidnappings, terrorism or any of that?*

CHAPLIN: Well, there was a concern, but this was a period in which there were different kidnappings of U.S. officials going on. As I mentioned there was the consul general in Guadalajara who had been kidnapped, was released fortunately not harmed. So there was that. Often in a small isolated area in northwest Mexico. I was the only American there in our office. There was a consul general there so we maybe had five or six other Americans. There are no bodyguards. You were kind of left to your own devices in this community. Drugs were coming up from Sinaloa, so that was a dangerous area. You occasionally altered your route to work and you did what you could, but I think many of us were fatalistic. You do what you can and what happens, happens. It was also part of U.S. government policy not to negotiate for overseas diplomats. If they were kidnapped

*Q: Could you have an effective exchange program in Mexico, or was there so much traffic going there and back that we didn't...*

CHAPLIN: No, I think in those days you could. There were a couple of practical questions that came up. One was who might be rising in the system. Who would you like to see go on an exchange program and who would be willing to identify under a U.S. government grant. Secondly, mastery of English. And, despite proximity, most Mexican journalists did not speak English. A lot of Mexican academics did not speak English, and leaders in the business sector and so forth also didn't. So you had some obviously university-to-university private sector exchange programs going on, but we did a fair amount. I think we wished we would have had money to do more. In subsequent years a lot more money has been put in by both governments and the Mexican private sector to increase exchanges. Illustrative of this, you see two Mexican presidents, I guess three

Mexican presidents back to back, de la Madrid to Salinas to Zedillo as people who got advanced degrees at U.S. universities, de la Madrid and Salinas from Harvard and Zedillo from Yale. Now these were technocrats, and this was part of the group that looked more toward pragmatic solutions and weren't part of the old political class in the sense of political bosses. These were very capable people of the world, very different personalities. So whether they went in private meetings or got some sort of scholarship to go I think that exposure to the U.S. and U.S. education was extremely important. Our government sometimes, and by government I mean government in the large sense, Congress, OMB, others, not just State Department or USIA, doesn't think in macro terms. We are so challenged and there is so much political pressure to deal with the here and now and contemporary political issues and policy issues and security issues. We lose sight of the fact with exchanges, particularly those involving Mexicans coming to the United States either for academic study or professional training visits or law training visits, that the payoff may not be immediate. But, if you have chosen wisely enough of the people that you have selected or have helped, will rise in positions of influence either in the government or private sector. This will filter down to our national interest because they will understand the U.S. In some cases they will want to develop a program or organization patterned on something they had experienced in the U.S. Or their minds have just been expanded and they think in more broader terms than they would had they been only educated in Mexican universities. So the costs are minuscule compared to defense costs or others. But because the payoff isn't so quick, sometimes those who had the power of the purse in the U.S. government don't consider that part of our security interest as well.

*Q: How did you find Echeverria? Was he...*

CHAPLIN: Echeverria was a difficult person; I didn't know him personally. I met him on a couple of occasions, but he was a very difficult man. He had a leftist agenda. He wanted to be a leader of the developing world. The third world, as you may remember back in the 70's, had Sukarno and Nasser and others looking for a way between the U.S. and the communist bloc. Echeverria had aspirations to be Secretary General of the UN. So a lot of his decisions and pronouncements have to be in the context of he is looking beyond his present means. He wants to see how this plays elsewhere. My memory is that the U.S. interlocutors with him, whether assigned to Mexico City or from Washington visiting, had a very tough time with this guy because he wasn't really a willing listener or participant. He was off playing other games. Echeverria had been at the Interior Department and was the one responsible for the gunning down of the students in the Place de Tlatelolco.

*Q: Yes, prior to the Olympics.*

CHAPLIN: The 1968 Olympics when the Mexicans wanted to get any semblance of protest against the government system out of the international view lest it sully the international image the Mexicans wanted. So he and interior had the responsibility of getting rid of protesters. We still to this day don't know how many people were killed.

Obviously those who were responsible for the killing at whatever level were never held accountable.

*Q: Did you find there was a strong core of Mexican experts in our embassy?*

CHAPLIN: I think we had some very capable people. You had some great people in the political section, the economic section. I think CIA had some very capable officers as well, very experienced. Our commercial section I would know less about. I think USIS had a pretty good staff including some people who had prior Mexican experience. Ambassador McBride was a very capable solid diplomat, very low key, not a particularly strong speaker in public terms. I think effective in working government channels. His deputy chief of mission was Jack Kubisch, a handsome person, very good Spanish, very capable inside manager, and someone who was very good also at external presentations. I remember being one of the drafters of a speech that Ambassador McBride gave, I think to the chamber of commerce, which was about why can you sell Coca Cola but not your foreign policy abroad. I don't recall if that was the Ambassador's choice or whether he was just given a topic. It may have been he was given a topic. I remember thinking here was my very first experience of speech writing for an ambassador, and I was given very little notice, like two days, three days to sort of work on this crash project. Whatever I wrote went through a couple of more drafts. It is illustrative of the recognition of the success of U.S. business and U.S. marketing abroad and the difficulty of "selling" or explaining or gaining support for American foreign policy objectives abroad. Mexico was an important case of this because it is so close and such an important country. Because it is so close and because our histories have been intertwined and often bitter, it makes it even a harder sell than a market which is much further away and there was less of the emotional baggage in the relationship.

*Q: Well while you were there, what focus had you on the Untied States? Watergate was over by that time?*

CHAPLIN: No, Watergate was going quite fresh. I remember at that time picking up Voice of America which was broadcasting the hearings that the senate committee was doing with Senator Ervin. Watergate was all over the Mexican media. Vietnam had still not been resolved yet. It was getting close to it but not quite resolved. There were still civil rights issues. Our economy was dipping at that point. There was a lot of concern we were getting to end Vietnam about what are our commitments were going to be abroad, what is the staying power of the U.S. once it gives its word and makes a commitment. On another note, there were also others who were looking toward 1976, the bicentennial, and what this meant in terms of U.S. presence abroad and projection abroad in terms of our values. So the big domestic issues were economy, civil rights, Watergate of course, which dominated so much and with that the role of the president, the judiciary vis a vis the executive branch. Overseas, Vietnam the biggest thing. Nixon, I think, came in with great hopes of perhaps, this may have been rhetorical only, I am not sure, but great hopes of doing something unique in Latin America. I remember being in Argentina when he sent Nelson Rockefeller, who had obviously been a big political foe of his, but who was well

known in Latin America on a mission to gather facts and come up with a plan.

When Rockefeller came to Argentina, some Rockefeller interests in some small supermarkets were bombed on the eve of his arrival. It was interesting that an American president thought he was sending a liberal who spoke Spanish, liberal in the Republican party sense, and knew Latin America. This would be a gesture of goodwill and would be viewed positively in the region. In fact, to many Latins Rockefeller meant capitalism, exploitation, the name meant completely different things, not Nelson per se, but the image of a Rockefeller than it would have meant in the U.S. His visit set off a lot of criticism and a lot of security concerns. So this was a lack of understanding on Nixon's part, unless he was out to get Nelson Rockefeller embarrassed. I would assume not. I don't think he was quite that devious or interested in that subject matter. But there was still a lot of feeling that the U.S. did not understand Latin America. We just want to exploit it. We want its mineral resources. Around this time you had Chile and Allende and the whole question of what is the U.S. policy going to be in Chile and fears of communism in Central America. The Cold War was still very much with us including this region.

*Q: Well, I know in this time you were going off to Romania but were you feeling that you wanted to be a Latin American specialist?*

CHAPLIN: Yes. I thought I wanted to be exposed to Eastern Europe, but I felt that my Spanish was pretty good and I wanted to come back to the region. But I still wanted to see another part of the world. I actually applied for a university year in eastern European studies. When I applied for Eastern Europe, there was nothing open at the time, and so I said, well, I will apply for this. I waited and waited and by this time my wife was about eight months pregnant. I finally heard. I said, "The only thing I don't want is an assignment to a University in Washington DC. There are good universities there but I really would like to get to a good campus. I got good grades in college, better grades in graduate school. Stanford, Michigan, any place with a Latin America study program." So they sent me to GW, George Washington University. The program was going to be a university semester and then six months of Romanian language. I remember going in the first day to see the guy who was going to be my mentor there, and he says he has a letter I sent to personnel asking not to be sent to a Washington DC university. He said, "I understand you don't want to be here." I said, "That's not quite the case." This is what my preference was but I am delighted. So I went to the Sino-Soviet studies institute and during the six months was able to do research and papers on subjects related to Romania. So I did that preparatory to going into language training at FSI. I knew that I probably wanted to come back to Latin America at some time.

*Q: Okay, well, we will pick this up the next time when you are at George Washington at the Sino-Soviet studies institute and we will talk a bit about what you were studying there, and then move to Romanian training and your assignment there. This is when; you were at George Washington when?*

CHAPLIN: September of '73 until January of '74, just one semester.

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*Q: Today is January 30, 2001. Steve, George Washington, what were you doing, you were there '73-'74. What were you up to?*

CHAPLIN: This was a university training experience that USIA sponsored prior to my going into Romanian language training and assignment to Bucharest as the cultural center director. I took about four classes and was able to do some research and write some papers on subjects dealing with Romania. It was time well spent. That corresponded with the birth of my first son, so I was busy as fathers do to try to help mothers out at that early stage, as well as doing the studies. The courses were good. Most of the professors I had were emigrants from Eastern Europe. There was even one Romanian professor who worked at the Voice of America and then at night did one course on Romanian history. It was my introduction to Eastern Europe, to some of the rivalries, historical, ethnic in that region. Romania was kind of a maverick and looked upon as such in that period. Romania was the only country not to break relations with Israel after the 70's war and they still maintained relations with Chile when Pinochet came into power. However, if one looked at the United Nations or other places where votes were held, they came down on the side of the Russians far more than against because there were mutual interests.

*Q: Did they give you a good feel for Romania and the currents within the country?*

CHAPLIN: Through this one Romanian professor I met a couple of Romanian Émigrés who had come here. Of course they were all strongly anti communist. Some were a little disappointed with what America held for them. They had greater expectations of what they could do here than was the result. They were either lawyers or economists or teachers. They came here and found out that either because of their age or the lack of mastery of the language or subject matter in the U.S. that they couldn't find comparable jobs, so they took jobs which they considered to be less than their ability and they were somewhat disillusioned.

*Q: Yes, well, it is the usual picture where it is the children that make it the next time around.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, second generation Americans.

*Q: It is very hard for a professional unless maybe they are an engineer of some sort.*

CHAPLIN: Some special skill.

*Q: Yes. Well you took Romanian for how long?*

CHAPLIN: It was a six month course. Usually FSI had only one Romanian professor. He



had been here for many years. He was a taskmaster, very strong, very critical. We had a large class both in terms of number of officers and there were a couple of spouses as well, so they had to hire his wife to also teach Romanian and they had to hire a younger woman who had just been here a few months. I thrive under people who are very demanding. I don't let that style bother me because it is helping me get toward a goal. Other people felt he was a little unfair, too critical. Then you saw the contrast with this younger woman who was in her first teaching experience. She had been a professional in Romania as well. You would go into rotation and get her for a class, you would use certain words in your vocabulary, she would say, "Where did you learn those? Where did those come from?" You would say, "Well from Professor Kioku." She would say, "Oh I see. Well in today's Romania it can only be used such and such." So it was the old issue of professors who have been here a long time and seemed a bit dated sometimes on some of the vocabulary or slang and so forth. She handled it very discretely. We obviously didn't call him on that, but it was just an interesting thing to observe.

*Q: Well you went to Romania when?*

CHAPLIN: I arrived in the summer of '74 and remained until summer of '77. In my class in Romanian was the DCM-to-be Dick Viets who became an ambassador in a couple of places. The ambassador was Harry Barnes, a terrific ambassador and a great linguist. It was an interesting time because some American investment was just about to go into Romania. I remember the party that was given for us by I think it was 3-M.

*Q: Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing.*

CHAPLIN: Right. They had some of their people who were about to go in for one of their early joint ventures. They very nicely brought us together for drinks and discussion. Their people went over with no language training at all. Then some of the folks on our side started asking them about some of their perks. It turned out indeed that in addition to, by our standards, very lavish housing allowances and meal allowances and extra pay for serving there, they were able to leave the country every two or three months for a week or two weeks at company expense. So then the division of how the government handles its employees versus life in the private sector was driven home. Nikolai Ceausescu was president, dictator. A dynamic figure, completely controlled the society. They liked Americans in part because of memories of W.W.II and the fact that we helped in the liberation of Romania. Of course, soon after it was liberated it became communist. A lot of the populace had positive views of the United States. Among government officials and some others they saw us as a counterbalance to the Russians whom they strongly disliked. They understood the realities of geography. They understood they couldn't do anything to really alienate the Russians, but they saw us as a counterbalance to possibly prevent the Russians from taking more Romanian territory, and also for economic assistance, or international political assistance. I ran the cultural center which was the only one of its kind in eastern Europe at the time which was physically separate from the chancery. When Richard Nixon had visited Romania in 1967, he had gone to a couple of other eastern European countries, Russia and Poland. He went to Russia and no one in the

communist party would really see him, private citizen Nixon. He went to Poland and I think a vice deputy foreign minister spent an hour with him. He went to Romania and spent three hours with Nikolai Ceausescu. I think Mr. Ceausescu didn't have much to do that day or he knew something in 1967 about where Nixon might go in 1968 before most of the American populace. Partly to drive a wedge between the Russians and the other eastern European countries, and partly perhaps in remembrance of when Ceausescu had hosted him, though I don't think Nixon was under any illusions, he decided to go to Romania. He became the first American president to ever go there.

*Q: Was this during your time?*

CHAPLIN: This was before. This was in '69 as I recall. Anyway, out of that visit came an agreement to establish cultural centers. Romanians decided to put a small center in New York City, and we decided to put ours in Bucharest. Ours was going to be a showcase. It was physically separate, about a block away from the chancery, a library with open stacks which was unheard of in Romania. Anyone could go and take a book. No charge for services. We had films, lectures, musical performances, exhibit space. We had about 20-22 Romanian employees from the janitor up to professional assistance. One never doubted where their loyalties were. There was no physical obstacle to people coming in to the building. There was a guard outside constantly but he never interfered with people except on a couple of occasions when there were demonstrations against the Romanians at the UN. One was a Ceausescu visit, one was something else. Immediately there was an anti Romanian government demonstration in the U.S., they responded and started checking people and allowing them maybe to come in or not. However, the natural audience for us, which would be students and professors at the English faculty and so forth, were told at the beginning of the year you weren't supposed to go. When you sent invitations to anyone to come to programs, they had to go through a "protocol" office, which people got invitations, which people got them late, which people never got them. So there were barriers put up to contact though only in a couple of occasions physical.

*Q: Was the barrier put up when there were demonstrations or was it a permanent barrier?*

CHAPLIN: It was a universal thing, and that was standard practice for them. They weren't going to in very visible ways restrain people from coming, but there were sort of implied threats to careers, that sort of thing. Nevertheless, many people came. We registered people by name and maybe had an address. That was just to get library cards, didn't ask anything personal, and again there was no cause. This opened I think in about '71, and I arrived in '74. By that time we had over 10,000 people who had registered as members. Other people could come in and look at magazines and books and not register. It was an interesting thing because having the open stack library to us was also a sign of openness, trust. Books did disappear. We would sometimes find them later in some sort of antique bookstore for sale. That used to drive the Romanian head librarian crazy. I had to try to explain to her that it is part of the cost of doing business, and if you have a few people who take advantage, we were willing to pay that price to show openness to others. Each

month we had to inform the division of socialist culture and education what our monthly program would be. We had a little pamphlet we had printed which listed the events which we sent to the members anyway. So in effect we put in letter form just what we were announcing to the public anyway. There was never any effort to convince us to cancel a program or demonstrations against programs. Often officials of that division would come, mainly to see who else was there I assume.

One occasion I remember in particular where word came back-channel, which was the Romanian way if it was something they did not like. There was a book by Zbigniew Brzezinski. He was at Columbia before he joined the NSC under Carter. On the Japanese, and it mentions in there how the Japanese dislike the Russians, and it sort of caricatures the Russians. The word came back one day from this socialist council of education and culture through my chief assistant that someone thought that maybe that particular book wasn't very appropriate for our holdings. After all this is about the United States. Why do you have a book on Japan? I sent back the word that we appreciated their interest very much but Dr. Brzezinski was a respected author. If he had factual mistakes in other areas that they would like to point out to us, we would be interested in knowing that, but that the book was going to stay on the shelf. I never heard another word about it. It is obvious to me that some Russian diplomats went in there, looked at it or knew of it, and complained to the Romanians who then complained to us. They made their complaint so they could say they did their job, and then refused to bow to any pressure. The programs we had were on literature, history, American theater. We would show films on occasion.

I arrived there in early August of '74. This was when Watergate was going on. I got there about two days before President Nixon resigned. The library was closed at the time for August because Romanians, like a lot of Europeans, take the month of August for vacation. We reopened the first Monday in September or the day after because of Labor Day. The head librarian came to me running one day, and she said, "I have a question for you." I said, "Yes, Zonda, what is your question?" She said, "One of our colleagues here wants to know where the condolence book is." I said, "What?" She said, "Yes when a president has resigned, we want a condolence book to sign showing the American people our solidarity and condolences." I said, "Well there isn't going to be a condolence book. This is the American political process in action." But the identification with Nixon had developed. He was the first president to visit. They looked on this as kind of a national tragedy for Americans, whereas we would say the process is washing our dirty linen in public, so be it. No one is above the law. They didn't quite understand that, and they feared, I think, that our system might be weakened which meant that the Russians somehow might take advantage of it from the Romanian perspective. So we had to explain that.

Before I left in '77, I showed the picture *All the President's Men*. As I did with all of our films, I sent out a notice in Romanian giving a little synopsis of the film because none of these were subtitled. They were all in English. None of these films appeared commercially in Romanian theaters. Then I did an introduction in Romanian to the audience. I explained this was a film based on the writings of two journalists. The film

seemed faithful to the book. The book was the perspective of these authors; it had great impact. the writing of the stories by the Washington Post journalists, Woodward and Bernstein, but that again it was a view from two people. I showed the film, and talked to a few people afterwards. Some, even some people who admired the United States, we are talking about some fairly intelligent people, not just necessarily the man off the street you ask a question, couldn't relate to the fact that this was a commercial film. They were seeing things through their Romanian upbringing. They would see something like this if it happened in their society, which it couldn't because the media couldn't topple anyone, but a leader deposed in their terms, as being government propaganda to discredit the former president put out by the new leadership. I raised the question. I said, "Well, if this were the case, why was the man he chose to be his vice president, Gerald Ford, why did he replace him?" The answer was well, it was the Democrats and the media who were out to get Nixon and this is a temporary thing and so forth. Well, indeed Jimmy Carter defeated President Ford. That probably reinforced their views. But again it was an interesting lesson to me on showing a commercial film but based on historical fact and again the interpretation of these particular reporters, as seen through the eyes of people who weren't used to treating history in objective ways or ways which weren't pushing the interest of one particular political sector. So, I am not sure what we accomplished by showing the film, but I learned a little about the Romanian psyche from that.

*Q: Well did you have problems with films? I mean I can remember earlier on, we were in Yugoslavia, and we put out the film on, the desert on about Lawrence of Arabia. The Turks objected and we had a hell of a time with this. We had it restricted just to Americans.*

CHAPLIN: Well I tried each year I was there to put on a film festival. These would be essentially bringing in films, giving some publication in Romanian, and a couple of speakers. One year it was on young directors. That was really something else. The third year it was on American humor. Film humor in lots of ways is a good thing to project to foreign audiences because a lot of it is physical. You don't need to have the language because again we didn't have subtitles for these films. Many in the audience understood English, but if you got into southern dialects or some other things or New England pronunciations, you might have some problems. In this film week, humor, it went from the silent films up through Woody Allen. There was one Woody Allen film which I think was Bananas.

*Q: It was about Castro.*

CHAPLIN: About Castro. A lot of people saw the humor in it, but evidently not the Cuban representative there. We showed it because it was on our premises, and there was no interference. But a couple of departments of English at universities asked us to loan the copy. Now the terms under which we had rented these films was we couldn't allow them to be shown outside commercially, but this was not going to be commercial, so we tentatively agreed. The word came back that some deans thought it might not be appropriate. The students needed more time to study for exams or something. That was

the one example where they weren't going to allow that film to be shown off our premises. On the flip side of it, they would often show on Romanian television films which showed the United States in a bad position. There was another, and I think it was a Woody Allen film, it was about the writers who got blacklisted in Hollywood for real or alleged ties to leftist groups or the communist party. The Romanians were mad at us on some issue or something, and all of a sudden on Saturday night comes this again projecting this as if it were a documentary. This was a part of our history, there is no doubt about that, but they would find things that were critical, as well as documentaries on our race relationships. At the same time, and I guess this is just because Hollywood makes such good films, the most popular Saturday night TV show when I was there was Kojak. I would go out to meet somebody at the airport. There were TV monitors at the airport; the two or three they had would be Kojak.

*Q: This was a New York detective.*

CHAPLIN: Right, Telly Savalas, a very popular show.

*Q: His brother was a USIA officer.*

CHAPLIN: George Savalas was at one time a USIA officer, that is correct. So they had the ways of using the media to criticize if they wanted.

*Q: When you were in Romania at this time, at a certain level we were dealing with them differently than we were dealing with other countries, but at the same time Romania maybe it wasn't as bad then, but had a terrible reputation as far as nastiness of police, Ceausescu getting these crazy ideas of increasing their birth rates. You know, you name it.*

CHAPLIN: It was a tough place to live. It got much tougher towards the end of his regime. That was partly even tied to the Romanian economy. Romania wasn't able to compete and Ceausescu's megalomania and everything else, but it was difficult. Our goals, in general terms, were to help American investment come in and be treated fairly if we thought there were opportunities for that. It was to make our case on international issues. It was in whatever minor way we could to show U.S. democratic values, and that we had a pragmatic aspect to us and we weren't preaching to them, but these values helped the economy, helped people progress in various ways. Also, even though we were greatly circumscribed in what we could do, there was an attempt to show that we respected each nation on its own, that we weren't going to necessarily make moral judgments, I am talking about the executive branch, on how they handled their society. There were individual criticisms. There was something called the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which meant on trade relations each year there was a review on Romania's human rights policy, just as there was with the Russians. Romanians chafed at this, and would argue that you can't expect us to get foreign investment if each year there is going to be a review. Congress, and I think wisely at the time, did not listen to that. Ceausescu had complete control. There were no threats. There was no sort of liberal element you

could work with very much there. There was one group that I worked with a little bit, and it was mainly through sort of a personal interest. They had a society of what we would call sort of futurists. They set this little institute up. Most of these people had day jobs, but they also did this. I, through bringing in a group of speakers, was attempting to take different topics which I thought would be of interest to Romanians on our society worked through problems. One was energy alternatives. One was agriculture. One was environment. One was transportation. Things from which you don't get our political philosophy directly, but if you look at the underpinnings of how our society works through these, there obviously has to be discussion, there has to be cooperation, there has to be freedom for researchers; there have to be resources allocated. I tried to show also some of the complexity of some issues such as energy alternatives, and one time brought in someone who said the only way to go is nuclear. All these other things are wasteful, pollute and so forth. Three months later we had another speaker who said we can try wind, we can try geothermal, we can try conservation. The worst thing we can do is nuclear. I wanted to show that even among advanced economic countries there was difference of opinion, and try to get the message to sink in that it is individuals who need to participate in the hopes that eventually down the line, maybe decades later, some of these people would be in positions of authority or they would be instructors and some of these things would take root. With the Romanians, there was a class not in the sense of a social group or economic group, but a group of well educated people, some of whom traveled, mainly with government, well all of them had to have government approval, but mainly on government business, who were very up to date on what was happening in the world; however, they were very restricted in applying what they would like to do because of Ceausescu's control of things. Ceausescu was interested in power. There were those who said ideology didn't mean anything to him. This was just a guy who used these words, a very uneducated man, who was ruthless, served people well, managed things and had gotten to the top. If there was anyone of a certain ability who may have been serving him well in a ministry, he looked upon him as a potential rival. As soon as that job was finished that guy went out to the boondocks. He was not going to stay around and develop his own political base. So he was very shrewd in that sense. He could be nasty in terms of treatment of people, the human rights abuses, but you didn't hear at least in my time, and before that, of summary executions of people. There may be some people who languished in jail, but they essentially wanted to export their problems, their problem people, or keep them in a situation where they couldn't cause trouble. But they really didn't want to shoot people, partly maybe because of bad publicity, but partly because it just wasn't they way they wanted to solve things. This was a group of people that sort of learned to live by their wits. There had always been an elite control of Romania. You had an external elite to whom they had to pay suzerainty, the Turkish Ottoman empire. Then you had a monarchy. Then you had a fascist group in charge and then the communists. There always was an elite on top. You learn to get by in a society like that by your wits. You learn to be a survivor. I said to others that if hope and sort of confidence in the system is kind of a glue of democracy, then fear is the glue of a repressive system. These people lived in fear. They wouldn't attempt frontal challenges of authority. They would try to find their own little ways to get by in society and be a survivor. Well survivor skills under those circumstances are understandable, but they really don't lead to democracy. When you

have got to have consensus and tolerance and respect for others and the rights of others and dissent and accept the minority view and so forth. Romanians haven't really grown up with that, but they saw enough changes in the elites that they learned ways of moving and dealing around this rather than frontal attacks which includes, as I said, shooting a lot of people. That just wasn't their style.

*Q: I would think the Romanians with their Latin background would have a fairly active artist group. I am speaking about writers and painters and film and you know, that thing.*

CHAPLIN: Well you did have an active group. Georges Enescu was a composer. Constantin Brâncuși was a sculptor who left Romania and mainly lived in France. A film actor we are old enough to remember, Edward G. Robinson, was a Romanian who left Romania early on because, I'm not sure if there was Jewish persecution, but there was probably opportunity. There wasn't going to be any film opportunity for him in Romania, so he left and changed his name and became Edward G. Robinson. Johnny Weissmuller was of Romanian descent. Theater, very strong theater. A lot of their top theater people were Jewish and had emigrated to Israel in the 60's or 70's. Some to other places. Music, theater, some poets who were pretty good, and it was interesting what some of these people did, including playwrights. They obviously had censorship, and their plays or poems, whatever the literature was, had to be shown to a board who had to approve it. So instead of writing about contemporary problems with Ceausescu or the communist party which would have been suicidal and you wouldn't get anything produced anyway, they tended to deal with contemporary problems by using an earlier historical period. In some cases they also had anti-Russian messages. Some of those got through because the censors felt it was masked enough to make it, say, well this is a 14th century piece, but they also understood a message which was poking the Russians in the eye. So that is what they did. The audience knew what was going on; the playwright knew what was going on, but ostensibly it was an historical piece of four or five centuries ago, even though it dealt with contemporary situations. The creativity was there. I got to know a fair number of artists. Socialist realism was a big thing as well. There was a lot of very junky stuff in architecture, not quite as blatant as the Russians. They copied some of what the Russians did, birthday cake type buildings, these horrible looking places. And you had some people who would just choose subjects that they knew would be non controversial, writers and poets, and try to express themselves with just the look through that. Very rarely did you hear of a dissident poet, or dissident writer like you heard of things in Russia and other parts of eastern Europe. One other thing which is very...

*Q: You were talking about the rivalry.*

CHAPLIN: The rivalry with Hungary. You have Transylvania which slips back and forth. Hungarian historians will date it back centuries as being Hungarian and the same on the Romanian side. That was the group that eternally the Romanians cracked down on the most. Up in Cluj-Napoca, Transylvania, Hungarian language had to disappear from the schoolbooks, street signs, whatever it was. It was interesting to me because they had the signing in Helsinki, the accords that President Ford did on human rights and other aspects

to settle W.W.II borders. A year or so later Hungarians were thinking of bringing to this international body the Romanians. Eternal brothers in communism don't complain to one another, but this was a case where the Hungarians had about had it. A good friend of mine was a Hungarian cultural attaché. He had been an actor before he joined. His wife was a ballerina. He would just tell me stories about how the prejudice and the clamps were on the Hungarians much more than any other single people. So that was an irritant, and there they would clamp down on people. They might arrest people and throw them in jail. Certainly teaching anything that they thought would threaten the sanctity of Transylvania's Romania, in Romania. They had a Yiddish theater in Romania. The actors spoke Yiddish, and on headsets you would have Romanian. I went there two or three times, once or twice with congressional delegations. On each occasion I went, there were more actors on stage than there were people in the audience. It was kept alive as a showcase, and in fact most of the Yiddish speaking actors had left. They were teaching non-Jewish actors how to speak Yiddish so they could keep this showcase open. They would point to the world about their religious tolerance and respect for the past and so forth. A large number of émigrés had gone to Israel. The Romanian government recognized the importance of remittances from abroad. First of all you had to pay several thousand dollars to apply to get a visa to go. Then these remittances that came back the Jewish families was a bit of a safety valve because of Romania's own economic difficulties. I remember talking once to someone who was called the literary secretary for the Yiddish theater. He proudly showed me a poster of about 1948 or 1949 vintage when this Yiddish theater went to the United States. On this poster it talked about the visit of this theater to the United States of America and Brooklyn. So even then they recognized where their main audience was going to be. Anti Semitism was rampant throughout Romania, even though a rabbi sat in the parliament, again partly for show though he would say that's how he helped protect his flock. There were several thousand Jews; most had fled. The anti Semitism ran to the extent certainly during the 40's and early 50's when you had a fascist government in control. It is still kind of a strain though with intellectuals and others there is certainly tolerance. I remember a U.S. playwright, a man named Jerome Lawrence with a partner whose name was Robert E. Lee, did things such as Auntie Mame, the musical, and the thing on the Scopes trial, Inherit the Wind and others. He came to speak to us. There was a Harvard sponsored seminar in Salzburg, Austria on different subject matters. They would bring Europeans in for a week or ten days to an idyllic setting to discuss whatever the topic was. He had met a Romanian theater critic. He said, "I would like to get together with her when I am there." I said, "Of course." He gave his talks and everything. I was driving him out to the airport, very sweet, very nice man, very mild mannered. He had done a biography of Paul Muni, the famous actor who would come over and actually started in the Yiddish theater and then went into Hollywood films. This was an autobiography which hadn't quite been finished when Muni died. His widow said to Lawrence, would you finish it, and he did. And Lawrence wherever he was going, he was trying to see if there would be interest in translation rights. So he talked to this woman and he said, "You know I am very puzzled. I am willing to make certain changes if it will help, but this one I don't know." I said, "What is it?" He said, "Well, she was very impressed by the book. Paul Muni is known here by many people. The book was well written. It would have a small audience," and so forth.



She said, "Can I change one part of it?" He said, "Well what is that?" She said, "Well this whole part of his being with the Yiddish theater. Could you drop that section?" It was such an important part and essential to it, so Lawrence said, "I have got to draw the line there." The woman, I don't think was reflecting her own views. She knew what she would face in terms of censorship, so the project never came about. That sort of thing ran through...

*Q: You know it is interesting. I wrote a book on the American consul. In 1875 or something like that, President Ulysses S. Grant sent a gentleman named Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, but he sent him as Consul to Bucharest, purely to look after the Jewish community. Very interesting because of anti Semitism. He had been president of B'nai B'rith, had served in the Union army, and at the time of his appointment was practicing law in San Francisco. This is not a new phenomenon*

CHAPLIN: There was one other anecdote. I mentioned Harry G. Barnes Jr. was the ambassador, and a terrific ambassador. He had been DCM in Romania before. There was a section in the security briefing at FSI before people went out. When Barnes had been DCM there, it turns out he sent some shoes out for repair and a microphone had been put in his heel of his shoe. That was used as a case example of beware what you say when you are walking around anywhere even by yourself. He headed a section once, and there was a very capable historian named Vlad Georgescu, very bright, very decent fellow who had written a manuscript about the history of the communist party in Romania since the end of WWII. Georgescu had been invited by Brzezinski and others to come lecture in the United States at Columbia and Berkeley and some other places. The Romanians denied him a visa. They made up their excuse; he couldn't go. About a year later, I think at a reception at the ambassador's residence, Georgescu gave a copy of his manuscript to Ambassador Barnes and asked if he would send it through the pouch to Washington to the Romanian desk to the State Department who could forward it. I am not sure who the recipient was. The ambassador was willing to do that. One or two days later the ambassador was called into the foreign ministry, and, I think, was essentially read the riot act about violation of authority in using diplomatic pouches. Most significantly Georgescu was placed under house arrest. His head was shaved. He then did the one thing in that era which really got the Romanian government's attention, and that is he talked to a foreign journalist. It was one of the British newspapers, the London Times or Financial Times. He gave them an interview. He spoke about this manuscript and about what was going on. Well they locked him up, but they also knew there were going to be eyes watching him. Brzezinski and others wrote letters on his behalf, and these were delivered to Ceausescu. Georgescu was later released, and he came to the United States and gave lectures. He then went to Radio Free Europe and was in Munich heading the Romanian service when unfortunately he had a brain tumor and he died. But he told me a story that he developed a bit of a relationship with the colonel in the security forces who was overseeing this case. Finally he said this colonel came to him one day and said, "You are going to get your visa, go now." The Romanians, when they do give you a visa to go, keep a hostage at home. It is a wife, it is a parent, somebody. In his case, it was a one year visa but they let his wife and child go with him. So in their mind it was a one way visa.

This man was not to come back. He said, "The colonel came to him and said you have got your visa. You will be going. I just want to redevelop this relationship. I respect you and I like you and I just want to tell you two things. Please don't forget two things." He said, "What's that, Colonel?" He said, "One, always be a Romanian patriot and love your country." He said, "Fine, I have that view, certainly." The second thing, "You are an historian, is that correct?" He said, "Yes." "Stick to the 15th century." The advice was anything beyond the 15th, that might get you in trouble, stick to the 15th century. That was his kind way of saying if you want to stay out of trouble in the future, stay away from anything later than 1400.

*Q: Did Madame Ceausescu intrude at all on your business while you were there?*

CHAPLIN: She didn't. She was intrusive throughout the society. They were attributing things to her that obviously she couldn't. She was supposed to have a doctorate in Biology or Chemistry or some such thing. Ceausescu himself never went to diplomatic functions. We had in 1976 the bicentennial. It was thought up to the last moment that he might come to the ambassador's residence on July 4. Then he did not, and she was also not seen in public with foreigners.

There was another story I would mention. When Ceausescu came to the United States for his first trip, reciprocating Nixon's earlier visit, they were going to go to two or three different cities. He came to Washington, and just as we have an advance team for a presidential visit, the Romanians sent out their advance team. They would go to the Department of State and talk to the Romanian desk officer, and they'd start getting into specifics. Now a great word in Romanian is reciprocity. This was now a mantra for them. So they sit down and said, "All right, now your President Nixon was here in Bucharest and there were about a million and a half people in the streets. We know we are a smaller country and so forth, but if you have about a half million, that's okay. The desk officer said I don't quite understand what you are getting at. Just put out about half a million people. "Well you will be coming down Pennsylvania avenue and it is lunch hour and so forth. Next point. "Motorcade. You had 36 cars in your motorcade we want 36 cars." The guy said, "Here is the name of the phone company, you know the limo, you can call." In the end they had people from the embassy who invited their neighbors. They really wanted to fill up the motorcade which was comparable to what the U.S. president had. I had two different people confirm this to me. They then went down to other cities including New Orleans. There was going to be a key to the city presented to Ceausescu at the international house in New Orleans. The advance team was there and were talking with their hosts. They said, "Now we would like to talk about the matter of gifts." The guy said, "Well you get a key to the city. It is a nice key," and it is this and that. They said, "Yes, but Mrs. Ceausescu would like a fur coat and Mr. Ceausescu would like diamond cufflinks," or something like that. The guy said, "I don't understand." "Well this is what they expect to have." He said, "Well I am sorry. Our standard procedure is you get a nice lunch and the mayor will be there and so forth, a key to the city." He said he could see the sweat on the brow of this guy. This was the second of three stops and he had obviously gotten the same news at the first stop. He had one more stop. She wanted an

honorary doctorate from the University of North Carolina or some such place. Finally I was told later that the Romanian ambassador had some little slush fund. He bought some of these presents and had them wrapped and sent to the hotel room as gifts from the U.S. government officials and New Orleans city officials, because these people here knew if they didn't deliver, they were gone. It was the end of their careers. So in a classless society, which was a communist society, the distinction between the classes is certainly more noticeable than in a capitalist society.

*Q: I am told too that Ceausescu when they went to Buckingham Palace, they took things that didn't belong to them and all this.*

CHAPLIN: That rings true. One of the great legacies beyond the human toll was in one of these rebuilding crazes he did, they toppled a lot of old historic homes and things which can never be replaced. And in a society where the government controls all and one man controls the government, there is no ombudsman, there is no media, there is no watchdog, and that was irreplaceable.

*Q: I mean they put up a lot of this Stalinist crap.*

CHAPLIN: They did, and that's why I think you saw, as you have seen in other places in the world, great rejoicing when he was toppled. There were many who hoped he would have been put on trial and not executed as quickly as he was. But the hatred that was there bubbled over. I must confess, however, that because of the lack of any democratic tradition, I think with luck, and no free market managers that go with a society which is democratic free market oriented, with luck it will maybe be two or three generations before the Romanians catch up. There are talented people there, but they don't have the...

*Q: Well this is the thing. You know their great talent. What about travel around the country? Was there a problem?*

CHAPLIN: We could, and this was part of the agreement with Romania, they could travel anywhere they wanted in the United States, and so we had the same right. There are some very nice painted monasteries where we could stay, and we did that. We toured the country. I can't say there wasn't surveillance. There may have been, but I think the Romanians probably felt either that it was sort of a small price to pay to allow their people in Washington and elsewhere to go around the country and do whatever their business was. Secondly I think they thought, and this was the case with most diplomatic missions there, not just ours, I think. The people didn't speak Romanian so they weren't going to be able to interrogate or get secrets or ask people what do you think about this policy. So they thought there was probably no risk in letting us go. There was inefficiency. There was no infrastructure for tourism and that sort of thing. But in terms of barriers placed to going, if there was a place near a military installation, but close maybe 20 miles, a far greater margin than we would insist upon. They said it was a no, but generally speaking there were no limits on our travel.

*Q: How about, did you feel you were in competition with the Soviets, or were you just doing your thing and they were doing their thing?*

CHAPLIN: Well probably a little of both. I think we felt that we had a good case to make and we went in there with our own agenda, with what we wanted, our own objectives, which we felt could stand on their own merits whether there was a Russia or not. But in the 70's there was of course the rivalry. They still had this very strong Soviet bloc. I think that entered into some issues. In my particular work I was explaining American society, and didn't deal with the media because there was no real media to deal with by and large. So I think there probably was competition.

We had a scavenger party one night, the couples in the American embassy. There were certain things you were supposed to do, and among the things were to count the number of columns at the Soviet embassy. This was a Saturday night. The Ambassador got a call on Monday morning from security forces saying that were very curious happenings on Saturday night in front of the Russian embassy. At different periods, at different intervals, cars with American diplomatic plates would pull in front of that embassy, stop for a minute or two and rush off. We counted 12 vehicles doing this and want to know what you are up to. The poor ambassador, I don't even think he was aware of what the scavenger party was; he wasn't there. He searched down the mission, what are you guys doing. It maybe felt okay to rub it in, but that wasn't the intent, but that's the way the Russians took it.

*Q: Was there much of a Romanian community in the United States? Sometimes I knew that when I was in Yugoslavia somewhat earlier, you know, we heard from it. It was important.*

CHAPLIN: There was a small community. They weren't active as a lobby group. I think most of those people had assimilated pretty well. There may have been one or two Romanians who contribute to one or both of the political parties I don't know, but it certainly wasn't anything like APAC in terms of Israel or the Greeks and Turks on Cyprus, India and Pakistan, nothing of that order.

*Q: You left there in '77, whither?*

CHAPLIN: Well in March of '77 there was an earthquake, a major earthquake which devastated a fair amount, had great impact including loss of life in Bucharest and other places. So my wife and two sons left six months before I left.

There is one more story I want to say about that earthquake. There was this great devastation; Ceausescu was out of the country. He came back and first thing right away blamed all the buildings falling and killing people on the capitalist era when these things supposedly had been put up before the communists came to power. The thing that really got him mad was the collapse of a building that in fact had been built on his watch for a lot of valuable computer equipment. The fact is that most of these buildings, apartment

buildings and office buildings, were built during the communist regime. They just violated all sorts of building codes on the steel supports and everything. A lot of people were killed. When it happened, the Romanian authorities looked at buildings. Where it was obvious people just couldn't live, there would be a staircase which was out or electric wires exposed, they told these people to go to certain points, gymnasiums and others, until they could find housing for them. Housing was already in great shortage. Then they realized how many thousands of people showed up, and in fact some people didn't like their normal housing so they went to these places as well. They sent out new inspectors who then decided that most of these places were habitable. If you didn't want to move back into them, then you were going to lose your right to live there. So we had families divided sometimes for years. Sometimes one child would go to an aunt, a mother and two kids would go to a brother. So even then the lack of human treatment of people was obvious.

There was one story of a young pianist who was very good. I had some musical program, someone from the Eastman School of Music came, heard this guy, several months of correspondence between me and this professor. The result was Eastman School offered a full scholarship to this fellow. I went to the conservatory, explained what it was, they would like this guy to come. I didn't hear for a month. I sent a letter, no answer. So in about three months I finally went back and said what is the deal. It was, well, we will have a competition and we will see who will go. And even though I wanted to maintain good relations with these people I had to be fairly blunt and said, "No the scholarship offer is for this young man. The school frankly wasn't interested in any political hack's third cousin being sent off To Eastman in Rochester for a couple of years." They didn't act. A year passed. The offer is made again. Comes this earthquake. The young man's parents are out of the city someplace else. The building collapses. He is killed. The parents come back. We sent a note of condolence. Then an American pop singer who came back for a roots experience with Romanian parents, a woman named Theresa Brewer who was very popular in the '50s and '60s came, and she gave a concert under our auspices. It was at the hotel, she was staying and waiting for her. The mother of this young man comes up and in Romanian thanks me again and just sort of starts blasting the government. They won't let us bury him here. They won't let us do that, this horrible country. People sort of turning and the husband trying to tug her away. It was obvious that in this personal case this family's future was destroyed when this young man died. They were blaming the government because if he had been treated fairly he would have been in Rochester, New York, at the time of this and not in Bucharest. So another case of an uncaring government and people's frustration with it.

At the end of my tour after about three years, I came back to Washington. I worked in an office in USIA which did in-house resource and planning studies. It was a three member team. We essentially looked at our programs and different activities and did evaluations of them. The idea was where could improvements be made; what new programs might be created; what old programs might be dropped. I did that for about a year, a year and a quarter. Then I worked in the office of the associate director for management. Then I applied for an area office job and I became a desk officer for France, Spain, and Portugal.

*Q: Okay, well it is now time to quit for this time. So we will pick this up when you are back in Washington in '77. We will talk about what you were doing in Washington and we will go on from there.*

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*Today is February 25, 2001. Steve, 1977 you came back to Washington, what was your job?*

CHAPLIN: I was desk officer for France, Spain, and Portugal in the European area office.

*Q: From when to when?*

CHAPLIN: That went from I guess, late '77 to I guess the early part of '79.

*Q: Well of these, in the first place, what would an area officer do in this type of work?*

CHAPLIN: You were the voice of that embassy section or USIS section in that country. You were that voice in Washington, be it be with government agencies, be it be with NGOs, private sector, as well as their voice internally to be sure they got the products and programs, budgetary support that they needed. So you would attend various meetings. You kept the area director, comparable to an assistant secretary, informed of developments, problems, personnel issues in that country as well as perhaps opportunities for program activities including press campaigns on certain issues. The late 70's was a time of the issue of Russia and the missiles in Europe, and of course that was a big public relations challenge.

*Q: The SS-20, year.*

CHAPLIN: So we tried through the agency to get programs and speakers out to the field who could present our point of view on this. At times we had to go to other agencies to try to strengthen our case by getting photographic evidence or other sorts of things. Sometimes our friends at Langley in the CIA were helpful. Often they were not, so we had to try to conjure up, be it by pamphlets, print products, as well as some things you could get on the Voice of America, come up with a credible enough case, so it just didn't sound like us preaching to them on something that didn't have much substance. That was a constant challenge. Beyond that we dealt with individual issues in those three countries. With France, where they always talk about politics being culture and culture being politics, we assigned particular importance to cultural activities and the amount of funding that went to important high level programs there, as well as American studies programs at French universities and trying to actually get some American studies into French high schools. Spain, this was a period shortly after Franco had died. You had first a sort of conservative and then soon thereafter a socialist prime minister. There it was essentially explaining to Spain not only the general policies we had in the area and the

region, but also, without trying to be too preachy, to give them things we had on democratic institutions, things we thought might be useful to constructing their own democracy. One particular program I remember was an international visitor program where you brought over rising leaders. The Ambassador in Spain at the time was Terry Todman. He wanted to get a group of socialist opposition leaders to come to look at the U.S. partly as a means of broadening their horizons, because there had been a lot of rhetoric about capitalism and so forth before each group. It was a group of about five people. Ambassador Todman had them for lunch before they came, briefed them thoroughly on what to expect or not to expect from this program. They came. A private program agency handled them. I sat in on meetings. It turned out that the leader of the group was a man who was the top political advisor to Felipe Gonzales. When he started talking about an additional program, we would meet at the democrat institute, the republican institute and so forth, this guy said, "Look, I have won elections in different countries for people. What am I going to learn from them?" So we ran into a bit of arrogance right away. He wanted to see Brzezinski who was then at the NSC. They wanted to see Secretary of State Vance. They wanted to see Senator Kennedy, a lot of demands, and until they found out which way those demands were going to go, they essentially sat in hotels for the first two days not partaking in the program. Well this was not quite accomplishing what Ambassador Todman and others had in mind. Finally, word came back that they might be able to meet with a couple of high level people but not Vance and not Brzezinski. Most of the members of this delegation were bright and active people of various ages and weren't particularly enamored with what their leader was doing. You could tell that, but nonetheless he was the leader of the delegation. They packed up after three days and went back to Madrid and had a press conference and said how all these promises of U.S. access to the leadership for the Socialist party of Spain was not good. It didn't take place; we didn't follow through. This was an example of when you have a group, an individual or a group that comes over with their own agenda, and our motives are somewhat different from theirs, but it is a voluntary activity, they could pick up and leave even though the U.S. taxpayer footed the bill for their hotel, their restaurant and so forth.

*Q: Was this a set up deal, the feeling or was there really...*

CHAPLIN: I am not sure we ever found out. I think it dealt mainly with the personal arrogance of this one leader who later became a cabinet official under Felipe Gonzales and then a few years later had to resign under a big scandal. His name was Alfonso Guerra, Guerra meaning war in Spanish which was sort of a proper name for this guy. It is not clear. I think the ambassador was a pretty shrewd judge of character, felt that they were coming over with open eyes and sincerely interested. I think that was probably true for the other five members, but just not one man. Unfortunately he was in charge. Then I was dealing with Portugal. This was shortly after the Portuguese revolution in '74, which was a marked contrast from what the Spanish had gone through in their civil war, a more peaceful event. So the Portuguese were looking all over the place for models to set up a government. Young people, some military, some others, really hadn't had any experience in governing. So there again in addition to the usual sort of thing, explaining U.S. policy,

we attempted to have exchange programs, speakers on issues which we thought might be relevant to their interests. The Portuguese were very friendly people to deal with. Frank Carlucci was ambassador at the time, right after the revolution. I think he was gone by the time I came to the desk. It was a memorable period because this was a country, as I said when I later was assigned to Portugal, it was in Europe but not always of Europe because it had been closed off for so many years.

*Q: Well did you find that in getting people to come in and talk, let's use Portugal as an example. Did you run across groups within the United States that had their own ideology? I mean the right way to do it is this or the wrong way is what those other guys want. Did you find yourself sort of caught up in this almost bureaucratic academic...*

CHAPLIN: There is always a danger of that. Because I think that most of the career officers felt we wanted to have freedom of expression, that whatever you sent abroad is part of our basic social and political fabric. Yet the argument came to be made, and I think with good reason, that the U.S. taxpayer shouldn't just send anyone who wants to go and mouth off on whatever they want to mouth off on. So we walked that sort of narrow tightrope over there and many other countries around the world. I think you searched for someone who A. had the proper credentials in terms of ability, academic degrees, whatever the subject matter was. B. someone that was pretty open minded that was not going to be dogmatic one way or another. C. had certain speaking skills and so forth. You talked with him in advance about what the subject matter would be. You wouldn't get into nitty gritty things, but you would want to know a little bit on how the person was going to approach it. There was a speakers division which really had this responsibility more than we did. We just sort of monitored. I would say more often than not you found in cases like this, you would have someone that would come over and they understood what the U.S. was trying to accomplish. There might be a specific policy they might express a different point of view on, but by and large they fell into the realm of reasonable speakers and protagonists for a particular position. They understood that we were talking about opening up a country to ideas and were not trying to sell them something. Most people we sent over, I think, understood that and cooperated and they did it willingly. Certainly there was never any interference either on the Washington end or the other end of censoring what someone wanted to say or canceling an engagement because they didn't say what the government said or what the U.S. policy was. At times, very candidly, this did lead to problems occasionally with other parts of the embassy. Occasionally an ambassador or DCM in more sensitive places like Romania, when I was there under a communist regime, or others in the embassy didn't quite fully understand what we were attempting by bringing this speaker. It was more than just a speaker. It was the openness which the speaker had. Some people were looking for, particularly in countries where you didn't get many speakers, many expert Americans to come. Many would have liked someone who was in 100% agreement with U.S. policy at that time. I can understand their feeling, but that didn't always necessarily achieve our bigger purposes. That was rare. I don't want to point that out as being the norm because it wasn't, but it could happen.

*Q: How about for Spain. Were we at all pushing the Hispanic side of the United States*



*there?*

CHAPLIN: No I don't think that was really pushed, even though Spain likes to think of itself as being the father of Latin America in creating all these cultures. When you get to these countries in Latin America, there is a feeling of somewhat different view respectively toward Spain. The big issue at that time was Spain and NATO, and Spain coming into NATO and under what terms. You had a bit of a divide which other experts can talk more about than I within the U.S. some were saying, look, there is one NATO charter. All members agree to the same conditions and so forth. Some others saying can we accommodate without violating our principles, can we accommodate special Spanish interests at this time, coming out of a dictatorship as it is, with a socialist government, so that we can bring them in and over time have them see our way. It was a big debate in certain academic and U.S. political circles. The Spanish for their own domestic political reasons didn't make the case any easier here because they kept ratcheting up things or using strong language. In the end, I think the coolest of heads prevailed. Spain did come in and years later we see a Spaniard become secretary general of NATO.

*Q: I would think that when you are talking about the response to the SS-20 missiles, Soviet missiles, in Europe for speakers, and say on NATO for Spain, you want military, I mean people out of the military side. Yet I would think there would be a certain reluctance to bring in Major General Smith or Vice Admiral Jones to talk on this thing.*

CHAPLIN: Well, what happens, and generally I guess for a variety of reasons, U.S. military often didn't participate in these programs. There could be financial and other reasons as well. If you had the military decide on its own that it wanted to have a mission, a ship visit, an admiral visit, a general visit, whatever the issue was, you would try to piggyback on that. You hoped that they would send the right person and either have a small lunch with some people, an off the record thing with journalists, a press conference with journalists, whatever. You are talking about military security, these are the other hand of the experts. So you want that voice heard and those reasons explained, but you needed a very good soldier diplomat who knows how to handle himself in front of foreign audiences.

*Q: Well, was there a place either in the Pentagon or did USIA help prepare some of these soldier diplomats?*

CHAPLIN: There is a big public affairs office in the Pentagon. It was pointed out by Secretary of State Powell the other day that the military go through a lot more training than diplomats do. I think some of their people either by training or instinct were able to carry out that mission. USIA had a liaison office with the Pentagon on and off over the years. It was essentially an attempt in recent years to have satellite TV interviews with experts. It could be to actually obtain publications because the Pentagon was so good and budget not being a factor, could churn out a lot of very good colored publications on a particular case or issue. So it was that more than the training side. The only place our people would really come into contact would be a pre-departure brief when someone was

going from Washington, or if there was a country team meeting with the official before they actually launched their formal program in a country once they arrived.

*Q: I would think being the area officer for France, as you say culture is everything. In the first place, how receptive was France to the United States at this time, because it waxes and wanes? How was it during the '77-'79 period?*

CHAPLIN: Well we were, I guess, in one of the waning periods. Part of that was politics. You had Mitterrand and the whole business of how we were going to deal with the French government.

*Q: This was early Mitterrand when he came in as a red hot socialist with communists in the government.*

CHAPLIN: One can say that the French, because of the importance they had given culture and because of how long that culture has been around, looked at us as perhaps not having culture quite as serious and certainly not as lengthy. So there was a bit of perhaps a snob view toward us. That being said, there were individuals you could work with. One of the people I met at this time when I made a visit to France was a young man who had his star tied to Chirac. When Chirac was mayor of Paris, this man who graduated from ANA, the administrative school, became the cultural director for the city of Paris. He was age 31, 32, smart guy. He was very affable and we hit it off, his English was pretty good. In '79-'80 a plane load with 400 Frenchmen came to run the New York marathon. This was someone who had grown up entirely in France, educated in France, came over on one of our international visitor grants, which is where I met him, but was open to other ideas. He shared running in common with a lot of people who were in New York for the run, so you go to New York and do it. He was interested in things there. It was more difficult when you started talking about American studies in high school curriculum, that sort of thing. The other thing of course we suffered from was budgetary. We could not bring over under U.S. government sponsorship the crème de la crème of American culture, visual arts, plastic arts, writers, because we didn't have a budget. The French would think nothing of doing something like that and give it the proper budget to send off to whatever country they wanted to send a particular message to or they wanted to coax into something. The advantage of being in Paris for our officers is a lot of the top people we looked toward come through Paris on their own, and so you try to catch them while you are there.

*Q: Wait at the airport and grab them as they come off the....*

CHAPLIN: Something similar to that or have the ambassador give a lunch and bring people in. So they have gotten a few more people than almost any other country in the world. That wasn't because the U.S. government went into it, that was innovative and people who checked airline schedules in Paris took advantage of someone coming for other purposes.

*Q: Did you run into sort of the buzz saw of American or Hollywood versus French films*

*and all?*

CHAPLIN: We ran into that everywhere. We talked about this earlier, and that is how American pop culture which is one of our big exports can also be one of the most negative things about U.S. society, if you are trying to explain American society. There was the whole issue of the number of French theaters that had to run French films and years later European films versus the number of American films that could be shown came to the surface really in the late 80's and the 90's. But there was some of that even then as American film in particular. You also have American dress and music, but film in particular dominates the world scene because they are just technically so well done, and there are audiences for these films. So there was some resentment even then, but it became a much bigger trade issue and political issue years later when Jack Valenti was pushing for things and limitations and was carrying his message around, but it was there even then.

*Q: The French also, I mean I enjoy French films. I still see quite a few. But they make usually a much more intimate one, and often it is more a work for the director than the actors I think, and the writers than for the public. The American ones are big and splashy and full of action. Kids love it.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, the French tend to make, certainly there are a lot of exceptions, but tend to make romantic and small films which are not fast paced in terms of action, which have long pauses sometimes between conversations, long looks between couples, that sort of thing.

*Q: Cigarette smoke.*

CHAPLIN: That's right. So you have the art crowd that likes them, but most of them are not big commercial successes though some of them are really excellent.

*Q: What about American jazz during this time you were doing this. Jazz is really one of the big sellers isn't it?*

CHAPLIN: It is and in my earlier period when I was in Romania, that was one of the main things we brought over. We tried to bring jazz groups over. Because it was eastern Europe, we got a little bit more money to do some of that, not a lot, but a little. But in these three particular countries, again the days of taking big orchestras or big groups over, the funds just weren't there. So you depended either on a lesser known group, or if you found a group was there commercially in a nearby country, see if they would come over at a cut rate. Patriotism into play, and we would introduce them to some interesting people. The Voice of America's famous Willis Conover jazz program which was noted throughout the world could be heard in western Europe. So anyone could listen to that on short wave. But jazz was very popular. We had the classical debate within the agency on who your audiences were. It varied from country to country, but did you go for small elites or for the large masses or a combination thereof. In many countries we felt that a lot

of popular American fiction, commercially popular, was going to come up in the foreign language anyway, and it is probably not stuff we were proud of. It was okay but nothing that said much about our country and our values. We often would tend to use the little bit of money we had to bring over a serious writer or a literary critic or someone else. By doing that, you would have to say is that the best use of the resources in this society because I am just reaching a few people. In France, because of the importance of culture, it might be worth doing. In another country it might not be worth doing as much because the elite and culture weren't quite as important as it was in France.

*Q: Well, I would imagine that given the culture of France, that France would almost always be treated differently than most other countries because you had the intellectuals and their role.*

CHAPLIN: You did, and I think what we attempted to do to exchange programs, on the Fulbright program as one example here, was where we did have good cooperation with the French. You try to identify in the Fulbright program future teachers, and you hoped some would pick up on American studies. I think the program was dictated a lot by budget, but also by the political agenda of the times. There have been many countries where we could handle very good cultural programs and have interesting audiences, but the political climate wasn't right, and so that group wasn't able to attend or the embassy said no this has to be a higher priority for this given time. We ran into that and you dealt with the situation as best you could.

*Q: How about with the arrival of the Mitterrand government. Say early Mitterrand, he was a pretty close to a solid left wing socialist in the beginning. He later became probably more right wing than anyone else. But he also had some communists in the government. Was this causing us some heartburn?*

CHAPLIN: Yes, I think it was initially. I didn't serve in the embassy so I didn't go through a lot of what obviously they were dealing with. But just on our side of the show, I think there was a great deal of concern because some people thought this might be the wave of change in Europe and you might see more leftist governments coming. The Cold War was going strong at this time, and the Russians were obviously looking for ways to drive wedges between us and individual European countries. So there was concern. I think our decision was that looking at French tradition and the depth of the roots of French democracy we felt by and large the people are democratic. This happens to be a leftist party within the context. Let's see where we can work and where we can't work. Someone who served in the embassy during those years can give you perhaps a very different position on that. From the Washington end, I think after the initial shock and figuring how do we work with this group, plus France's decision not to participate in NATO exercises and that sort of thing. There are various stages that had already been there that Mitterrand came into. I think there was a feeling of let's sort of wait and see how it goes. It doesn't serve our interests to isolate them. It doesn't serve our interests to make arguments with them. Let's keep in mind what our common objectives are and who the enemy is and let's deal accordingly.

*Q: How comfortable did you feel, I mean you are back in Washington during a solid hunk of the Carter administration. It is a new administration; it had its own way of dealing. How well did you find the fit from your perspective?*

CHAPLIN: From my perspective? Are you asking about the organization or just my own views?

*Q: Well how it worked, how it used USIA and how you felt about it.*

CHAPLIN: Well there was a very special beginning to the Carter administration and that is because Mr. Carter decided that USIA needed to change its name. He went through and at one point, I forget exactly what the letters were to stand for, oh it was going to be the Communication Information Agency, CIA. Someone talked him out of that so it became International Communication Agency. Before I went to the desk, when I worked as a management analyst, I was given the task of communicating with each embassy in the world to find out what the name would be in the local language. What International Communication Agency would translate into in China, in Bolivia, in France, wherever. We had something like 45 days to do this. You could only have one name per language, so for all countries that speak Spanish they are going to have to agree on one name. In Chinese, one. Some interesting things came up. First of all, the blasts from the field saying how long did it take ESSO to decide what its name was going to be and how many millions of dollars before it became Exxon, and we are going to do this in 45 days. We followed marching orders, so off we went. This was a Presidential decision. I can't think of anybody within the organization or foreign affairs community who thought this was a proper name to describe what we did. Carter's point, I think, was we have to see ourselves as part of the world, and not just unilaterally telling people what they should do and therefore the U.S. has to be dropped from this title. We finally came in with some anecdotal stuff including from Thailand, with a tonal language, saying the tones that you would use for this will come out to sound like you the killer. Of course we had just gone through Vietnam and they said that is probably not appropriate. Another country said they are going to confuse us with the telephone and telegraph company or agency in the government. In Taiwan they said yes the thing you have chosen for Chinese is correct, but something similar to that is what the Japanese had picked as part of their breaking relations with Taiwan so they could recognize China. The word went back, if it is technically correct it has got to be one thing in Chinese. Of course later you had the Shanghai thing, and we did change our relationship with Taiwan. Other places wherever you use the word "Agencia" in Spanish it means CIA, so people were against that. There were questions what are you going to do with the letterhead, what are you going to do with all these films where it said made by USIA at the end? In the end, because we had Carter as President and the first USIA career officer as director of USIA, John Reinhart, people would do what they are supposed to do in the bureaucracy. That doesn't mean there weren't jokes; that doesn't mean there weren't biting of tongues. There was a meeting during the campaign when Reagan ran against Carter. Richard Allen, at that time the top foreign policy advisor to candidate Reagan, had a meeting with people at State

and USIA. One of the things he said the Reagan administration would do would be to change the name back. There was a lot of applause on that issue. I don't know how many of those people voted for Reagan and how many voted for Carter, but on that issue he hit the right button. So we start off against that background. I think a lot of people were sympathetic to what Carter was attempting to do in terms of human rights, raising the profile of human rights. There was a sense of idealism. This of course comes in the era of post Watergate, contrast with the Nixon period. That said, I think a lot of people felt that there was naiveté, certainly micro managing. And that in terms of how it affected our programs, there might have been some programs where some individuals in the organization felt good about doing something, but that didn't mean they felt necessarily that what they were doing would be effective. It was something they could defend in terms of American values. It was a good way of looking at ourselves and what you wanted to project. But I think some people felt that this was moralizing and this was preaching and it was going to be counterproductive in what we were attempting to do in convincing organizations or individuals overseas.

*Q: On your particular area, the Iberian Peninsula and France, did the Soviet Union enter at all how we treated with them or was that something quite different?*

CHAPLIN: It wasn't the big issue. I think the main context was Spain and NATO and what the Russians might make of that. I am sure the Russians were putting money into Spain and trying to convince the Spanish in addition to their own views that it served them to go their own way and set their own parameters for participation. In Portugal you had a democratically elected government, but the second strongest party was still the Communist party. It is one of these small country stories where Mario Suarez became the socialist prime minister and was a classmate in school with the guy who became head of the communist party. They came from similar roots, so everyone kind of knows everyone. The fears that came out initially in '74-'75 about the direction in that country had pretty much abated, but still there was a little uncertainty about Portugal making it. With a communist party which had been the only authorized party during the dictatorship in Portugal, might there be circumstances through an election that they would come into power and the Russians for their own purposes could make mischief.

*Q: When did you leave in '79?*

CHAPLIN: I left in the beginning of 1980.

*Q: Well, then you were there when all hell broke loose in Iran and in Afghanistan.*

CHAPLIN: Right.

*Q: Did that send a shock wave throughout the agency?*

CHAPLIN: It did. In Iran there were four or five USIA employees who were among the hostages. One whom I knew pretty well, a couple of others who I knew of slightly. Yes,

that was a big story. It was a story that captivated the attention of the American people. That was where Nightline got launched on ABC to cover that story, and then became a permanent feature of the landscape. To many eyes this showed the weakness of this government in getting these people free. There was a personal interest story in terms of what these people were suffering, what they were going through and how you project that, at the same time in terms of foreign audiences views, you had that abortive helicopter rescue. Later Secretary of State Vance resigned over it and other things. It looked like a sign of weakness. You have got the most powerful country in the world, one or two along with the Soviet Union. You have got your people as hostages. You have tried diplomacy. That doesn't seem to work. Why don't you go in and do something about it? The administration, and I am not sure they had a better option, but at least in terms of public affairs, didn't have a real answer to that. We were caught, I guess, in a situation where the protection of those individuals and saving their lives and trying to get them free was more important than a projection of power, which might have ended up in a lot of people being killed. It appeared that we were as a country hostage to the Iranians. Afghanistan was a different story. I think there was certainly sympathy for the Afghans by a lot of people who didn't know much about Afghanistan's history but just because of what the Soviets had done. That was a story which was the converse. That was a story where you could point to the Russians as the aggressors and try to point out and make cases for why they should leave and why there should be world opinion rallied against the Russians. It was a very different sort of thing. The one sort of big, I won't say gimmick, that is not the word, the big attention getting decision related to that, the boycott of the Olympics in Russia in 1980, was then and I think even today a very controversial decision. I think it perhaps looks more controversial now than perhaps it did then because what tangible options did we have to show disfavor. This again was a government, Carter administration, which emphasized completely human rights and respect for other nations and sovereignty. So I am not sure what kinds of action they could have taken, but that again in terms of world reaction didn't get the full attention or the positive attention we as a government would have liked. But by and large, that was a story where we got good cooperation from the Pentagon on pamphlets and things like that, documents. What weapons the Russians are using. That was a case in which the U.S. government thought it was in a good position to make a case while surreptitiously providing arms and so forth to guerrillas and those resisting, freedom fighters. But both events in their own way captured public attention internationally, and we had to respond in ways, and it was easier to respond to what the Russians were doing than what we were not able to do in Iran.

*Q: Well in early '80. where did you move to?*

CHAPLIN: Well I became a bit of a tug of war. I moved up to a position in our bureau of policy. This was a case of an area director who frankly didn't want me to go, and a higher authority who wanted me to go to that position, and the director of the agency not wanting to get in between two people. So, right after the election, the higher authority became acting director of the agency before the political director was appointed. So in that job, I represented USIA at the State Department press spokesmen's briefing. I would sit in also on the pre briefing, and then the post brief discussion and then bring back the

guidance to give them to our media, Voice of America, our TV service and to the geographic area offices. So if there was something specific in a country or a region, they could let that country know right away. This is what the spokesman said or would have said if asked that question. This was when Reagan started and Haig was Secretary.

*Q: Well the press briefing at the State Department is often a level where secondary policy is worked out. In other words if you say well if there is a question on this, this is our answer. That sort of becomes the policy of the United States.*

CHAPLIN: That's true, but the wise press spokesman knows when to say I'll get back to you on that or I'll look that up and so forth, so it is a little less making policy...

*Q: He's not making policy on the fly. What I mean is the apparatus that is dealing with this all would touch everybody else. They are going around and coming up with what should be policy. So I mean you were sort of handling the hot stuff...*

CHAPLIN: Yes, it was because again there would be the importance of public opinion. It was really clear in this position, the importance of U.S. domestic politics and its effect on policy utterances. You are talking about speaking to journalists who cover the Department. They are U.S. journalists who work for publications but also foreigners as well, the conflict between what is said domestically to appeal to a domestic audience and the impact of those same words overseas. There are lots of examples of this for every region in the world. So the Department spokesman first of all has two masters to serve. He or she serves the Secretary of State, but they also serve the press corps whom they have to work with. If it ever becomes a choice between the two, they would go with the Secretary of State, but they would probably lose their effectiveness with the press corps. So it is a neat balancing act. Then it is a question of, more times than not, other agencies. It can be the White House, domestic agencies, who have some role in the particular policy issue. They may say that because of domestic constituencies or domestic politics or something else going on domestically in the U.S. we don't want you to say this or we want you to take this tack or we want you to go at it this way. When in fact the diplomats in that building might prefer a somewhat different approach. I am not just talking about the answer; I am talking about the approach and the way you package it and phrase it. The spokesman, it is a critical position. It is also one that is fraught with difficulties. Time bombs all around you or minefields all around you, and you have to give journalists enough substance on something for them to be able to do their job and not take pot shots at you. Also, it was ever thus and I think it will ever be thus, the Department of State does not speak with one voice. There are lots of people around there who know journalists. In various agencies it is a fact of life in government there are people who will give different answers, almost never identified, anonymously to a journalist. That complicates the life of a spokesman as well. We would then depend on what we got out of those briefings to essentially send out to our people who are keeping the embassy informed. You also had the Voice of America, the wireless file and others so they can give "Directly what they said" or just have a background file when they had to review in the future for some article or program on this, they could see what policy was.



*Q: You were doing this from when to when?*

CHAPLIN: I did that for about from January of '80 until April of '82 at which point I went into language training to go to Portugal.

*Q: Well what was the USIA role? Were you there as just a recipient or were you saying hey there is a problem here?*

CHAPLIN: We worked on two levels. There were public affairs advisors in each State Department functional bureau and geographic bureau, certainly geographic and almost every functional bureau. Many of those were USIA career officers on detail. They would be the ones, depending on the relationship with the assistant secretary or the deputy assistant secretary, who could weigh in and say this is the public diplomacy dimension of this. At my level, by the time I got to those meetings, I would occasionally be asked, but more often things were already decided. They were getting the suggested guidance down from the bureaus to put in the spokesman's book, and the pre brief discussion was this is what they say, do we need to quickly go back and clarify that. To speak, the spokesman has to be comfortable with the words being put in his or her mouth. So occasionally I would offer views. More often than not, I was the one sitting in, learning, taking stuff out, picking up informal stuff to keep an eye on for the future as well as physically taking guidance back to be distributed.

*Q: You were there at the change of administrations then.*

CHAPLIN: Right.

*Q: In the first place, what was your impression of the press corps that dealt with the State Department, and then was there a change in attitude in these early days when the administration came in?*

CHAPLIN: Well there are several people who have been press spokesmen. I know two quite well who had come from outside, who were journalists. Hodding Carter who was with Vance and later John Hughes who was with Shultz. I have known a couple of career people as well. They have unanimously said that the press corps at the State Department is the best in town, that it is better than at the White House, and it is better than any other beat. Certainly the networks, the major newspapers, the news magazines have very qualified people. Probably along with the White House, they are the two top Washington beats for the general press. The specialized press, may cover Treasury or the Department of Energy, EPA or something else, but the editors, the top directors of the news at the networks and others, they send first class people there. There was a period, I don't know if this began with Hodding Carter or not, but there was a period there where it is only recent that you have televised press conferences. For a long period everyone knew each other. Over the years it has become a little more formal adversarial relationship. Some of that has to do with the intrusiveness of television. People want to be stars on television, big

players or journalists. But it is also an effective way of communicating, so it is only recently that you have had that. After the session is over, there is background, and after the cameras are off and cassette recorders are off and so on, around where the press spokesman is, journalists will come up and they will be able to toss some more stuff back and forth. You still have got to be careful what you say, but at least the spokesman tends to go a little further there because good journalists know they are not going to get everything they want on camera or when their cassettes are on. I think this was recognized by the crowd when they came in. The first assistant secretary I worked with was Bill Diaz who was a career officer who left only a few months after I had got there. He was replaced by Dean Fisher who had been a Time Magazine diplomatic correspondent. I may be jumping ahead of the game a little bit, but it was not easy being Alexander Haig's press spokesman. Part of that was the short leash. The deputy to the press spokesman, if they bring in somebody from the outside, is always a department career officer. Some of those are better than others, but they know where the skeletons are buried and where the problems lie, and they can help guide a newcomer to the department through the shoals. But I think, in general, each administration understands the importance of dealing with the press and the impact internationally as well as domestically. I think some secretaries, like some presidents, are more skillful than others and I think Haig probably viewed the press really as an adversary.

*Q: He was kind of really out of the military wasn't he.*

CHAPLIN: Sure.

*Q: And also the Watergate.*

CHAPLIN: The Nixon Watergate. I just think by personality. He is a very strong, hard driving, bright guy, but like a lot of generals you saw in Vietnam, didn't understand why U.S. reporters didn't get on the team because it was in U.S. interest to do this. So it was a misunderstanding, not a misunderstanding, a lack of acceptance of the roles they play in our society. Haig who was very forceful, very outspoken, good speaker, very articulate, very dynamic, I think probably couldn't or wouldn't, I am not quite sure what, cultivate the press the way some predecessors and successors have. That then makes it particularly difficult for his press spokesman.

*Q: Did you have the strong feeling that everybody was sort of holding it in and speaking their way slowly and very carefully.*

CHAPLIN: You mean the spokesman and the staff?

*Q: Yes.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, I think there had been some of that. It doesn't matter if you have the nicest boss and someone who is very understanding, the tension in that job the pressure is on you because the press is really following you when there are big problems and big

issues. They are not talking about what went well today. So there is an inherent pressure and difficulty there where you really have to mind your P's and Q's. The tension level just goes a little higher when you have got a tightly wound leader at the helm.

*Q: How did you like the job?*

CHAPLIN: I found the job interesting. It got very tiring in some ways because I had to be in about quarter to seven in the morning, and I was staying until about six at night. I had a deputy so about four days a week I would do this job and one day he would. The morning started off with a call which went between us and the State Department press office. At that time they had a press officer over at the NSC and occasionally Defense. They would essentially spotlight the issues. This is what is coming up today and what we are asking guidance on, so I would already have an idea on that. The particular administration that came in we had a hard charging director named Charles Wick who I later served more closely. With another officer I had to brief our top leadership each morning at about 8:30. My part would be either looking at cables or guidance. Cables would come in highlighting issues, cables that are going out or what I picked up from that early morning conversation just to put it on their agenda. It was interesting. You were at the top levels internally. I come from a journalistic family. My father was a newspaper editor so I am comfortable and enjoy being around journalists and enjoyed working on the other side, the government side with journalists. So it was a good insight into that operation. You would always like to have more time in the day, and you certainly saw that with the spokesman. If the person could have three hours to think through something, the answer might come out a little differently than taking ten minutes, but that's the nature of the thing. The briefings start at noon; you have got to have guidance ready. It was an interesting job. I enjoyed it. I only really left it because I was going to be assigned overseas. It was time to go overseas again.

*Q: Well from '82 you took Portuguese?*

CHAPLIN: I had Spanish before, so I took a conversion course. It was a one-on-one with a teacher and I had about six weeks of conversion. I needed continental Portuguese, not Brazilian Portuguese, so I got that. I went out as public affairs counselor to Lisbon.

*Q: And you were there from when to when?*

CHAPLIN: I arrived July 5, '82, and left the end of August, '86, so I had a four year tour. Dick Bloomfield was the first ambassador. He had just left. I think I dealt a little with him as ambassador. I had to rush to get there by July 5 without taking leave or anything, and he had already departed post. There was a chargé for awhile who was Ed Rowell, and then Alan Holmes replaced him. Then in my last year, Frank Shakespeare who had been a previous director at USIA and also a Nixon public relations man in the '68 campaign, came as ambassador.

*Q: When you got to Portugal, what was sort of the state of, well Portugal itself and then*

*Portuguese American relations?*

CHAPLIN: Portugal was going through a period, and it did for many years, of political instability in the sense that you had no one who got 51% in the parliament. This was a parliamentary government. So you had constant changes in government. The communists never came to power. They had influence in the congress but... So you could never build on anything. Three months, six months down the road that government would be out; a new cast of characters would come in. Whoever you were, Portuguese or American or British, you would have to start dealing with them. Limping along economically. The debate over entry into the European Union had gone on. There was much public discussion about it. It was evident that was the direction Portugal had to go. The colonies were gone. Their links with Africa, Macao and so forth, while maybe sentimental, weren't going to really help them in terms of development, so this was the only choice they really had. That debate got started late, but the major democratic parties agreed that had to come about. The communists were pretty moderate communists. This was almost like the Italian variety of communists with a smile on the face whenever they turned to you.

*Q: Eurocommunist.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, exactly. So they were not hard line in the sense of saying no to everything and putting roadblocks and strikes and so forth. On the other hand, they weren't really coming up with good initiatives. Partly through ideology I guess, partly through personal ambition, they were setting up roadblocks where they could to certain things and not initiating any good new policies. They were totally reactive. Through it all the Portuguese seemed to muddle through these things. There would be strikes on occasion, but there wasn't great domestic strife. There weren't battles. Crime was rising, but crime was rising everywhere. A poor country but a pretty conservative and traditional people. I think that in good measure described what they went through, slowly kind of reaching this goal. Very friendly toward the U.S. Part of that was image of the U.S. values, part of that was everyone knew the U.S. was rich and successful. Enough Portuguese in the U.S. who had success stories who could say life here is fine.

*Q: Did you notice a lot of ties with Rhode Island and Massachusetts particularly?*

CHAPLIN: Well the two coasts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and then California on the other side, and most of those are from the Azores.

*Q: Fishing people.*

CHAPLIN: And there were more Azoreans in the United States than in the Azores. The Azores and Madeira are what you would call semi independent entities within Portugal. But Azoreans would refer to Portugal. They wouldn't say our country. They looked upon them as different. There was even a move, obviously not well thought out or successful many years ago, of some who thought the Azores would like to become a state in the U.S. Now I don't know anyone on the U.S. side except maybe some of the Portuguese descent

who ever had that notion but the point being this friendliness toward the U.S.

*Q: Somebody told me once the subject was raised in '74 when it looked like Portugal was going down the communist tubes or something. Somebody said, "Well you know, why don't we just kind of promote Azorean independence because this is prime real estate as far as strategic real estate. You know it was shot down, but I think the subject at the fringes came up.*

CHAPLIN: Well it is interesting. In fact our biggest interest there was the base at Lajes in the Azores. This is where we used to refuel planes for Middle East wars of the past. It is a line item in the Azorean budget. That is their biggest source of income. I was there in one base negotiation. It took us ten months, a year, whatever it did take. And I advised the ambassador and he agreed that he wouldn't give any press interviews until we concluded the negotiations. In a way this let different Portuguese groups who wanted to make cases to the press get out their word while we weren't answering. I said, "Look, all you can tell them is that you are not going to comment. We are not going to discuss it. We are friends. This isn't an adversarial thing." But I didn't know it was going to take a year to get this thing done. But in the end they depended so heavily on that. The foreign ministry in the government of Portugal was looking for how much they could extricate from this in funding because most of it was going to go right to the Azores. They wanted something else so they could develop, also some strategic theories. There was a strategic triangle involving other parts of Europe that was key to the success of Europe against the Soviet menace. There was a think tank there of strategic studies promoting this among other things. It struck me that first of all the Portuguese were friendly and easy to deal with, very reticent as a people. Completely different personalities than the Spaniards. How these people co-inhabited the same peninsula all these centuries I am not quite sure, but as confident and as arrogant and as big and tough as the Spaniards can be, meek and quiet and reserved is the Portuguese style. One other thing that struck me was because the revolution was still just a few years old, it occurred in '74 and I got there in '82, the youth of the leadership. You essentially had young democratic leaders coming up, so you would have a foreign minister who was 32. Because of the change in government, someone like that would go out of government in a few months, but they would bubble up the next time the socialists were in charge. So you had a small pool of people, be it socialists, Christian democrats, whatever else maybe on the communist side, as well who were going to be on the stage for a long time because all you had before were generals and people who got discredited when the dictatorship fell. So these people created a country, but they all at the beginning were young, and were going to be around for a long time. Most knew each other. Despite personal ambitions, at least they were civil to one another when working on things. In that sense it was a kind of a pleasant atmosphere and ambiance in which to work. The fact the U.S. had a big high profile there whether we wanted it or not, that didn't mean the Portuguese understood us well. Very few Portuguese studied in the States. Not many studied in other parts of Europe for economic reasons. For those who went, they would usually go to England or France or Germany or Italy. Some went to Spain. Very few went to the U.S. because of the distances and cost. But the image of the U.S., the values, what they heard about them, pop culture and relatives was all very positive. So

you had excellent access to whatever level of government you needed or private sector. You just had to remember that despite the fact they were in Europe, they weren't Swiss, and they weren't Germans, and they weren't British, they weren't well organized. There were some parallels with the Latin American experience that came in kind of handy in dealing with kind of a developing economy and people who really had a long proud history in which they were front page for five or six centuries. I was telling some friends, sometimes the U.S. newspapers on the editorial page would say 25 years ago today this happened, or 50 years ago. When the Portuguese paper had it, they would say 500 years ago today so and so happened. Put it in perspective about A, how old they are, and B. they, along with Spain through the Treaty of Tordesillas, sort of divvied up the world for exploration. Prime players on the world scene.

*Q: Well, were we, what sort of programs did we have, USIA type programs did we have there?*

CHAPLIN: We ran the whole gamut there. Some were democratic institution building, some were cultural, a lot of foreign policy again because of Russia and NATO issues. In terms of explaining U.S. society, drugs was becoming more of an issue domestically for us, and we felt the need to explain it. It was a very traditional sort of program, very different from the sort of thing we had in Romania for instance. We had a small staff of four Americans and about 19 or 20 Portuguese FSNs. We could do anything we wanted, but we just had a very limited budget. We dealt with universities. We had speakers on energy alternatives, environmental issues, rule of law, a whole variety of things. There weren't as many local organizations as you could work with that you would see in a more sophisticated, developed western European society. Nonetheless, those that were there were very receptive. The Russians did a little there. They didn't do a lot publicly. The British had very long ties. I think the British-Portuguese treaty...

*Q: 300 years or something.*

CHAPLIN: ...was the longest in history. So you would find some Portuguese who wanted to learn English, but they wanted to learn British English not American English. The French were pretty active there as well; Germans to some extent. Some of these foundations, the Adenauer Foundation and some others in other countries were very big suppliers of funds to Portuguese political groups in the critical period right after the revolution, particularly the socialist party and to some extent the Christian democrat party. So it was a wide open program. We did some cultural events. The Portuguese, and this is one of these flukes of history, have a place called the Gulbenkian Foundation. Gulbenkian was a five percent man who sold oil in the Middle East, Armenian.

*Q: It goes back to the turn of the century doesn't it? I mean earlier...*

CHAPLIN: Well a little later. Anyway, he had become right around WWII, guest of a Portuguese diplomat he had met and had set up shop there. When he died, he created this foundation which uses Chase Manhattan. It is like Rockefeller, Ford. It is in that level in

terms of resources. Its money dwarfed the official government money for education, culture, everything. So the Gulbenkian Foundation had a museum, a ballet, had a film center, the symphony orchestra. I am not saying they wanted to do all these things, but if they didn't do it these things were going to die. So we worked a lot with that, both on speakers and exhibits, musical programs. Unlike many organizations they weren't better organized than any other Portuguese organization. They would just throw money at things and make things happen. We had speakers; I didn't bring him over, but I helped with Alvin Toffler who did Future Shock. There was a big interest in him and I had gotten him to come to Europe when I was there before. He came and gave a lecture, invitation only, at the Gulbenkian for about 1400 people. He started right on a Friday night at 8:00. With typical European style, commentators making comments on what this speaker has said, I left at a quarter to two in the morning and it was still going. People were still interested in what this guy had to say. Great thirst for information about the outside, great interest in what others had to say. Pride in being Portuguese. One of the cases that came up when I was there, you may remember there was a movie made about this famous rape case up in New Bedford, where there was a Portuguese victim and a tavern, the American assailants, the judge, everyone was Portuguese.

*Q; Small, it was New Bedford was it?*

CHAPLIN: Or Fall River. Congressman Barney Frank came over. We had a country team briefing, so this must have been '85 I think. People were talking with him, and he was going to have an interview the next day with leading journalists. I said, "You are going to be asked about this." He said, "That's Gerry Studds' district, not mine." I said, "Mr. Frank, you are going to be asked about this case." A guy came over, a reporter, and asked general questions. Got to this question, and this is one of these cases where you are sort of proud of American politicians and dismayed in the span of the same conversation. Where he said, "Look, the verdict hadn't come in. They are getting a trial. That's our way. The fact they are Portuguese-American, that doesn't really concern us. There are bad apples in any nationality group," and so forth. There is no big problem and Portugal is wonderful and so forth. "Anyway on violence, it goes back to the Mayflower. We have a history of violence." He goes on chapter and verse I guess ingratiating himself with the local host about this. If he had cut off at the Mayflower we were fine, but he wanted to go on. So he did. There was another story. When Ed Koch was the Mayor of New York and he ran for the gubernatorial nomination and lost. He befriended the Irish ambassador, someone from Ireland up in New York, and the Portuguese UN ambassador. So he had some time on his hands since he wasn't going to be governor, so he went to Ireland and then came to Portugal. Private visit. There was an embassy liaison officer. The top newspaper said they would like to have an interview with Koch. I said, "Well I can send him a note." Sent a note, the answer came back, "Sure." The ambassador was giving a reception for him, so we set up this interview downstairs just before the reception. The reporters were throwing softballs at him. How did you get the economy up in New York, how did you do this and that, softballs. Finally it comes to what looked like a throwaway thing at the end. He said, "You have a lot of Portuguese-Americans in New York." He said, "They are great. They are middle class. They pay their taxes. They go to church. Their kids are well behaved.

They are wonderful, send me as many as you want." Well the next day the headline in the paper is "Send Me as Many as You Want." The consul general calls and says you have got to get hold of Mayor Koch and tell him about this. Our phone is ringing off the hook. I said, "Tom, two things can happen. He will say Look I said it or Look immigration is federal policy." And he was going out of town. In those days the roads were bad. One guy got in a taxicab and rode about eight hours down to Lisbon only to be turned down for a visa applications. He could have been turned down anyway, but these throwaway lines of politicians to ingratiate themselves have consequences they don't think of. It was a good experience. We liked Portugal more than any other tour we had.

*Q: How did the administration go down? This is the height of the administration, including things like the bombing of Libya and all that.*

CHAPLIN: The Portuguese press was spectral. Some were more responsible than others, some with minor circulation, but there were a huge number in proportion to the number that were economically viable. Some places understood it, but we got a lot of criticism. But there was a feeling of the cowboy and the lawyer and looking for an excuse to pull the trigger. It was somewhat a tough stand on missiles in Europe as well and the feeling of why can't you just compromise. We just want less tension and why can't you be more accommodating. There was some of that. It was a constant challenge to try to make our case. Reagan did come to Portugal, and he spent four days in Portugal, so it was a lot of time for a presidential visit, four nights and three days something like that. But I must say, he made a very favorable impression. The man is so good so I think they were honored that an American president was coming. He was the first since Carter, early Carter, or maybe even before Carter someone had been to Portugal. Anyway it had been many years. So they were honored by his coming. There were enough people who were worried about communism based on early experience that they were kind of giving us the benefit of the doubt. It wasn't like you guys are totally off your rocker. It was kind of an understanding of what we were trying to do with the Russians, Soviet Union, at the same time disagreement perhaps on individual policies or the way we approached certain policies. But not the criticism you saw in other European capitals. You didn't have massive demonstrations that you saw in other places.

*Q: You know, you are talking about the European communism with the friendly face. When I interviewed Frank Carlucci in the earlier period, we are talking about the real time, he was saying they were helped very much by the fact that whoever was the communist leader at the time was a good solid Stalinist, and hard liner, had no idea and so screwed up that he turned many of the people off because he was...*

CHAPLIN: I think that is true, because again this was a country that was isolated. It had a communist party that was underground and organized, but they were looking at the old Russia, the old Soviet Union. So we were fortuitous on the lack of sophistication in those people in dealing with audiences directly or through the media in making their case. Carlucci couldn't say this. Others have said it. He was absolutely the right man to be there at that time. I don't know if he mentioned this, but there were stories that Kissinger had



written Portugal off to the extent that Portugal was a founding member of NATO. Their ambassador in Brussels was not allowed to read classified material by himself. Someone had to be there with him. Carlucci made the argument and he was right. The leader, who continued to be a leader for many years, began to pick up a little stuff, but again not as sophisticated as the Italians or the French or others. The Soviet Union had its own problems elsewhere in terms of Poland, Czechoslovakia and other places. The Portuguese in this case could observe those and see the heavy Russian hand there, so that made the case for us as well or better than our just giving our own views on things.

*Q: Were we just in terms of American trade, were we concerned about the European Union becoming sort of a customs union that might be excluding the United States and any developments like that in Portugal?*

CHAPLIN: I think again a little bit depends on whether you are sitting in Washington or Lisbon. I think in sitting in Lisbon, people in the embassy felt this was the place they had to go. They had to join for their own benefit. We weren't perhaps taking the global picture of what is this going to mean in terms of a threat to U.S. interests. There was also a debate in U.S. policy circles that while we wanted to encourage European unity, at what price. Not to the extent it will endanger our own commercial opportunities and so forth. U.S. investment was pretty small in Portugal. They weren't producing any minerals or particular product we could only get from them to put them in a high profile. So I think we just generally felt that competition may come down the line, but the disputes we were going to have were going to be with the bigger European powers. They were going to be with Germany and France particularly, or some of the larger countries, but not Portugal. So it served everyone's benefit to have Portugal enter the EU, common market, as soon as possible.

*Q: Well you left there in '86. Maybe this might be a good place to stop I think, but I will put at the end, where did you go in '86?*

CHAPLIN: I came back to Washington initially to be chief of foreign service personnel in the personnel division. I did that for about four months and then got drafted to be the executive assistant to the director of the USIA, Charles Wick.

*Q: This will be very interesting, but I think this is a good place to stop. We will pick it up then.*

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*Today is 20 March 2001. Steve, 1986, let's talk a little bit about you were in personnel or something?*

CHAPLIN: Chief of foreign service personnel.

*Q: Only for a few months but what had been your impression before you came there?*

*How satisfied, dissatisfied were you from the colleagues you sampled at that stage of the game were the USIA personnel?*

CHAPLIN: Well, it is a bit hard to generalize. I think most people probably felt they had a good bit of individual contact. Let me rephrase that. I think a lot of people felt the system in general was fair. There was a feeling that the individual personnel officers who were your career advisors usually wrote you a letter when they began their tenure on the desk in that position, and then another letter when they left, and they weren't proactively seeking to further our careers. So some people were disappointed, I think, in terms of the lack of active hands-on involvement by personnel officers. That being said, we had a policy, I don't remember exactly when it began, probably in the late '70s early '80s of open assignments: you were to bid, at some point in your tour, on five upcoming assignments where you would like to go next. You would have to provide some justification of your qualifications for each of those assignments. If they were overseas assignments you had to work in at least two different geographical areas. This was an attempt to open up the system. The feeling among many was there was a series of personnel clubs based on geographic regions and who you knew, so that if you were in Africa for much of your career, or Asia, and you wanted to go to Europe, the feeling was you had to break into the European club and had to know somebody who knew somebody and so forth. I have never seen this really carefully documented in terms of an assignment pattern...

*Q: But it is certainly part of the folklore that I think all of us, I mean sort of in the State Department foreign service as well.*

CHAPLIN: Sure. And the advantage we had over State was being a much smaller organization, so you knew a fair number of people. Some of them who served in other areas did indeed have access to people who were in senior positions in other areas whose path may have crossed with yours earlier in your career. You also had more senior officers, when this open assignments process was opened, who resented this, who felt that their qualifications and experience were self evident and they shouldn't have to go through this process, and they resented having to go through it. In some cases they may have gotten assignments without going through the formal bidding process. In other cases the director of personnel who is a career civil servant may have had to talk to them about the egalitarian nature of what they were out to achieve.

*Q: When you came for your rather brief, only four months, look at it, what was your impression?*

CHAPLIN: Well I actually had a little bit more time than that in an unusual way. I came in in October, no I guess maybe September of '86 to this position. This was an office with maybe 20, 23, 24 people. We worked on all the assignments for foreign service officers domestic and overseas.

*Q: About how many were there?*

CHAPLIN: At that time we probably had about 650 officers. I think at its high point after Vietnam in the early 70's and so forth there were about a 1000 in the USIA foreign service. The numbers then went down somewhat. So this was training assignments as well as tour assignments domestically and overseas. I spotted a couple of things. I thought we didn't have enough people trained down the road in junior level positions for eastern Europe, in eastern European languages, so we did a survey which I launched. I moved on before it was completed, trying to determine candidates for the study of languages in eastern European countries. Part of the problem of course is in eastern Europe as in some parts of the rest of the world, you are talking about languages that can be used in a single country and never again. Western Europe is somewhat that way. Asia to some extent.

*Q: You learn Czech; you learn Czech.*

CHAPLIN: That's right or Finnish or whatever it is. So that is a great disincentive to people who don't want to necessarily invest nine months or a year of their career learning it to go to a place for two or three years and never go back again. So you had to come up with some incentives to do that. So we were looking at people; we were trying to come up with ways where if they would do this, they would get a break in their next assignment. That is careful consideration of what their "druthers" were in the future. That was one thing. We were running into the tandem couple issue. In a few cases two USIA officers married to each other. How you did those assignments in places where you may only have three or four officers. You couldn't have one reporting to the other. But there were also tandems across the board. Someone married a State officer, someone married to a Commerce officer. Those were always tricky because you ideally wanted to come up with assignments that were advantageous to both individuals.

*Q: I am interviewing two ones now, Louise Taylor was a USIA officer and Marjorie Ransom. Both were married to State Department officers.*

CHAPLIN: Exactly, I know them both well. So that was an ongoing issue. And then a little bit on recruitment. We were concerned about getting the best in terms of qualifications to take the foreign service exam. How do you get the word spread out enough. And then a corollary of that is how to improve minority recruitment. That has been an age old problem, to make the foreign service look like the rest of American society and attempt to do this on minuscule budgets in terms of correspondence or sending officers out to visit colleges. Plus a very real factor in society, minority candidates, which in many instances meant African-American, to a lesser degree Hispanic or Native American and some others, Asian-Americans. Many of them who years before might have looked to the government as a first resort of employment because there were so many barriers elsewhere, all of a sudden those barriers weren't there anymore in society. They could start to pick and choose where they went, and the government might be three or four or five on their list of business or academia or some other thing. So that was a constant thing we were looking at. I don't think we ever did a very good job. I think there were noble efforts made over the years not just in my time in personnel, but before

and since. But I don't think we did an effective job, because it wasn't a high enough priority for the top managers of the organization to allocate funds to improve that.

*Q: Well then you did this for, did you find you had all sorts of friends all of a sudden when you were in personnel when you came back?*

CHAPLIN: It worked both ways. Some people did want to take you to lunch which I couldn't accept, but, that is the payment, but I certainly enjoyed the lunch. But many people did come down. Because of the size of our organization, the chief of foreign service personnel was also a career counselor to the most senior officers in the senior foreign service, so it was a dual role there. Then some officers who were very unhappy with assignments wanted to come and complain or threaten to invoke higher authority and so forth.

*Q: Tell me, I had at one point, I was a career management officer. Somebody comes, a senior officer and say you see, and you find for example, we are talking about senior officers. I am sure that probably there more than it shows up farther down the line, sometimes abrasive personality or inability to work with an organization or something is a factor. How did you deal with things, because you talked a little about some of the things you find yourself having to deal with.*

CHAPLIN: Right. Well you had that on occasion. Of course I think it is just like anything else in life, certainly within a government organization. Nobody, unless you have really done something terrible or against the law or reached mandatory departure dates, is going to be fired. They are just going to be moved along to some other position. So I think you try to identify, let's say for a senior position overseas as a public affairs officer, you try to identify as best you could, the circumstances of that post. What were the issues, what type of ambassadors did you have; what was the quality of the other officers. How much experience did they have. Then you would look for someone, you would look for maybe several candidates, but you would look for people who had personalities as well as skills and experience who would match into that circumstance. Language training and press background whatever it was. Did this person have a demonstrable record in their file of being a good manager of people, of managing down with colleagues as well as managing up to the ambassador and DCM. People who had particularly bad records in getting along with Americans and/or foreign service nationals, if it was documented that they had problems, the way the evaluations system works it really had to be a bad problem because people tend not to go into detail in those unless it is demonstrable and you just have to by good conscience put it in there one way or another. Those people we looked at carefully, and some of them, probably most of them, didn't get the assignments they wanted if we felt it was going to be a detriment. So those people tended to go to secondary assignments for which if you looked at their file they might be better qualified. But if they really couldn't manage people or couldn't manage resources, we couldn't entrust them I think, to go overseas and do a good job. There were one or two cases where I had to bring officers back from overseas assignments. One case particularly where an ambassador weighed in. Remember this is dealing with someone's career, so you don't take that lightly no matter

who the ambassador is. So we look for documentation; we look for specific things. You talk with other people as best you can to find out the circumstances. Is this just a case of a difficult ambassador or is our officer really not doing the job or some other medical or other factor contributing to the lack of performance. Then in the end I would go to the head of personnel and say these are the circumstances and I think we should withdraw this person or I think we should wait awhile. We might inform this person that they are in a difficult situation because they may have lost the confidence of their superiors, but we are going to give them a few months to turn around. There weren't too many cases like that fortunately. The more frequent case was of a senior officer who just thought that he or she, mainly he, was going to go to a position beneath them in terms of what their aspirations and self identification or self worth was. In some cases we just had to bite the bullet and just do it. I can't think of a single case offhand where I was overruled either by the head of personnel or the head of the agency. People who usually want or get assignments line up support, senior assignments line up support informally. The word may come informally endorsing someone, but not putting pressure on that being the final decision. We attempted to have a credible system by being sure that people from mid level up to senior level really did serve in different areas where that was a requirement, that they did meet their language requirements, that they were fair and as best we could tell, accurate evaluating officers. So it is an imperfect system. One thing recommended was that because personnel is such a sensitive and delicate topic, putting foreign service officers in and just trusting their judgment based on their experience with personalities instead of going with professional personnel people was not the way to go. Professional personnel people should be hired just as big corporations who have overseas branches hire personnel people. In the end I think it was a combination of things that never went anywhere. Just inertia to begin with. Second, budgetary constraints. Thirdly, the feeling that what we do is a bit unique; to bring in an expert in personnel assignments and motivation and this and that, who does not have any background with the foreign service, might lead to very uninformed or less than fully informed decisions which would make sense perhaps from a professional personnel manager's standpoint, but would not make sense for the organization. So in the end that was resisted; it never came to pass. It was an interesting experience.

*Q: I would say because of the cycle when you were there, you probably wouldn't run across it, but I would think you might have picked up repercussions, that one of the most sensitive. There are two very sensitive jobs, I mean career sensitive jobs. Two major ones. One is the DCM to a political ambassador, and the other is the public affairs officer because for a political appointee those are the only two he really cares about. The political counselor, the economic counselor, they can make their reports and okay. But the DCM manages the operation and the public affairs officer gives, is this guy's guide on how to exist in the country. Does he have a good presence or a bad presence?*

CHAPLIN: The ambassador's image.

*Q: Yes, and this is usually the reason they bought and paid for the job, for a good image.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, that often happens.

*Q: I would think that this would be sort of if not a graveyard, it would be a whole organization dealing with the aftermath of difficult, I am not trying to pick on just the political appointees, but they are a different type, and they come in for a short period. They depend on their public affairs officer.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, and some of them of course, don't think in terms of that officer's future career and what you say about them can affect their career. Well, that happened in some instances. I think in most cases, not every instance but some instances, we found very capable, sensitive and supportive DCMs who could be a buffer if the ambassador wasn't getting totally what they wanted from the front page of major newspapers every day. It is a sensitive position and probably for that reason most public affairs officers tended to be people with press backgrounds. Yes, from the organization standpoint they knew how or had to know how to manage people and money. There were some officers who were good in press and cultural affairs equally. But working with an ambassador who wants hands-on public affairs support, you had to have someone who had all the internal diplomatic skills one can imagine plus who was creative in seeing that the ambassador got his or her wishes in terms of public appearances. But at the same time there shouldn't be any damage done to the U.S. interests and the broader mission of why we were there. So it was a delicate balancing act in some cases. Often that was not the case. But I know of times where ambassadors effectively ended people's careers, either by having the PAO ousted or having a couple of evaluation reports that determined that essentially that officer was not going to be promoted or given a big senior assignment. The organization, through personnel, but also through the geographic bureau, attempted to intercede where we could to help before it got to the final stage. Sometimes an ambassador, particularly a political ambassador, not always, but particularly political ambassadors who might have good contact to the director of USIA, who was after all a political appointee, just went there first and the organization found out as the word came down. That made it more difficult. Often you just want to be very responsive to that ambassador, and really didn't care about how well the person was doing the job, was there another side of the story, whatever. So those became a bit tricky in managing some points. Fortunately those were few in number. But it was always a challenge and something we kept our eyes on.

*Q: Well then, in early '87 you moved over to do what?*

CHAPLIN: Well it was actually the end of '86, probably around the first of November roughly. The director was a man named Charles Wick who was a friend of President Reagan, very close personal friend. He had, besides being very smart, very capable, he also had a volatile personality. He had as his chief of staff a political appointee who also was serving as general counsel of the agency. I have never heard of such a combination because those are both full time important positions. But for whatever reason, this man was in that job before I came back from overseas. He was fired. He was bounced, I think because he was just not serving Wick in the ways he thought he wanted to be served. There were comments that he was blocking access of senior managers to the director. The

paper flow was not moving expeditiously and so forth. The senior foreign service officer position in USIA was called the counselor. That would be something comparable to the undersecretary for political affairs at State. The then counselor talked to the head of personnel. He had lunch with me.

*Q: Who was that?*

CHAPLIN: A fellow named Stan Burnett, an extremely capable guy. He and the deputy director of USIA came to Marvin Stone, who had come out of publishing and edited U.S. News and World Report. A good republican who after he sold his interest in U.S. News came in as deputy director to Wick. We had lunch one day and they essentially said they wanted me to do this job. We talked about it. I wasn't naive. The position attracted me in many ways, not only in terms of career aspirations but also because you have a vantage point, a view of the organization and some important decisions or helping the decision making process at least, that you wouldn't get elsewhere. The downside was working for a man who had a very unusual managerial style and was volatile and saw himself as a major player on the foreign affairs scene. I had met the director before. When he would come into the agency initially, before he was fully confirmed, and I was doing the fast policy job, I used to brief him and senior managers. So I knew him somewhat. Then he came to Portugal once when I was there. In Washington I talked to him. It was agreed that I would hold the title of chief of foreign service personnel, and we would do this for about three or four months to see how being his aide worked out. If it didn't work out, I would go back to personnel. Well, for the director that was no big concession. He didn't care as long as I was doing stuff for him. For me it meant a little more work. Fortunately, I had a very good deputy in personnel, and so he pretty much ran the office. I would come down a number of hours a day or over a course of a week several hours, usually after hours, sometimes at the end of the day and get in on all the big personnel decisions. I actually did that until the following summer. Also I wanted to be sure they had a good person coming in to replace me which meant you were required to wait until that summer cycle. So I actually did these two jobs for about eight or nine months. The director's front office was the biggest in terms of staff of any director in memory. In what other places would be called the chief of staff, which is what I did, was called the executive assistant. I then had three officers one of whom was civil service, two who were junior foreign service, under me. There was an appointment secretary. There was a regular secretary and then there was a special kind of administrative assistant to the director and a receptionist. There were like 11 or 12 people. Really big for our front office. All of them extremely busy and a lot of work. The main assignments I thought I had were making sure that materials came up to him in a timely fashion for decision making, be they budgetary, be they policy, be they personnel related, whatever the issue was. And if the sending organization did not frame the briefing memo or action memo or decision memo in a proper way, one of the assistants or I would go back down to their office and say you have got to do it in a way that he will understand. He will not be confused. There will be no time bombs here. That was difficult in many ways because of the heavy work load we have. It was also because we ran into very tight deadlines on things. This was a director who traveled quite a bit so you would have to get him focused on things to begin with.

Much of his focus was on the organization but he also had a social life in the higher circles here at the time and other things were on his mind. In terms of process, we would have to fight to get time to get in to see him to go through the paperwork in person because leaving documents in an in box for him to review either during the day or at night, this was not his style. He wanted face to face talk. Even then he might have two telephones going and someone else coming in and this and that. I also played a role in scheduling meetings. The other side of the office, the social secretary, the senior administrative person and so forth really went under my command. We all coexisted, people were friendly, but I didn't evaluate them. They served other purposes for him, so I was just looking after the organizational business and not the other side of his life. He wanted to be thought of as a major player in the foreign policy team. That meant wanting to go to big meetings, summits with the Russians and other places. He felt that because he was so close to the president that he might be a target of assassination. He got a four or five member secret service team with him whenever he traveled. There was a famous story that he had a bullet proof raincoat to wear to events. He wanted to be sure that on planes that he got the proper protocol in terms of how he was treated. He had gotten a law degree, come up on his own, was a musician as well. He had done a lot of arranging for major musicians and later went into business, and did a little film work and set up nursing homes. A self made man. He and his wife were very close to the Reagans. He wanted this position and the President asked him to take it, and he did. He had a very sharp mind, an effective negotiator. I think there were some insecurities there vis a vis career officers who might have had more experience overseas in terms of education or experience or travel. I think there was a feeling he wanted to get across that he was in charge and wanted their advice but he was a little sensitive.

*Q: This is the problem, it is sort of endemic with the foreign service per se, in that we do recruit people who have quite good educations and they have moved around. So they can appear a hell of a lot more sophisticated than say you and I looking at them practically after being in the business for awhile would say, yes, but not really that great.*

CHAPLIN: Gloss and style.

*Q: But having done this so well, you really do pick up something that could be off putting to somebody who comes up. It is a problem that we have to deal with.*

CHAPLIN: I think in this case he had three or four counselors who were superior officers, very smart, extremely capable, that knew how to treat the director with deference and respect and so forth. Yet when he would observe them in action, they would switch from one language to another, they knew the historical facts, and he didn't have that background. No one was trying to either impress him or certainly not to embarrass him. They were behaving in their normal ways and yet, as I said, I think he felt a little insecure around some of these people. He also, and this goes back to expectations and traveling abroad or domestically, but particularly abroad, was sensitive to how he was treated. If he felt somehow that the PAO had not done some service to which he felt entitled, he would come back and want that person's head. This is where the counselor of the agency really



stepped in and earned his salary to prevent this from happening.

*Q: You are talking about Stan Burnett?*

CHAPLIN: Right. But it happened earlier because Jock Shirley was the first counselor. Stan Burnett was replaced by John Kordek. Jock and John both became ambassadors. Stan is at CSIS and is an academic and is at Georgetown as well. It made life interesting. Now he had maybe two staff meetings a week, that is senior staff. He would come to those meetings, this is maybe 30-35 people around the table. He would listen to what people had to say; but it was clear that he was looking for people to come up with ideas and programs or policies or suggestions that he could put under his name and send them to the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense or the NSC advisor or someone. Again, he was trying to be a member of the club, the inner club. One of the big things he did, and this was because of Reagan's backing, was to get USIA's budget increased substantially. That was done on ideological grounds. We are fighting with the Soviets, this battle of ideology. We are at the forefront of that battle. We need the resources to do it, radio, television, more officers, more this, more that. He was successful in doing that. It was a sympathetic congress in many ways, but he set the stage and the climate so he could make these arguments. A second thing was getting us into the television age and establishing Worldnet. He was in London on a trip, and this is when we went into Grenada. He saw on British television unrelenting criticism of U.S. action. Based on the content itself, based on what is this big country doing with this small, nothing country. There you are throwing your weight around foolishly, whatever it was. The story was he just got very upset about this. He said we need to find a way where we communicate directly with decision makers and to some extent the public at large and bypass the media and other sources of information in these countries. Satellite television was the answer. So he came up with Worldnet. Now, it is one thing to come up with the concept, and to defend it on the grounds- (end of tape)

*Q: This is tape four side one with Steve Chaplin. You were just finishing your thought.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, this was to show that the television service he wanted to create would not interfere with commercial U.S. media abroad. That it had a different role, which was to explain U.S. government policy. It would go around the media and the gatekeepers of the local media, newspapers, magazines, TV of these other countries to get the U.S. message across because he felt that it wasn't getting across. So you had to make that argument to Congress and others to begin with. Once you have accomplished that, you then have to go to some of these individual countries and start getting agreements for sending your signal. It has got to land at some place in the country, a satellite station which can pick it up and then disperse it to the local environs be they TV station, hotels. That required negotiations. It was not just a philosophical issue, it was a dollars and cents issue. For those who were around him when he did this, they praised highly his negotiating skills because you are dealing in many cases with national government entities. You are going to the French post office and service and communications office, agency, and you are going to other countries. It was a hard sell. But he had the vision.

This was in the early 80's and was something we needed to do, something we as an organization should have been doing years before, but no one had fought the battle. All the stars lined up politically. So he got it done. Essentially the way it worked was using television studio that we had and was expanded in Washington. You would do satellite feeds to different regions of the world on topics that either individual posts or regions thought were important, or that Washington policy makers felt were important. In a typical program would be what we called dialogues. These were the most valuable of the programming, but there were other forms of programming as well. You would have an assistant secretary of state for Latin America discuss for 30 minutes with three posts in Europe, Paris, Rome, and London let's say, the U.S. policy towards Cuba and defend that policy. On the other side, you would have invited guests in the television rooms of the embassies of those three countries or another studio, but typically it was the embassy who would be asking the questions. If you needed interpreters, there was an interpreter in Washington, English to French, French to English, Italian, whatever the language was involved. For 30 minutes you had a discussion back and forth. The hope was that not only would you get a high level audience, media, government, academic, whatever group you are reaching for to come in and listen to this, but you would be able to place part of this on local television to reach a larger audience. It then expanded to whereby WorldNet, the name of the television service, could be going into cable and by cable into hotels and other places in a city. The hope was you could get to those in the radio and TV listings in that city and get a better viewership. Now you knew you weren't going to get big ratings. This isn't sex and violence and Hollywood films, but that you would be getting a point across that otherwise might not get through in the way the regular media did their jobs. What happened in many cases is you had high level spokesmen. I mean there were cases when Ronald Reagan used this, other senior officials. The topics were without end. You could come up with any sort of topic, whatever the issue was. It could be immigration, drugs, ecology, educational system, wherever you thought we had something of a policy interest to explain and to sell. And if you had a local audience that you thought had been identified as interested or important to us, you did one of these things. You typically did it, unless there was a specific case, with more than one country to get more bang for your buck. Even if you only had questioners in three countries in this case of the assistant secretary for Latin America talking about Cuba policy, that would be beamed in to the rest of Europe so that other places could passively see it. So it was an interesting idea and I think useful. It is a tool; it is not the definitive tool. You need to supplement that with exchange programs and speakers and press realizes and ambassadorial speeches and everything else, presidential visits, everything else you have in your arsenal of public affairs. But it was a useful, important tool and it did well with time sensitive issues or further down the track with analytical issues pieces. He was the one who made it happen. He had the vision to push this through, did the negotiations, got the money, raised the budget, and he deserves a lot of credit for that.

*Q: How did you find the feedback you were getting during your, by the way, you were there from '86 to what?*

CHAPLIN: I started November of '86 to about July of '88. It was about 18 or 19 months.

*Q: What was the feedback you were getting about how, basically we are talking about TV and newspaper people in other countries were responding to the world net?*

CHAPLIN: Some looked upon it as a gimmick. Some found some individual programs useful. They all knew who the sponsor was, so there was no question it was going to be the U.S. Though at times we would have non U.S. government speakers. It wasn't just limited to that. It depended on what the subject was. You could have an American Jazz expert talking to French jazz experts. That was kind of the low level, not the high intensity policy stuff but useful to explain our society. They got a little overblown, this was the TV service, in trying to justify their existence. I think they juiced up a little bit the statistics on the number of people viewing, and that got them in trouble with congressional oversight. I think it was unique in that no government in the world did anything quite the way we did it. Some others, the French and Germans experimented with certain things on their own I believe. Some people thought it was very useful and informative; some said that is U.S. propaganda, why watch it. So it varied from country to country.

*Q: I would think you would be well designed for the person who was going to write an article. I mean it was designed for opinion makers. They could talk to somebody without having to fly to the United States.*

CHAPLIN: A mythology grew up about it, at least an idea: That foreign media organizations' Washington correspondents didn't like this because this was something that was going directly to their country not something that they were filing. Now I can understand that view of a journalist, but the fact is that same journalist isn't going to get in to see the secretary of state or the secretary of treasury or deputy secretary unless there are extraordinary circumstances. So you really weren't robbing this person of a story, but they didn't like the idea they weren't able to write on something on their byline and get credit for it. So there was a little resentment on that end. We did operate at the same time, and this got stepped up a bit under Wick's period as well, this foreign press center where we did brief foreign correspondents of all the types of media who were based here on subjects that we think are important. So that was a complementary tool. It is in the national press club building. It still functions.

*Q: You basically had an office there or a room?*

CHAPLIN: We had part of a floor so that you had not only individual offices for staff who worked on different regions or themes. We also had a briefing room which could accommodate TV cameras. Marjorie Ransom ran that recently. That was useful prior to presidential trips, on big decisions by treasury, on drug issues, whatever message we wanted to get out either globally or to a region or to a country. This was a very effective facility for that use.

*Q: How did you find Charles Wick dealt with American ambassadors abroad? I mean*

*were you involved in his contact?*

CHAPLIN: Didn't deal with him abroad. I saw him when ambassadors would come and see him. I think he took their work seriously. He expected to be received with a schedule of appointments and a schedule of social events arranged in his honor at a certain level coming as a senior foreign affairs person. He usually got good briefing papers. If they were done by the geographical bureau before he went out, he knew what to look for. If they were done by the PAO at a post, he knew what to look for. He was, I think, respectful in most instances, but he did have these expectations. The smart ambassador, career or political, understood beforehand this was a man who was a major player and would treat him accordingly. He would want to see a president of a country, or a foreign minister, or some one.

*Q: Well looking at this, I mean Washington basically the name of the game is power. You have on foreign affairs you have got obviously the State Department people, the NSC and other parts of the White House and you have a congress. USIA is sort of off to one side. I would think it would be very difficult for him to find a place at the table.*

CHAPLIN: I think this is what the staff wrestled with constantly because he did want that place at the table; often the office table but also often the social table. I think this was frustrating to him at times, but I also think that senior officials at State and NSC, I can't speak for congress so much, knew who he was and how close he was to the president, and they tried to make room when they could. That didn't mean he had automatic entree, was automatically on the list. If the head of a bureau at USIA would talk to the assistant secretary in the same bureau at State on some event he'd say you know the director would really like to sit in on that meeting, the 14th seat or something like that. The staff put in intensive labor to get him these things. Many times we succeeded, more so than for previous directors. A lot of times we didn't.

*Q: I mean looking at this in a practical way, what did he have to contribute?*

CHAPLIN: Well it was proximity to the president and to Mrs. Reagan. Perhaps certain issues would come up in which USIA played even a tangential role, and the other party might think well, it is useful for me just to touch this base. For instance, Prime Minister Shamir came from Israel. A meeting was arranged over at USIA for Shamir. I had to coordinate all the stuff at our end, the policy input, the briefing papers, the logistical stuff. Shamir came and besides the ego stroking to have for these two men across from each other, ego stroking for our director, the issue was a transmitter in Israel to be beamed toward the Soviet Union. It was a sensitive political issue in many ways. There were also cost factors, but it was that issue that justified, I think for Shamir's handlers, a visit with Wick. He said he would come to USIA. Wick was delighted and we rolled out the carpets and everything else. It was a constant problem, a constant issue of being sure he got into meetings he wanted or if he couldn't you could come up with a reasonable explanation from a high enough official that he would understand that it was not personal that he was being excluded. Only the president and the secretary of state was going to meet with Mr.

X. That didn't mean that it didn't gnaw on him. It just meant that it was fact. He particularly was interested in the relationships with the Soviets. He developed relationships, business relationships with Gorbachev's spokesmen and other senior advisors, so he saw handling them as sort of his focal point. It was something that constantly had to be dealt with.

*Q: How did George Shultz deal with...*

CHAPLIN: My sense is very skillfully. I am not sure deferential was the right word, but he treated him like he was an equal in the dealings I was aware of. There was correspondence and other things I am sure I was not aware of. They would always shake hands and were friendly with one another, and I think Shultz got him included in lunches and meetings where he could. Shultz, I think, may have done that as an individual anyway, but he certainly understood the importance to Reagan. Now, there were at least a couple of circumstances, one involving a trip to Russia when Howard Baker was brought into the White House as chief of staff replacing Donald Regan, that staffers of his perhaps didn't do as much as they could to respond to a request Mr. Wick had or things he wanted done in certain ways. This dealt with travel and with protocol issues. So I think the seniors or the principals he would deal with were cooperative and helpful and friendly. Maybe in a couple of other cases they just had their staffers do the dirty work they didn't want to do, but not a lot of that happened. It did happen on occasion in which case he asked the staff to look into it. He was a former lawyer. I don't know if he ever practiced, but he had that kind of a focus and organization and sense for interrogating witnesses. So you needed documentation as to who and when and what was the rebuttal for that, so it took a lot of staff time. He also invented something that was called the Z-gram. A Z-gram was essentially our attempt at follow up on things he wanted. Sometimes they could be one sentence; they could be part of a sentence; they could be a short paragraph blurting out something and the staff would have to go back someplace to find out where it was that was supposed to have been done or someone's address whom he met on a plane somewhere once. He wanted these things constantly updated and brought up to him. Well, that was extremely labor intensive. A lot of it didn't have to do with the business of running the organization, or some of it I should say. It had a predictable impact on staff morale, that they felt they were getting these messages that required quick turnaround times but that their office didn't see it as really essential to the way they did their business. It was just an inquiry coming from the man on top. When it became repetitive and constant, day in and day out, well it took a toll. It would be up to me and our immediate staff to constantly soothe feathers elsewhere to be sure that the organization was responsive when you really needed them to be responsive.

*Q: Did you run across you know, Radio Marti and all that sort of thing? Could you give your view of that?*

CHAPLIN: Well Radio Marti and then subsequently Television Marti were both instruments by which the United States government attempted to explain to the people of Cuba what was going on. They were modeled somewhat on Radio Free Europe and Radio

Liberty. They were to be surrogate broadcasters saying what went on in those countries, not like the Voice of America which explains what is going on in the United States. They had popular appeal certainly among the republicans in congress and the Reagan administration. It was a thorn in Castro's side. Some people felt, and I can confess that I am one of them, had serious doubts that this institution should be placed within the United States Information Agency. It seemed such a different function that I thought that if it did have merit, it should be an entity separate because it didn't really correspond with our main focus and mission. When Radio Marti started, Castro jammed it quite a bit. It was a constant irritant whenever there were these informal bilateral communications or talks between the U.S. and Cuba. It was extremely popular with Cuban-Americans particularly those in Florida. I think there was some sense in Congress, even with some who supported the idea, that they wanted to be sure there was a certain discipline there. They thought with the Voice of America it would be held to a certain standard that they may not be held to if they were separate and off on their own. So USIA had parental responsibility for Radio Marti. I was a little more involved as an observer representing the front office, the director's office or the deputy director's office in the discussions about how you put up Television Marti. I think it was then-Congressman Jack Kemp who introduced the bill to establish to establish Television Marti. I think the feeling was this is a natural complement to what Radio Marti was doing and you used Cuban TV images undermining the administration there. Well nothing like this, I think, had ever been done. It had to have receiver stations on the ground in a country to get a TV signal. Obviously the Cubans weren't cooperating on that. So the U.S. looked at various ideas including one which would have an airplane with television production capabilities circling constantly over Cuba. That, for whatever reason, didn't go anywhere. What they actually ended up with was a blimp, a dirigible, which would be up in Florida. I think it was leased from the navy, certainly the armed forces. Inside this thing you would have a television production capability which would reach a signal to reach Cuban television sets. I am not a technical person, but it is my understanding that this was a technical breakthrough, leave the politics and everything else aside, this was a unique challenge which was worked out in very imaginative ways. That being said, from day one it was jammed. Cuban émigrés, when they came to the U.S., this was one of the questions they were frequently asked on new arrivals. "Did you see TV Marti?" I don't know the numbers but virtually everyone said no. There was a further legal issue which is if you are going to broadcast it on a certain channel, and the Cuban government said that is one of their channels for their own transmissions, you interfere, they can take you to international legal authorities. So there were legal questions, there were budgetary questions, technical questions all mixed in together. Robert Coonrod chaired these meetings. He was a career foreign service officer who hadn't been abroad in several years, but very smart, nice style, capable. He later left and now heads the corporation for public broadcasting and has done rather well for himself. He went over there as a deputy and then succeeded Richard Carlson who was the man who brought him over and by all accounts is doing a very fine job. We were the most active within the constraints of operating in Cuba, we were the most active section. We had two Americans in the interest section, Havana. The principal person there would often have to go out at night or on weekends to sort of see if he could pick up the signal. We ran into practical problems. First of all you are only on the air a certain number of

hours a day. Then you are completely at the whims of the environment. You get heavy winds, they can't put that balloon up, so you don't televise that day. Well, it is hard to develop an audience even under optimum conditions, and these are less than optimum. So it is as of today still jammed. I think the argument has changed. There is another thing I will get to in a second. But I guess the argument is it is still worth doing, and you justify the expense of it by saying Castro has to invest funds to jam. Broadcast Marti, probably five or six years ago through congressional legislation, moved to Florida, the Miami area. There were some, including the Department, who did not think this was a good idea. They were no longer under Washington control at all. But Congress passed it. The Florida delegation, I guess, led the charge and it is down in Miami and they do their broadcasting from there both radio and, when they do it, television. I haven't looked into it for the last couple of years, but my assumption is, I do know they are still being jammed. Radio Marti developed an audience. I think it still retains some audience and some credibility among those people who listen. Of course you have got some high wattage stations in the Miami who broadcast over there too that can be picked up as well. But Marti's role is supposed to be to inform Cubans what is happening in Cuba. It is not to inform as American commercial or U.S. government broadcast will do what is happening in the United States. So it has been a mixed bag. It certainly is an indication of the power of the Cuban-American lobby with both political parties in the United States to establish a presence in using communication as an important tool, as a way of undermining the Castro administration.

*Q: Did you feel other groups, obviously one thinks of the supporters of Israel, you could comment on that. But also other groups Filipino-Americans, Korean-Americans, and Greek Americans, did the winds of those outfits blow through your office corridors?*

CHAPLIN: Well a little bit. This is during the time with Wick in office. Not a lot. You heard occasionally from an Israeli group or an Arab group, but not a lot because they were lobbying elsewhere. They weren't really coming at us. The only Greek thing I remember was the actress Melina Mercouri came. She was the minister of culture. She was trying, because of who Wick was in the Reagan administration, but also because USIA dealt with cultural exchanges, to press him to support getting the U.S. Olympic committee to vote for holding the '96 Olympics in Athens because that was going to be the centennial. She was very charming, and she made her case. A lot of people wanted to be in the room when she came in. It didn't sway the day; they didn't get it, but they are supposed to get them in 2004. So that was that. Occasionally we would hear from an immigrant group that was upset about one of the language services of the Voice of America. You know the Armenians would be mad about this or something, and they would have a little letter writing campaign, or a Polish group. But they weren't frequent. They would come in little cycles but not a lot of wind behind them.

*Q: Did you notice, we are talking about what in those days we didn't know but were really the last days of the Soviet Union. But did you with Gorbachev in and this warmth between Gorbachev and Reagan, did you notice a diminution of the anti Soviet thrust of USIA during the short time you were there?*

CHAPLIN: Reagan's phrase was trust but verify. I think that was probably carried out in a lot of what we were doing. I am generalizing here, but I think the tone of a lot that was coming out of the media services and speakers and programs had really toned down considerably from early Reagan or from Carter or Afghanistan. I think it had changed quite a bit. There were still contentious issues that we had with them, but the decibel level had probably come down somewhat. We weren't fully in an embrace. There were realizations too that this was still a competitor. It is only with hindsight that we see how quickly this was going to crumble. At the same time we were being very supportive in terms of broadcasting and in other ways of helping other Eastern European countries break away. There were private journalism groups that were going to donate equipment to some fledgling newspapers in some of these places or fax machines or some copiers or something like that. The National Endowment for Democracy and the different parties, Institutes within the endowment, were very active in this. I think we were very supportive particularly on the press side. So the decibel level did come down some, but there were still attacks where we thought there was a basic issue and we were diametrically opposed.

*Q: How did you find dealing with Charles Wick, personally, and how did he deal with you?*

CHAPLIN: Well, he was a volatile personality. I think there is a pretty large ego there as well. I think I work reasonably well with people of different backgrounds and personalities, temperaments. It was the most difficult domestic assignment I have ever had. Some of that was just the nature of the office. Much of that had to do with the temperament, the tone and the style in the office because it was frenetic. It was all centered to one person. My main job was to try to get agency business done, to get him to focus on the stuff that he may not think is that important, but the director was the only one authorized to do it.

*Q: I am told he had a very short attention span.*

CHAPLIN: Very short attention span, and there were a lot of subjects that just didn't interest him. However, you couldn't delegate to yourself a decision to say, well, the director isn't interested in this, I will just sign off because I believe this is OK. Because if something happened with that or he heard, then he would get very upset. Well why wasn't it brought to my attention, and you would try to give an explanation and your competency would be challenged. So it was tricky and difficult in an emotional way to work in that circumstance. I also had to be protective of staff both within the immediate office and down the line. If something went wrong I would try to seek what went wrong before possibly breaking the news to him or find a way to break it so people who deserve to be protected were. People who just screwed up completely or didn't care what they did, well they got the consequences of their own actions. But people who tried hard and just made a mistake or had a different version of things, I tried to be supportive of them. A big thing was getting access to things. I think he regarded everybody on the immediate staff as a hired hand, and you were there just to do whatever work you were assigned and whatever



his bidding was at that time. He had never served in a government entity, and much less managed a big organization. He had one particularly capable number two, Marvin Stone, who was quite good. But it was left to the counselor and the senior staff and the executive assistants to try and keep the place going in terms of normal business. I went with him in his care to get papers done at whatever hour I could do that. I had to go and do barbershop and have him read things while he was there and bring him a sandwich and so forth. I would go to his house when he wasn't feeling well. That was fine, I mean that was part of the... But the thing was to focus on things, to try to alleviate his suspicions that people were out to get him or undermine him, that is within the organization, and didn't give him good advice or didn't give him papers in a timely fashion. Like any bureaucracy there are failures. So anyone coming in from the outside could point to weaknesses, and he was right. But you couldn't operate this like you could a private business, and there were accountabilities and so forth. One of his biggest tiffs, and I wasn't around when this happened, and I thought whatever the original motivation, I thought it got way out of hand later. There was something on the sending of speakers abroad. There was an office who handled that. The story came out early on that there was a blacklist of people who couldn't go because they were too liberal or this or that. I was overseas at the time. And secondly, Wick, and I think he did this with good intentions, as a memory device not something else. He would often record conversations he had with people. Well one of the people he recorded was William Safire. Safire the columnist from the New York Times, former staffer for Nixon, blasted him in a column, because I guess he had not been informed he was being recorded. I don't even know what the subject was. Wick apologized and said something about it. I think it really was an attempt to keep him refreshed and keep his memory up on things. I don't think it was any devious intent. That wasn't the case at all. But during my time there there must have been at least four, five, six, Safire columns that just lit into Wick out of the blue. It was just as if, you know, gee this is the six month anniversary; I have got to blast this guy again or something. And so we had these things which I really thought were being overdone and petty and so forth. There may have been more in that relationship than I know of. Pat Buchanan was communications director for the Reagan White House. He left. They were looking for a successor. Wick recommended to Mrs. Reagan the name of somebody. They announced it. The person was going to give a little press conference on a Saturday, and I went to tape it so the office could be represented. In two or three days it came out this person was born in Germany and had been a member of the young Nazi group. Well his explanation was, I was 12 and it was this and it was that.

*Q: Everybody joined if you were a kid.*

CHAPLIN: It didn't matter. The guy had to resign within his first week. Either it was unfair or not enough staff digging into his background, whatever the issue. There were a couple of times later when Safire would refer to this incident, the incompetence, the unfairness, the small group that is controlling stuff at the White House and things. I just thought whatever the merits it was a mean spirited thing on Safire's part.

*Q: Was it you that told me the story or somebody else I recently interviewed who said*

*that one time Wick saw Safire in a restaurant and went over with all good will to greet him and you know, and in gesticulating knocked a glass of wine into Safire's lap.*

CHAPLIN: I hadn't heard that one.

*Q: Well anyway somebody told me about it.*

CHAPLIN: That probably guaranteed two more columns. So that was the case. And there Wick had a kind of a naiveté of not dealing in Washington before and certainly not at that level in the government agency. He didn't realize some elements of the press were going to be out looking at this thing challenging his motives, looking at his foibles. But he was a smart guy, good sense of humor in many ways. After he left as director, he organized this speech tour for Reagan in Japan where the former president made \$2,000,000 or something for giving three or four speeches. Wick was the man who organized that. He also set up something which was kind of interesting, and I guess this is the businessman's approach though others saw other motives in it. He developed an international advisory council to us. He got it peopled with some high rollers from around the world whom he knew, as well as Rupert Murdoch and some other big names in the Washington scene. And the idea was these people were invited to an annual meeting, and then I guess throughout the year, to come in with unsolicited advice on how we should approach things or how we should deal with X country, whatever it was. The payoff for many of these people was they got a White House lunch. There was a lunch at the White House in their honor with the president and so forth. As soon as Wick left his replacement made it clear that this council was not really, I think they tried it once one time, and it didn't work. Obviously the clout with the White House wasn't the same as it was during the Wick days. But he was constantly looking at public relations approaches, some would call gimmicks, some would call innovative ways of engaging people to support what we did or in the broader sense the Reagan foreign policy while using social status and the desires to achieve social status as a mechanism linked with this effort. It was very clever, controversial again, labor intensive, raised private funds to do this, made sure that U.S. government money wasn't used. An interesting man.

*Q: Did foreign embassies use him at all?*

CHAPLIN: Foreign embassies?

*Q: Foreign embassies cultivate him?*

CHAPLIN: Oh I think there was some of that. I mean he was certainly on the list for whatever national day or some big galas. I don't know all of them, but I think some did. I am not sure quite how effective they were in terms of influencing anything, but I think he was certainly on the A guest list.

*Q: Well then you left there in what, '88?*

CHAPLIN: I moved over in July of '88 and then actually moved to work with the deputy director doing the same job. It was a switch. Wick decided he wanted somebody else in that position. So I moved over and worked with Marvin Stone who was the deputy director. Then when Wick left, and it took a few months into the Bush administration for someone to come in as director, Stone was acting director. So I worked in that capacity for him as acting director for several months. I remained there until early '90 when I went into a Portuguese/Spanish reversion course to prepare for assignment to Venezuela.

*Q: How did you find at your level at USIA the switch from the Reagan administration to the Bush one because one had the feeling that on foreign policy and other elements there was not the friendliest of, it was not as though you know, I mean...*

CHAPLIN: The Vice President moving up...

*Q: Everything you know, we were all in this together and it is great to have you and all. How did you find this in the USIA side?*

CHAPLIN: Well we had certainly a smaller group that came over. It was obvious these were Bush people. I am not saying there was any criticism of the Reagan administration. It was like a new day in town. That president is gone. His staff is gone. We are loyal to Bush. The head of the transition team was a former general counsel at the agency. The transition chief came in and I don't know if he said or it was said about him, that they don't want any job in the administration. They would help and lo and behold after the transition team finished, they had a job. So that is what happened in this case. There were several young people. There were only one or two old folks. It wasn't a very large group. The two people who did come in had no foreign affairs experience at all. They were just brought in, I think, because they were smart enough and were interested in the subject matter, but knew nothing about the organizations. They knew very little about current foreign policy positions. They were there to line up things, get briefing books ready and talk about what you are doing and learn. I am not sure how much influence they had when the new director, Bruce Gelb, came in.

*Q: What was Bruce Gelb's background?*

CHAPLIN: Gelb and his brother, who was a more senior official, were with Bristol-Myers. I think the brother was chairman and Gelb was either like president or vice president, something like that. He had gone to Andover and knew Bush there, and I think may have been at Yale sometime. He was just a big fund-raiser. There was a story that when they were at Andover he was a new kid and there was an initiation process going on. They were pushing this guy around and an upperclassman named George Bush interfered and said leave that guy alone, befriended him somewhat and that is how they met. He knew public relations, and he had been a big fund-raiser. He wanted to come to Washington. I am obviously not privy to what advice was given him or comments made to him before he came into the job. I just don't know. But I can say that he came into the first staff meeting and spoke to some people. I offered my opinion in terms of the

frequency of the meetings. I said, "It is whatever you want to make of this meeting. I mean there are a lot of people here. If you want serious discussions on big issues, you may want to have a smaller, more confined group. Whatever you want to make of it." He was a little noncommittal. He made it very clear he wasn't going to have the access to the White House that Charles Wick had, that they weren't close personal friends, and he didn't have an entree. It was a bit of defensiveness which I am not quite sure why it was there. It was certainly not needed. No one was asking him to be something he wasn't or to have contacts he didn't. A very different personality and different background and less of an intimate with the president than Charles Wick was.

*Q: Well, did you find that you were dealing with, what sort of things were you dealing with?*

CHAPLIN: Well working on the deputy director's side, this was again a deputy director I did not know. This was Eugene Kopp who replaced Marvin Stone. Kopp had been deputy director of the agency during the Nixon period and had some government service, a lawyer by background. He became a lobbyist after he left USIA and came back into government service. He started day one knowing what the organization was. He just needed a little time being brought up to date on what things exist and which ones don't exist. He know a lot of the senior people already. A very capable decent man. I liked him very much. He was picking up different issues. I mean he became sort of the day-to-day official running the place. He did not have the type of entree he had when he had been deputy director before when a man named James Keel, who used to be an editor of Time Magazine, was there during Nixon's time. They would just pop into one another's office. Kopp had to make an appointment to see the director through his secretary. It was a little off putting I think. We dealt on the same types of issues, but again it was what the deputy director wanted. There were personnel issues and there were policy questions and it was getting the briefing memos and action memos and decisions made and things being run on time. But there was a counterpart over in the director's office who was doing the same kind of thing as I did but without the intensity of what was there in the Wick years. And the staff was reduced. Several people were brought in from the outside to be in our office. Out of six or seven people there was one or at most two careerists.

*Q: Was there any change in the relationship with the James Baker State Department or not?*

CHAPLIN: Well I think people knew this guy wasn't going to be a big player, and so I am not even sure to what degree he sought to get himself included in things as Wick had. I don't have a good feel for that because I wasn't working directly for him. But I do know that he constantly pushed staff to come up with ideas on what he should do, proposals and so forth, I think as a way of getting to sit at the table. Some of those ideas came up and some may have not been to his liking. I remember one particular session, though I forget what the issue was. I may have been in the minority on this, where there was something coming up vis a vis the Russians. One of the European nations had come up with an innovative idea on dealing with them on whatever the subject was, maybe trade. Gelb was

really almost vehement about saying we have got to come up with a better idea. I could see he wanted to be the player and wanted to throw something new into the hopper, but no one really on the U.S. side had thought of something better, and what is wrong with an ally doing this. As if we had to be ahead of every ally in everything, too. We just couldn't accept the collaborative role. We had to be unique and push. If they came up with an idea, we had to come up with a better one instead of just saying let's give theirs a trial. Maybe we will all benefit. So I think that goes back to a sort of feeling of insecurity and inexperience. He traveled a fair amount too, and I am sure he got treated well as USIA director; but I think the intensity of staff work to be sure this person was given good treatment probably wasn't the same and probably there wasn't any feeling on the other side that this guy is as big a player as Wick. I think the intensity just diminished notably.

*Q: Well then you left there in...*

CHAPLIN: '90. I had learned Spanish, but it was before I had taken Portuguese, so I needed to go back to Spanish. So I left in about April of '90 to do a one-on-one with a teacher for about six or seven weeks to get my Spanish back.

*Q: Then your assignment was to...*

CHAPLIN: To Caracas as the public affairs counselor. This was when Carlos Andres Peres was president of Venezuela. He had just been elected to a second term. Not consecutive terms because that was prohibited, but he had just been elected I think in '89. There had been some riots. Venezuela, because of oil, was an extremely important country to us. Venezuela was pro American. I went there and the ambassador had been named but hadn't arrived yet. The post had been vacant for something like 18 to 20 months.

*Q: Good heavens!*

CHAPLIN: So it was a major public affairs issue.

*Q: Why...*

CHAPLIN: Well Otto Reich had been the ambassador. He left. They were looking for a replacement. I forget the man's name now. He was not a careerist. I guess this guy waited several months. I don't know if you remember the web tech scandal up in New York which involved a lot of people. Well somehow this man's name surfaced as being involved in that. He was cleared eventually, but it meant it was going to take more time. So after several months he withdrew. You go back to square one, and they ended up choosing Michael Skol who was a career officer. He was going to be assigned to a smaller embassy. He was in place as a deputy assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs. He arrived in mid-November of '90 two weeks before the president came, George Bush.

*Q: Well you were in Venezuela from 1990 to when?*

CHAPLIN: Until August of '94, it was about a four year tour.

*Q: Well when you arrived you were saying relations were good with Venezuela.*

CHAPLIN: Relations were generally good. Venezuelans travel a lot to the U.S. Some have been educated here. They depend heavily on our purchases of oil. I asked the then desk officer at State what are the impressions that Venezuelans have of Americans. He reached in his pocket and pulled out six baseball trading cards. These were six Venezuelans who had come to the U.S. and were playing major league baseball. The idea was not only is baseball their number one sport, but these were guys who were poor who made it. They want to make it too. But because the income level through oil for much of the time, not all of the time, was pretty good, you didn't see a lot of immigration from Venezuela to the U.S. People preferred to stay there. But it was a country totally dependent on oil, had not diversified its economy, had a political class, political situation that was looked upon as a beacon of democracy in many places. But when you probed further, you found out essentially there were two hollowed out political parties who traded power with one another. A lot of corruption.

*Q: For years. What was it the reds and the blues or something. I can't remember it was way back.*

CHAPLIN: And so you had a lot of corruption. Stability, but corruption and poverty and great disparities in wealth. But very little anti Americanism per se. Much less than you found in many countries. That isn't to say again that a lot of Venezuelans understand the U.S. They just admired the consumer society and things that we had achieved in that sense.

*Q: You worked in Caracas which sort of sits up at the top looking at the map. What about the hinterland of Venezuela? Was life pretty well, the political life pretty well centered around Caracas?*

CHAPLIN: Yes. You had Caracas and it was the center in every respect except oil. That came from Maracaibo and the lake over there. That was where it was produced, so you had a bit of a business and political class in Maracaibo, but Caracas was everything. That's where it came. The big city for politics, for business, for fashion, sports, culture, you name it. It dominated the country. You only had this one other major city, Maracaibo, which is pretty small in terms of population. Then you had a few other little centers. It is nothing comparable to New York, Washington, Los Angeles. Caracas is it by far. It dominates the scene in every way. It is in a valley. It is difficult access and road system. You just get tremendous traffic jams, and you get smog and pollution. The gas, the petroleum there still contains lead. There were riots when they were going to raise the price to the equivalent of about 20 cents a gallon because they were so used to getting it so cheaply. They were going to raise bus fares and that sort of thing. So you had a social

class, you had a social situation where you had a great deal of poverty, a great deal of illiteracy. There were some people at the top who were not only wealthy but could probably hold their own anywhere in the world as managers and talented people and academic degrees, but not really a sense of community or feeling of commitment to society. Corrupt institutions, inefficient institutions, terribly managed institutions. While oil prices were high, for instance in the late '70s early '80s, the country could limp along. They had this expression: the middle class would go to Europe every year for vacation, maids would go to Miami to shop. That situation flipped as oil prices dropped, and that led to some unrest. It certainly led to a national psyche of oil is part of our birthright and there is corruption and mismanagement and we want that changed. But no one went to the polls or could influence the political parties to change that. They just knew they wanted it changed. The idea is that oil is something that belongs to each individual Venezuelan. It is not a national asset that you use to get money into coffers to help run a modern society. It was if the price falls and my salary doesn't go up or I lose my job, you are robbing me of what is my birthright which is a stake in this oil. Because oil produced so much capital for so long, there really didn't seem to be an incentive to diversify the economy. This is a country that is rich in bauxite, in diamonds and coal. They have got a whole flock of natural resources which they could market in addition to manufacturers and things, the agricultural exports. There was really no incentive to do it, so they just really didn't do it. When Carlos Andres Peres was president the first time he nationalized the oil companies. So you had these American oil companies, German, British, some others I guess, Dutch. They became part of the state. What they were smart in doing, and I have rumblings that this may be changing a bit, is they left oil men in place to run this. They knew that this was the golden goose and this was going to produce three quarters or 80% of their foreign income, so they didn't politicize it like Mexico and some other places where they politicized it with disastrous results. They then nationalized banks. They nationalized the beer industry. They nationalized cement. They just went on this big nationalization kick without really developing the plan or the resources to manage it. They ended up with a lot of wasteful government run industries sucking up money that could be used for better causes. While I was there, there were two coup attempts. The first one led by the man who is currently the president of the country, Hugo Chavez. There was just a dislike of politicians. The political process was found to be unworkable many people felt. An active media, some responsible some not so responsible. A country that loves to party. They had a statistic that came out a few years ago that Venezuelans were either first or second in the world in per capita consumption of scotch. So there are some serious people and people work hard, but it is a society by nature with a Caribbean influence, a languid kind of life with parties and socializing. It is a country as ours was in a different era, enriched by European immigration. Unlike some societies, Peru being one, where you have a very stratified sort of society. Under the dictatorship, the former dictatorship after WWII, they allowed a lot of Europeans to come in, Italians, Germans, Spaniards and others who wanted to make a new life. These people came in and they found that they had certain skills, maybe there was some money passed, whatever else was done, they were able to rise. Some of them created fortunes. Some of them created social status, and so you get some very unusual names of people. It is almost like the U.S. kind of a melting pot on a smaller scale. A lot of Cubans came. You have got people of Indian background, African

background as well as Caucasians, a real mixture there. They claim there isn't racism. In fact there really are aspects of racism in the society. It is like Brazilians won't recognize it but it is there as well. An interesting place. The work was interesting. There was a lot going on in the bilateral relationship. I enjoyed working with the embassy staff and had some good Venezuelan contacts and made some friends. Not my favorite assignment.

*Q: What was your major job? I mean was it trying to reach the media? What was your target?*

CHAPLIN: We followed the country objectives and so I think the instruments we worked with mainly were the media or other entities. The objectives were increase trade with Venezuela, which included trade and investment regimes which would welcome U.S. investment on fair terms. So that took up a fair amount of time. Democratization and modernization in the broadest sense working with the judiciary to modernize their records and work toward something approaching more professionalism in the judiciary. Citizen action, getting citizen groups to assume more power, become more active in the political process. Drugs. A lot of drugs passed through Venezuela on their way. Some grown there, but mainly passing through, to raise their consciousness that consumption was a problem for them, not just being a transit nation. Some environmental issues and gaining their support on regional issues involving strengthening democratic institutions throughout the area, not just in Venezuela. Getting their support in the OAS, in the UN, in other regional fora, that sort of thing. So a kind of a standard list of what you have in a lot of Latin American countries, but probably unlike a Colombia where fighting drugs is probably the top thing. Here it was the trade and economic investment issue that were very big. Then on certain individual issues that came up such as the first Gulf War, explaining our side of it because we were talking about a fellow OPEC member in Iraq that was involved in this. Actually there was a public opinion poll that showed a fair amount of support for Saddam Hussein. So I did some TV interviews and we did some placing of articles to say look, threatening another state. Whatever else you think of him, invading Kuwait is unacceptable in international terms. That is why we went in as part of an allied coalition to restore independence to Kuwait in the interest of free trade and the flow of oil around the world.

*Q: What about relations with Brazil? I mean Brazil has a long border with Venezuela but it is way in the hinterland.*

CHAPLIN: Well we didn't get involved so much in that, but the Venezuelans in the Amazon area and so forth, there were some tensions. Some of this were gold miners coming over from Brazil and killing some Indians. That is where you have the last sort of remnants of an indigenous population, an isolated population in Venezuela. So there were some irritants in the Venezuela-Brazil relationship, but we really didn't have to get involved in that.

*Q: Let's see, you were there when the Clinton administration came in too. In the first place Mike Skol, how did he use you; how did he operate?*



CHAPLIN: He was a very smart, experienced officer. I think the issues that I listed before were what he had as the embassy's top issues. He was very active in the chamber of commerce on trade, looking for tax reciprocity bills and investment regimes. The Bush administration, which was ending, had the enterprise of the Americas initiative, EAI. So every embassy in Latin America supported that. We were in the forefront of that, and we had a Bush visit as well. Mike liked to be on top of every issue. I think he had confidence in his senior folks, more in some than in others. But he wanted to be kept informed; he read voluminously, was very active in terms of meetings with government authorities and private officials. We occasionally had an interview for him if we thought it served a purpose. He did it well; his Spanish was good, objective policy focus was right on. He was very capable. He was a strong personality. I think some people react less well to that sort of personality than others, but he was capable and a good ambassador to work for. The DCM, Bob Felder, was also extremely professional, very good. You had certain internal morale issues which related mainly to living in Venezuela. Physical security was a problem, a lot of robberies. Affordable housing was an issue. Quality of schools varied depending on kid's age. Even though they involve only individuals who had to wrestle with them, it becomes an embassy morale thing. So we dealt with those. I think Ambassador Skol did a reasonable job in trying to deal with those issues as well, internal as well as external. He was indefatigable. His wife worked, was the commercial attaché. She was a career foreign service officer and very capable. I think they had to get a legal ruling from the Department to allow her to work in the embassy while he was there. She reported to someone else in the economic section. But he spent a lot of time, at least a six days a week, working. I thought he was effective. He was not popular in some Venezuelan circles after coup attempts came because he was very outspoken. He explained that the U.S. would not accept an illegal attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government. I think he did this early on after the first attempt and then the second attempt, just so it was absolutely clear what U.S. policy would be. I think some people felt, well, the military are pro U.S. If they want to do something, the U.S. will concur as long as it is stable. He wanted to make it very clear that wasn't the case. I think it was probably the right thing to do, but it did make some people feel what are you doing interfering in our affairs. That is not the way you should represent your country, and not speak about us. He also did one thing which later had some ramifications. The first coup plotters, and then I guess this applied to the second coup plotters a few weeks later, he went and got through State a legal opinion. It took two or three months, maybe a little longer. I don't know if it was applied elsewhere but it became a general department policy. People who attempt coups in overthrowing democratically elected governments and have American visas, will have those visas lifted. The point was we will hit those guys where it hurts. They are not going to be able to go to Disney World. They can't take their families. So those visas were annulled. It was a new policy, and he pushed for that very hard and he won. Now that meant when Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela, he could not come to the United States because he headed the first coup. That was something that got into the press a lot. What is he going to do? Well, obviously once he became elected president, circumstances changed and he did get his visa. But it was still in force, that was '92, he got elected in '98, six or seven years later, he was still

denied coming here. We had to change that finding for him.

*Q: How did you find the Venezuelan media?*

CHAPLIN: Mixed. A couple of papers were quite good, with smart businessmen running them who wanted to make them effective journals of opinion and professional in their pages. Venezuelan reporters are paid very poorly, and there is a fair amount of corruption. A certain business wants a positive spin on some story, they go to a journalist and it appears. That affected all the papers even the best. But a couple of very good ones, a few so-so, and some which were just rags and were just not self supporting but were kept alive by subsidies so that one group or one individual could have a voice. The biggest circulation papers, as in many countries, were the sports publications or the sensational sex type things. But of the serious papers, far too many for a city the size of Caracas to support. The same in Maracaibo. The better ones carried international news services, the New York Times or Wall Street Journal, Washington Post or LA Times. A few of the newspapers have correspondents. Two or three had correspondents here or the Venezuelan news service has a correspondent based in Washington and also in New York. They have a government entity which was called the office of central information, OCI. This would be like a ministry of information. It is a chaotic place. I think it seeks to come up with a uniform government point of view on whatever the issue is so one ministry doesn't say one thing and the president's office says another. It didn't seem to be particularly effective. I am not even sure it is necessary, but it is one of those things that is a carryover in a lot of these regimes. Even as they democratize some other areas, they want to control what it is they are saying. Whereas we do something like that on a more diversified way, each government entity has its own spokesman and so forth. Maybe on an issue with the White House they will consult. This was an attempt to control it all in one place whatever the question was going to be. Friendly people, we really didn't have any problem with them, but I just don't think it was a particularly effective operation. We got some journalists up here on exchanges. I arranged a couple of cases for papers to come up to cover particular stories or TV crews. There was one which I think is the most responsible paper. It is equivalent to the New York Times in Venezuela. In terms of having more look about government accountability and whistle blowers and that sort of thing. So I said what is it you are looking to in terms of creating a Venezuelan institution, strengthening it, and we will find something for you to do up there. So we sent somebody up here who looked at the SEC and how the SEC enforces things. They looked at what we were doing on drugs. They looked at what we were doing on transportation regulation and the role of citizen neighborhood organizations doing certain things. So it was a different look at lots of different aspects of how you need to regulate a society. You need to have government regulation done in a positive way to achieve a public good. This is how we go at it, and we hold it up for you to look at. It is not a model you should necessarily copy, but you should be familiar with it. If you have got people working within government entities who think illegal things are being done, well we have whistle blower legislation. We have sunshine laws where the media can get at government things. We did some of those initiatives and there was responsiveness to that. Also the drug issue, what was being done in terms of education and treatment, not just the drug busts

and the DEA side of things. Just trying to make Venezuelans more familiar with what we are because most Venezuelans who come to the U.S. are for vacations. It is not because they understand our institutions or values. They just like the consumer nation where they find they can do all sorts of good things from skiing to visiting Disney World. So proximity in this case doesn't mean great understanding. It means it is easier to get there.

*Q: Did Venezuela find an affinity to say Mexico or Cuba or the fall of Nicaragua or to say Peru or Brazil or anything like that? How did they fit in to sort of the Latin circuit?*

CHAPLIN: Well, first of all there is this pride that since the 50's that they have kept a stable government where others were divisive and crumbling around them. That came at a price, so it is a lot more image than substance. They are a founding member of OPEC because they wanted to be a world player on that stage. When I was there, they were one of the rotating members of the security council at the UN. They consider themselves the leader in the Andean region. They don't try to be like Mexico which for many years in its foreign policy was just automatically reflex anti American. Whatever the U.S. wanted was wrong, they had to be against. Venezuela doesn't go that way. It sides with other Latin American nations when it thinks it is useful. It has been helpful to us when they felt it was useful to them to be helpful to us. They don't have some of the political hang-ups or historical hang-ups the Mexicans or others have had. They didn't have the civil wars that Nicaragua or El Salvador went through as well in recent years. I think it is a question of being treated seriously. That being said, oil is their big card. There is a bit of naïveté about that in terms of a relationship with us. I remember where a Venezuelan said that because we needed to keep our strategic oil reserve at a certain level, they would sell us oil tomorrow, and we would pay X number of billions of dollars for it. They would guarantee that for our strategic reserve we would have the oil. But they wanted to keep it in Venezuela. When we needed it we could call on them. Well, can you see how a U.S. congress would ever go for this scheme. It was a naïveté there. I am not sure it was an attempt to take advantage of us. I mean intentionally. I think it was just this will help cement our good relationship and we will have the money to do development things we need, and you will have the oil. Yes we want to keep it here just because it is easier that way. We are out saying look that is a non story guys. So there was that aspect of it. When Carlos Andres Peres was president he was very active in the socialist international and was a globe trotter and liked the adulation he got, but that was a very individual thing. Other presidents have stayed in the region or have not traveled much. So it is a very insular society in many ways and very provincial and inward looking while going about their daily business. Some elements among the intelligentsia are still sort of reflex anti American because they don't want to be dependent and because of our role. Not a lot of that, not that you would find in other societies. I think some of the small Caribbean states felt that they were a little paternalistic or the others felt they were being too paternalistic to them, and they didn't want that. They had a pretty good relationship with Cuba. There were times in the early 60's and 70's when they had a very hard line.

*Q: Well Cuba was messing around landing arms and things like that.*

CHAPLIN: Right but later they kept the arms, they didn't get involved in any anti Cuban rhetoric. This president, the current one, has had Castro come. He has been to Cuba. There have been a lot of feelings of solidarity with the Cuban people and things they want to achieve together. The current president (Hugo Chavez) an ex-military man is very much a populist. I think he likes to stick his finger in our eyes on occasion. He comes up here and he is charming in a way. It is kind of funny. I heard a talk he gave here probably six or nine months ago. This is a guy again I remember who was lobbing grenades over the walls of the presidential palace to get in and got arrested. He comes up and this time he is president and Matt McQuerry, the former top man on Latin America, introduces him. So the Washington establishment, even though they say we have got some reservations, will basically embrace him. It is a feeling of yes we want to do business with Venezuela. We want to see about more foreign investment in their oil fields. They are going through a very tough period now. The crime rate continues to rise; poverty continues to rise; job creation just isn't happening, and so increased oil revenues can help things for awhile but they are not going to sustain this guy's popularity forever if he doesn't follow through, and in this case at this stage he is making a lot of internal enemies. He is taking on the church. He is taking on different business groups. I think we are interested observers. We want them to stay together as a country. We are not going to endorse what this guy wants to do, but we are not going to be critical of him if we can help it. So we have a career ambassador down there now, Donna Hrinak. She has got a tough brief.

*Q: How did you find when the Clinton administration took over? Did you notice any change from your perspective?*

CHAPLIN: I am trying to think back. The trade and economic issues were right up front. No greater emphasis on human rights or other things. We were interested then in the free trade act for the Americas which was really a follow on to what Bush had been wanting, the economic initiative occupied a lot of our time. So we were talking about NAFTA and what that had done. The next step was to go down the rest of the hemisphere. That was a big thing we were doing and to try to get them prepared for it, these tax regimes and investment regimes. I think the agenda was pretty much the same. A career ambassador, Jeff Davidow, following Skol. The issues were basically the same. It wasn't as if you had gone from a Ford administration to a Carter administration where all of a sudden human rights was the big thing of the day. Nothing that dramatic.

*Q: Well then you left there in '94.*

CHAPLIN: Summer of '94.

*Q: Whither?*

CHAPLIN: Back to Washington. The job I had for one year. We had what we called a resource management committee staff, RMC staff. This was a three member team which I headed, two civil servants working with me, that did in house studies. We worked with

the deputy director of the agency and the counselor and the head of management essentially looking at where our resources were going to be dispersed. It was analyzing programs, new proposals as well as mainly where are we going to take cuts.

*Q: You know it is really when one does this you are really talking about...*

CHAPLIN: We are talking about where are we doing cuts. And so we did the analyses and all the legwork, the report, the recommendations. We had to sell the recommendations in many cases. In some cases they were followed, in some they weren't. But we had to work with every part of the agency, the geographic bureaus to the functional bureaus. This required analyses throughout that year as we were taking stabs at what our budget would be. If you had to take a 5% cut, what would you do? If you had to take a 10% cut, what would you do? If you had to take a 20% cut, what would you do? Then getting the individual proposals in, being sure there weren't any Washington monument type issues with someone proposing something so far fetched. These had to be responsible proposals or we would go back. How many positions would you cut overseas, Americans and FSNs. Could you transfer funds from one post to another as a way of beefing it up because of new objectives or opportunities? Then after looking at what individuals would say, we then had to come up with a global view from the organizational standpoint of what sort of changes would we make, if any. So there were a lot of contingency plans, some which we had to implement. Hitting a balance as you do at an overseas post between programs and people. If you have to take a 10% cut and most of your money is in fixed salaries or rents or something like that, the easiest place to take the cut is in the program. It is somewhat more flexible. But if you do too much on the program it doesn't mean anything to have a staff there, so you have got to hit this happy medium about what is it you do with between the proportion of cuts. Then what countries do you consider closing out entirely. You work through the regional bureaus and with the ambassadors. There was a lot of that. A lot of people weren't very happy to see us come knocking on their door. They knew what we were coming for. But it was interesting work. Sometimes we were more effective in getting our senior management engaged in looking at the totality of issues, than other times. Sometimes there were intervening political factors, orders that our recommendations weren't going to be accepted.

*Q: Were you addressing the long term, really exchange programs and things like this which I think everybody agrees are quite effective programs. This is investing 10-20 years ahead and the short term things?*

CHAPLIN: Yes, we looked a little at that. The biggest savings were really going to come from overseas assignments or staff cuts. We got into these bookkeeping type things where if you bring Americans back here, you would abolish their position overseas. Well, in effect, all you are really saving on is allowances and cost of travel. But we were able to take a little bit bigger credit than perhaps we should have. This is a bookkeeping thing that the budget office came up with which was reasonable I guess but difficult to fathom. Exchanges and other things we looked at somewhat, but they were, as you say, long term, and also we were getting separate budgets. We were getting an operational budget

operation out of Washington for each post. Cultural exchanges were a separate budget. There were constituencies in congress on that and elsewhere. We looked at everything. Everything was on the table but in the end we were essentially looking at people, program money, and overseas operations more than exchanges.

*Q: Well then you did this from '94 to '95. Then what?*

CHAPLIN: Well I knew when I got this position I was going to be the area director for the Latin American area. So that was going to come in '95 to '97.

*Q: Fine. Well we will pick this up the next time in the summer of '95 when you were Latin American area director. Then we will move from there.*

*This is tape five, side one with Steve Chaplain. Steve, let's see you became area director for Latin American affairs from '95...*

CHAPLIN: From July '95 to August '97.

*Q: How did this work? I mean what does a director for Latin America do at that time?*

CHAPLIN: USIA had area offices comparable to the regional bureaus at State. So I dealt with what is now called the bureau of western hemisphere affairs over in State Department. Within USIA these were among the most senior positions, most sought after positions for career foreign service officers. The organizational arrangement was very similar to State in that we had desk officers, except that because we were a smaller organization, our desk officers had to serve several countries. We had a policy officer, and we had people handling cultural exchange and so forth. The area office was the conduit for money and policy guidance to the field. For the field, the USIA sections of the embassies in Latin America and the Caribbean, we were their man in Washington to represent them to the bureaucracy. The office staff was probably almost evenly divided between foreign service officers and civil servants. We participated in those exercises to try to get the budget for the area office. In this period in particular we would take our cuts since this was still a period of budgetary decline. We worked with USIA's media, Voice of America, the wireless file, and world net television service, suggesting ideas we thought would be of value for either one country or more likely for the region entirely. We dealt with counterparts that handle Latin America in one form or another at other government agencies: Commerce, Defense, a little bit at the NSC and so forth. Among the biggest challenges in this period, the first was the budget. I came in a few months after the November '94 election where the republicans took over the Congress still with a democratic president. So the trend on the budget was continuing downward for all foreign affairs agencies. It accelerated a bit because of the push by Speaker Gingrich and others in the house in their contract with America where I think foreign affairs was even going to have a lower priority than it previously had under a democratically controlled congress. This was the period of confrontations where we actually had a government shut down. It meant closing down our programs and activities and not certain when we could pick them

up again. This was a major public diplomacy challenge overseas explaining to foreigners how the U.S. government could close down, why people who had plane tickets could not get visas, being unable to let people know when consular sections were going to reopen for business. We took a shellacking which we deserved in terms of the functioning of our democracy in that particular period. So that was the general thing. With these budget declines I had to take guidance and advice from others but I had earlier signed off on where we were going to take budget cuts. So when I came in we had a budget for American salaries and foreign national salaries and program money of a little over \$40 million, \$42-43 million. I had to cut it by ten percent. So much of our funding is tied up in people and in real estate and relatively little in terms of what the area office controls in program money. It was always a constant issue of hitting that balance between how much are you going to cut back on people, who after all are the ones who enable you to carry out the programs, and the program side because if you cut back too far there, then you didn't have any reason for these people to be on your payroll if you didn't have enough programs. So we had to constantly look at that country by country. Within USIA we had what was called a resource allocation group system, RAG. This was a global ranking of the importance of countries in the world to us. This was looking in U.S. policy terms first and foremost, but the added element for our concern was how much can we operate in a country. So that affected the ratings. You would have a closed society in Iraq which might be very important for obvious strategic reasons, but if we can't operate and carry out programs there, that takes on a lower priority in our terms for the resource allocation group. The RAG-one group countries would be seven or eight in the world. That would be Russia, China, Japan, Canada, England, Mexico, in the case of Latin America, and then maybe India and Israel perhaps. Then you get to a larger group of RAG-two. By the time you got to the end you got to the Haitis and the smaller ones in Latin America and comparable countries elsewhere. So we had to justify and look at that as a guide as we went about making our cuts.

*Q: You must have been up against the general perception that attention is almost always in American foreign policy looked at the Far East or at the Soviet Union or the Middle East or something. Except for the brief period with Central America, Latin America is practically beyond the radar of a lot of people. I mean that must have hit you all pretty hard.*

CHAPLIN: It did, and of course Cuba which is a special case, ongoing thing. Latin Americans who we would deal with would often say we are ignored by you, and in fact they are. We would try to put the positive spin and say well you are ignored to some extent because relations are so good and we don't have crises. So if you create a crisis which you can elevate our level of interest ... which drew some laughter but didn't really answer the question as far as they were concerned. It was a problem, and the resource base for State Department and for us in the Latin American areas, certainly is smaller than that for other regions of the world. There are exceptions: Mexico which is so important and Brazil which is important for other reasons but does not get the press attention. Big programs and big activities and we try to reduce or keep to a minimum the cuts there. If you are looking at cutting back on an area wide basis, you have got most of your

resources in certain countries because they are the most important to you; they are the ones that have the largest amount of resources so it is tempting to cut there in order to preserve smaller places. There was not really serious thought given to setting up a regional USIS post to serve several countries. State had toyed with that in Africa and some other places. Our ambassadors in those countries would go right to the hilt and everybody else they knew to preserve their own staff. So that wasn't looked at. We did talk about cutting from two officers to one officer in some places. There was one case where we talked about actually trimming back in the Caribbean area from one American and going back from five FSNs to perhaps one over about a year's time. As soon as a political appointee ambassador got hold of that, this person was on the phone to Jesse Helms within hours who was then on the phone to the director of USIA, who then summoned me to the office and wanted to all of a sudden find out what it is we were doing.

*Q: What country was this?*

CHAPLIN: This was, as I recall, Barbados. The argument that was tossed back at me was the ambassador there is a representative to several of these little island states. They represent seven or nine whatever it is votes in the UN. It was this and it was that. I wasn't going to argue with what was said. The question is how far do you cut, how does that rate on the scale of importance to our operations vis a vis Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina and so forth. So everyone had their own views on this. We attempted as best we could to consult with ambassadors and make them know what we were intending. Some protested vehemently, and some caused some rollback. Others were a little more philosophical and lamented and got that out of their system. It was an ongoing problem. At the same time this is when discussions really heated up about USIA merging with State Department. So there was a concerted effort by USIA management, which meant political appointees calling on senior officers for a variety of meetings, papers, essentially saying why the agency should remain independent. So that occupied one's time for a fair amount there. Then there was a third thing which was just specific to this office. This was launched by my predecessor, but I was the one who was charged with implementing it. This was an attempt to empower mid-level civil servant administrative types with more authority, more responsibility, and the chance to also rise to higher grades. A lot of the philosophy behind this was the American officers come and go just as they would come and go after two or three years in an area office. It is the staff, the civil service staff, which stays on as it is with FSNs in an embassy. This is a wasted resource if you don't have these people doing more than just filing paper and typing letters. Part of that argument was this is an attempt to see if these people have talent and give them more responsibility and have them rise within the system. The overwhelming majority of the people to apply for this were minority employees. We saw the change in technology and the fact that officers could now easily type on word processors and computers, do some of their own correspondence and their own filing. Let's see what skills these people have to get more out of the office and give them more responsibility. This included Spanish language training. It included each of the individuals going to one or two posts over a couple of week period to see what a post actually does overseas, some other specialized training. It



was about a year preparation of this in various ways using outside management experts. I picked up the system and was asked to run with it. The EEO office was very interested in it. There was a suspension of civil service rules in terms of grading. They sort of banded positions so that people who were successful after a year could move up a grade or two. But it was a constant challenge because you had uneven educational levels and abilities to handle some of the work we did. So that was an internal challenge that occupied a fair amount of time. All of that being said, for a USIA career officer, senior officer, being an area director is probably the best job in Washington, so there was great competition for these positions. Either the area director or the deputy area director was supposed to spend up to 25% of their time on travel. One or the other would be in the office. In our case, because of the budget situation, the travel budget, on order of the front office, was greatly curtailed. So I didn't get to do as much of that travel as I would have liked my first year. My second year I did considerably more. The area director rates the PAO's for each post. So the PAO got two OERs each year, one from the ambassador or DCM and one from home office area director. That was a time consuming but obviously extremely important function for the system. In terms of what was going on in Latin America in general in this period, the push was on. NAFTA had been concluded with Mexico; that was being implemented.

*Q: That is the North American Free Trade Agreement.*

CHAPLIN: Exactly. We had that. There was the summit of the Americas held in Miami sponsored by President Clinton, and then a subsequent one which took place in Chile shortly after I left. We just had the third one in Quebec last week. All of that momentum, trying to build momentum toward a free trade agreement by the year 2005, the feeling that democratization will increase along with prosperity and economic development. Cuba, of course, was the one difficult country for us to deal with in the region. Most of Latin America did not see our relationship with Cuba the way we did at least in their public utterances. Privately some said things more supportive, but partly based on their own histories, partly to show they were different from us, they often wouldn't side with us on human rights condemnations and that sort of thing. We had two American officers there, and seven or eight local employees. No one doubts where their loyalties lie, but they did work for us. In terms of contact with the public in a very closed society in which every sort of obstacle was put in your way to prevent contact, our people by the nature of their work probably had more contact than anybody else there with the possible exception of the principal officer of the interests section. So that was an important place for us both in terms of what they were able to do and as a listening post.

*Q: Was this fully understood by the powers that be? I can see somebody saying well we don't have relations, why do we bother to have this.*

CHAPLIN: There were probably some like that, but interestingly Senator Helms and others who would be very critical of our policy in other ways thought this was terrific. You know, we were taking the good word to the enslaved people, so they were very supportive. Our management, at least in the time I was there, was fairly cautious. They

wanted us to do the programs, but they were very fearful particularly in a period when it looked like USIA might go out of business, that there might be an incident or something there which would leave the agency with a black eye and therefore endanger its existence even more. That came up in ways including when an officer would come back and we would talk about briefing congressional staffers or meeting with journalists. There was a reluctance to do that. I think it would have served our purposes admirably and have been helpful. There was a concern by the political leadership in the agency that this was a risky proposition and we shouldn't do it, and so we didn't. Personnel decided on assignments but with great input from the area office, equivalent to the regional bureau. Also, the counselor of the agency, who was a senior foreign service career officer, had a fair amount of impact and input on the selection of the PAO's. We looked for people obviously with experience. We looked for people from a diversity standpoint. We looked for opportunities to give high rising young folks stretch assignments where we could. So I would say we could stand up to almost any region in terms of the general quality of our people. Many of these people became acting DCM's. A couple later actually became DCM's. The budgetary thing was just a time consuming and difficult proposition because it meant that you were cutting back on what you needed to do at a time that one could argue that we should have been doing more. Connected with this, and this goes back to the Cuba thing, was the existence of radio and TV Marti. They were great irritants to the Cubans which delighted certain people in the Cuban-American community and obviously supporters on the hill. That was an issue we also had to look out for, whether it was interviews or something which would get the host country upset. In the case of Cuba we didn't mind so much, but in other cases like Haiti and some other countries where our media would go in during elections, that sometimes would get the embassy upset, and we had to be the ones to point out that the voice of America operated independently with very general ground rules.

*Q: Well you mention one of the things you re doing with policy coordination. I have always felt that USIA particularly in Washington has this peculiar role in that here in the State Department desk officers or at least area directors are involved in saying this is our policy toward such and so and really sort of getting in there. USIA, it seems to be one removed from that in that you are more passing on the word rather than being directly involved which seems to be a mistake frankly, but with the set up, how did you deal with that?*

CHAPLIN: Well that was an ongoing concern, and I think it gets back often to personalities. If you had a very effective, articulate and politically sensitive area director who had good contacts with the assistant secretary of state or the senior desk, they would try to get the public diplomacy input into the discussion as you were making policy. I don't think that happened very often. It happened on occasion. That, in fact, was one of the justifications for the merger. Secretary Albright, who I think wanted this merger as much as Senator Helms did for very different reasons, was saying public diplomacy is so important it needs to be within the State Department so that their counsel is listened to prominently. It was a problem. This was the old argument that people used to harken back to Edward R. Morrow when he was the USIA director after a distinguished career at CBS

as a correspondent. When he had a seat on the NSC he said often USIA was looked to only when the plane crashed and we wanted to be there on the take-off to help avoid the crash. I think that on occasion, depending on personal relationships, our officers may have been consulted by State colleagues. More often than not that was not the case. The feeling was that we were to be the ones who were to describe the policy as it was being implemented, to explain the policy but not to participate in the establishment of that policy. That was a role, I think, that most USIA directors accepted. There were public affairs advisors in each regional bureau at State, and most of these were career USIA officers on loan or on tour, detailed to the Department. In fact, much more of their time at State was spent explaining things to the domestic press, which USIA was of course prohibited under its charter from doing under its own auspices, than it was spent talking to the foreign press. But whenever the department spokesman says something to the domestic press it gets carried overseas as well. So some of those officers who were assigned there did have some input at least into the public statements of the policy if not to the establishment of the policy itself. No Secretary of State that I can remember, and no deputy secretary of state that I can remember had much experience in Latin America. The focus on the Far East, the Middle East, Europe in general was certainly true, and that's where most of the trouble spots in recent years have bubbled up. Now, with the exception of Cuba, every country in the region is democratic. That being said, it is a democracy which is pretty fragile. The roots aren't very deep, and there are trends even now in certain countries, Venezuela being one, where a return to an authoritarian regime is possible. So, we have to not just get free trade through, but we have to explain, not just in a moralistic way, the values of democracy. We also must work where we can with local institutions, governmental and NGOs, as we did during my time there, to help them with the nuts and bolts of it. Whether it is judicial reform, setting up something like a securities and exchange commission, accountability in government, education and schools on democracy. As a government we should only have a limited role and our resources and staff limitations dictate that at best even if we wanted a larger role, we couldn't have one. But we can play roles. People still look to the United States for ideas and as a model for many things. In many cases they need to adjust what they see to their own circumstances. In some cases they will reject what we do entirely, but there still is, at least among the progressive elements and younger people, people 40-45 and below, a looking to us for how we deal with problems. Whether it's crime, poverty, water issues, environmental, you name it, if it is faced in the U.S. it is going to be faced one way or another in all of these countries. That is where we need to take advantage of something that we can do that is unique as a government, either helping as a government ourselves or putting NGOs into contact with counterparts. That is where a public diplomacy effort can be very helpful.

*Q: Did you see a new relationship developing with NGOs as being in a way you know from our perspective as government employees, seeing them as sort of an auxiliary arm? You know if you want to teach about democracy turn them over to an NGO that deals with constitutional law or that sort of thing.*

CHAPLIN: Yes, I think we did that probably for a variety of reasons. First, NGOs in certain subject areas have become very powerful units on their own, and they had their

own domestic constituency, their friends in congress and so forth. So these people would often labor and push for them to have a bigger role overseas. Secondly, with the better ones at least, who would at least listen to some advice and help, whatever else we could provide, they can perform functions in a far easier way without a lot of the costs involved to government or the regulations and procedures we have to follow. They are not hamstrung by those. So, yes, we tried often in USIA to get comparable groups together. Whereas we might have done projects in the past, either our resources had diminished so much or the nature of the issue had changed somewhat that it was better to put organization X in one country together with organization Y in our country and let them go at it. We become facilitators rather than doers. I think that is a legitimate role. It is useful. Sometimes American staff who are used to the old way of doing things don't necessarily like that because they aren't the ones out front getting the credit or taking the responsibility. This is a fact of life. Often Latin America indigenous NGOs have sprung up there in response to some problem. It could be human rights abuses; it could be environmental degradation. These groups have sprung up, some with honorable people with honorable missions, some used by local political groups as a way of gathering domestic support. Most governments until recently in Latin America have essentially looked askance at these NGO efforts, the argument being who elected you to tell us what to do. We are the ones elected by the people. The savvier ones now are learning to work with NGOs, at the very least from a public relations standpoint in sitting down and talking to them even if they aren't listening. At the very best actually working very closely. In Mexico with the election of Vicente Fox, the first non-member of the PRI to be elected in 71 years, one of the first things he did when he came up to the United States in addition to meeting with congressmen the White House and so forth, he sat down with human rights organizations here and said he wanted to hear them out. There were a tremendous number of human rights complaints in Mexico. There are some very good organizations I am told, Mexican organizations, working on the issue who have their links already with U.S. organizations to serve as a megaphone for their views up here. Fox was very smart. Now how they follow through I don't know. But NGO's are an element. Whether it was the mine ban treaty done by an NGO which gets the Nobel prize or in other areas. They are an element to be dealt with seriously. They can be a useful adjunct when they are a mainstream group which is non-partisan and understands when they work on foreign soil to work with groups and not tell them how to do it or do it for them. They can be very helpful. When some which are very shrill but also very good at getting media attention go off in a direction that we don't think is particularly useful, we should not ignore them, but engage them in discussion; ignoring them essentially gives them a platform by themselves, and we don't get our view in either to modify them or set the record straight.

*Q: What was your impression of the, in the first place the interest of the directors of USIA at that time, and then also of the Secretary of State toward Latin America?*

CHAPLIN: Well, Secretary Albright, at least initially, I don't think she had much experience certainly not professional experience in Latin America. Hers was all academic in Europe, eastern Europe to some extent, central Europe. The nature of the holding of a

summit for the Americas, the existence of Cuba and what that means as a domestic issue as well as a foreign affairs issue, she got drawn into those. Some of her popularity with Helms and others came when she made some very strong anti Castro remarks about the regime. I think she was given very good advice. The two assistant secretaries for western hemisphere that I worked with, Alec Watson first and then Jeff Davidow, extremely capable officers, knew the region well, very articulate, strong managers, and I think that both were viewed very favorably by Secretary Albright. The USIA director that I served when I was area director, Joseph Duffy, was an academic, former university president up at the University of Massachusetts, later American University, a political activist in the democratic party. He had run for senate in Connecticut. That was an election where former Senator Thomas Dodd was for a variety of reasons censured and was not going to get the democratic nomination but was still going to be a force. Lowell Weicker ran and among the people campaigning for Joseph Duffy were two people from Yale Law School named Bill and Hillary Clinton. So that friendship was sealed early on. Director Duffy went to a couple of countries. He didn't travel a great deal. Partly I think there may have been some health factors, but also because of the budget situation and the question of merging with State. I think there were a lot of other issues that forced him to remain in the United States. I went with him twice to Mexico. We had these annual parliamentary talks, a lot of cabinet officials go, and two of the sessions are for education and culture. He participated in both. Essentially these were set pieces. Our embassy section did the briefing points, and director Duffy used them in his own way. He was effective in that. I think he was very good and curious about a lot of things, but I think his own focus, perhaps his own background, was probably more Europe and maybe to some extent the Far East. He was interested in Latin America, but there very rarely was a call from his office saying he needed to know something. If one of our ambassadors from Latin America or a Latin American official at a certain rank wanted to meet with him, he was very happy to do so and very courteous and very cordial.

*Q: Did you find that with the election of '94 which brought the republicans in and with Senator Helms becoming chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has always seemed to have, I won't say a warm spot because it is not the right term, but an acute interest in Latin America as compared to the rest of the world, and, maybe I am wrong, but almost isolationist except Latin America, and there he has got some pretty fixed ideas. Not just him but also his staff. Did you find that this was affecting you at all?*

CHAPLIN: Well, less so than colleagues at State. But yes, in fact, it was mentioned. Helms just went to Mexico last week with three members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and they met with Mexican counterparts. Helms was effusive in his praise of President Fox and the new relationship with Mexico. His point was with the previous regime in Mexico, of whom he had been very critical, Mexico was doing a lot of wrong things which were against our national interest. Now he wanted to show symbolically how pleased he was about this new trend in Mexico with the opposition party taking authority and cooperation with us. He was happy and going to be supportive of it. This I think was his first trip abroad since '95 when he went to a funeral, Rabin's funeral in Israel. I don't know when his last trip was before that. There were two countries, at least

in terms of media attention, which seemed to occupy his time and interest. Some may attribute this to his staff, but I think it was much more than that. I think it was just with Senator Helms per se. One was Chile years ago when Pinochet was in control. Helms I think liked what was happening in Chile in terms of the economy rebounding and the communists being put out. He was supportive even while our policy was evolving and pointing out the flaws in that system and the human rights violations. It put our ambassador at the time, Harry Barnes, in a very awkward position. Second was Cuba where he has been one of the leaders against Castro in any form possible. Helms-Burton, his is one of the two names on the act with the sanctions against the Cubans. I don't know whether his interest is more than just an ideological one because Latin America is in our backyard and so he focuses on some countries there more than others. I don't know anything in his background to say that he had any previous experience in Latin America or was active before he became the top minority member of the Foreign Relations Committee and then chairman of the committee. It is true he has had very strong willed staffers and outspoken staffers who reflect his views I am sure, who have made very critical comments on our policy for Latin American in general. I think they are in favor of free trade. If there was anything that looked like in their view a leadership which is a bit left of center in the U.S. context of what left of center meant, probably a red flag went up, and I think they were, the staffers were going to be critical. The other thing was Central America. Helms was strongly in favor of what the then republican administrations were doing, critical of what the Carter administration had done previously particularly in Nicaragua. He is a force to be reckoned with. The voters in North Carolina in their wisdom every six years for many years now have been sending him back. There was an interesting newspaper piece by a foreign affairs observer who said you need a Jesse Helms there because he represents the views of a lot of people and he is willing to make deals in the end. You make deals with him whether it is on UN payments or others. If you had a stronger ideologue who was unwilling to make deals, we would be in even more of a muddle. Now whether the author thought that this was going to be contrary in thinking and that would get him a place in the New York Times Sunday edition I don't know, but he made a plausible case whether one buys it or not. But he is a force to be reckoned with. He is certainly a senator whose name is known in Latin American capitals, often in negative terms from their views. I don't know whether this recent trip to Mexico signals an interest for more travel in the region or not. Again it seemed to be his first trip abroad in about 5 ½ or six years. At that rate he would be in his late '80s. I don't know how much he would be traveling.

*Q: Did you feel that Cuba during this time was almost a force over which you really had very little control, you know I mean with Cuba and its political clout and all that?*

CHAPLIN: Well Cuba is a domestic issue more than a foreign affairs issue. It is votes, Florida's electoral votes. You see this with democrats as well as republicans. Some of the hard line Cubans, particularly with the Cuban-American National Foundation, learned well years ago to sprinkle money around campaigns of key congressmen and senators who were in states where they probably didn't have five Cuban constituents. But this was money coming in and they took a fairly hard line policy. Cuba, of course, I think there is a

big national debate going on about the wisdom of the policy. Depending on where you sit, you can certainly understand the feelings of the first generation Cubans. I think there is good argument to be made that this group, pretty hard line, often middle class, who became very successful once they emigrated here, and wanted to attack Castro and communism for extremely understandable reasons, took control of the policy. There was no organized counterweight group or individual with such influence who was saying no, we shouldn't adopt this policy. These are all the 112 reasons why rationally we should not stick to this policy. It has been tried; it has been done and so forth. Cuba is just a neuralgic subject for many people. Now, there are splits within the community in Florida. I think those younger members whose parents left Cuba but they have been born here are Americans. They are not going to go back to Cuba. They are perhaps a little more moderate on it, but you are right. I think if you are in the government, in the executive branch in a foreign affairs agency, you have to wait to see until the political winds change so that leaders in the White House or in Congress say we will change this policy. My own view is that the change, when it does come, is not going to happen so much from those human rights organizations, those pushing freedom of the press or other things. It is going to come from economic self interest. You see state trade groups going to Cuba because they want to sell farm products. They want to do this. I think over time you will see more bipartisanship on this with economic groups who of course are contributors and very important for the election of representatives to Washington as well as in their state capitals, who will talk about let's start easing some of these things. One negative thing, or it could be a negative thing of course, is if Castro would die tomorrow. I don't want him to stay in power, but dictators don't do a very good job of preparing successors. That is how they get to remain in charge. Whereas the common wisdom is that his brother might succeed him, there may be a big battle for succession, and you could see thousands of Cubans getting rafts and boats descending on Florida. That, I think, scares the hell out of elected officials in Florida and other places. People who want to be president or are president or want to be president, so that is another argument for reaching some sort of accommodation over time to avoid that exact crisis. But it is a neuralgic issue. It is an issue which I think has been dominated by a relatively small number of people in a small part of the country along the east coast, mainly Florida. It needs to be re-examined, but will only be re-examined if there is a real domestic push for economic reasons. And the fact that Castro uses this himself. This is one of the big things he is able to use to point out how we are bullying him. He does things such as when Clinton was attempting to begin to ease educational exchanges and trying to do some other things, two pilots get shot down. Well that put the kibosh on that effort for a few years. I mentioned I visited Cuba. I was the first Area director I think in about 16 or 17 years who got to go. The first time I applied I was invited by the principal officer down there. Visas, the State Department desk handles sending the passports to the Cuban embassy. Within two weeks they are to respond. I checked with our office passport stuff, and two or two and a half weeks later the passport came back. "Was everything all right?" "Well it looks OK, come on down." I went down, there was no visa. There was no letter of explanation, which is their way of turning it down without giving any explanation. I didn't get to go on that occasion. A few months later it came up again. We were I guess on a little relatively better cycle of relations. I did get a visa to go. It was to be limited to six days. This was

official. It was six days, and I couldn't go out of Havana. Unofficially they didn't want me going and knocking on doors of dissidents. That was fine; I just wanted to look at what I could do. I had to go via Mexico. So I went and did a day's work in Mexico City and then flew in. When I got to Havana, there was a diplomats' line, with a woman behind a window. I got up there and she started waving one of the tourist cards in front of me. This was all in Spanish. I explained I didn't have one because they didn't give me one. So she starts asking questions. About half way through I understand she is basically filling out this card for me. We are talking and so forth and how I am this, that, and the other. I knew I could only be there about three days, three working days, even though the visa was good for six. So we get to the point of how long will you be in Cuba, and before I could answer she said, "Well you are going to be here for three days, right?" Well, I hadn't mentioned that. There was nothing in the passport that mentioned that. Somehow the word had gotten back to her. They had been listening in to our conversations even though we talked by secure phone to Havana. I was impressed by our staff there, the dedication, the tough conditions they work under. I stayed at the principal officer's residence.

*Q: Who was the principal officer?*

CHAPLIN: Mike Kozak was there at the time. His predecessor had been Joe Sullivan who is now ambassador in Angola. Mike is a lawyer who came up by that route and did some of the negotiations on the Panama Canal and was due to go, I think, to Panama, I am not sure, as ambassador. This is when some democrats were in control of congress. He and Joe Sullivan, who was due to go to Nicaragua, were unfairly caught up on old Central American issues, and their names had to be withdrawn. It was really a disgrace that this happened to both of them. Since then, their talent and perseverance have gotten them good positions. I did meet some dissident writers. I met a couple of professors including one who had taught at the University of Havana, American history or American diplomatic history. She had lost her job just because of the subject matter I think. The way she introduced herself was she gave you a card, and it had her name and address and phone number. Where it had her title of what she had been in the university, she had cut a hole in it. So this was her statement as she gave you this card on how she had been treated. You saw wonderful buildings that had been great at the beginning of the century that were in decay. You saw 14-15 year old girls on the street, prostitution, often going out with middle aged Europeans and others. You would see them later at a restaurant. Old cars held together by chewing gum and barbed wire. This was for professionals who make \$10-\$20 a month equivalent. You saw a lot of signs of police, but you also saw kids in school uniforms singing and playing and happy. It was a dollarized economy; they weren't interested in Cuban pesos. So one sees a kind of proud country on its heels turning heavily to tourism. Largely pro American populace despite what the government says. They may be angry with decisions we take which affect their lives, but they are pro American. Most of them have relatives in the U.S., and remittances in dollars from these families helps the economy go quite a bit. So it is a country we are going to have to deal with. It is a symbol for political opposition in many other countries of standing up to the U.S. because there is still, I think, a latent level of anti Americanism for our past history in the region that is slightly below the surface. In some countries it is a little deeper but it



is still there to be used by intellectuals or columnists or politicians who want to do it for their own reasons. Cuba stands as a symbol. What do we have to fear these days from this tiny country 90 miles away. We can deal with China; we can deal with Vietnam. Why can't you find a way to deal with Cuba?

*Q: Well you left that job in '97. whither?*

CHAPLIN: I was asked to do two things. First I went back to the previous job I had in this resource management group. This was looking at where we took our budget cuts. It was even more serious now. The second job which became even a heavier time commitment was to be on the steering committee for the merger of USIA with State. Then I took on the added job connected with that of there were counterpart members of State and USIA for each of the functions, technology, administration, you name it. But it was decided there would be one small staff handling communications, internal and with posts overseas. It was determined we would do that function ourselves, USIA officers, and I was to have that responsibility as well. So this was through Internet, through announcements, through scheduled meetings and briefings. There were a couple of videos we prepared, a website that was produced to keep staff informed as various steps happened over this nine month period. Originally the original plan had called for two years to work on the merger. When congress adjourned without passing the budget at that point, we got into the new fiscal year, the timetable moved up. All of a sudden it became nine to ten months instead of two years. In retrospect, even though things weren't totally smooth, they went pretty smoothly considering what was being done. Nine months was probably right. If you had two years you would have seen a little more posturing; your people wouldn't negotiate, you would put off any negotiations. It would go down to the last moment hoping they could get something out of it. So even though in the minds of some the totality of this was going to take two years, in fact it could have been done in nine months, and was.

*Q: What was as this thing became it was going to happen. Can you what was the view of this? I mean morale is one but the other is how the job gets done.*

CHAPLIN: Well I think surprisingly, this is just from my vantage point, the job got done amazingly well. You had a lot of committed people and besides being committed and being paid to do this, by doing your work and keeping your mind off the other thing, that was good. That allowed you to escape whatever fears you had. So I think the work basically did get done. Again there were discussions working on an overseas level of integration there totally, which weren't very big issues. A lot of cooperation and agreements were already in place. Some things there changed, but it was a bigger issue on the Washington end.

*Q: Because really in the field, the integration has been there.*

CHAPLIN: Well it was except the PAO had a separate budget, control over his own motor pool, had his own admin staff, had his own tech person. Some of these things got

merged and changed and there was worry about how this was going to work out. The morale was a bigger issue. There were some who felt, look, this is time. Let's do it right; let's get on with it. There were many more who were just afraid of the unknown. They knew that the work cultures were very different. USIA was a much smaller operation. We were program oriented. Speed was essential in the way we did our work. State was larger, more fiefdoms, more clearances. Whereas we used Internet for program purposes not just inter organizational communication, State used it mainly on a classified system which meant limited access, which again meant a lot of clearances and time. It might be a big factor on certain issues of bilateral relations or something else, but it wasn't always as big an issue as it is with us when you are sending out a wireless file or something else. If you don't get something done in a day, then you have lost the urgency and it gets tossed over. So there was a certain amount of anxiety. There was a feeling among many foreign service officers that our function was going to be downgraded, that we would be becoming another cone, diplomacy cone in State. There would be less attention paid, that whatever resources we had to do things on our own quickly would now be part of a bigger embassy budget and would we get our own share. What priority would be given by ambassadors? Would a political ambassador decide that he was going to be the speaker program for that year and go out and give talks and we would just pay the bills. All sorts of things bubbled up. There was concern about promotions within the system, assignments, the usual things which are bread and butter issues. On the civil service side, fairly or unfairly, State Department has a reputation of not equating the value of the civil service at the same level they value the foreign service. There is a cleavage there, a perception. Obviously I would talk about mid level and lower level employees, secretary, administrative types. They were just worried that they were going to get lost in bigger offices with no chances for promotion because they were going to be the new kids on the block, they were going to get the smaller office or no office. Because they didn't know the way State did business in clearances they wouldn't have the same chances for competing for assignments and promotions, again fear of the unknown. I think what was attempted in this reorganization, that was skillfully led by Patrick Kennedy as assistant secretary for administration and then by Dick Stevens on the USIA side who was an executive officer who had retired and was brought back to do this, was an understanding of this dynamic and attitude. This was one reason there was such a strong emphasis placed on communication. There were briefings and meetings at USIA with a lot of folks from State coming over, whatever the function was, to talk about how they did things and how they saw the cooperation coming in their particular offices. We put a lot of effort into that. The only real domestic constituency that USIA had was in the exchanges area, the Fulbright program and other exchanges. The fear of people working in the building and also in this exchange community which got grants from us was that this activity was going to be diminished. They worried that cultural funding would dry up and the money would be used for other purposes to build State's general resource base. In fact what happened is education exchange comes as a separate budget, like a line item budget now. It is not incorporated in the general funding for the department so it is walled off and at pretty good levels of funding given the general climate. The disarmament agency was also involved in this. At one point it looked like a fair amount of AID was going to be affected by this. In fact, AID, if you read its public statements, was the organization Helms was

really after in terms of incorporating. Because of its constituency, I think, I have no other way of explaining it, was spared or was not required, let's put it that way, to fully merge. It was only, I think, its congressional liaison office, and its public affairs office and some other thing, but not the basic function. And the idea that the administrator reported to the Secretary of State and not to the President. Other than that, AID was left pretty much on its own. That is my understanding. I think one can make a case logically. I think a lot of these issues and personal concerns of people will go away over time. There is a transition period, and then people are very resilient. Most people adjust and adapt. People who were fearful of going and working at State found that their new supervisors didn't breathe fire and look down on them and didn't get into dress code. Also physically, 2/3 or more of these people didn't move at all. There was no room for them to go. They are working at what was the old USIA building which is now State Annex 44, their same car pools and same schedule. The job is a little more difficult in some sense because you still have to get clearances and take shovels to go to State to get things done. A bigger challenge, concerning content, but more to do with money, was to technologically link their systems between the different buildings because that wasn't possible for many years. I think they are working toward it; I am not sure where they are. So that was a concern. That being said, I think one can make the argument that if you were starting out today and creating the senior or the major foreign affairs agency, which is the Department of State, what should be the components given the needs of today's diplomacy: public diplomacy should be an important component of that overall organization. So that argument, I think, makes a lot of sense. It is in the application and the use of that whether you give it sufficient funding, whether the people in the cone get promoted in comparable ways with others, whether you design programs which were effective, whether it is a real player or real tool in the arsenal rather than just more bodies and more money that has come over.

*Q: And also it is the thing we talked a little before and that is that if it is done well it means that the public diplomacy experts have a seat at the table where policy is being made. I mean after all these are, my impression of 30 years in the business, you are really talking about people who are really well plugged in, particularly in the overseas side, and are extremely useful for any ambassador. There should be that carryover to the general public way of carrying on policy.*

CHAPLIN: I totally agree with that. The bureau that was created was called the Bureau for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The spokesman's office, the assistant secretary for public affairs, is in that bureau. That I think is done for organizational reasons. Everyone knows that that assistant secretary, who often is the spokesman himself or herself, is going to report right to the secretary. They are not going to go to the undersecretary for public diplomacy. That's fine. But because even though State operates overseas, and its mission and function and mandate is overseas, it has to logically, like any other government entity, develop a constituency or attempt to domestically build up support for its role, for its funding etc. When the Secretary of State travels around the country and makes speeches, or the deputy secretary or whoever it is tries to educate people as to what it is the State Department does and why people should be interested in it and supportive of it, that a public affairs role designed to obtain support domestically so

that you can do your job well. That is distinct from working with foreign publics and explaining American policy to try to get them to support and understand those policies. Now the tools can be very similar, whether it is speeches, publications you are handing out, a TV program, radio, the Internet, whatever you use, but the goal or the objective is somewhat different. Secretary Albright, a very effective speaker, felt she really needed to help educate the American people. She said that what she did going around the country and talking to audiences was public diplomacy. I think career people, civil service or foreign service, would look at what she is doing as a bit different than that. She is trying to do the same thing the Secretary of Treasury does or EPA or Defense or whatever. Their words may get played overseas, but that is not what the audience is. The audience overseas under public diplomacy is a different sort of game, and you shouldn't confuse them. I went to a talk yesterday that Ambassador Pickering gave. He brought this up. He talked about China and Russia, but then he talked a little bit about public diplomacy and its importance. He said, "I told Secretary Albright when we began that she should call herself the secretary of state for public diplomacy, and the deputy should be for diplomacy. This is what the name of the game is. You need to get the publics convinced in democratic societies to get policies adapted and educated. We didn't do as good a job on several issues as we should have." He attributed some of that to the number of different fiefdoms in State. He would like a smaller number of assistant secretaries and a smaller number of bureaus. I honestly believe that it is important. I think incoming classes of officers need training in a public diplomacy component to show why that is important. Because whether you are going to do political, consular, econ, or administrative work, particularly if you have contacts on the outside and you may get interviewed by somebody, or even if you are just talking to important people, you are carrying out on the policy issues the public diplomacy function even if you don't work in that section. So it is, I think, common sensical, but as institutions we have not put enough effort into it. We have looked at specialists doing this and not that it should really be in the job description of everybody who is assigned overseas and those in certain positions domestically.

*Q: Well did you retire after this?*

CHAPLIN: I did. The integration took place on October 1, 1999. I went into the retirement seminar and I finished November 30.

*Q: Since then what have you been doing?*

CHAPLIN: I have done some part time work at the Foreign Service Institute where I direct the Mexican area studies course.

*Q: Well, great. Steve, I want to thank you very much.*

CHAPLIN: Thank you. It has been my pleasure.

*End of interview*