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

JAMES D. CONLEY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: January 27, 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

View of President Mobutu
Living with Ebola
Family life in a hardship post
SecState Kissinger visits

Washington, DC—FSI Russian Language 1977
Rethought assignment to Moscow

Retirement October 1978

Post-Retirement Activities
South Bend, Indiana—The Historic Landmark Foundation of Indiana 1978–1994

INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Conley prior to his death.]

Q: Today is the twenty-seventh of January 2000. This is an interview with James D. Conley, being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Jim and I are old friends, having served together back in the sixties in Belgrade. Jim, could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

CONLEY: I was born in Chicago, Illinois on October 5, 1928. My family were native Chicagoans. I have three brothers and a sister. We grew up on the north side of Chicago. I attended parochial schools, St. George High School in Evanston. It was a very happy time in my life.

Q: What was your father's background?

CONLEY: My father served in the First World War. He did not attend college. He had a great ability with figures. He was one of the youngest commissioned officers in the First World War. In fact, he was commissioned on his birthday. He couldn't have been younger than that, because he was like the administrative officer of the battalion that he was with. When he came out of the army he wound up as the inside man of a small insurance brokerage agency in Chicago, which later became substantial. He did that the rest of his life. I don't think my father ever sold five insurance policies in his life. That was not his interest. His interest was in managing and dealing with people.

My mother was also born and raised in Chicago. Her father, Chief Kenney, was a battalion chief in the Chicago Fire Department. The family legend has it that Big Bill Thompson asked him to pay five hundred dollars so he could be fire marshal and Tom Kenney told him to stick it in his ear. He was already at the top of the list of professional

firemen, and he said he had gotten there on his own merits and therefore he wasn't going to pay anyone anything to go further, so they retired him in 1938. He was a lion both to his men and in the history of the fire department. My mother was one of three or four children. She and my father met in grade school and married when they were in their twenties.

Q: From the name the family is Irish?

CONLEY: It's Irish on both sides.

Q: So, you were brought up as a Catholic in Chicago.

CONLEY: Yes.

Q: I was born in 1928 in a place called Chicago too. My father was in the lumber business. Did you grow up in an Irish enclave?

CONLEY: No, I didn't. We were "north side," which was a mixed neighborhood of nationalities. My father never promoted the idea of his Irishness. In fact, he could hardly bear to wear a green tie on St. Patrick's Day. I tried to learn about our family history from his side, I knew on my mother's side, and he simply was not interested.

Q: You went through a parochial system more or less?

CONLEY: I went through parochial school through eighth grade and I was, in the parlance of the time, a "jock." I went to Evanston St. George High School, which became a local, in Chicago, football power. I played football there. We won the Kelly Bowl named after Mayor Kelly. The team who won the Catholic conference played the team who won the public-school conference. Wendell Phillips, the first all-black school that had won the public-school championship, and who had Buddy Young, a legendary halfback, were favored by some thirty-three points. Our high school coach was the first coach in the country to introduce the T-formation, probably because it had been employed by the coach of the Bears. St. George won that championship. I got a football scholarship to college.

Q: In grammar school and high school what were your interests other than sports?

CONLEY: I wanted to travel. I had this wanderlust as a youngster. I was interested in reading.

Q: Were there any books that were influential or really grabbed you?

CONLEY: One of the most influential books in my life when I was very young, I think before I was in high school, was *The Kid from Tomkinsville*. It had to do with a shortstop. It is a legendary boy's book of the time.

Q: Were there topics that were bandied about at the dinner table at all?

CONLEY: Politics, a lot. My parents were Democrats. We talked politics and public affairs a lot. Chicago politics and then national politics every four years. My father was an ardent New Dealer. All of this was just within the family, not publicly. Religion was another topic. My father had volunteered at Mt. Carmel parish out on the lakefront of Chicago. His closest friend was the pastor there. My older brother became a Catholic priest and my younger sister became a Benedictine nun.

Q: Were you feeling at all the pressure of the Church? I always think of that period as one of conformity where the priests were pretty powerful players.

CONLEY: I must say I didn't. I was kind of the maverick in the family. I was not an altar boy, although my two older brothers were.

Q: *How was Chicago politics viewed? Chicago politics have always been sort of a case apart. Who was running the machine at that time?*

CONLEY: Ed Kelly was the mayor. In fact I thought that he was mayor for life. I didn't know any better when I was in grade school. He was the only mayor we had. Frequently there would be discussions of graft at the dinner table and my father just despised people who were on the take and, of course, lots of people in Chicago were, although not to any great degree perhaps. It was something we would discuss from time to time. It might be on the basis of inside information a developer made huge bucks, et cetera.

Q: Did the Depression have much effect on your family?

CONLEY: No, my dad worked for wages and didn't have any other income. I don't know how we did it with four kids and his father living with us. In the middle of the Depression he bought a bungalow on the north side of Chicago for forty-three hundred dollars. I think it was just prudent management that enabled him to do it because he did not make big money at all. But, he was employed, which was important.

Q: After high school whither?

CONLEY: My preoccupation in high school was sports. I got decent grades, but nothing to write home about. The war was on. I had a brother in the Seabees in the Second World War. I was just a year or two too young, so I tried to follow what was going on, especially having a brother there. In 1945–46 I thought I was going to be drafted so we didn't have career aspirations other than when we were going to get called.

Q: How did it play out?

CONLEY: I graduated from high school in 1946. I was invited to the University of Notre

Dame to try out just before graduating for scholarships there. I went into the locker room and met, among others, Leon Hart, who was an eighteen-year-old from Pennsylvania and going to be a freshman, and also Jim Martin, who was shown on posters for marine recruiting in the Second World War, and I thought, No way would I have a chance to play here. I had a scholarship offer from the University of Detroit, and it was close by, so I played football there for a year.

Q: You were there from when?

CONLEY: From 1946 to January 1948. At that time the university and I had a mutual agreement that we should part company, and I came back to Chicago. My father recommended that I try the insurance business at an agency that he knew was looking for a young person, so I did for about a year and a half. I was also going to night school at DePaul University. I had joined the Illinois National Guard in 1948 because of the threat to draft, and I wanted to continue to go to school. Then the Korean War came about. My unit was activated and sent to Georgia until 1952 at which time I was discharged. I had time to read during the year and a half I was in the service and decided I really wanted to get my degree, so I went to Notre Dame.

Q: What happened at the University of Detroit?

CONLEY: There was a misunderstanding between the dean and myself about an incident that occurred and we each thought the other was at fault. I decided I didn't want to have anything else to do with the school.

Q: In the national guard, what sort of work were you doing?

CONLEY: Because I had had a couple of years of college they decided I had certain abilities and made me a radar officer. I had no aptitude for electronics whatsoever. There were big skull and crossbones signs everywhere indicating you touch this or that and you have had it. It just scared the hell out of me! But, I did it. I was with antiaircraft artillery and working in a radar shack.

At the same time I was managing the battalion baseball team and put forth some harebrained ideas, you know. We had little talent but went to ball games. For example, we had to score a man from second base and had a man at the plate who couldn't hit but he could run, so I had him lay down a bunt and run to first base and when he got to first base turn around and start running back to home plate, thinking that in the confusion that the person who got the ball would chase him back to home plate. The guy on second was our fastest man and I told him as soon as he lays the bunt down, don't stop. He came around third plate and there was a big collision at home plate between the batter, the fielder, and the base runner. They all collided and he scored. Well, there was an officer there and he just loved the excitement of the game, so he said, "Why don't you come to special services?" Special services as you may remember was the outfit that ran all the recreation rooms and baseball, et cetera. I became acting sergeant major because all ranks were

frozen. I was a corporal. But, I could keep the paper flowing and edit some of the writing of my sergeant major, and keep him out of trouble. I did that most of the time I was there. Oh, I also played basketball on the team.

Q: Then you went back to Chicago to work for an insurance company?

CONLEY: I was with an insurance firm from 1948 until 1950 when I went into the service, and when I came out of the service I went to Notre Dame and graduated in 1955.

Q: What did you major in at Notre Dame?

CONLEY: Political science and international relations.

Q: What had pushed you in that particular direction?

CONLEY: An interest in politics. I had begun to do some reading. I think it may have been the Stevensonian era. I know by 1952 I was an ardent supporter of Adlai Stevenson. There was a stirring of interest in public service which was ill defined. I had never heard about the Foreign Service at that point. It was only when I took a course in Latin American government and met a professor, Jack Kennedy, who had been in the State Department as assistant naval attaché in Costa Rica during the Second World War, and come back into the department after the war for a short period before deciding to get a doctorate, which he did, and ended up teaching at Notre Dame. He was the person who said I should do something with my degree and encouraged me to think about the Foreign Service.

Q: Did you find being in the Midwest that world events didn't impact very much where you were?

CONLEY: If they did, certainly growing up, they impacted through the lens of Colonel McCormack, the publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. And John S. Knight who was the publisher of the *Daily News*. But Chicago is very insular.

Q: You graduated from Notre Dame in 1955. Had you focused on the State Department, USIA [United States Information Agency], et cetera?

CONLEY: At that time, no, I still didn't know where I was going to go. I wanted to go overseas. I went to Chicago and was looking to interview with companies that had branches overseas and I could only find two or three companies there that did. I couldn't get through the front door. It was at that time that my friend Professor Kennedy said, "Look, I will give you an introduction to a friend at the State Department. I think you ought to go to Washington and see if you can't do something with the degree that you have." So, it was only in March 1955 that I came to Washington for the first time.

Q: Was CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] on the list?

CONLEY: CIA, NSA [National Security Agency], et cetera. My objective was to get to Washington. State in 1955 was very difficult to get into. The advice I got was to try USIA because it was a new agency and it might be somewhat easier to get into. I couldn't crack it in 1955 so I filled out applications for NSA and CIA, and NSA made me an offer at the level of GS-5 in June 1955. CIA came through with a similar offer in September 1955. The difference was that the NSA offer was conditional on a full clearance but they gave you a partial clearance so you could be on the payroll, but CIA conducted their clearance completely before making a definite offer. So, NSA came through first and one of my interests in coming here is that my first job was here at Arlington Hall in 1955.

Q: We are at Arlington Hall now. Could you explain what NSA was at that time? It was the National Security Agency, but what did it do?

CONLEY: It was the electronics intelligence gathering arm of the U.S. government. The code breaking arm.

Q: Had you any experience doing this? Any mathematical background?

CONLEY: No, and I was not on that side of things. I worked in a vast open space that was a research department and probably the largest classified library in Washington. It had everything in it from clippings from the *New York Times* to the most secret information available in one place. I was a research analyst.

Q: What does a research analyst do?

CONLEY: In those days in the area I was working in we were assigned specific countries. I had three countries, which I followed from the standpoint of individuals writing up bits of information that could be useful down the road. You didn't want to have multiple cards if you could help it so it was a pretty good education in precision and brevity. You tried to use words from the source and then file it in two or three different places so that down the road if you got a question this information could be useful.

Q: What were your colleagues like?

CONLEY: Very departmentalized. You tended to know the other analysts like yourself. Most of us had liberal arts background with basic undergraduate degrees, although there were a few MAs. We didn't know people at all who were not in this vast library that we worked in.

Q: We are talking right now in what was the main building of the old girls school that was here in the '20s. Was the library where you were working near here?

CONLEY: I worked in a temporary building that the government built in the middle of the war.

Q: Where did you live at that time?

CONLEY: On George Mason Drive just north of here. Our first child was born there.

Q: Sounds like you got married.

CONLEY: I got married in 1955.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

CONLEY: She was a student at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Q: While you were here did you see much of a career for yourself at NSA?

CONLEY: I think I had one because I had a certain aptitude for what we were doing and enjoyed it well enough, but I still had this desire to go overseas. They had offices outside of London and I kept trying to get information on how I could apply for a position over there and was told they had no need for someone with my skills. They needed different types of people. So, I kept going back to USIA, because that was where I had received the friendliest welcome, and made the acquaintance of a man named Marshal Berry who was a personnel officer there. I would go in there about every three months to say hello. The Junior Officer Program at that time had a hurdle that I could not overcome. You had to be single and have a master's degree to enter the Junior Officer Program. I enrolled at American University and began course work on a master's degree but I was already married. Marshal Berry said that he thought that was going to change and it did change because the first group of junior officer trainees were sent overseas and they were alone and sent to isolated places. One example comes to mind, Belem, Brazil. The guy went bonkers. He had no one with him. The agency pretty quickly realized that that was not a smart thing to do. So, they dropped the single requirement allowing married candidates to apply. They also lowered the barrier for a master's degree. You didn't have to take the Foreign Service examination to get into USIA but you did have to take another exam which I think was called the Pace Exam. I took that and then there was an oral.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked in the oral?

CONLEY: No. They were very contemporary on the political side and the international side drawn almost from that week's *New York Times*. As I recall I think Greece, the UK [United Kingdom], and Suez were in the news. Then there were situational questions. If you were in this situation, how would you respond?

Q: Then what happened?

CONLEY: After two years at NSA I told them that I was leaving for USIA and was told that NSA was going to promote me, and that if I didn't like USIA they wanted me back.

Having been promoted to a GS-7 earlier, I was promoted to a GS-9 at the time I transferred over to USIA. I have always felt well of NSA because they did it despite the fact I was leaving within a week or two. But, they said it was a reward for past performance and an inducement to come back if I decided I didn't like USIA. I thought that was very straight up of them. I liked it.

Q: You came into USIA when?

CONLEY: In July 1957.

Q: Did you have an entry class? How did they break you into the agency?

CONLEY: They brought us in in small groups. I think there were twelve to fourteen of us. I was in the thirteenth junior officer training class.

Q: What was your group like?

CONLEY: Very diverse. Men and women from all over the country with different backgrounds, different degrees of confidence, different sources of education. I remember sitting at a table, the personnel officers were sitting on the back benches, and we were all asked to stand up and give a thumbnail description of ourselves and language competencies. Pat, I can't remember her last name, a wonderful lady who had gone to Marquette and had been a journalism major said she was competent in English and sat down. Then a fellow gets up and says he is competent in French, German, Swahili, and Arabic. It was unbelievable. When it became my turn I didn't know what I was going to say. I decided on the truth saying I had taken Portuguese in college to satisfy the degree requirement for an undergraduate degree. I made no pretense whatsoever of being able to read it or speak it. But, I passed the course. Shortly thereafter assignments came out and I was assigned to Rio de Janeiro.

Q: When did you go to Rio de Janeiro?

CONLEY: In 1957.

Q: And stayed how long?

CONLEY: Until 1959.

Q: Could you describe to the best of your memory what the political, cultural situation was in Brazil at that time?

CONLEY: Before I get to that, I would like to say that the embassy was in turmoil. The public affairs officer was on leave, the executive officer had had a stroke, the cultural attaché had a terrific accident involving his eye, the ambassador was away and the place was wild. Woodruff Wallner was the deputy chief of mission [DCM]. I went and paid a

courtesy call on Mr. Wallner and he said, “Tell me, what do you do here?” I don’t know if you know about Wallner.

Q: Well, he was a character. Could you explain a bit about him?

CONLEY: Well, all I know is that he was a character. He was an old-line Foreign Service officer who had been imprisoned briefly in France during the Second World War. He was very francophone. He had a distinguished career. He was DCM in Belgrade and DCM in Rio for Ambassador Briggs. He was flamboyant and suffered fools not at all. He used a cigarette holder, wore berets. He was a shouter too. He used to scream at his secretaries.

He said, “What are you doing here?” I said, “I’m a junior officer trainee, Mr. Wallner.” “A junior officer trainee? Do you know what I would do if the State Department sent me a junior officer trainee, Mr. Conley?” I said, “No, Sir.” “I would put a six cent stamp on his forehead and would mail him.” My introduction to Rio de Janeiro.

Juscelino Kubitschek was president at the time. Brasilia was a thought. They were already thinking about moving their capital, in part because it seemed economically to be a sound thing, and partly because they could not figure out a way to deal with corruption in government in Rio de Janeiro more effectively than by moving the capital away because they realized these guys who were not coming to work but collected a paycheck wouldn’t move away from the seaside. So, that was the Brazilian solution.

There were some in USIA at the time who saw communists under every rock. There were those in USIA in Rio who thought that way. They were in the minority I am glad to say. Certainly not the public affairs officer, who was John P. McKnight and one of my heroes. Compared to today, the capital was fun, safe, vibrant, colorful. USIS [United States Information Service] had a large program, probably too large, certainly by today’s standards. The entire embassy was huge. We had some good people. John Hugh Crimmins was there in his first job as transportation attaché and was a birdwatcher. He would keep his binoculars on hand for looking out to sea and around the bay. John and I became very good friends there.

The economy was chaotic. They would not even post the price of bread. They kept a chalkboard. Bread prices changed from the time you went out in the morning to eleven o’clock because they would check their bank and see what the exchange rate was. So, it was kind of wild.

I was very young. The idea of a junior officer was to work in every section of USIS, like the embassy. I was doing that, and ended up in the office where we had the liaison USIS officer working with a vast AID [United States Agency for International Development] program. This officer was rotated back to the U.S. and there was no replacement just at the time I was due to transfer out after one year. In those years a junior officer was to spend only one year in their first assignment and then direct transfer to another country. I had orders transferring me to Chile after one year in Brazil.

But there was this vacancy and I was working there and had established a lot of friendships within the AID mission and a working relationship with Howard Cottam, who was the minister counselor for the AID program. My boss, John McKnight, cabled Washington requesting them to break my assignment to Chile and keep me in Rio because he thought I was doing the job that needed to be done there.

Q: The ambassador was—?

CONLEY: Ellis O. Briggs, one tough guy.

Q: Did you have any dealings with him at all?

CONLEY: A couple, on the cultural side.

Q: What was the impression of how he ran things?

CONLEY: People were scared to death of him. He had a gigantic reputation of being a master drafter of pungent cables and an astute political analyst. I never saw the cable traffic that he originated or received. He could be a curmudgeon. At the last minute, my wife, Jane, and I had accepted a dinner invitation from other officers in the embassy to attend an opera. We were sitting way up in the balcony seats that we had bought ourselves. We were having dinner with this other couple and going to the opera. Well, about five o'clock that night word came down that the ambassador's wife was back in the States and he was going to take the foreign minister to the opera and he wanted to have an escort. So, my boss turned to me and said, "Jim, you are going to the opera tonight aren't you?" I said, "As a matter of fact, yes." He said, "Well, would you meet the ambassador and provide the necessary?" I had no idea what this meant. A colleague with much more experience than I was walking by and heard this and said, "You don't have to worry about a thing. Just show up and bring in a drink and then you can disappear." I thought that didn't sound right but decided to do it.

So, I'm there and meet him and escort him to the box. The foreign minister comes in and he is escorted. They sit down. I say, "Can I get you a [local drink], Mr. Ambassador?" He leaned on his walking stick [he had the gout] and said, "No, not that. Cognac, scotch, whatever the foreign minister wants." I got an order for two scotches and have no idea where I am going to find these things. I go running out of the box, and sure enough, I find a bar, and get the drinks, and take them back. The ambassador says, "You will be back between acts to take an order won't you?" I say, "Yes, Sir." So, I spent most of my time at the opera going up and down stairs. He was perfectly fine but I had no idea what to expect and I didn't think I had done a very good job. I told my boss this and he said, "Oh, you did fine." He had a note from the ambassador the next day saying, "How much do I owe that young man?" I had put the money out for the drinks. Everything worked out fine.

Q: During your first year were you doing USIA work or was it pretty much AID?

CONLEY: USIA for AID. There was a big program there on the eradication of malaria and they wanted a pamphlet written on how the Brazilians, with assistance from the Americans, were going to cope with this scourge of malaria, particularly up in the north along the Amazon River. So, as the junior in the AID office I flew up to Belem. I got back to the embassy and in due course wrote a pamphlet.

Q: When you continued on the AID assignment was it more of the same?

CONLEY: Yes. It was publicizing what AID was doing in the country that would promote better education, health, et cetera. I figured out a way to do that that would engage Washington as well. A kind of schematic way that back in the '50s was not so well known as it is today. By every month looking down the road you could say that August would be a month when you would try to focus on education projects from a public information standpoint.

Q: How did you find the interface between USIA and the Brazilian media worked?

CONLEY: I think it was cordial. I did not have much time working directly with the media, but I knew the people who did and I think it worked out all right.

Q: What about the AID operations office in Rio? Not too much later you had this operation to see where they tried to bring down the size of the embassy. Did you find that the head office of the AID operation was excessive?

CONLEY: Keeping in mind that I was very junior, yes, I think I did. I think it was John Tuthill who did that. I later got to know him a little bit when he was chief of mission at the European Committee in Brussels. Yes, the size of everything was kind of a joke. Even USIS was too large. The Young Turks, so to speak, would comment about this.

Q: I interviewed somebody, and it may have been in a different era, but he was saying that one of the problems he found in Brazil, particularly in Rio, the normal practice would be to have a mistress and he was sort of astounded because a lot of the embassy sort of picked up this habit. They seemed a little too involved in their "affairs," and he found this astounding. Did you find this was true throughout the embassy?

CONLEY: If it was, I was not aware of it. I didn't hang with people who talked about it.

Q: Was your Portuguese developed enough so you could get to know the community?

CONLEY: Yes, but not in a substantive way. We knew Portuguese. I was the first American to join a small tennis club that was two blocks from the apartment we lived in. There was a delightful group of Brazilians who were there and we interacted socially with them and that kind of thing. But, from the standpoint of representation, I had no representation allowance. I attended other people's parties. The ambassador gave these

gigantic parties out at his residence. By gigantic I mean there would be guests like Louis Armstrong and an overall guest list of several hundred. I simply wasn't invited to political officers' functions.

Q: In 1959, where did you go?

CONLEY: In 1959 I went to Zagreb and here Woody Wallner comes back into the picture. He heard that I wanted to go to Yugoslavia and tried to talk me out of going there. He had already served in Belgrade, and felt Yugoslavia was a difficult assignment: contacts discouraged by the Yugoslavs; there was no commissary; living conditions were difficult; food was scarce and vegetables were almost nonexistent in the winter time; it had an oppressive climate at times, et cetera. None of this had any relevance to me whatsoever. I just wanted to go. I had read, among others, Rebecca West's *Black Land* and became very excited about it. It turned out that George Allen, who had been his ambassador in Belgrade, by this time was director of the U.S. Information Agency. Wallner wrote a letter to George Allen saying, "Dear George, I have a volunteer for the white city, Belgrade." He sent me a copy of the letter. So, that helped. I had put in for Yugoslavia, and as it turned out the agency was looking for someone to go to Zagreb in a new position that they were establishing, information officer. And that is where I ended up.

Q: Did you get any training?

CONLEY: I got four months. Of the intrepid Serbs, I had Popovic.

Q: Popovic and Jankovic?

CONLEY: Yes, he was a Nazi.

Q: That was an experience that none of us will forget.

CONLEY: Never. Popovic, when he heard I was going to Zagreb, would spit. He could just not abide the Croats. He was all that was wrong with Serbian culture.

Q: In many ways I have found that experience, which I detested at the time, was probably the best introduction to the Serbian-Yugoslav situation. You got a full dose of a very strong Serb nationalist with no veneer of trying to understand anyone else. I think all of us who went through that experience, including Larry Eagleburger, got a very solid dose of this.

CONLEY: Right.

Q: *Well, you served in Zagreb from when to when?*

CONLEY: From May 1960 to the summer of 1962 when I was asked to direct transfer

down to Belgrade.

Q: How did you see Yugoslavia at that time and particularly from a Zagreb point of view?

CONLEY: Zagreb was very depressing when we first arrived because we had come from such a colorful country. I had sort of a warped idea of what it must be like to live in a totalitarian country. It didn't take long before I met Yugoslav journalists and people on the cultural side who educated me about the difference between economic and political freedoms. They were constrained certainly, but they led a vibrant life. There was a lot of freedom as long as they played within certain rules. I developed enormous respect for Croats and Slovenes. I didn't know the Serbs until I moved down to Belgrade. But, their independence, intelligence, flexibility, and depth of their culture I just found to be astounding.

What was astounding in some respect, Stu, was how little this was known in the United States. Nineteen sixty was still pretty early on in the cultural relationships between our countries. We had university professors coming to Zagreb and asking what it was like to live behind the iron curtain. You had to go through the explanation that Yugoslavia was not behind the curtain. They were different and I had to explain in what way they were different. I had to take them around and introduce them to people in order to open their eyes so they could get a richer experience of the country. So, in some respects I was acting almost as a friendly emissary from the Yugoslav standpoint, not politically, but to try to acquaint them more with the reality there. Of course, it was a directed economy and that was depressing.

Q: What did you understand to be America's policy towards Yugoslavia at that time?

CONLEY: Kennedy had just come in and I thought America's policy towards Yugoslavia was very sound. It was trying to support the independence and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. I was not very privy to the pressures that were coming through our embassy in Belgrade from Washington requesting attempts to get Tito to perhaps modify some of the positions that were taken by the third world group, of which he and Nehru were two of the founders. They would take some positions that our government was opposed to. When the Soviets exploded an underground nuclear test device, which we were opposed to, they did not criticize the Soviets.

Q: I recall that test really outraged Americans since it happened when there was a non-aligned meeting in Belgrade. All of a sudden we discovered they were making noises about there being good nuclear tests and bad nuclear tests. The good ones are Soviet and the bad ones are American.

CONLEY: You were in Belgrade at that time?

Q: I wasn't in Belgrade then, but it is one of those things that stands out in that period because it happened to put Tito and his colleagues on the spot and was sort of a litmus

test, which they flunked as far as we were concerned.

CONLEY: Yes. I was in Zagreb at the time and they did flunk it. On the other hand, Tito had to walk this tightrope from a political and economic standpoint. I suppose he felt his interests were better served by taking a hard view against the United States. It certainly wasn't easy for us.

Q: What was your job?

CONLEY: My job was described as an information officer, but the fact was that I was more of a cultural officer. The cultural officer was a beloved person. Her name was Corrine Karen Spencer, who was the architectural librarian at Columbia University when her husband died, and she decided she wanted to do something else and joined USIA, going to Budapest on her first assignment. She was the librarian there. Then with the 1956 revolution there, they shut down her operation there and she came over to Zagreb. Corrine had been there three or four years before I got there and she only spoke four or five words of Croatian, but she was beloved. She created the bridge over which Croats and Americans walked. The Yugoslavs thought that a gathering of people for a cultural purpose was perfectly okay. So, Corrine had cross sections of the whole society—political, economic, social, cultural—meet in her magnificent apartment up in old town above or next door to the studio that Ivan Mestrovic had worked in.

Corrine stayed in the library and didn't do anything else, and there was work to be done out in the field, particularly outside of Zagreb. So I traveled to every town of any size in Slovenia and Croatia. What was I doing? Well, I would take speakers to give lectures, trying to place a newspaper article on American culture. I got a kind of "Let's Learn English" film series on Slovene television using a Slovene speaker as the instructor and then the repetition would be in English. This was a series of about sixty-six films. I was told that this could not be done—the federal government had said that the series was propagandistic and they were not going to allow it. The films had been sent back to Washington. I, meanwhile, had done a favor for a woman in the television station and helped her out at a bad time. I read some Robert Frost poetry at a time when her reader had gotten the flu, or something like that, and she owed me one. I talked about this series and she said that she thought she could get it on in Zagreb.

It was an example of the federal system in Yugoslavia. The Slovenes—on culture—could make their own decisions, but our own office in Belgrade did not believe that. I got the films back, took them up there, and got them on television. And this was sort of an example of how within certain realms the federal government in Yugoslavia worked. That was a major accomplishment, I thought, because then it went from Slovenia to Croatia because the Croats saw how popular the series was up there that Croatian television appealed to Belgrade for permission to run this series, and they did.

We had lecturers and musicians who were coming to town, and a nice thing to do if an American artist came through and had nothing to do with you was to send a bottle of

whiskey over to his hotel room and ask if there was anything you could do to help. He would be so pleased that he would accept an invitation to dinner or lunch to which you could invite Yugoslavs. It was a very rich, exciting experience for us.

Q: Who was the consul general at that time?

CONLEY: Ted Montgomery was the first one. Ted was a playwright and had a couple of plays produced on Broadway. He had been consul general in Malta. He was succeeded by Joe Godson, who was labor attaché in Belgrade after many years in London as labor attaché. I worked for Ray Benson in Zagreb.

Q: Did you get involved in the university either in Zagreb or Ljubljana?

CONLEY: Yes, in both places. It had been the wish of the embassy to establish a chair of American Studies at the University of Ljubljana and it was just not happening. The head of the English Department there was a very good friend. The light bulb went off for me that there was a semantic misunderstanding. If we were successful in getting the University of Ljubljana to create a chair of American Studies, they would have had to do the same thing for the Soviets and they did not want to do that. It was when we solved that misunderstanding by finding another way to characterize the position, that we accomplished the goal without calling it a chair. So we had American professors there. We already had American professors coming to Zagreb.

Q: How did it work with these American professors? Did you have contact with them?

CONLEY: Yes. They lived very simply on the local economy. The selection of the professors was perfect. There was a man named Zink who couldn't have been better. He taught literature and gave English lessons merely by the fact that he was speaking. He and his wife just hung out with students. We saw them a lot.

Q: A year or two later I knew the man who had the job in Skopje, Macedonia, Cy Gross.

CONLEY: Oh, yes, I remember Cy.

Q: He was from Notre Dame, and he was sent there because Macedonia said that they had to have a comparable person. He said his class was at the point where they couldn't understand that the Queen of England was not attached to the United States somehow and he was trying to teach Moby Dick and was getting questions about Marilyn Monroe and movie actors. It was at a much lower level than what was happening at Zagreb or Ljubljana.

CONLEY: That was true of the whole country from the standpoint of economics and culture.

Q: While you were there were you getting a feeling about the difference between the view

of Serbian control from Belgrade?

CONLEY: Only from the standpoint that there were Slovenes and Croats who thought there was too much centralized control. My experience was that while Croats and Slovenes identified themselves as such when they were in country, they were proud to identify themselves as Yugoslavs when traveling abroad.

Q: Things began to change, obviously, sometime later but you didn't feel at that point the rebelliousness of Slovenian and Croatian nationalism at that time?

CONLEY: The Slovenes even then were looking for independence and I knew some who were associated with a group that was looking for independence. After all, Slovenia had eradicated illiteracy. They had horse-drawn bookmobiles in the nineteenth century, and yet a lot of the product of their tremendous energy and abilities was being siphoned off by the federal government to develop the southern part of Yugoslavia, and they resented that. In the days of Lumumba's assassination Congolese students came to Yugoslavia as well as other places in Eastern Europe. Some went to the University of Yugoslavia and a few ended up at the University of Ljubljana. This newspaper editor, a very good friend, used to criticize race relationships in our country. I remember having lunch with him one day and saying, "Don't make the mistake we made in this country. Don't treat them any differently. Don't treat African students in Slovenia any differently than you do Slovenian students in Slovenia. If you give these students too big a stipend what is going to happen is that they are going to get the dates. The girls are going to go with the guys that have the money." "Ah," he said, "we won't make that mistake." I said, "I hope you don't." And there was a newspaper article some months later that some Africans had been tied to railroad tracks and killed. It was discovered that this had been done by Slovenian students. It all had to do with money, special treatment, favoritism, all of which is avoidable. We didn't avoid it in our country. The population had never seen a black person before. It wasn't race, it was economics.

Q: How did you find the USIA functional relationship with the embassy in Belgrade when you were in Zagreb?

CONLEY: My boss, Walter Roberts, is a giant in USIA. He referred to me as "the ambassador from Croatia" because when I would come down to Belgrade I always stridently insisted on the Croatian or Slovenian view to be considered in decisions that were being made. Let me give you an example. I was told in Washington that the Zagreb trade fair was going to be my biggest job. The American participation in this trade fair would be highly publicized. Well, it was the biggest bore. They had put out a lot of junky press releases, but there had to be brochures, and these were made in Belgrade and translated by Serbs. I went down screaming that they had to have Croatians doing the translating because the trade fair was in Croatia. It took two trade fairs before I got that point through. Up until that time, the embassy thought nothing of sending Serbian brochures up to Croatia. The same with a magnificent art show of some eighty pieces of abstract art by giants in the field. I helped to mount that show in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and

Maribor—two in Slovenia and one in Croatia. The embassy had one brochure that was in Serbian. That was not good enough. We have to have one in Slovenian, or else don't have the show. It was that kind of thing, Stu, that was difficult from the hinterland to get through into the thinking of our folks in Belgrade. Walter finally bought into it. Of course, it was budget. It cost money to translate something twice. Those were some of the issues.

Q: Jim, did cultural life play a large role in Croatia from your perspective?

CONLEY: Absolutely. It was the major component of the work I did. Going back to an earlier reference, it was the bridge and the Yugoslavs, while they probably did interrogate people who attended our parties, and we certainly had a lot of them, I never got the impression that they were deterred from coming to more functions. The first American musical ever performed in Yugoslavia was *Kiss Me Kate*, and we did that in Zagreb with American choreography. The director was an opera director of distinction having directed opera in London, and he was smart enough to realize that while he could direct an American musical, he would be out of his depth with the dance, so he asked the consulate if we could get an American to take care of that. We got Ray Harrison, who had been a dancer in *Oklahoma* and had done his own little show, *Little Mary Sunshine*, a huge hit off Broadway. Ray came over and was in Zagreb for about four months working with the choreography. Well, it was electric. It was in Croat. Ray was admired by dancers and people in the cultural world and became a very close friend of mine. We had visits by all kinds of musicians, pianists, violinists, and opera singers.

The Modern Jazz Quartet came. I was instrumental in introducing John Lewis to his wife, who was the first Yugoslav scholarship student to go to England to study the harpsichord. On returning to Zagreb there was no harpsichord so she was working in the British Council library when the Modern Jazz Quartet came to Yugoslavia for the first time in 1960 and I was the escort officer. Zagreb had a version modeling themselves after John Lewis. The pianist's sister was Mariana Heifetz. John met Mariana and they went out and they are married and live in New York. Their son graduated from Harvard.

Q: Was there theater in Zagreb that was becoming kind of avant-garde?

CONLEY: You could say that. This director I referred to earlier put on some American shows, serious dramas, that they weren't yet doing in Belgrade. They were trying to be Western is what it came down to. If you remember, Khrushchev once commented that modern art resembled nothing so much as a tail of a donkey dipped in urine on a canvas. Tito looked at modern art as a way to show a difference between Yugoslavia and the bloc and allowed it. You had abstract painters all over the place. Imitators, to be sure, but culture was a way that Yugoslavia could present itself to the world as different and therefore independent.

Q: For people in the Foreign Service like ourselves it was an exciting time because you really felt you were in a communist country but things were making a difference and we

were allowed to do things.

CONLEY: Absolutely, it was yeasty. You could spot a journalist who had an open mind. To be sure he had to play the game. All journalists were assumed to be members of the Communist Party, but in certain respects that is like being a Republican in a Republican administration or a solidly Republican state. What else can you be other than a Republican? So we sent these journalists to the United States under a Leader grant and they would see things that would just open their minds. Did they return with changed views? No, but they would be more inclined to give us a fair shake when it came to writing stories that dealt with the United States. So, we felt our programs and association with these people did make differences that were favorable to the United States in that country.

Q: This was before Kennedy was assassinated. Did you find the Kennedy administration being young and projecting the feeling of youth was striking a resonant chord?

CONLEY: Absolutely. They had new diesel engines on the section of the Orient Express that went from Slovenia down to Greece. They were called Kennedys by the people. Not by the press, not by the government. The people called these new diesel engines which had been purchased through credits they got from our country. The Kennedy mystique in my part of Yugoslavia was just extraordinary. The sisters, Jean Kennedy Smith and Eunice Shriver, came on a visit.

Q: Did the visit happen while you were there?

CONLEY: Yes, they came to Zagreb. Lemoyne Billings was the advance man and in typical Kennedy fashion they did not inform the consulate that the sisters were going to be traveling in Croatia. The consul general, Bill Montgomery, was going nuts because he knew he would be expected to be courteous and yet he wasn't given the courtesy of an advance coming your way. We knew that Lemoyne Billings was going to come to advance the trip of the two sisters. Didn't know when the sisters were coming or when Lemoyne Billings was coming. Word that he was arriving on a train at the Zagreb railway station during the afternoon was all we knew. There was no message from the department. So, the consul general sent us to the railway station to see if we could spot Lemoyne Billings and offer the courtesy of the consulate.

So, Ray Benson and I and one other person went down there. I see this tall guy get off in a tan summer suit and he has a center vent in the back of his jacket. At that time, the Croatians who wore jackets were slavishly copying the Italian jackets that had side vents. Billings got off and I see this guy with a center vent and I walk up to him and I say, "Mr. Billings?" and he says, "How the hell did you know who I was?" I said, "Because you had a center vent." He could not believe it. He said the sisters were flying in the next night, landing at the Zagreb airport. I said that we would have a car there and would like to extend the courtesy of the consulate. Well, the sisters came in and flew out fairly quickly. They were advancing a trip for Jacqueline Kennedy who later on showed up and

water-skied off the coast of Dubrovnik and the "Today Show" covered it and suddenly Yugoslavia was no longer a hardship post, but a garden spot. That is how things work.

Q: In 1962 you went to Belgrade and were there for how long?

CONLEY: From 1962–65.

Q: What were you doing there?

CONLEY: The job title, I think, was press officer. My main function was to produce a daily telex back to USIA Washington. We called it the Sava Telex. You remember the newspapers were translated there during the early hours of the morning with the British and called the Joint Translation Service [JTS]. I would get that first thing in the morning and pick out what I thought were flagrant examples of misrepresentation of American positions on international policy, Cuba, early days of Vietnam, et cetera. I would send it back to Washington and then the Voice of America [VOA] could read daily what was being printed in the press and make decisions as to whether or not it wanted to counteract the statements that from our standpoint were egregious. That took a lot of time every day.

Q: Oh, yes, it was really a prime spot.

CONLEY: Yes it was. In periods of distress the Yugoslavs had a habit of going to the American embassy or consulate, the British embassy or consulate to read the news and pick up the news bulletins. I edited the news bulletin every day. I remember when JFK [John F. Kennedy] was assassinated. They were absolutely convinced that one man could not have been acting alone, that this had to be a conspiracy. Trying to deal with that was a major issue. We tried. I remember putting up a photographic exhibit in a window trying to show the illogic of their assertion that LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] was in on the conspiracy as well as Robert Kennedy who was attorney general at the time.

Q: Was the press pretty much in the hands of the apparatchiks?

CONLEY: Without a doubt, yes. Every newspaper in the country got policy guidance every single day. Some were more sensible than others. I went on a trip calling on editors in Skopje and Titograd and wondered where some of these guys crawled out of. They had no idea. We would sit down and they would say, Let's get one thing straight. I am a communist and you are a capitalist. Now we may talk.

Depending on the political climate and what point the Yugoslavs felt they had to make, the press was not free and independent—pure and simple. They received directions every day on how to place their stories. Walter Roberts and Ray Benson used to have journalists over several times a week, and we would hammer these guys on whatever point we were trying to make at the time.

Q: Did you find that the Yugoslavs believed what they read in the papers or were they and

the journalists getting their information elsewhere?

CONLEY: On the life and death issues the informed Yugoslav public accepted their own media. They were pretty canny and listened to the Voice of America, to BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation], and the German broadcasts. They certainly didn't believe whole hog what they read in the papers.

Q: Did you find yourself still acting as a Croatian and Slovenian emissary after coming to Belgrade? Did you find that there was too much "Serbness" in our embassy?

CONLEY: There was still too much of that but Americans were trained at FSI [Foreign Service Institute] by Serbians, spoke Serbian, and on arriving in Belgrade thought Serbia was the dominant power, and, in some cases, the be all and end all of the relationship. This probably goes on to this day. It still permeates the viewpoint of Yugoslavia.

Q: I have been back twice now as an election observer to Bosnia, and I have found that some of my colleagues who had served in Belgrade at the same time as I did, or later, were overly committed to the Serbian cause. They were trying to explain it all. Quite frankly what happened in Bosnia and Kosovo was just unpardonable. Although I served five years in Serbia, I could not justify what happened at all. It surprised me to find colleagues who were trying to.

CONLEY: I know people who have served in the embassy who have tried to find some justification in some respects while at the same time saying it is heinous behavior, but the people aren't really like that; it is Milosević.

Q: I have to say in retrospect, I knew obviously that the Serbs and Croats didn't get along but I always thought this was one of those cute little cultural traits and didn't realize the depth of what could happen.

CONLEY: Nor did I.

Q: It makes me better understand how the Germans could have done what they did during World War II, particularly with anti-Semitism, if there is a government that works at it. Were we monitoring how the Soviets were doing in the media, the press and their relations with Yugoslavia?

CONLEY: All the time. I did not.

Q: What were you getting from your colleagues about how this was going?

CONLEY: When I say "all the time" I mean the Yugoslavs were more concerned about the effect of Soviet propaganda in Yugoslavia than they were American. What appeared to us to be steps that were taken against our ability to conduct our business in the cultural field, were in fact aimed at forestalling Soviet initiatives: had they allowed us to do

certain things, that would have made it possible for the Soviets to do it.

Q: Like a chair of American studies at the University of Ljubljana.

CONLEY: Exactly. There was this famous press law that almost closed down all information and cultural programs in Yugoslavia. It turns out that the Yugoslavs put in the press law because the Soviets were expanding so much within Yugoslavia and particularly in southern Yugoslavia, in Macedonia. The Yugoslavs, rightly so, were very mistrustful of the Soviet interests during that period. Now this was before Khrushchev came and bent the knee to Tito before the meeting took place. But, they were still at loggerheads after 1948.

Q: Where were these misrepresentations in the media that were found by the Joint Translation Service coming from? Was this directed at trying to put us down or coming from the bowels of the apparatus or was it a real campaign?

CONLEY: It has been so long and difficult to think what the issues were at that time. Cuba was an issue. The whole Cuban missile crisis happened while we were there. They could not publicly use the term "offensive missiles." We thought the missiles that the Soviets were installing in Cuba were offensive, targeted on the United States. The Russian position was that they were defensive to help protect Cuban sovereignty and the Yugoslav position was the Soviet position and they attacked us on that.

Another issue was Vietnam when Kennedy sent in advisors. In retrospect you have to give the Yugoslavs credit because they had one of the few Western news agencies in Vietnam that was operating and probably characterizing American activities more accurately than the information we were getting.

Q: I remember, too, that we relied very heavily on Tanjug to get news out of what was then called Communist China.

CONLEY: Yes. Those would be two major issues. The test ban was another.

Q: Did you get involved on the cultural side in Belgrade?

CONLEY: Tangentially because of my interest in culture. Martha Graham came and I went out to the airport with the cultural attaché to meet her. There was a cultural attaché, an assistant cultural attaché, and a books translation officer. It was a pretty big operation. But, I went to all the cultural activities.

Q: Did you get a feel for the difference between the Belgrade cultural life and the Zagreb cultural life?

CONLEY: Yes, and it reflects my bias. I thought Zagreb was richer and more vibrant. They invited many more foreign opera singers to their opera. The Belgrade opera seemed

to be much more static, traditional, and Russian influenced. This is not a bad thing, Russian opera is glorious and the Belgrade opera was good. The Belgrade ballet I think was somewhat better than the Zagreb ballet.

Q: There was theater. I believe Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe appeared in Belgrade before it appeared in London.

CONLEY: Yes, I do remember that, now that you mention it. Yugoslavs were passionate about art. We collected a fair amount of it, primarily Croatian, but we also have several Serbian pieces.

Q: There was a modern art gallery on the other side of Sava.

CONLEY: Yes. The best modern art gallery, I thought, was up in Ljubljana. The Yugoslavs loved art and they bought it. The Yugoslav government bought artwork and had Yugoslav artists' works represented in offices of every enterprise and company throughout the country as a calling card to show the art that was being produced in that country. Of course, they paid top dinar.

Q: When you left there in 1965 how did you feel about relations?

CONLEY: I thought we were close and I thought the Yugoslavs felt close to the United States and wanted to keep that closeness, that we were one of the guarantors of their independence. They allowed a ship visit, for example, in the Adriatic for the first time to show their independence. The Yugoslavs realized that we were perhaps the most important country guaranteeing their freedom.

Q: Ambassador Elbrick told me one time that Tito had told him in confidence that they really appreciated having the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. I felt that one of the key things about Yugoslavia at that time was that if things got loose and it started to split up no matter what, because of seven neighbors all of who had claims on it, and the Soviet Union began to meddle with the situation, it, next to Berlin, was the place where World War III could start.

CONLEY: Yes, I think that was true.

Q: So, it made them a key player, because of the external demands on its territory.

CONLEY: I never gave a thought to internal disintegration in the four years I spent there, except that the Slovenes wanted to break away. There was a tiny rump in Croatia that wished the reins would be loosened so they could trade more on their own. But, not the internal disintegration of the country.

Q: As a practical American it didn't seem to make sense. It is like Quebec splitting off from the rest of Canada. Economically it is too small a unit for it to make sense to us.

Q: *Jim, you went to Brussels from Belgrade. How long were you there?*

CONLEY: From 1965 until 1968.

Q: What were you doing in Brussels?

CONLEY: I was attached to the embassy as press attaché. I arrived on the weekend that President Johnson sent troops to Santo Domingo and spent the time taking messages to various parts of the Belgian government explaining why we decided to do that. That was my baptism of fire.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

CONLEY: Ridgway Knight. He was not at post when I arrived but showed up two or three months later.

Q: What was the political situation in Belgium in 1965?

CONLEY: We had a long, very good, and deep relationship with the Belgian government. I can't recall that there were any major outstanding issues between governments. Of course, the Belgians did not support us in Vietnam, but then very few European countries did. So Vietnam was an issue.

Q: As press attaché, I imagine you were up to your neck in trying to explain Vietnam.

CONLEY: Yes. USIS was a three-man post and I was the press attaché and trying to get our position into the Belgian media, which was not a very easy thing to do. Oftentimes the best way to do that was not with materials that were crafted in Washington, but rather with reprints of articles that made sense that were balanced from publications like the London *Economist*. The Belgian editor would say that that was a reasonable position, and although I don't agree with it, I will agree to reprint it. That had more credibility sometimes than stuff we would do ourselves. We had an officer in the embassy, Arva Floyd, who took on the heroic role of debating throughout Belgium the U.S. position on Vietnam. He was bilingual in French and was able to do this very effectively.

The issues were primarily economic. I dealt more with the economic counselor, Chris Petrow, than any other person in the embassy, trying to provide him with information that would be useful.

Q: What were the economic issues?

CONLEY: Oh, it was so long ago I can't really remember specific points. These were more arcane issues that were important to central bankers. Belgium being a player it was very important to be able to pick out statements from a speech by the Alan Greenspan of

the time or the secretary of treasury. And through the Wireless File, which came from Washington, containing speeches of cabinet members and heads of the administration, we would be able to get the information into the right hands, the opposite of the secretary of the treasury, the central banker of Belgium, through the economic counselor. That was important to do so that they would know exactly what our position was on certain issues.

I think the major political issue during my time there was de Gaulle and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]. That was the period when de Gaulle kicked NATO out of France and there was almost a contest as to who would step up to the plate to receive NATO, both the political and military headquarters. I don't know what went on in the back room, but the Belgians did agree to build a building, receive the political headquarters in Brussels and the military headquarters down in Mons.

Q: Did the Belgians feel this was pushed on them? They were not a frontline state. Did they feel the threat of the Soviet Union?

CONLEY: No, but they were one of the prime movers in the organization that preceded the EU [European Union]. Paul-Henri Spaak was one of the major visionaries of a united Europe both economically and militarily and NATO was the military arm. I think it was made financially attractive for them. They did not have to have specific requirements on their contracts, et cetera. There was talk about locating the headquarters in England but with the channel the objective of geography could not be overcome; it had to be a continental country.

Q: On the Vietnam side, Belgium was just coming out of its Congo fiasco where it hadn't done a damn thing as a colonial power except milk the Congo. Was the Congo at all reflected one way or another as an ex-colonial power in looking at Vietnam or not?

CONLEY: I don't have the recollection that it was, although the Congo experience was searing, the way they got out and the pressure they felt from outside to get out of the Congo. They made a mess of it there. I don't recall seeing the reflection of their experience in the Congo and what we were doing in Vietnam except that some would think of it as a great sadness because they were very saddened by their own experience in the Congo.

Q: Did you get involved on the cultural side of dealing with the Flemish-Walloon problem? Did you have to have two different programs and things of that nature?

CONLEY: No, we did not. We might be doing that today, but in 1965 we did not. We did produce information materials in Flemish as well as French. We had a Flemish translator. But, our cultural programming was almost entirely French language.

Q: I'm not familiar with the ruling body of Belgium. In France, of course, you have the intellectuals, for whatever they are worth, they do play a role in commentary and are a power to be reckoned with. The British call them the chatting class who write, are on TV,

and are always expounding, generally coming at it from the left. They are a considerable force being on TV, radio, and in the newspapers, so we have to pay attention to them. Was there a comparable group in Belgium at the time that we had to make contact and deal with?

CONLEY: Yes, certainly there were the insiders: well connected, well educated, very sophisticated, and they were almost the permanent civil service going from one ministry to another ministry.

Q: How about the universities? You mentioned Arva Floyd going to talk. Were the universities radicalized at this point?

CONLEY: They were. The linguistic war had heated up at that time over in Louvain, so Arva would have to be invited by the French faculty at Brussels but I don't think he ever went to Louvain simply because they didn't want anybody who was not going to be invited by the Flemish faculty.

Q: Were there demonstrations against us?

CONLEY: There were. None of them got awfully out of hand, but there were marches. The Belgian government by and large took care of that.

Q: Ridgway Knight was a professional Foreign Service officer and was almost at the end of the line before an onslaught of political appointees. How did he operate?

CONLEY: In what respect?

Q: How did he use particularly USIS people?

CONLEY: I thought he was a very able ambassador from the standpoint of USIS because he was a participant in the cultural life of any city that he lived in. He went to concerts often, art exhibits, et cetera. So, anytime that USIS was instrumental in bringing over an American artist like Audrey Watts or the Chicago Sympathy, Knight was in his element. I used to accompany him often to art openings. I went with him almost a couple of times a month to a concert. He liked the book presentation program that USIS had in those days when we could order books and he could present them to various contacts of his. I had a high regard for him and I think he had a high regard for what USIS could do for his mission.

Q: Were there many Belgians going to the United States on exchange programs or would they naturally turn to Paris or someplace else?

CONLEY: They liked going to the United States. We had an exchange program that was relatively small. We tried to keep exchanges from becoming politicized within the embassy. Ambassador Knight, I felt, was very even handed in that, making sure that the

program was used for its proper purpose. We might send a key librarian or key professor and also some political people. Many Belgians, because of the linguistic requirement of knowing Flemish, spoke excellent English because it came naturally from the Flemish side of their background. This was a help to them when they went to the United States.

Q: On the political spectrum, were the communists a major power as they were in France and Italy?

CONLEY: I would say no. There was a Communist Party but it was not feared and wasn't all that much disruptive in my time.

Q: Were there demonstrations and all when NATO came to Belgium?

CONLEY: Not really. I think the general public looked upon NATO's coming to Belgium as a prestige thing, and the people took pride in it and their own government for receiving NATO.

Q: What was the attitude towards France?

CONLEY: Ambivalent. From the insiders we talked about earlier, of course, there was great admiration and an immense respect for French culture. But, at the same time, a bit of wariness, perhaps like Canada and the United States—an excellent relationship, but nonetheless France has considerable weight; Belgium is small.

Q: How about with Germany?

CONLEY: I think that was a mixed relationship. I know that there were a number of Belgian sympathizers with Germany in the Second World War and that story was just beginning to come out in 1965, much to the great embarrassment of the Belgians who wanted to suppress it. The Belgians, I think, bought into the idea that we ought to do everything we can to tie Germany into the European Union and make them part of the solution and the growth of Europe. If we do that, maybe we can escape the conflicts that we have had in the past.

Q: Did the European Community and NATO have their own USIS staffs?

CONLEY: Yes, they did. There were three American missions, three ambassadors in Brussels.

Q: Did you find yourself having any problems with the other two missions?

CONLEY: Not at all. We worked closely together and coordinated our programs.

Q: Well, you left there in 1968. When did you leave in 1968?

CONLEY: Left in June.

Q: Did they have the May 1968 business there that they had in France with the students?

CONLEY: They didn't, but it was followed very closely with a great deal of attention, but they did not have the same situation.

Q: In 1968 whither?

CONLEY: In 1968 I went back to Washington for my first assignment there. I was Yugoslav desk officer in USIA.

Q: You did that from 1968 to when?

CONLEY: From 1968–70. From 1970–71 I was special assistant to the USIA deputy director for policy and plans.

Q: Okay. How were things going with our program in Yugoslavia at that time?

CONLEY: I don't recall that there were any major problems, any difficulties. The program was pretty much the same as it was when I left in 1965. Of course, the single event that shook the world was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. After I got back in late June and had home leave I just barely got on the desk when that event happened in August. That of course shook Europe and shook us.

Q: *Did USIA gear itself up to take this opportunity to portray the Soviets as a pretty menacing group of people?*

CONLEY: I don't think that was the issue at the time. I think the issue was more to make it clear not only to the Yugoslavs, but primarily to the Soviet Union, in that we supported the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. As you recall, that was the policy line back in our time there. I remember Larry Eagleburger was special assistant to Katzenbach when I was on the desk, and a minister from Yugoslavia over on one of our Leader grants happened to be in Washington. I called Larry with the idea that maybe we could get the president to repeat that line in his conversation with the minister. Well, it didn't come up. There wasn't an appropriate occasion, I guess, for him to make the statement orally. But, there was a note posted on the bulletin board of the White House briefing room that this was one of the subjects that would have been covered had they gotten to it. That didn't have quite the impact of an oral statement, but it had some impact. Our feeling was that the Yugoslavs thought they might be next. We were offering to have a ship visit Dubrovnik and trying to think of public manifestations of solidarity with the Tito government.

Q: While you were there were there any signs of fracturing within the Yugoslav republic at all?

CONLEY: None whatsoever. One thing I did not say earlier and I would like to say is that one of the outcomes of the situation in Yugoslavia is that when we were there the country had great, deep affection for the United States and Americans. They admired Americans and looked upon us as their friends. That is now gone. I don't know how long it will take for us to recover that. It was a matter of trust. They trusted us and that trust is now gone.

Q: Then you moved over from the Yugoslav desk to be special assistant in policy and plans.

CONLEY: In those days the deputy director for policy and plans was the top career position in the agency and Bill Weathersby was the man in that office. The special assistant shuffles paper and tries to keep things moving. Bill had a large staff. I remember my first day on the job he called me in and he said, "Now a test of your ability here is to see how often you can get things done without invoking my name. This office is like a big organ and you have to know which stop to pull out to solicit the right tone. The more you can do that on your own authority and the less you have to bother me will be the measure of your success." This was very, very good advice.

The major events during this period were in Washington. The march on Washington by the students with the anti-Vietnam feeling being a major issue. Primarily I just tried to keep things moving.

Q: Were you feeling within the agency a growing discomfort with Vietnam?

CONLEY: Oh, yes, by that time I think a number of people had made up their own minds about our policy towards Vietnam and our involvement there, and this was reflected amongst personnel not only in USIA but in the State Department.

Q: Was it getting more difficult from what you were observing to get people to serve in Vietnam?

CONLEY: I don't recall that it was a difficulty. I think in those days people still tended to salute and go where they were told. In fact, when I was in this job I was promoted to class two and all class-two officers' names were sent on a list out to Saigon and the PAO [public affairs officer] could choose people. I was one of those newly promoted to go to Can Tho.

I ran into Henry Loomis in the corridor and he said, "I see your name on a list to go to Vietnam. How do you feel about that?" I said, "Henry, I have a thirteen-month-old baby girl and if you are expecting me to be overjoyed about the prospect of leaving my family and going to Vietnam, you are mistaken. But, if I get orders to go to Vietnam, I will go, but don't expect me to be happy about it." I think that attitude was the attitude I observed in the people I knew. No one was clicking their heels in joy about going, but they were going.

Q: Who was director of USIA at that point?

CONLEY: Frank Shakespeare.

Q: What was the attitude towards him and his attitude towards the agency?

CONLEY: Frank Shakespeare had a very, very controversial reputation, I think, in the agency. He was very smart, but he made judgments on the fly. I think Frank Shakespeare could visit an overseas post and if the chemistry wasn't instantly correct, off with the person's head. They would be out of there within weeks. A lot of things about the agency I don't think Frank Shakespeare ever got. A small example of that: remember the Macomber task force to assess the effectiveness of the State Department?

Q: This was diplomacy for the seventies.

CONLEY: Yes. The fellow who had been economic counselor in Brussels, Chris Petrow, was heading up a subcommittee on creativity. He asked me to represent USIA on that subcommittee. I was very pleased to accept that, but it had to be approved. Well, Shakespeare couldn't understand why I was going to be selected for that. He felt the person who was in charge of art in USIA would be more appropriate, but he really didn't care. He just didn't get it. And, yet, I met him years later in Portugal when he was no longer with the agency but with Westinghouse Broadcasting, and we had dinner one night. He was a very quick study. He is a bright guy and likable in many ways. But a lot of people in the agency just had really no time for him.

Q: *Did you have any feel for the Nixon White House? Did you pick up pressure from the White House to be heavier on Vietnam or anything like that?*

CONLEY: Not from my level, although my boss sat in on some of those high-level meetings, of course. This was the period of Cambodia. There must have been some pressure. I would be very surprised if there wasn't. But I personally have no knowledge of that.

Q: In the spring of 1970 when American and South Vietnamese troops went into Vietnam, there was a petition that had gone around the State Department that officers signed in protest. Was there a comparable thing in USIA?

CONLEY: There was the beginning of one. My recollection is that someone in USIA heard that there would be retribution, and people in USIA, I think, took that very seriously and desisted.

Q: I think as a matter of fact the story is that Nixon said, "Get rid of those."

CONLEY: I think that is exactly right.

Q: And Rogers basically sat on it and kept out of sight of the White House at that point.

CONLEY: I think someone in USIA had picked up that intention before people in the State Department did and that is why it never got rolling in the way it did in the department. I knew some people in the department who were preparing to sign the petition.

Q: In 1971, did you have a good feel for how the agency ran? Did you feel there were advantages to serving in Washington, particularly at a desk job, and also in policy and plans where you might get an idea of what makes things move and all?

CONLEY: I have long held the view that USIA Washington was in some respects an agency in search of a mission. That what we did overseas was integrated into our overall diplomatic effort in a certain country. But, back in Washington we were pretty much ignored and therefore a lot of effort, I thought, went into trying to show that we could be a player and could be important.

Q: In a way it was support of field people, because the real action of USIA is abroad. You are a major player. The information officers, et cetera are really doing something and are a major component of the country team. But, when you come back to Washington, if you are the Yugoslav desk officer at the State Department you might at least have a peripheral influence on what is going on, but the USIA desk officer isn't much of a player.

CONLEY: That's correct. The USIA desk officer would attend weekly meetings in the State Department and only in a situation such as in 1968, maybe USIA could be part of what was going on.

Q: *In 1971 whither?*

CONLEY: In the summer of 1971 I went to Lisbon.

Q: *And you were there for how long?*

CONLEY: From the summer of 1971 to the spring of 1975.

Q: That was an interesting time.

CONLEY: Yes.

Q: Had you taken Portuguese?

CONLEY: My first assignment was in Brazil so I had a residue of Portuguese. I took a refresher course at FSI for about three months before going to Lisbon.

Q: Is there much of a difference between Brazilian Portuguese and Portuguese Portuguese?

CONLEY: In the way that there is a difference between British English and American English.

Q: So, it isn't significant.

CONLEY: No, but the mainland Portuguese look upon Brazilian Portuguese as being childish, pronouncing every syllable while they chop off the end syllables like the British do. Instead of saying "necessary" they would say "necsary."

Q: When you arrived in 1971 what was the situation in Portugal?

CONLEY: I might say that the reason I went to Portugal is that my ambassador in Brussels, Ridge Knight, had been selected to go to Portugal as ambassador. Up to 1971, Portugal had been viewed, I think, as a post where Senior Foreign Service officers went as their last or penultimate post before retirement. Ridgway Knight just simply wanted to break that. He recruited in the State Department younger officers to be political and economic counselors, et cetera. He came around USIA and met with Shakespeare and Henry Loomis and he asked for me as his PAO. I did not know this, but was told one day that instead of going to Vietnam I was going to Portugal.

When I got to Lisbon, Marcelo Caetano was the prime minister. It was a corporate state ruled by an oligarchy.

Q: Salazar had died by this time?

CONLEY: Yes. He had slipped in the bathtub and cracked his skull and died. His successor was an economist by the name of Marcelo Caetano. I think the big political issue in the days before the revolution in 1974 probably was the renegotiation of base rights in the Azores.

Q: There must be a file somewhere that every time this Azores negotiation comes up is dragged out. There must be a set of speeches, demands, et cetera. It is always a very tough negotiation, but I think both sides realize we are going to be there. How did we feel about that?

CONLEY: I had nothing to do with the political aspects of that at all. I just remember reading, maybe the Kennedy memoirs, where he negotiated the original base rights as a freebie so that we would have a landing field in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. As I remember we were going to negotiate in good faith to get landing rights, but if the negotiations broke down we were going to simply go in and take it. We were going to have base rights in the Azores with or without their agreement. The Portuguese probably understood that. By the time 1973 rolled around I think there was an understanding that

both sides needed to benefit from it, and that was what the negotiations were all about. There were monies made available from us to the Portuguese for a handsome educational training program. I was the point person on that part of the result of the agreement. In fact, when April 1974 came up we were just on the verge of organization with professors coming to town to organize a program for training Portuguese teachers, I believe, at the University of Texas, I was dealing with the minister of education and his deputy to get an agreement together.

Another example on the cultural side: The first jazz festival in Portuguese history was being held out on the coast, far enough from downtown Lisbon. There was an American group there, Ornette Coleman Quartet. He had a bass by the name of Charlie Haden who was the only bass I know of who ever won a Guggenheim scholarship. At one point Coleman calls Charlie Haden up front from the back of the quartet and says, "I now introduce my friend and bass, Charlie Haden. He is going to go play an original composition." Haden comes up there with his instrument and says, "My composition is called 'Food to Che' and I dedicate it to the freedom fighters in Angola and Mozambique." Well, the government had suspected something like this would happen. They had no idea what it would be but that there would be an event. So, they had filled the first four or five rows with veterans from the African wars, many of them with crutches, loss of limb, et cetera. The huge amphitheater just went up for grabs. Charlie Haden was taken to the secret police headquarters. I got a call the next morning asking me to get him out, which I did, with the guarantee that he would leave within twenty-four hours. I put him up overnight and we got him out the next day. In the early '70s the [subject of] African wars was a tinderbox. Portugal, a beautiful secret garden of Europe with a tremendous culture and wonderful warm people, was permeated with the united policy they had towards their African colonies.

Q: You were the new boy on the block and when you arrived did you find that the political officers, and maybe the economic officers, were seeing that this place could blow up or were they pretty comfortable with the way things were?

CONLEY: We sensed a possible blow up because we had very good political and economic people. I will mention two names. Wingate Lloyd was political counselor and a gifted reporting officer by the name of Tom O'Herron, a real linguist and a political reporter who could just as well have been an ace reporter for the *New York Times*. Tom knew dissent lawyers who represented people who had gotten themselves on the wrong side of the government on various civil rights issues within Portugal. We also talked to young reporters and young military people. Around 1973 there were concerns that the country was very unstable, but no one was predicting from what corner the instability would come.

Q: Was there very much the feeling that this was because Salazar had had such a tight control on things and now that control was gone?

CONLEY: I would be out of my depth to answer that question. I think the problems in

Africa became so immense that it was becoming more and more apparent that they were going to have to adopt a new policy towards it.

Q: Did you find there was a problem in normal social intercourse in mentioning Africa? Was there an emotional attachment to Africa?

CONLEY: Sure there was. The Portuguese had been there for centuries, and had a lot invested there, both emotional and economic capital. Many of the Portuguese that I knew had relatives living in Africa. They had gone there for economic opportunity and didn't leave. They felt their purposes were noble and decent and that the world didn't understand that. So the Portuguese expended great sums to fly opinion makers to Mozambique and to Angola to show how they were aiding in the development of their colonies, that their policies were benevolent. It didn't work, of course.

Q: What was the feeling? Was it that Portugal was playing catch up in Africa? Did we feel this was a losing policy at that time?

CONLEY: Oh, I think so. By the 1970s it was a losing policy. It wasn't a question of that policy ever succeeding. It was only a question of when they would change the policy and grant freedom to their colonies. That had to come.

Q: Were we pushing this idea?

CONLEY: I don't think we could, no. It was very difficult to talk to members of the opposition. One of the ways the USIS section of the embassy was able to be helpful was the Portuguese forget politics at the door of the opera house. They are ardent opera goers and music lovers in general. So, if a musician came to be part of an opera in Portugal, I invited that person to lunch at my house where I could then invite Portuguese who represented the spectrum of thinking. They could accept even though there would be guests at my lunch table who couldn't be at the same table in a restaurant. The ambassador would come to the lunch along with Wingate and others, so there would be an opportunity to get these people together and talk to them.

Q: What was your impression of the media there?

CONLEY: Completely controlled. There were some young reporters who became disillusioned after trying to criticize Portuguese policy, particularly in Africa, and they couldn't get their opinions published.

Q: Did you find that the normal educated Portuguese was listening to the Voice of America, BBC or something like that?

CONLEY: More often they would listen to French radio. The Portuguese have a long tradition of association with France. I would say if they were listening to foreign broadcasts at all, they would be more inclined to listen to Radio France.

Q: What was happening in Spain at the time? Had Franco died?

CONLEY: No. You had both sides of the Iberian Peninsula in oligarchical gridlock.

Q: Was there much interest in Portugal with the exception of the Azores back then?

CONLEY: I don't think so. When Knight was coming to the end of his three years there he decided to retire. That was when the department assigned a political appointee to the job, Stuart Scott. He was a wonderful man. A member of a prestigious New York law firm. I recall he was supposed to take over a major position, perhaps head of the Legal Department, in the State Department while Rogers was still secretary. Then Henry Kissinger came in and wanted his own head of the legal department, which left Stuart Scott, who had been cleared for the Washington assignment and had taken a leave of absence from his law firm, without an assignment. Then Knight decided to retire and Portugal became free and the department assigned Stuart Scott to Lisbon. A kinder, more decent man you would never want to meet. He had no experience whatsoever in running an embassy and probably very little if any experience in foreign affairs.

Q: Who was the DCM?

CONLEY: The DCM was Dick Post, who had been principal officer in Luanda, Angola, and had been selected by Ridge Knight as DCM because of this experience.

Q: How did the events of April 1974—?

CONLEY: The fact that Caetano was overthrown was not a startling revelation. It was rather a question of when it was going to happen. Some months earlier Tom O'Herron had picked up that this was a possibility and had heard that there were rumblings down in the south. Nothing came of that. I'm sure it has now been written that there had been a thought of rising up earlier than April, but signals got crossed and they decided to postpone it. So, O'Herron's sources of information were right but the timing was not. I remember we had a live-in maid, who was more babysitter than anything else, and will never forget her shouting up the stairs that Caetano has fallen. It did not come as a great shock to me. It was more like, "Oh, okay." I quickly dressed and went to the embassy.

Q: What was the reading you were getting and how did Ambassador Scott react?

CONLEY: We reacted, I think, very coolly, and from the standpoint that this is an internal affair and simply want to find out what is going on. The fellow who worked for me who was the press officer— When I arrived the traditional staffing was that the PAO [public affairs officer] was also the press officer and the deputy would be the cultural attaché. It was only a two man post. When Jake Jacobson arrived from Brazil with excellent Portuguese, young, outgoing, just the kind of person who could maybe get with the young journalists in Portugal, I wrote back to the agency and proposed they change the

two assignment to have Jake be the press officer, which they agreed to, and I took over the cultural side of the program. I was assisted by the cultural assistant who was virtually acting as the cultural attaché of the embassy because her husband had been Portugal's leading operatic tenor and she knew everyone in the cultural field.

So, Jake, who was in town talking to these young journalists, some of whom had stayed in their job, had something to do. He knew who they were and he knew young military officers. He was all over the town. Jacobson and O'Herron were the two best reporting officers that we had in the embassy on what was going on during the early hours of the revolution. In a situation like that you don't try to make any judgments you just try to collect information, try to make sure that you can source it and report it.

Q: Was there any concern about where on the spectrum the coup leaders came from?

CONLEY: Yes, of course you want to know who they are and where they came from politically. The difficulty, as I recall, was for the most part we did not know where they stood. They were captains, majors, and only a couple of colonels. No one knew these young officers who were creating the coup. The leader was a captain—one of the leaders and one of the most outspoken leaders. I don't think anyone had heard his name before. He made his career in Africa and was just back. But, as we later learned, he was one of the few people who created small cells of people, and the information was never imparted from one cell to another except by a person like—the man on horseback—who would interact with all the groups.

Q: As this thing developed, there seemed to be a disconnect in Washington with the Department of State. Did this come through that Henry Kissinger was quite unhappy with what was happening in Portugal or did this develop later?

CONLEY: No, this developed just months after the coup. The embassy was reporting that we thought there were some communists, maybe two prominent ones, among the leaders of the revolution, but the others were very likely socialists in the European socialist tradition. It was too early for us to go beyond that. We needed to see more of them, observe not just what they say but what they do, before we were prepared to make a judgment. Our impression was that this was not registering well with Henry Kissinger. In the country there was a former ambassador to Portugal, former chief of naval operations, admiral of the sixth fleet, George Anderson, who lived in the south. There was a former head of the World Bank, George Woods, who lived in a suburb of Lisbon. My recollection is that Anderson was part of the president's advisory board and had access, could pick up the phone. He asked for a briefing at the embassy and I was part of it. It was very clear that he did not agree with our perspective on the people who were carrying this revolution out. He thought they were a bunch of leftists, a bunch of communists, and that we were being taken in by them.

I think that viewpoint got back to Washington that we were being hoodwinked, that we were naive ["we" being the embassy as a whole], so I think there was an unprecedented

reporting team that was sent out by Washington to Portugal to check up on us. Now, there may be another reason for the team coming out, I don't know, but I thought there wasn't. The team consisted of three Foreign Service officers and a person who was not a Foreign Service officer but may have been in the department, and came out in November 1974. It was headed by Alan Lukens, who I think was a new Iberian desk officer. He spoke excellent French and with French you could speak to anybody in government. There was Peter De Vos who was a Portuguese speaker. There was a fellow named Michael Samuels, who I don't think was a Foreign Service officer, but became an ambassador to an African country.

When they arrived Ambassador Scott was back in the States having a hip replaced, so Dick Post was chargé. He, I think, was furious that this team was coming for the purpose of making an independent assessment of what was happening in Portugal to report to the secretary. I remember Alan was dropped off at the ambassador's residence, which was vacant because he was out of the country. My wife and I took Alan under our wing, because he was going to be just left there for the weekend, and asked him if he would like to go to the Algarve, which I said he probably knew from reports was a hotbed of unrest. He said that he would love to. So we drove down to the Algarve.

Q: What is the Algarve?

CONLEY: Algarve is the southern coast of Portugal just before entering into the Mediterranean. Having heard what was going on down there and having just come in from Washington you would expect maybe to see peasants walking down the road with a sickle in one hand and a pitchfork over the shoulder. We took Alan wherever he wanted to go. We talked to people and answered any question he had. I think it helped to get him off to a good start with his interviews to find out for himself who was doing what to whom and why. I don't think the final report diverged from our own assessment.

Q: Well, one does get the feeling that the Washington establishment, particularly Kissinger, became extremely concerned about the development there. Did you see a re-emergence of the Communist Party at this time?

CONLEY: Oh, sure. They were the only organized party. In July, I went home for an abbreviated home leave and had cabled the agency asking for an appointment with Congressman John Brademas, who had been on the Hill for eighteen years. I had known John for years. I got the appointment for one reason. I thought since the Communist Party was the only organized party, wouldn't it be good to provide some organizational manuals, how-to-do-it material, from both the Democratic and Republican sides in our country and make them available on a first-come, first-serve basis to any of the democratic parties back in Lisbon. That was my goal. John invited me to lunch and I explained what was going on. He said, "No problem." When I got back to Lisbon boxes started coming in with all these organizational manuals from the Democratic and Republican National Committees. We called the fledgling political parties, who had not a clue how to organize. Their idea of effective television was a talking head. So I got the

agency to define good examples of good political television advertising. There was a collector in the United States who lived in Wisconsin who had a magnificent collection on this and the agency got it for me with the idea of showing it to these parties who had to now compete at the ballot box with one very well organized and disciplined party, the Communist Party.

Fortunately, for everybody, the Communist Party in Portugal was headed by a communist leader who was to the right of Joseph Stalin. He was a Stalinist in the '70s. His adherents tended to be inflexible, older or very opportunistic people, and ended up getting 16 or 17 percent of the vote. But the fear back in Washington was that they were going to do a lot better than that. As I remember, Secretary Kissinger's fear was not Portugal but the example Portugal would set for the more fragile democracies like Italy, and who knew what was going to happen at that time in Spain. Part of the problem was that the governments that were being formed in Portugal did have at least one communist as a member of the government and Portugal was a NATO country. This troubled the department and Washington very much.

Q: I take it you felt you were fighting a two front battle, one in Washington and one in Portugal.

CONLEY: Well, I was not involved in the battle with Washington because my agency, as I indicated earlier, was field-oriented and when I asked for something I got it.

All through this the subtlety of Ambassador Frank Carlucci and his grasp of the situation may be one of the first times the U.S. decided to play a major role but one where our hand didn't show, one where we were a backbencher. We wanted others to be out front. We wanted to be supportive of Portugal's turn towards democracy and the democratic elements in that revolution.

I'll give you an example of something that in my time happened there. A man named Victor Albas, who later I think became president of Portugal, at that time, right after the revolution, was a lieutenant colonel and no one knew him. He spoke French, English, and German. He was one of the few officers who had languages. He was one of the intellectual leaders of that revolution. He was sent abroad to talk to leaders in other countries and explain the purposes of the revolution. He went to Germany and was seated next to Willie Brandt. Ambassador Martin Hillenbrand wrote a cable reporting that Brandt had formulated five questions to put to Albas, the answers to which would tell him, Brandt, whether Albas was a communist or socialist. Hillenbrand reported that Albas responded to the questions Brandt put to him as a European democratic socialist would respond. Hillenbrand sent the cable to Washington with a copy to the Lisbon embassy which is the reason I saw it.

Q: Did we then single out this man to go to?

CONLEY: Sure, and to be helpful too.

Q: You were there when Frank Carlucci came?

CONLEY: Yes, I was.

Q: Was there resentment that all of a sudden they pulled Carlucci in to deal with the situation?

CONLEY: The popular perception was—there were some who were rotating out because of the end of their tour. A new political counselor came in, Charlie Thomas, who had been there a few months when Carlucci came. Dick Post was relieved of his assignment and I don't think he was very happy about it and there was no reason why he should have been. Herb Okun came in as DCM and came a few weeks before Frank Carlucci arrived. Herb was making his own assessment and a number of people thought they would not be asked to stay on. So, there was an unsettling period. My time was coming up on three years and I didn't know what was going to happen to me, but as it turned out I stayed another year. I received orders to go to Kinshasa in early 1975 and Frank Carlucci called me upstairs and said, "I would like you to stay and if you would like me to break that assignment, I will." My response was that after four years it was time for me to move on. There was a sense of unease. A new broom was coming in. But, I think that was based on no knowledge whatsoever. No one knew what kind of a person Frank Carlucci was. Once they met him they realized they were in the presence of someone who was his own man, who was tremendously competent. He had lines of authority that went right to the White House.

Q: Yes. He had been the number two in HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare].

CONLEY: And his former wrestling teammate was Donald Rumsfeld, who was chief of staff in the Ford Cabinet. I don't think there was another ambassador who worked for Henry Kissinger, who had his own line to the White House the way Frank Carlucci did. All I want to say about that is when Frank Carlucci came in you only had to meet him to know that he was going to make his own assessment and that he was going to report that assessment back to Washington. And that is exactly what he did.

Q: I have interviewed Frank Carlucci for this history and it is one of the great stories of the Foreign Service. I think Henry Kissinger at that time was almost ready to read Portugal out of NATO, causing all sorts of consequences rather than to see what we could do.

CONLEY: Stu, you then know more than I do. Was I far off the track in what I just said?

Q: No. I just re-read it recently and Kissinger was pretty mad at Carlucci because Carlucci was saying there was something we could work with. Kissinger thought he had sent a tough guy out there who would read the riot act. Basically rather than deal with

the situation would lay down the law and essentially escort Portugal out. It was a misreading in Washington.

CONLEY: Yes. I will give Kissinger this, he did send a tough guy out there. The thing is he was tough enough to stand up to Henry Kissinger.

Q: When Carlucci came out he became part of the scene being on TV and on the communist side being portrayed as the American devil. How did you operate in this?

CONLEY: Well, we came to an understanding pretty early that he had to respond to everything. My instincts before the revolution in other posts I have been at, was that it is sometimes better not to react. That would have been my reaction to Ridge Knight back in Brussels when a communist would attack him. The Communist Party in Belgium amounted to very little so just ignore it and not elevate them by responding. In Portugal it was different. You had to respond and Carlucci had the language ability to do it and he was smart. So, when he would be attacked he would seek an opportunity to respond or say, "I'll respond to that in the same newspaper." I would call the editor of the newspaper and he would come in and just the two of them would go one on one.

Q: Did he have any TV appearances?

CONLEY: Oh, yes. I don't remember how many. There was an East German propaganda line that came out at the time when Carlucci was principal officer, I believe, in Madagascar. He had called the embassy and asked for some administrative support. He said something like, "I need ammunition on this." His phone conversation was intercepted by the East German intelligence and made to sound as if he was an intelligence operative who was involved in some dirty work down there. That was made available and he was PNGed [persona non grata].

Q: Actually he was PNGed somewhere else as well and he said that he was a little bit worried about establishing a record.

CONLEY: Well, this is published in the leading daily paper. You don't let that stand or rest. You have to attack right back full of disclosure. And, that is what he did.

Q: How did Herb Okun work? Herb and I came into the Foreign Service together. Herb had not been well received by his colleagues. He was pretty young and came on fairly strong, I think, in Brazil.

CONLEY: I was there for about four months with Herb. From my vantage point Herb and I got along very well, but I could see that he could be abrasive. I think he was Carlucci's choice.

Q: Oh, he was.

CONLEY: They had worked together in Brazil. So, Herb was carrying out what his chief wanted done, quickly and well.

Q: Being the American representative, did you find that you had to play things very carefully because the junta was suspicious of the United States?

CONLEY: I don't recall that the people I dealt with were suspicious of the United States. There was a feeling that we weren't being as helpful as we could be, especially in the early days. I remember having coffee with a news anchor and he was saying, "If you don't support us now, Jim, the United States does not deserve to be called a friend of Portugal by the Portuguese." And, there was a lot of truth in what he was saying because we were dithering in the beginning. The junta, as it turned out, was going to be looking for support to carry out a democratic revolution in that country if the democrats won the election. They couldn't have done that over our opposition, I don't think. So, they wanted our support.

Q: What about Mario Soares? Was he around prior to the revolution?

CONLEY: He was teaching at a provincial university in France.

Q: When he arrived in Portugal did we see him as someone to work with?

CONLEY: Absolutely. I was at the airport when he arrived with Jake Jacobson. We met him. It was amazing, the Portuguese are so informal and he just walked down the street. He had hundreds of people around him but they all sort of stepped back. We happened to be next to him at a certain point and introduced ourselves as coming from the embassy and he beamed and smiled. He was coming back to his country for the first time. I think he wanted contact with the embassy and expected it and he got it.

Q: Did you find that media people were coming to you for advice on how to run a freer media?

CONLEY: No. Remember I was there only in the very early days the revolution happened. However, they were coming to me almost daily for reaction to one announcement or another that the government had made.

Q: Did you feel that the American media was over-emphasizing the communist side?

CONLEY: There were some. The *New York Times* had a correspondent based in Lisbon after the revolution, Henry Gieneger, and his reporting was accurate and expansive in depth and didn't play up the fright angle at all. Another who was excellent was a stringer for *Time* magazine, Martha Fitzmaurice, and she also wrote from the vantage point of deep experience. She had lived in Portugal for about twenty years. The inflammatory pieces came from a *Time* correspondent, for example, who was a very nice fellow, but he didn't know the situation there at all. Although Martha took him around, he was the

correspondent on this cover story and the cover story was nothing but red flags and was very alarmist and got it wrong.

Q: Were you getting concerned that somehow or another Henry Kissinger, who was certainly running our foreign policy in those days, and people around him, were getting it wrong?

CONLEY: I would have to say when I was there I was not aware that they were getting it wrong. My first understanding of it was when a group led by Alan Lukens came out. Then it made me think that they are getting what we are saying but not understanding it. Then I was out of there.

Q: There is a surprisingly large group of Portuguese-Americans in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Did you find that you had senators like Senator Pell or Senator Kennedy giving a lot of attention to Portugal while you were there?

CONLEY: Senator Kennedy, in fact, embarrassed the department. The revolution was in April 1974 and I think it was October 1974 that Senator Kennedy came over and met with members of the junta and announced a small aid program. It was only about a hundred thousand dollars or less, but it was the first and it was coming from Congress, not the administration. Kennedy went around and was, of course, on every front page and attracting tremendous press attention, because of who he was but also because the Portuguese were almost desperate for some signal from Washington that they supported their effort, taken at great risk, to overthrow a government primarily because of its African policy and because of the way they organized things at home, it was a dictatorship, and to free the press, free the judiciary. They thought, Please give us a signal saying you are on our side and support those goals. And we were being silent. Then Kennedy came. He was the first one.

Q: How were we looking at the African policy? It seemed to be akin to what happened in the Congo.

CONLEY: I can't comment very much on that because I wasn't following it. You are absolutely right. Like the Belgians, the Portuguese had not really trained enough professional people to take over. They said their goal was a civilizing mission and this was going to take centuries. What did they mean by civilizing? It meant teaching the Portuguese language, to read it and write it. Only after that happened was it possible to provide the skills needed to create a society. In their view they had thousands of years to do that. Once again, it didn't take a genius to figure out the factions that were at loggerheads trying to consolidate power now with Portugal pulling out. There was one group that had the support of communists, to be sure, but also the indigenous people. I think Henry Kissinger showed again that he just didn't understand that, and we opposed that group, the MPLA [People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola].

Q: Did we have any particular contact with the communists in Portugal?

CONLEY: I think there were a couple of members of the political section, who were younger and knew some people in the Communist Party, but I don't know for sure. I would say from my personal knowledge that I suspect we did, but I don't know.

Q: Because Portugal is a relatively small country and there has been a significant migration to the United States, was there a pretty close feeling within Portuguese society towards the United States?

CONLEY: Yes.

Q: Once the revolution started were we able to crank up the cultural side or were things pretty much on hold?

CONLEY: I thought we were fairly creative in what we were able to do. I started an English language program in the embassy for the Portuguese, which people expected to fall flat on its face because the British Council had a long time reputation of doing a wonderful job of teaching English. But we filled a niche. That is to say, young Portuguese who wanted to get jobs in hotels, for example, we taught them how to speak English although we didn't teach them to write well. We taught them how to understand and speak English quickly.

Q: We did that on purpose?

CONLEY: We did that before the revolution. I created what was called the American Cultural Council which was a little corporation into which the profits for teaching English after paying salaries, et cetera could be used to fund cultural programs. And, we did. After the revolution, Regina Resnick, the opera soprano, was in Portugal. She had a leading role in the first opera performed in free Portugal. She became a friend. She was staying in a little hotel opposite the secret police. The only blood shed during the revolution was when the revolutionary side surrounded the secret police headquarters in downtown Lisbon and the police decided to fight and they were overwhelmed. There were two or three people killed in that skirmish. Well, CBS called saying they understood there was a building under siege and wanted to know what was going on. I said, "Well, I can put you in touch with an eyewitness who can give you an account of that. I'm sure she would love to hear from you. Her name is Regina Resnick." "You mean the great opera star?" "Absolutely, her bedroom window looks right over the building." Well, Regina was delighted of course because she got national exposure by giving an eyewitness account of what was going on. American artists came, pretty much on the music side, to Portugal. The exchange program went on. I was chairman of the Fulbright commission there.

Q: Jim, I think this is a good place to stop. In 1975 you were off to Kinshasa?

CONLEY: Off to Kinshasa, yes.

Q: You must have been delighted.

CONLEY: The director of the agency had come through, Jim Keogh, and spent a couple of days in Portugal and my time was winding down there and he asked me what I would like to do as a next assignment. I said that I didn't care where it is but would like to have a larger staff, budget, and program, and see how I deal with that. So, when Kinshasa opened up meeting the criteria I had asked for because it was a large program in French-speaking Africa with branch posts with everything except a Fulbright program, I went down there on direct transfer willingly.

Q: We will pick it up in 1975 when you are in Kinshasa.

CONLEY: Oh, it was my first time in Africa and Dean Hinton was ambassador, and a crusty guy, as you probably know. When I get off the plane I see this man in a black suit and a white shirt striding towards the aircraft. I squinted my eyes and said to my wife, "If I'm not mistaken, that is Ambassador Hinton walking towards us." Sure enough it was Dean Hinton and he puts his arm out to shake hands and says, "Don't get the wrong idea, Jim, I am saying goodbye to a colleague." About four weeks later he and I were playing tennis with the German ambassador and somebody on his staff, when a man showed up from the Foreign Office with an urgent request that Ambassador Hinton present himself to the Foreign Ministry immediately. Ambassador Hinton said, "Do I have time to go home and change?" He was told, no, that the foreign minister needed to see him right away. He went to the Foreign Office and cooled his heels in over air-conditioned air for about twenty minutes and then was told that he had forty-eight hours to get out of the country, that he was being declared persona non grata. That was my initiation to Zaire.

Q: Let's save this until next time.

CONLEY: Okay.

Q: Jim, you were in Zaire from when to when?

CONLEY: From April 1975 until roughly June 1977.

Q: Just before we closed last time you mentioned that Ambassador Dean Hinton was kicked out soon after your arrival. Did you mention why he was kicked out?

CONLEY: I'm not sure. But it was a trumped up charge, Stu. Dean asked me to partner him in a tennis match and we were playing against the German ambassador and one of his staffers, when a black limo pulled up and a Zairean government official stepped out and called the ambassador to the side of the court and said, "Your presence is required immediately at the Foreign Office." Hinton said, "Do I have time to go home and change?" He was told no. So, he went to the Foreign Office and cooled his heels in an overly air-conditioned ante room and was told because he had fomented revolution

against the person and policies of the leader, Joseph Mobutu, he would be given forty-eight hours to leave the country. It was a totally trumped up charge. The two just went by each other and didn't make music so Mobutu decided to trump up a charge and get him out of there. A month later a scurrilous local newspaper came out with a story that Hinton had called on the Zairean foreign minister in his tennis whites. The effrontery of the Americans to do such a thing! There was no substance, nothing to it, but Mobutu wanted to get rid of him and did.

Q: What was your job in Zaire?

CONLEY: I was public affairs officer. I had a pretty big staff. The budget was the largest USIA program in French-speaking Africa. There were branch posts in Lubumbashi and Kisangani.

Q: How did you see our relations and interests in Zaire, and what was the situation there when you arrived?

CONLEY: Well, it was a long time ago. Mobutu was completely in charge. He had a pocket of resistance in the south in Lubumbashi. These were people who supported Moise Tshombe, and when they lost in the power struggle in the '60s they went over to Angola and periodically would make forays back into Zaire. So, Mobutu would ask for arms from us and sometimes we would give them and sometimes we wouldn't. If we didn't, that created friction. The overriding issue when I got there, I thought, was the situation with Angola. Mobutu was supporting one of the factions there led by Holden Roberto, who was head of the Revolutionary Government of Angola-in-Exile [GRAE]. Our policy seemed to be supportive of that faction as well, and Mobutu provided safe haven for these people. The Cubans were supporting the MPLA. The Portuguese, I think, felt the MPLA was the group to support. Were there communists in the MPLA? Yes, but they were Africans, and probably didn't even know what communism was. We had an excellent consul in Luanda by the name of Tom Killoran, who was reporting what he saw developing on the scene. His reporting was totally ignored in Washington. I thought Tom did a brilliant job of reporting at much risk to his life, and I think his career suffered, causing him to resign. He may have stuck it out and retired, but I don't think he did. Henry Kissinger, as you know, had this idea of big picture politics: don't let the Soviets get a foothold in Africa. If they do, they will wheel east and march to the Indian Ocean. Now this would be through an extremely large rainforest over unbelievable terrain. It was utterly ridiculous.

The embassy was headed up brilliantly by a rather young Foreign Service officer, Ambassador Walt Cutler and his deputy, Lannon Walker. The two of them provided strong leadership. There were junior officers in the embassy who were strongly opposed to the direction of U.S. policy with respect to Angola, and towards Zaire with its participation in that policy, and they were using appropriate, legitimate channels to express their concern, the dissent channel. Henry Kissinger didn't like that at all and called Lannon Walker and read him the riot act. But I was at Ambassador Cutler's house

when Kissinger came to call. He addressed the embassy staff from the lawn. We are all standing up about a foot above him on this terrace. He looked up at us and said, "In effect, your [the embassy] call was more accurate than mine." This was pretty astonishing.

It was an issue in 1975 because with the overthrow of the Portuguese government, they just pulled out of Angola, Mozambique, et cetera.

With Mobutu you just never knew where the next thunderbolt was going to come from. He thrived on instability. Lannon Walker used the phrase that Mobutu looked to be trapped by his own fiscal irresponsibility and poor choices of directors of department, personnel decisions. But he would then create a new terrain and jump out of that box and make everybody else be defensive. He would go on the offense and make everybody react to him. He was a very smart politician. Was there anybody bobbing and weaving out there looking for an opportunity to topple this regime? No. There were so many factions that there was no strength any place except in the government headed by Mobutu. Mobutu played all of these factions off against one another. There was no cohesiveness for an alternative to Mobutu to emerge during the time I was there.

Q: Did Mobutu's watchfulness run throughout Zaire or did it go mainly where the money was?

CONLEY: I believe it ran throughout Zaire. He had astonishing ways of impressing the country's unsophisticated population. An example: The TV news program would open up with a dark screen. Up in the upper right hand corner about one o'clock there would be a sunburst that would start coming in towards the center of the screen getting larger and larger. Suddenly you thought you could see a leopard skin cap, and of course, that was Mobutu's symbol. Then his face would develop. It was as though he was coming out of the sun. For people who had no running water, no electricity, living in the most primitive conditions [I'm speaking of the mass of the people], no education although intelligent, I'm sure, to see this— He would make some grandiose promise to the people. He was a god in some respect.

Q: What was the language that was used?

CONLEY: I think there were some twenty to twenty-five known languages. The language of the army was called Lingala, a trader's river language that followed the Congo River. Lingala had no concept of yesterday or tomorrow. They had no words for yesterday or tomorrow.

Q: In a place as huge as this controlled by a man who was not that friendly with the United States, what was USIS doing?

CONLEY: We did a lot of exchanges. We tried to put on cultural programs explaining who we were, et cetera. We had a magazine we produced. Mobutu was friendly to us, but

he always knew where his own interests were. He needed us and we thought we needed him.

Q: While you were there how would you describe your experiences and the role of the CIA there, the station chief? One always hears in later days that there are some countries that look to AID as being the prime thing and others look to the CIA. One always hears that CIA had a special relationship with Zaire.

CONLEY: I heard that was the case. I knew the station chief fairly well. I heard he had a fairly close relationship with Mobutu as did his predecessors. In fact, one of his predecessors many times removed is still in the country and was a consultant on a large engineering project, a big dam that was being built down south. This man still had contacts with Mobutu and I used to talk to him from time to time. Maybe a dozen times in two years I would call up this guy and tell him what the situation was and ask for his take on it. He was always very, very forthcoming and helpful.

Q: How was working in Zaire during the period you were there?

CONLEY: Your own survival was the first thing you had to look after. By that I mean your health. You had to be very careful what you did. When I was there Ebola broke out, which is one of the deadliest diseases known to man. As a matter of fact it was unnamed. There was just this deadly disease not airborne that suddenly appeared in northeast Zaire. It was first thought to be green monkey disease. The CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] flew a team in and found it wasn't green monkey disease. It was this kind of a situation. I think to this day there are diseases that exist there that nobody knows anything about. My predecessor two or three times removed was carried out on a stretcher. He had tremors, and when I met him in Washington he still had the tremors. He had picked up something that nobody was able to figure out what it was. So, my counsel to the staff was to be sure you have your life together and don't take any unnecessary risks with your health or expose yourself unnecessarily to dangers traveling the countryside. One did not in Zaire go out on field trips without a great deal of thought as one would do in other parts of Africa. It was not a hospitable environment either from a health standpoint or a political standpoint.

Having said that, I found working in Zaire in certain respects to be perfectly delightful. It certainly made families rely on themselves more than they had ever done at earlier posts, especially families with younger children who they got to know a lot better. We worked from 6:30-7:00 in the morning to three in the afternoon with perhaps a half an hour for lunch. The reason for this was the sun set at six, you could set your watch by it, and so there were only three hours of daylight from three to six. The school bus would come by and pick the kids up at 6:30 in the morning because it got so hot. The education at the American School of Kinshasa was very, very mediocre based on a public school district in the state of Ohio. It was not very good preparation. When you are in a hardship post people pull together and that was certainly true in Zaire.

Q: Who were the target groups that USIS was aiming at?

CONLEY: The younger journalists, economists, political leaders, and, of course, the university professors, et cetera.

Q: Did you find that Mobutu tended to chop these guys down if they got to be too expert? For example, economists in a country where the leader is looting the country wouldn't be the greatest people to have around.

CONLEY: He would transfer them to another office like the Ministry of Light and Power for instance. He was an absolute master at moving people around and trading them off. He rarely punished people corporally or severely, except a few of his enemies were thrown into jail, but even then there was visitation, et cetera. If they got too high he would just move them out.

Q: You say you had an active exchange program. I would think coming back from the United States after having tasted university life—I wouldn't think it would sit very well.

CONLEY: No, it didn't and yet our laws being the way they are, they had to return and it was appropriate. There was almost a non-fraternization policy there, at least during the two years I was there. The Zaireans would very often accept invitations and not show up to lunches, dinners, cocktails, receptions, et cetera. We would identify the people we wanted to go to the States and they would accept the invitation, return, and we would see them once or twice and then they were not available for follow up.

Q: What about the press, the media?

CONLEY: Controls. There isn't a lot more you can say than that. Their only hope was that when change came there would be some residue of journalistic practice that we find in the West that would have been picked up and used in that country. They are very influenced by French journalistic practices. After all, Zaire is an ex-Belgian colony.

Q: Was there the feeling that okay you have a political section, a public affairs section, et cetera but you were really operating in a swamp?

CONLEY: Yes, like a rubber ball that you push in one place and it pops out in another place. I recommended that we close a post and would have recommended we close more than one and reduce the size of the staff in the capital. Allocation of assets just didn't make sense. There was a big AID program, but whatever has become of that. It was such a personal mission. It was the ambassador and his relationship with the president. It was almost like it was a one-on-one basketball game. The DCM who was smart, had language skills, and knew how to move, was an alter ego, and that was Lannon Walker. Between Walt Cutler and Lannon Walker we had a terrific combination. Mobutu just didn't trust anyone except a couple of his advisors, and only then, he half trusted them. So was anyone else really necessary? If you had then what you have today you could almost say

that an ambassador, DCM, and the Internet would be all you would need.

Q: What about other missions, were they operating under more or less the same circumstances?

CONLEY: Yes. The big players were the French, the Belgians, the Germans to a lesser degree, and ourselves.

Q: Did missionaries play much of a role in what you were doing?

CONLEY: No. Walt Cutler and I went up near Lake Kivu to see a group of missionaries up there. They had a shortwave radio net where they kept each other informed, and I believe also kept the embassy informed if they saw trouble coming in their own self-interest. I don't think they did any other kind of reporting. In my view, it was a pretty grim mindset that they had. The missionaries that I saw seemed to be living in a 1930s mindset.

Q: Bringing God to the primitives?

CONLEY: Bringing God to the primitives, but having the primitives do all the work around their house. They had no purchase on the reality of America. They had the good book, and probably didn't do any harm where they were, and by their own lights they did good. The few who worked with them had food, clean clothes, and a standard of living that probably was better than it would have been in their villages. But the American missionary seemed to think that that was how life was in the United States. It was rather pathetic, I thought.

Q: While you were there were there any high-level visits?

CONLEY: The highest-level visitor was Henry Kissinger.

Q: What brought Henry Kissinger there?

CONLEY: This was after we acknowledged that we had been supporting the losing side in Angola and were not going to do it anymore. He was traveling in southern Europe, I believe, and decided to come to Zaire. He came to sign with Mobutu an agreement, not connected with Angola. I can't remember what the agreement was.

Q: After two years in Zaire, what happened?

CONLEY: I was expecting to spend another year there but got a call from Washington asking if I would be interested in succeeding Ray Benson as public affairs officer in Moscow, coming back in the summer of 1977, going to language training, and going to Moscow in the summer of 1978, and I said yes. So, I went into Russian language training in September 1977.

Q: You took Russian for a year?

CONLEY: From September to April, then Ray Benson cabled Washington saying he would like to extend in Moscow for a year. This was agreeable to the agency and the area director called me and asked me to come by. He said, "When you finish your language training here in July, we will send you to Garmisch and you will have a year of language and area studies and go to Moscow in 1979." So, I took this information and went back to my apartment and called my wife and told her what was going on. I said that I had done some figuring. If we go to Moscow on the agency schedule, our daughter Grace would have to return either to the U.S. or Western Europe to go to high school. Knowing that Jane had been so supportive of my career, but knowing that if she had her druthers would just as soon not go to Moscow, I put the question to her. I said, "I could retire in October, I will be fifty. Would you like to do something with your life?" She said, "Oh, would I ever." So, that is what happened. I told the agency I was going to retire much to the surprise of my colleagues. Jane went to Notre Dame law school and I went into another line of work.

Q: *What have you done since?*

CONLEY: I was lucky. I had had an avocational interest in historic architecture. A relatively new foundation in Indianapolis, The Historic Landmark Foundation of Indiana founded by Eli Lilly in the sixties, had the intention of decentralizing the activities of the foundation, the purpose of which was to save historic architecture throughout the state of Indiana and help create organizations to do that. I was asked if I would be willing to open up a branch office in northern Indiana out of South Bend. The salary I was offered was less than the salary my secretary had earned in Zaire, but that wasn't what I was interested in. I did that work for fifteen years. So, I really had two separate careers, but both in the non-profit area, if you will, and both in areas that I loved. I wouldn't have traded my Foreign Service career for anything, nor working in the field of historic preservation in Indiana through the '80s and '90s.

Q: You got into it at the right time. I think that one of the most significant things that came out of the '60s was to get people to take a look at their local architecture.

CONLEY: Yes. The results of the whole urban renewal movement were beginning to be seen. Urban renewal was creating vast parking lots in downtown areas of cities like Indianapolis and South Bend. You had effective congressmen like John Brademas who was very able in getting money for South Bend, but he wasn't responsible for how it was used. It looked like a moonscape. Finally there was a reaction to this and the National Trust for Historic Preservation started a program called Main Street. This started getting people to pay attention to what was happening to their downtown and the building fabric of it. Today it is tourism— Why do we go to Europe? We go to Europe to see old buildings, don't we? And landscape and ensembles of buildings.

We, in this country, woke up to that and I caught a wave there just as I think I was at the beginning of a wave of people who were leaving the Foreign Service. I figured out during Russian language training that there had to be a life after the Foreign Service, but in order to find that life and create it one had to embark on it early enough. So, at age fifty I thought I still had a shot, and I did. It also gives me plenty of time to acquire more social security quarters to augment those I had acquired before going into the Foreign Service. So there were benefits to it. Of course, the retirement income I retired at was my high three at a class one level in 1978 and very different from what it would be today. But, that is all right.

Q: How about your wife? Did she move into law?

CONLEY: She did. She became a prosecuting attorney and a very good one. She is in Indianapolis as a senior deputy prosecutor, prosecuting felony cases, felony murders, and the rest. She is very good at what she does.

Q: On the architectural side, I remember about the time you were doing this, I read a book that really impressed me. It was The Life and Death of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs.

CONLEY: Before that came out in book form there were articles either in *The New Yorker* or the *Atlantic Monthly*, that came out in the ’60s. She was one of the giants.

Q: She is up in Montréal now.

CONLEY: Is she?

Q: She has published something on economics that was reviewed last week in the New York Times. William White did something I think on time studies on cities. I think we are beginning to look at cities as organisms rather than something to be changed at a whim.

CONLEY: Yes. The National Trust has taken on urban sprawl as its major thrust. All you have to do is look at northern Virginia and see what you don’t want.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

CONLEY: You are welcome.

End of interview