

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

GREG COOPER

*Interviewed by: Tom Selinger
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INTERVIEW

Q: Okay, I'm Tom Selinger from the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. It's May 8th, 2025. I'm here to interview Greg Cooper on behalf of the Fulbright Association. Greg, if you could just start by saying your name and spelling it.

COOPER: Sure. Greg Cooper, G-R-E-G, C-O-O-P-E-R.

Q: And can you tell us your current occupation and employer to start?

COOPER: Sure, I am a Senior Vice President with Pathward Bank.

Q: And can you tell us where you grew up and what brought you to things international? I guess what was your inspiration as a young person?

COOPER: So I grew up actually right outside of Washington, DC in Alexandria, Virginia. And being part of the DC capital area, I got exposed to a lot of different international peoples, a lot of different international news, and a lot of people that came from all different parts of the United States to be part of Washington D.C. to come to work or to study. And so I would meet these kinds of people, and it just inspired a curiosity for me to say, well, where are they from? I'd love to see that place. How is it different from Alexandria? How is it different from D.C.? So that was the catalyst.

Q: Excellent. And how did you find your way to Fulbright? What was your Fulbright project and when was it?

COOPER: So I found my way to Fulbright through my undergraduate university, the College of William & Mary. And I found my way through Fulbright to apply to a Swiss grant in the University of Basel, the Basel & Sion governance, and they had a subgroup called the International Center for Asset Recovery. And this group was focused on recovering the proceeds of crime and corruption from dictators, or really anybody that was involved in sort of large scale corruption, and particularly about how to recover that money from different financial jurisdictions. So if it was a dictator, particularly a misappropriated asset, but put it under their sister's name, how did you legally, well, one,

find it? How did you freeze it? And then how did you actually convince the legal systems to work together to repatriate that money back to the country of origin?

Q: Interesting. And it's very popular now to talk about how government makes America safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Can you talk about your Fulbright experience in those terms? Did it make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous?

COOPER: I'd like to think so. I think on a macro level, the Fulbrights give the opportunity for people to go out and understand the world. The world exists and it's one of those things where any bit of understanding really helps build a sense of security. Security comes through knowledge. So, knowledge from the peoples of the world coming to the United States and from us going abroad to understand that. And a little bit of understanding can go a long way. For me on a micro level, for me personally though, it helped set out my career. I absolutely loved my Fulbright experience. I worked with some of the most talented international prosecutors and investigators, and I learned a great deal from them. I also knew that I had a lot more study and work to go to be like them, but seeing that and doing that kind of work and touching that kind of work really inspired me personally, to go to law school and to work in the field of anti-money laundering and compliance. And it's one of the things that really inspired me to do what I do today, which is my passion.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add about why Fulbright is important?

COOPER: I think Fulbright is a fantastic program, and I think that Fulbright should continue because continuing to build that understanding, it needs to be constantly refreshed. The world changes, we change. That feedback loop, that intercultural connection is something that needs constant tending and updating. Otherwise it becomes stale, it becomes outdated. So everyone knows change is the only constant, and Fulbright connections help maintain that understanding, that awareness of the broader world, which helps us build a stronger sense of security and where our place is in it, and what we need to do to maintain that security.

Q: Thank you, Greg. That concludes our interview with Greg Cooper.

End of interview